

Note from LAist:

Below is an email exchange between LAist reporter Nick Gerda and Rhiannon Do, daughter of O.C. Supervisor Andrew Do who was listed on and off as a leader of Viet America Society (VAS). Supervisor Do directed millions of taxpayer funds to the group that have gone unaccounted for.

The emails are from early April 2024. At the time, Rhiannon Do was a 22 year-old intern at the Orange County District Attorney's Office while studying law at UC Irvine. A few months after the email exchange, federal agents searched the home referenced in the emails, which Rhiannon purchased in unincorporated Tustin for \$1.035 million.

LAist began reaching out to Rhiannon Do for comment on the Viet America Society controversies in November 2023.

In the ten months since then, the below emails are the only known time Rhiannon Do has responded to questions from the press (as of mid-September 2024).

April 1, 2024 at 2:01 p.m.

Hi Rhiannon,

I'm working on a follow up article and have the following questions:

Why was \$400,000 in county meals funding routed through VAS to your mental health business (Behavioral Health Solutions) in 2021-2022?

Why was Aloha Financial Investment's principal (Thu Thao Thi Vu) listed as a contact person on the deed for your home purchase last year? And how did you qualify for the \$621,000 mortgage? Your only work you listed on your LinkedIn for that time was at Viet America Society, which UCI Law School limits the amount of hours you can work at.

Was the home purchase financed by money that came from county funding of Viet America Society? if so, how much of it?

Nick Gerda
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April 1 at 5:25 p.m.

Hello Nick,

It has been amply shown that I was never an officer or director for VAS. Your continued practice of calling it my mental health business shows me your bias. VAS, as a nonprofit, saw a need for mental health services and started a clinic. It has had a staff, led by an MD and case workers. Your insinuation that there was something untoward with the use of VAS funds is fabricated to further your false narrative from the beginning.

Rhiannon Do

April 2 at 5:07 p.m.

Hi Rhiannon,

Thanks very much for getting back to me. We'd love to talk with you further, would you be free for an interview this week?

I'm going to be out of the office, so I'm cc-ing my colleague Ted Rohrlich. He can also be reached by phone at 213-839-0789.

Also, I'm including some follow up questions below that we're hoping you can address for the story that's in progress.

Again, thank you for your response, and we welcome more conversations. Please advise if you'd like to do an interview. We're happy to come to you, or invite you to our studios in Pasadena.

Questions:

You say you never were an officer or director for VAS. I'm trying to reconcile that with documents indicating otherwise:

- VAS's director minutes for Oct. 1, 2023 showing you as one of its three directors and appointed as one of the three officers
- VAS's public 990 tax filing for 2022 marking you as director and officer
- You signing on VAS's behalf as president on two county-funded subcontracts with OCAPICA

- You describing yourself as VAS's executive director in a February 2022 email to the county

How do you explain those records?

Regarding the mental health business, as I noted in my email, that refers to Behavioral Health Solutions Inc., a private business which Secretary of State filings show you as one of three officers of.

We're trying to understand why in 2021 and 2022, when records show 99% of VAS's funding came from the county meals money, \$400,000 was paid by VAS to the mental health company, Behavioral Health Solutions.

Can you help us understand what those payments were for and what services were provided?

Why was Aloha Financial Investment's principal (Thu Thao Thi Vu) listed as a contact person on the deed for your home purchase last year? And how did you qualify for the \$621,000 mortgage?

Was the home purchase financed by money that came from county funding of Viet America Society? If so, how much of it?

April 3 at 4:47 p.m.

Hi Nick,

I'm checking a couple things, but my responses to your questions will be coming soon.

Rhiannon Do

April 4 at 11:06 a.m.

Thank you Rhiannon for the update. Looking forward to your responses.

April 4 at 3:22 p.m. (with [a copy of the home's deed of trust](#) attached):

Hi Nick,

As I have previously stated, I was never an officer or director for VAS. I have worked for the past 3 years to help them stand up a mental health clinic, which was the first of its kind for the Vietnamese American community in Orange County. I was later hired to work on a proposal for the Elderly Nutrition Program, a food service program for seniors, which was completely unrelated to Covid and any Covid funding. I had also worked at a law firm last summer. I have worked hard to purchase my house.

You should contact VAS for any administrative questions as I was never involved in any of the Covid meal gap programs or have ever played any role in the back office or financial side of VAS. I am also no longer with VAS or the Warner Wellness Center.

Regarding your question about why Ms. Vu was "listed as a contact person on the deed" to my house, I'm assuming that you are referring to the Grant Deed. The Grant Deed simply lists Ms. Vu as one of the names to receive a copy of the recorded deed—she was not a "contact" person for the sale.

Ms. Vu found the house first. She dealt with the listing agent until she decided not to buy the house and referred it to me. I don't know why Ms. Vu's name was included to receive a copy even though I was clearly listed as the sole buyer in the body of the Grant Deed, other than the fact that the Grant Deed contained many mistakes. For example, the Grant Deed misidentified the property as not being in the City of Tustin, and it listed Ms. Vu's address as the address of the house I was purchasing where Ms. Vu did not and does not reside.

The Deed of Trust (a copy of which is attached for your reference) that was actually signed by me shows I was the sole buyer of the house and does not contain Ms. Vu's name or any of the above mistakes.

Rhiannon Do

April 8 at 10:53 a.m.

Thank you Rhiannon for your reply. We'd like to reiterate our invitation for an interview with you about our unresolved questions. Would you be open to it? To give you an idea of what we mean by unresolved questions, I've included some bullet points and detailed questions. (Please bear with me for a long time.) Where I mention documents, I'd be happy to provide them for your review.

Essentially, we're still trying to reconcile you saying you never were an officer or director, with the numerous records stating otherwise, including:

- the October 2023 VAS directors meeting minutes showing you as officer and director
- the latest 990 tax filing, for 2022, marking you as officer and director
- you signing on behalf of VAS at least three times as its president, including on the OCAPICA subcontracts

How do you explain those records?

You mentioned you were “never involved in any of the Covid meal gap programs or have ever played any role in the back office or financial side of VAS.” We’re trying to reconcile that with you being marked on its latest 990 tax filing as the only director and only officer in 2022, a year in which over 90% of VAS’ revenues were from the Covid meal gap program (per county payment data and VAS’ financials). And in an email to the county in February of that year, you identified yourself as VAS’ “Executive Director” — a position that typically is the top staff member at a nonprofit. These records indicate you were leading VAS at a time the vast majority of its funding came from the county’s Covid meals program. How do I reconcile this?

Also, regardless of your leadership position or lack thereof with VAS, how did you become involved with it? Had you known Peter Pham or his wife Thu Thao Vu, or Le Dan Hua or Dinh Mai before you got involved? How?

Regarding your home purchase, thank you for explaining about Ms. Vu and your work history. Still, it’s unusual for a 22-year-old to be able to afford a million-dollar home. So, we’re still trying to understand:

- How did you afford the \$414,000 down payment, when VAS’ ledgers and 990 show you were paid only \$18,000 for your work in 2022? I know this is detail many people prefer to keep private. But because of VAS’ failure so far to provide a full accounting of taxpayer dollars it received, I have to ask: Where did the rest of the down payment money come from? Did it come from VAS? Other entities that VAS funded?
- Also, how were you able to qualify as the sole borrower for a \$621,000 mortgage? How much were you paid by VAS last year? Did you have other income streams besides the 2022 income VAS reported in its ledger and 990 and your summer job? How much have you been paid by VAS, Warner Wellness Center and any of the funding that flowed from VAS to other people and organizations (such as Aloha Financial investment and Behavioral Health Solutions)?
- Was the home purchase financed in part by money that came from county funding of Viet America Society? If so, how much of it?

- How do you afford the ongoing mortgage and property tax payments (estimated around \$5,000/month or \$60,000 per year), while a law student with a demanding course load and whose outside work hours are limited by school policy? Standard lending practices (maximum 43% debt to income ratio) would require roughly \$140,000 minimum in annual income to qualify for a \$5,000 per month payment for mortgage, property taxes and insurance.

Among the reasons we are asking all of these questions is that Peter Pham and other VAS leaders have not responded to multiple requests from us since December for a breakdown of what VAS did with the millions in tax dollars VAS received from the county. Also, VAS noted in general ledgers it turned over to the county (which we obtained in a Public Records Act request and would be happy to share with you) that about \$400,000 of the county meal gap funds were provided by VAS to Behavioral Health Solutions, when you were registered as an officer of BHS in corporate information papers filed with the California Secretary of State. VAS' general ledgers for 2021 and 2022 (the only years for which we have them) also show that an additional \$1.7 million of county funding to VAS for those years (earmarked for the Covid meals money) was provided by VAS to Perfume River Restaurant, the DBA of Aloha Financial Investment, whose principal is Ms. Vu, the spouse of Peter Pham.

We're also wondering:

- What was the elderly nutrition program you said in your email that you worked on the proposal for? Was your work on the proposal funded through VAS? How much were you paid for that? Our understanding is that the program itself was never funded because VAS had failed to submit the two required single audits to the county as part of its application. If this is incorrect and it did get off the ground, how much funding did the elderly nutrition program get, when and from where? What services did or does it provide, and to whom?
- Do you have any idea why VAS hasn't complied with the single audit requirements in its county contracts? The first of the audits (for 2021) is nearly two years overdue.
- Do you know how many meals were delivered by VAS, when and to whom?
- What was your involvement with Warner Wellness Center besides getting it started? How many people did it serve, what kinds of services and when? Why was it started as a for-profit business (Behavioral Health Solutions) for its first year-and-a-half? Who was the M.D. you cited that helped oversee it?
- Are you able to provide a breakdown of what Behavioral Health Solutions did with the \$400,000 it was provided by VAS in 2021 and 2022? This came from the county meal gap funding to VAS, per VAS' ledgers.

- Perhaps most importantly, do you know who ran VAS, since you say it wasn't you?
- VAS' ledgers, combined with county payment records, show that two thirds of the county meals funding to VAS in 2021 and 2022 passed through to businesses Peter Pham and his wife have controlled, rather than those costs being paid directly by VAS. Do you know why? Part of this is the \$400,000 to Behavioral Health Solutions.
- Lastly, are you pleased with the services Warner Wellness has been able to provide? Do you know how many people have been counseled? You mentioned you left it and VAS. Why?

I am sorry this email is so long and detailed. We really appreciate the willingness you have shown to respond to some of our questions, and hope we can continue to talk as we try to figure out what happened with the public funds that went to VAS. If you find it easier to speak about this, rather than email, we would welcome the opportunity to speak in person or over the phone.

(As of mid-September, LAist has not received a reply to the last email, including after sending multiple follow-up messages.)