

It was 1992, a time of uncertainty and dismay for Kathy as a new immigrant in the US. As she shared a rental apartment along with her 10 family members, she knew she needed to find a decent job to support them. While walking along Washington Street in Boston she found her answer: South Cove Community Health Center was looking for people to hire. Despite having no experience, she was hired by supervisor Heidi Wong and placed in the billing department with the task of typing in data. Soon enough, she was able to use her refined typing skills along with her multilingual talents to be a receptionist. More than 25 years later Kathy Bu Huynh-Wong is now the supervisor that leads the front desks: the face of South Cove that establishes a patient's first impressions of the renowned Asian health center.

I've always associated South Cove with my mom; not only because it's the place where she works, but it's clear it's a place that's shaped who she is. I believe her strong-willed ethic emerged from working at South Cove. She told me to be back in Vietnam, she spent her youth part taking some wild shenanigans. She'd dance at the club all the time and was mostly focused on being socially active than anything else. But the stories she tells me about her work at South Cove shows how well she can handle such a high-stress environment. With code reds, code blues, and some rambunctious patients, her work life is never a dull or easy 9 - 5 shift. It's clear as night and day how much she's matured as a person from her youth at Vietnam to working at South Cove as an adult.

From the delicious food she brings home given by thankful patients to the wondrous stories she tells me about her coworkers, it's clear she's formed numerous relationships from South Cove that she holds dear. In Chinatown, I'd often run errands for her in various places like the supermarket or restaurants. The moment I mention my mom to the cashier or the waiter, a wide smile spreads on their face. They always will mention how friendly and helpful she is. The elderly would mention how they've always remembered her working the desks. Young adults would mention how they've seen her around since they were kids too. From young to old, she's formed an abundance of relationships with South Cove's patients and overall the Boston community. My mom also mentions numerous things about her co-workers. She raves about how nice the receptionists, nurses, doctors, and management is to her. On Valentine's day, I remember how she got a whole bouquet of flowers from her coworkers. And often enough, she has had coworkers buy her food and clothes to express their gratitude for her kindness. Every time I visit her at work, she's able to happily socialize with anyone and everyone.

South Cove is renowned for being a community health center that best assists Asian immigrants and Asian Americans. Majority of South Cove staff are at least bilingual, allowing staff to communicate with patients without a translator like most places would need. Along with the color-coordinated signs that are in English, Chinese, and Vietnamese, even the interior design of the building is set up to be informative and inclusive to the Asian community. A problem often for Asian immigrants and non-English speakers is the language barrier. For my mom specifically, as she settled in the US, it was quite a struggle to communicate and socialize with anyone in her town community unless they spoke Chinese or Vietnamese. However, in South Cove, she was able to obtain a strong connection with the Asian community in Boston along with maintaining her connection with Asian culture.

For me personally, South Cove was never just a location. It was also a place where I knew the kindest and caring people to be. As I'd wait in the color cushioned chairs, the nice receptionist aunties would converse with me about school. The nurse's were always reassuring when they asking me how I was and the doctors with their kind smiles gave me confidence that I was in good hands. South Cove gave me the feeling of reassurance and support that was very similar to my mom; it's clear now why I've always thought South Cove felt so nostalgic to home. It simply because it's what molded the person whom I consider home to be.

If I had to sum up what South Cove is, it would be a place of opportunity. On the surface, it seems the opportunity South Cove gave to my mom was simply a job, but really she gained much more than that. South Cove became a place of change for her. As her new life in the US began, South Cove kicked started new ambitions. The immature nature of my mom soon faded and what was left was a hardworking and determined woman who was ready to take on any challenge given to her. South Cove also gave her a place of community, from the South Cove staff to the patients, the friendships she's formed allowed her to easily integrate into the American lifestyle with full support from the Asian community in Boston. Overall, South Cove has impacted my mom's morals and self-identity; it has truly shaped her to be the mother I know to love.

As a new generation of immigrants and Asian Americans emerge during a time in the US where discrimination and racism are still prevalent, I know South Cove will continue to impact the Asian community by providing opportunities of hope like it has for my mom and myself.