

MORE FROM HOMEPAGE



Southwest Airlines will offer free Wi-Fi on all flights, with a catch

Frisco Memorial football hosts its first home game, still mourning death of Austin Metcalf

Five prim



ADVERTISEMENT

THIS IS MEMBER-EXCLUSIVE CONTENT ⓘ

NEWS | TEXAS

How a Grand Prairie couple is keeping Vietnamese radio alive in D-FW

Peter Dao and his wife Lien Bich Dao earlier this year took over the Voice of Vietnamese Americans radio station at Asia Times Square in hopes of continuing to preserve their culture.



By **Zaeem Shaikh**
Staff, Reporter

May 21, 2024 | Updated 8:01 a.m. CDT | ⌚ 5 min. read



Voice of Vietnamese Americans, VVA 1600 AM, announcer Minh Tuan talks in their radio studio, Saturday, March 9, 2024, in Grand Prairie.

CHITOSE SUZUKI / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

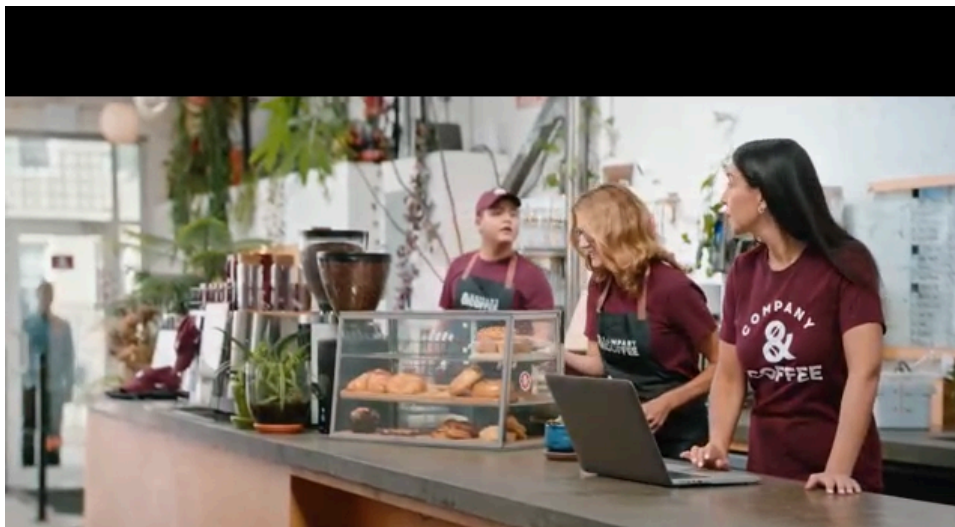


This story is part of [Asian American Bustle](#), an occasional series publishing during Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

GRAND PRAIRIE — Inside a large corner office space at [Asia Times Square](#), passersby can peer through a rectangular window and get a peek at a studio with a unique mission.

Why This Story Matters

Asian American Bustle is The Dallas Morning News' community-based reporting effort examining the development, culture and future of Asian American enclaves in North Texas. Over a few months, two reporters, two photographers and an editor spent several days in the communities' gathering spaces to meet the public and hear their stories.



Skip Ad

0:09 / 0:30



From sunrise to sunset each day, hosts broadcast in Vietnamese news, music, sports and their passions on 1600 AM and online. The station's name — [Voice of Vietnamese Americans](#) — is fitting for the mission of serving the Dallas-Fort Worth area that roughly 90,000 Vietnamese call home.

As economic headwinds have shuttered other non-English-speaking outlets, Peter Dao said he hopes to use the station to teach people about what Vietnam was like before 1975, when the communist party took control.

Breaking News

Get the latest breaking news from North Texas and beyond.

SIGN UP

Or with:  **GOOGLE**

By signing up, you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

“We want to preserve our way of life ... for our children and grandchildren,” Dao said.

Dao and his wife, Lien Bich Dao, took control of the station this year, shortly after [their station in Arlington](#) closed in 2023. Starting in 2003, the Daos ran Dallas Vietnamese Radio, near what is now Ben Thanh Plaza. The station [rebranded in 2017](#) before shuttering as its contract with the owner of the radio frequency expired last year,

forcing a change. Some mementos from their former station sit in the new office: a lunar new year award from 2008 and a framed map of their native country with the South Vietnam flag.

ADVERTISEMENT

In the fall of 2022, Voice of Vietnamese Americans began broadcasting under a different owner inside Asia Times Square, considered an anchor for the Asian American enclave in eastern Tarrant County. When the station struggled and the former operator had to leave to care for his family, the property's CEO invited the Daos to take the reins.

The couple brought about two decades of experience to Voice of Vietnamese Americans and 1600 AM, a frequency that had long been a Vietnamese-language station.

“I felt like that [the station] is one of the key components to have at Asia Times Square, so the radio station can be at a location that's more well-established and to be able to make their broadcast and reach out to more people,” said Matthew Loh, the strip mall's CEO and property manager.



Voice of Vietnamese Americans, VVA 1600 AM General Manager, Lien Bich Dao is seen their radio studio, Saturday, March 9, 2024, in Grand Prairie.

CHITOSE SUZUKI / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

‘Refugees from communism’

Many of the staff at the station had no background in radio.

Peter Dao said he didn't know anything about the industry, joking he couldn't tell the difference "between the mixer in the kitchen and in the radio station." A former engineer, he worked stints at Texas Instruments and American Airlines before retiring and helping his wife with the radio station, he said.

Duc Pham, the deputy manager and one of Voice of Vietnamese Americans' announcers, said he worked odd jobs in the Dallas-Fort Worth area before a 20-year stretch in the U.S. Postal Service. Pham retired then worked at a local Vietnamese television station until it closed down during the pandemic.

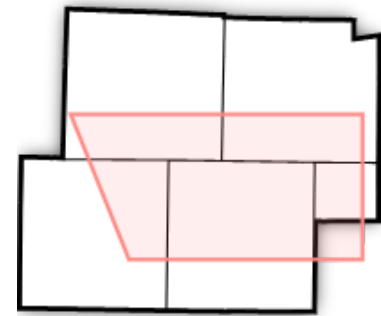
"After that, I had nothing to do," Pham said. "In 2022, this station reopened. 1600 AM is very strong, and then I came here and worked as a news anchor."

Minh Tuan, a reporter, sought work at the station to highlight stories of Vietnamese soldiers and what the country was like for them growing up.

Asian American enclaves in North Texas

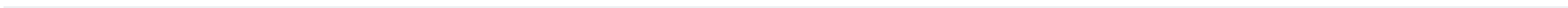
Mapping areas in North Texas where different groups of Asian Americans created hubs for community and culture.

Interact with the markers to read a description.



GRAPHIC: José Luis Adriano

The Dallas Morning News



“You need to know your parents, your grandparents from the original form of Vietnam,” said Tuan, who is also in retirement.

Not all staff members are retired. Hien Van Vu, a host for Voice of Vietnamese Americans, said the station is a part-time hobby on the weekends. During the week, he works at Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth.

Lien Bich Dao, the general manager, is one of the few on staff with prior experience. She worked at a Vietnamese station in Garland before starting Dallas Vietnamese Radio more than 20 years ago.

For many of the staffers, the Vietnam War and its lingering impacts connect them. Lien Bich Dao’s parents were killed by Communist forces when she was 17, she said. Some of the staffers fled during or shortly after the war: Peter left in the midst of it, Tuan left in 1975 and Vu left six years later.

“After 1975, the communists [tried] to erase what was Vietnamese culture for thousands of years and want to replace it with their own kind of culture,” Peter Dao said. “We are refugees from communism.”



Grand Prairie Police Sgt. Thai Nguyen, speaks during an invited show at Voice of Vietnamese Americans VVA 1600 AM, on Friday, April 19, 2024 in Grand Prairie. He has been focused on hiring Asian Americans for the police department and is one of the sources on the department's efforts to make connections with the Asian American community in Grand Prairie.

SHAFKAT ANOWAR / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Helping the community

The programs, which record live from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., can vary, with news, music and how-to sessions, Peter Dao said. Included in those are collaborations with local colleges like Tarrant County College and University of Texas at Arlington.

ADVERTISEMENT

The station does public announcements for various community organizations plus a monthly talk show with the Grand Prairie Police Department. During election season, Peter Dao said, he has invited candidates and urged people to come vote. Reporters will also cover special events.

“We have announcements from the city of Arlington and around here to inform people about the many different programs for seniors, about housing, health care,” Peter Dao said.

Staff members also highlight things they’re passionate about. For Tuan and Pham, that means stories of soldiers and poems and music. And for Vu, that means talking about professional sports — especially baseball, football and basketball.

Peter Dao said listeners range in age from early 20s to 90, and the station's talent aims to be "the teachers for everyone." Pham said seniors turn on the radio and listen to it all day until they go to sleep.

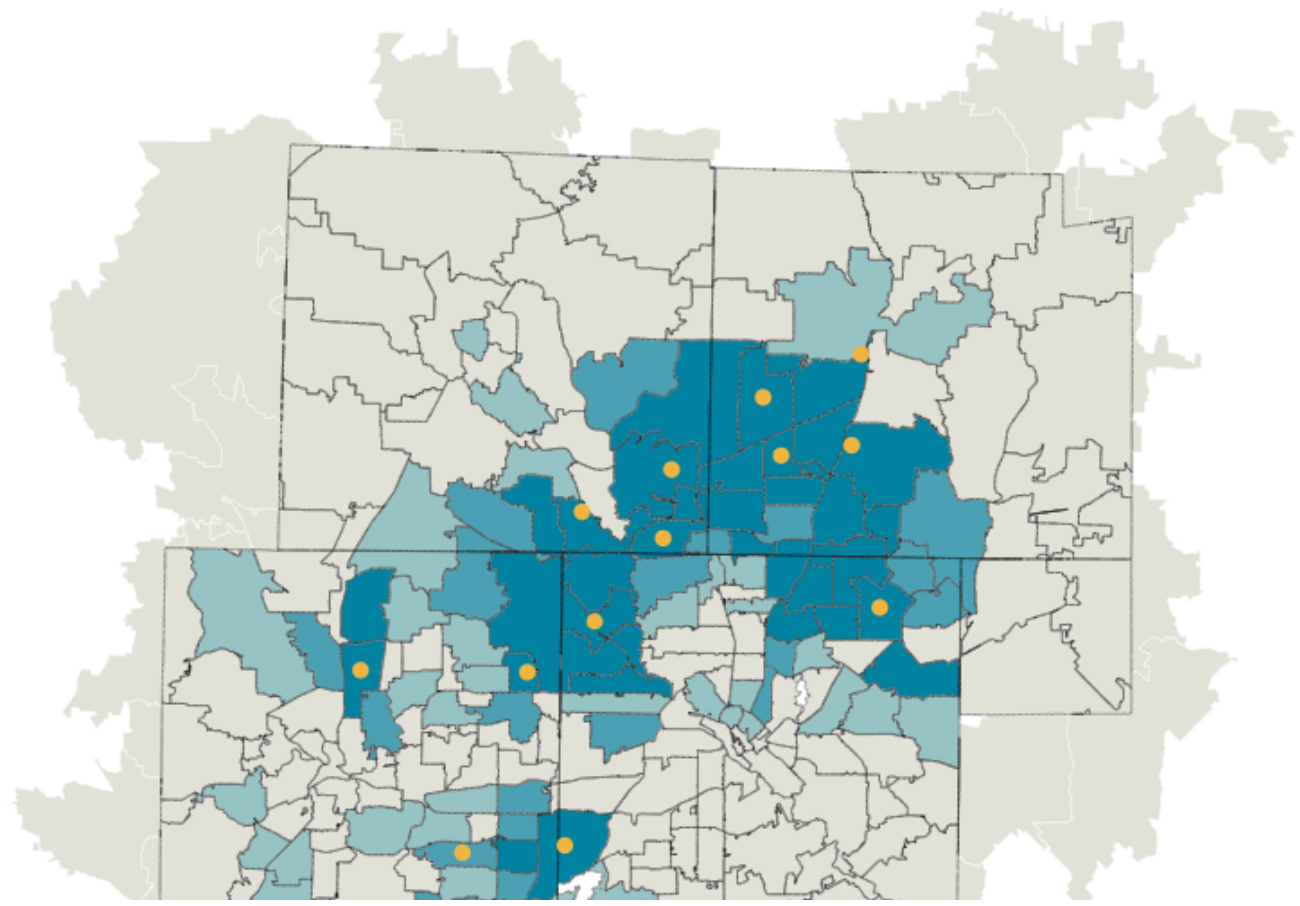
ADVERTISEMENT

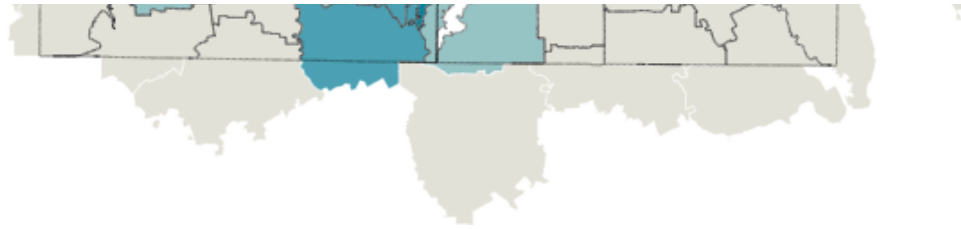
Asian Americans in North Texas

Most of the Asian American population in North Texas lives in North Dallas, Collin and Denton counties, with some communities in Grand Prairie.

Interact with the map to see how the population changes by ZIP code and in relevant cities.

- 2017 Total Asian
- 2022 Total Asian
- 2017 Chinese, except Taiwanese
- 2022 Chinese, except Taiwanese
- 2017 Asian Indian
- 2022 Asian Indian
- 2017 Korean
- 2022 Korean
- 2017 Vietnamese
- 2022 Vietnamese
- 2017 Pakistani
- 2022 Pakistani
- 2017 Burmese
- 2022 Burmese





SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey · NOTE: The American Community Survey 2022 provides population estimates for about 33 different Asian ethnicities. Those smaller than 1,200 inhabitants per ZIP code were not included in the map for clarity.

GRAPHIC: José Luis Adriano

The Dallas Morning News

Peter Dao doesn't have an exact number of how many people tune in but estimates, between the radio and online audiences, it's tens of thousands given the 200,000-plus Vietnamese people who live in the state.

"At first, I'm a listener," said Y Linh, a sales associate and announcer with the station. She said she turns on the frequency "because I miss my country a lot."

Peter Dao knows the niche is not a particularly profitable business. Dallas Vietnamese Radio originally sat alongside a cosmetic business that Lien Bich Dao owned, and some of that store's profit went toward the station.

ADVERTISEMENT

“I told [my wife], ‘If we didn’t have the radio station and if we had like three cosmetic shops, we’d be probably much wealthier,’” he said with a laugh. “But this is just a matter of helping the community.”

Still, he believes in his staff of about 16 and hopes he can receive more buy-in from the growing Asian American community in North Texas.

Related



Diversity, buy-in from younger generation spell success for North Texas’ Asian American enclaves

“That’s what I’m optimistic about — is that as long as you do it right, you will attract people,” Peter Dao said.

ADVERTISEMENT

One business, he said, committed to advertise on their station for a whole year. But there’s more work to be done.

Inside the studio, a message hangs on the back wall in black script on a red background that speaks to their devotion. Lien Bich Dao pointed at the Mandarin script and asked, “You know what that means?”

“Heart,” she said.



Voice of Vietnamese Americans VVA 1600 AM General Manager Lien Bich Dao, fourth from left, and her husband Public Relations Manager Peter Dao, fifth from left, pose for a photo with other managers and announcers at their office, Saturday, March 9, 2024, in Grand Prairie.

CHITOSE SUZUKI / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ADVERTISEMENT

MORE ABOUT: [Grand Prairie](#) [Arlington](#) [AAPI DFW](#) [Texas](#)

Related Links

- [Late night expected at Texas Legislature as lawmakers sprint to finish overtime session](#)
- [Flood relief, camp safety bills pass in final hours of special session](#)
- [How to buy 2026 FIFA World Cup tickets at AT&T Stadium for \\$60 ... or \\$6,370](#)
- [Smith: Bo French could be a harbinger of bad things for Texas GOP](#)
- [Is Texas on track to prepare students for in-demand jobs by 2030?](#)



By **Zaeem Shaikh**

Zaeem Shaikh is a reporter covering breaking news for The Dallas Morning News. He grew up in Fresno, California, and graduated from Fresno State University in 2022. Before joining The News, he has reported for The Sacramento Bee, CalMatters and the Oregonian.

TOP PICKS



Standard of Fear: Overview

In a state where it has long been dangerous to be pregnant and give birth, experts say it has only become more perilous



Standard of Fear: Doctors

We interviewed dozens of current and former Texas doctors who shared first hand accounts of the impact of abortion bans on their practice

Commenting Experience Feedback

Encounter an issue with commenting? Take 2 minutes to [provide feedback](#) to help us improve your experience.

Join the conversation

Thank you for reading. We welcome your thoughts on this topic. Comments are moderated for adherence to our [Community Guidelines](#). Please read the guidelines before participating.

