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## New Communications Manager of Web Services Appointed

- Content oversight of metro.net and myMetro.net merge into a single position.

By JIMMY STROUP

(May 14, 2008) As the new Metro Communications Manager of Web Services, Vivian Tran has a knack to parlay prose and an eye for all things visual. It's no wonder the recent Metro hire believes the World Wide Web is the ideal medium for her. Tran, who started April 28, will oversee content for the agency's two websites metro.net and myMetro.net. She also will manage Metro's printed publications, Metro Quarterly and MetroPeople.



Vivian Tran is the new Communications Manager of Web Services. Photo: Gayle Anderson

"I think Metro's two websites are incredible online resources. Metro.net and myMetro.net are full of useful information, and there's a lot of depth to the sites," Tran said.

"I'd like both sites to have fresh, dynamic content daily and to make it more fun and functional," Tran said. "The idea is to make metro.net a Top 100 destination website where people want to keep coming back everyday – whether it's for the Trip Planner, customized and interactive features like Google or Yahoo, videos, information, or blogs – because there's something new and different available that they can only get from Metro."

Tran comes to Metro from the Los Angeles County Arts Commission where she managed the agency's two websites as the web editor, webmaster and programmer in Communications.

A recent graduate of Claremont Graduate University, where she received her master's degree in visual communications, Tran sees the Web as an extension of the work she did as a journalist.

Tran covered the O.J. Simpson trial for National Public Radio before she joined the *Orange County Register* as a news reporter and the *Los Angeles Times* as a features staff writer. Fluent in Vietnamese, she covered government, transportation issues, arts and entertainment and the Asian-American community in Orange County, which is home to the largest Vietnamese population in the world second only to Vietnam.

Like many Vietnamese-Americans, Tran shares her own harrowing story of escape from the Vietnam War as a political refugee with her family.

Her father served as a combat helicopter pilot for the democratic South Vietnamese (known as the ARVN), who were allies with American troops. When South Vietnam's capital city of Saigon fell to the Communists,

Tran's father had to hot-wire a broken and discarded helicopter to flee from the country with his family.

"It didn't have any working gauges," Tran recalled of the ailing craft. "My father was flying blindly and there was no telling how much gas was in the helicopter."

Tran's father piloted the helicopter over the coastline out into the ocean, leaving Vietnam behind. Then the helicopter began to sputter. Not knowing where to land, Tran's father motioned the craft to tilt into a nose-dive just as he caught a glimpse of a speck of land in the distance. He headed toward the speck to find that it was a tiny, deserted island formerly used as a prison colony. The family crash landed and S.O.S for rescue.

"We were picked up by a Filipino cargo ship," she said. "That Filipino ship was ... a rescue ship the Americans had chartered to pick up Vietnamese refugees. When we got on board, we saw thousands of refugees who had escaped."

Tran and her family eventually settled in Miami Beach and participated in the American Dream like thousands of refugees on boats similar to the one that picked her up.

She became a journalist to continue to report and tell stories about people and their unique experiences. In doing so, she was named a three-time fellow by the National Press Foundation and covered issues such as Terrorism/Counter-Terrorism at RAND, global healthcare and AIDS in Bangkok where she also elephant trekked through jungles and met with the Queen of Thailand's giant panda bears. She also was named a USC Annenberg School for Communication Fellow for online journalism.

"I have a love and passion for words and all things visual," Tran said. "So whenever you see one of my stories, there's always a lot of visual imagery to accompany the story. As a journalist, I've always tried to make both words and images come together. On the Web, words and images come together seamlessly."