



Hel Lan Htoo- Spirit of Service, Outstanding YouthBuild AmeriCorps Alum of the Year

Hel Lan has been everything that you would hope a member would be. Hel Lan came to Gap as a 21 year old who had only been in the U.S. two years after emigrating from Burma as a refugee. He had nothing but a dream to gain an education and help other refugees who were in a similar situation to him. He struggled to learn English at first but his amazing work ethic was an inspiration to us all! Hel Lan soon became a phenomenal leader and an example to other Karen refugees who followed him into our YouthBuild program. He not only recruited others to join him in his journey, but worked tirelessly to help them through the program.

Hel Lan was then selected to attend the CoYL conference in Washington. He returned with an even greater sense of purpose and began to mentor younger students coming into our program. He stayed after school nearly every day to help anyone who was in need, from the students to the custodian. After his graduation he became a VISTA member at our school and worked tirelessly to help students prepare for life after their days at GAP were completed, and did a great multitude of projects.

After his VISTA term was completed he was hired as an interpreter and teachers assistant. In this role he excelled beyond anyone's expectations and became a leader in the Karen community and helped our program swell to over 100 Karen refugees. Without his help this would have not been possible. Hel lan also became the caretaker at one of our properties at GAP and spent countless hours per week in the building helping students, cleaning, maintenance and security. He has never once asked or cared about what was in it for him, his only concern is helping our program and the students. *I can't imagine what GAP would be like today without having Hel Lan here the past 4 years. He is one of the most amazing individuals I have ever met!*

-Nominated by Tony Zahradka