

Exploring Asylum Hill: Celebration at Bishop's Hall

On Sunday the 22nd a graduation party was celebrated here in Asylum Hill, and given the time of year, this is not really news, but for a few of the details that make it notable. First of all, it was the graduation party for Stephen Naing, the son of Soe Nang and his wife Ku Ler Paw. He has completed his degree at CCSU and hopes to work at Saint Franciscare while preparing for the next milestone in his education. He



came here with his parents as refugees from Burma 8 years ago, and studied at Bulkley Public High School before enrolling at CCSU. All the while his father worked hard but still found time to participate in the Welcoming Committee that was co-sponsored by Hartford Public Library and AHNA. Through that association and also through their association with Catholic Charities they have integrated into both the Catholic community and the neighborhood.

Along with his sister, Hsa Ku Soe, they both celebrated their Confirmation as well. And they were able to have that celebration at the recently refurbished Bishops Hall, formerly the auditorium of the old Cathedral School.

In the years since they first arrived in Hartford, the empty Cathedral School has become housing for 28 families; the neighborhood has established the Welcoming committee to bring people like Soe Naing and his family together with members of the receiving community; and as hoped for, they have integrated into their new home while still preserving their native customs and culture.

While the progress often seems slow and inadequate, it's events like these that mark the successes that were hoped for. Most of the food at the celebration was Karen as were the majority of those attending, but there were also hot dogs served, and they were popular with the Karen children more than with the 20 some Western adults attending. It was a delightful event, a celebration of many successes.