



# *Proclamation*

**WHEREAS,** During the mid-1970s and 1980s, following the American evacuation of the region and the rise of Communism in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, many Southeast Asians, including people from Laos, escaped their homelands to safe havens around the world as refugees and became the largest group of refugees to build new lives in the United States; and,

**WHEREAS,** After more than 50 years, little is known of the experiences, culture, and way of life of the Lao people, and the Downtown Merced Lao New Year Celebration provides an opportunity for the Lao American community to promote a deeper understanding of its traditions and people; and,

**WHEREAS,** The Lao New Year (Pii May Lao) festivals have been celebrated across the country as part of the rich tapestry of American culture, where the New Year, Pii May or Kut Songkhan falls around April 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, or 15<sup>th</sup>, coinciding with the end of the dry season and the start of the monsoon season, often referred to as the Water Festival, is seen as a day of rebirth and purification; and,

**WHEREAS,** The Lao American community has appreciated and embraced the notion of freedom with continued cultural preservation, unity, and pride in our youth, particularly so they can better appreciate their past and take charge of their future as productive citizens of the United States of America; and,

**WHEREAS,** Members of the Lao community in the Merced area will join their countrymen throughout the world in observing the community's largest annual celebration, the Downtown Merced Lao New Year Celebration, held in Downtown Merced at the Bangkok Thai Restaurant on April 29, 2023.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, Matthew Serratto, Mayor** of the City of Merced, on behalf of the City Council hereby proclaim the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 2023, as a Day of Celebration in Downtown Merced and encourage all residents to participate in the Merced Lao New Year event to experience the unique culture, food, people and heritage that the event brings to our community.

Signed this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of April, 2023

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*Matthew Serratto, Mayor of Merced*