OCA ADVOCATE
35th ANNIVERSARY EDITION
WINTER 2015

OCA ADVOCATE

This anniversary issue throws the spotlight on our youth. The talents of API youth were on display at OCA’s Asian Heritage Festival (see photo above), at the Rising Stars Concerts and at every major function where Young OCA (YOCAA), our junior auxiliary, works side-by-side with our Executive Board.

This year marked the expansion of our Youth Awards Program. We continue to sponsor Student Leadership Awards (see photo below), the Golden Apple pre-college Award, and an OCA Scholarship at Westchester Community College. We are proud to announce two memorial endowments which will fund two needs-based awards given annually to promising API youth who will be the first in their families to attend a four-year college. (see p.11)

SPOTLIGHT

Featuring news and events from OCA Westchester Hudson Valley

OCA: Who We Are

The Westchester/Hudson Valley chapter of OCA is one of the most successful advocacy and cultural organizations in the Hudson Valley. Founded 35 years ago, our award-winning chapter is a vital part of OCA - Advocate, the national organization embracing the hopes and aspirations of 13 million Asian-Pacific Islanders (API) in the United States.

OCA is at the forefront of national legislation affecting APIs, fighting for immigration reform, anti-hazing in the military and non-discriminatory university admissions policies.

We, the Executive Board, are your voice for actions that count. We come from business, science, medicine, academia, the arts, human services and range in age from young professionals to active retirees.

Get to know us! Get involved! Join OCA! (see membership details on back cover)
OCA/WHV sponsors a full calendar of activities ranging from political action to cultural celebration, to family fun. We also oversee a vibrant Youth Awards Program and many advocacy-based events addressing the needs of the growing API population in the Hudson Valley.

**Lunar New Year: Westchester Chinese New Year Festival**
The largest Chinese New Year cultural celebration in the Hudson Valley, tapping the many talents of community groups.

**April: Rising Stars Musical Competition**
Two concerts showcasing the talents of gifted young Asian musicians and featuring music and instruments from east and west.

**June: Asian American Heritage Festival**
Kick-off to the County’s free summer program of ethic festivals, drawing 7,000 County residents to Kensico Dam Plaza. The Festival is an all-day family friendly event with pan-Asian food and featuring experts in traditional dance, song and martial arts.

**July: OCA/WHV Membership Picnic**
Hotdogs, BBQ, sports and fun for all ages at the annual mid-summer picnic at Croton Point Park. Sharing in the festivities are our friends from Families with Children from China.

**September: New York/New Jersey Area Picnic**
Long Island, New Jersey chapters join us for a Labor Day celebration at Van Saun Park in NJ. Joining us are friends from FCC.

**October: Meet the Candidates Forum**
Candidates for local office are invited to rub elbows with API voters and hear our community’s needs and concerns.

**November: the Dynamic Achievers Award Gala**
Our chapter’s valentine to our community, honoring the best and brightest APIs in the Hudson Valley area. Past DAA winners include filmmaker Ang Lee, AIDS researcher Dr. David Ho, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Sheryl WuDunn and many more. Student Leadership Awardees and recipients of the Jeannette Wang and Avon Xiachun Luo Awards are also recognized.

**December: Annual Membership Meeting**
Dinner, socializing and inauguration of the new Executive Board
The History of OCA/WHV by Jean Chang

In the early 1970s, there were groups such as the NAACP for African Americans and JACL for Japanese Americans. But none for the Chinese in America. K.L. Wang and Alex Mark decided that Chinese Americans needed a presence on the national stage. They conceived of OCA at the first National Convention on June 9, 1973, with three founding chapters: Washington, DC, Detroit and St. Louis. Through tireless campaigning and networking with other influential Chinese Americans around the country, they recruited more members and slowly built OCA into a successful organization. Today there are over 100 chapters and affiliates as the organization has evolved to represent all Asians and Pacific Islanders.

In 1980, Frances Chu decided to follow K.L. Wang’s lead and establish an OCA chapter in Westchester County. After numerous meetings, by-laws were drafted. On March 9, 1980, the Westchester chapter’s first General Membership meeting was held and the eighteenth chapter of OCA National was established. Altogether there were 31 charter members present from Westchester County, Long Island and Connecticut.

Since its founding in 1980, our chapter has achieved many milestones. In 1999, it expanded its membership to include the Hudson Valley region of New York, hence changing its name to OCA/Westchester and Hudson Valley (WHV). Its many awards from OCA National include: Best Chapter of the year in 1990, 1998 and 2003; OCA Burger King Project Award in 1994; Chapter Excellence Award for Membership Growth in 1995 and 1997; first place: Chapter Excellence Award for Community Involvement in 2006, Chapter Excellence Award for Membership in 2008, Chapter Excellence Award for Projects & Programs in 2009. The Leadership in Advocacy Initiatives Award was presented by the Filipino American Association in 2005. Our chapter also has the largest number of Lifetime Members and is one of the most active and generous under the OCA national umbrella.

Dynamic Achievers: Where Are They Now?

Dr. David Ho was named a Dynamic Achiever in 1996 before Time Magazine dubbed him Man of the Year. Ho devised a drug “cocktail” which transformed AIDS from a death sentence to a manageable disease. Now CEO of Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center, he devotes his efforts to the creation of an AIDS vaccine.

Ang Lee, Taiwanese-born American filmmaker, was a Dynamic Achiever in 1996. Three-time winner of the Academy Award for Directing, Lee’s current project brings the novel “Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk” to life. The film follows a veteran infantryman in Texas before his return to Iraq and is scheduled for release in November, 2016.
DYNAMIC ACHIEVERS GALA 2014

Co-Chairs: Rose and Bill Kaung, Vincent Young
ASIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2015

Festival Chair: Grace Pan,
Program chair: Jin Li
SUMMER PICNICS: Co-chairs: Peggy Chen, May Lai, Daniel Lewis
On September 3, 2015, two hundred advocates from agencies across Westchester convened for the Westchester Working with Immigrants Summit. State Senator Minority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and County Executive Rob Astorino led the day-long conference at WCC.

William Kaung, who represented OCA-WHV, was one of the chief organizers of the summit, serving on the steering committee and chairing the panel on Health Care. Kaung noted that with a quarter of a million immigrant residents, Westchester has the highest percentage of immigrants per county outside of New York City. Among these, Asians are the fastest-growing immigrant population.
Dancers carry Asian Arts Across The Generations

Every spring, the Outreach Team brings dancers and musicians from the New York Chinese Cultural Center to area nursing homes to perform traditional Chinese dance in celebration of Lunar New Year. The audience this year were residents of United Hebrew Home and Willow Towers Assisted Living Facility.

The young performers, who are always given a warm and enthusiastic response, are at the forefront of our chapter’s efforts to create opportunities for young and old to mingle and share talents.

In January, 2014, presidents of four OCA New York-area chapters (New York New Jersey, Long Island and Westchester-Hudson Valley) and Families with Children from China of Greater New York began meeting on a regular basis to discover common goals and interests and to build a strong working relationship. The first meeting was focused on the chapter presidents. Subsequent meetings grew to include board members and senior officials from each of the five chapters.

The group continues to meet regularly over dim sum in Flushing on Saturday or Sunday mornings to identify issues and projects all can work on together. The first project was the joint Anti-Bullying Workshop held on October 24th at PS 130 in Manhattan. Seven people from all five chapters ran that project. The Presidents’ Group also discusses unified approaches to issues and problems that may arise in the future and shares information on individual chapter activities and accomplishments.

In 2015, the Presidents’ group met six times and looks forward to continue this special collaboration through the years.

Articles and photos by Daniel Lewis
2015 Outreach and Advocacy

OCA joins launch of photo exhibit

On December 1, 2015, OCA-WHV joins with the AJC, the organization for global Jewish advocacy, and the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center for the opening of a historic photo exhibit on the history of the Jews of Shanghai during World War II. The exhibit is housed at the Jewish Community Center in Harrison and runs through December.

Executive Board member Mark Fang, who also serves on the Holocaust and Human Rights Center Board, urged OCA members to attend the exhibit. Past president Vincent Young emphasized that APIs share a “common thread on civil rights” with Jews in America. Young added that the exhibit offers a “wonderful opportunity to be the sole Chinese organization representing our community to AJC and Westchester County.”

- Shanghai was a haven for Jews people fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe in the 1930s and 40s. The city once played host to a community of over 20,000 Jews.

- When the Second World War broke out in 1939, more European Jews had taken refuge in Shanghai than in any other city in the world.

- After Pearl Harbor, the Japanese invaded Shanghai. By 1943, the majority of Jews in the city were forced into the Restricted Sector for Stateless Refugees in Hongkou district, an area which would become known as the “Shanghai Ghetto.”

- The ghetto, along with the rest of Shanghai, was officially liberated on September 3, 1945 in a combined American-Chinese effort.

- After the war, China’s Jewish population dwindled sharply as Jews emigrated to the U.S. and Israel. From 1949 to 1956, the Jewish community in Shanghai effectively ceased to exist. Approximately 2,000 Jews living in the city today.
OCA/WHV 2015 Outreach and Advocacy

We’re Number One!
OCA & AARP at Tax Time

Fifty members of the OCA/WHV family have volunteered as ground troops for the AARP Program to help Asian American families, particularly new residents with limited income and language difficulties, prepare their taxes next spring. According to Nick Lee of OCA National, our chapter now leads all others in the nation in numbers of volunteers!

Chapter volunteers range from teenagers to retirees. After a brief training session, we will be assigned different tasks, depending on individual skills. Volunteers will serve as interpreters, greeters, technology coordinators or offer hands-on help to streamline paperwork.

The project is part of a national OCA effort to ensure that Asian families of low-to-moderate income, particularly Asian seniors, will get the credits and deductions they are entitled to, free of charge.


National Convention Comes to San Francisco

Veteran OCA activists Jean Chang (above) and Rose and Bill Kaung (below) represented our chapter at this year’s National Convention in San Francisco in July. The Conference theme was “Unifying Asian Pacific Islanders.”

The issue under discussion by hundreds of chapter representatives was how to unite an Asian American population that is rapidly growing in numbers and diversity. Particularly pressing are the needs of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islanders who have greater financial challenges and lower college acceptance rates than other Asian groups.

Convention discussion topics:

• Hate Crimes • the 1882 Project • Affirmative Action • Asian Americans and the Media • Anti-bullying • Voting Rights • Xenophobia and Immigration

See the OCA National website for a full account of programs and convention resolutions: www.ocanational.org
In Memoriam

Jeannette Wang (1957-2015)
OCA-WHV President 2007-2009

Jeannette Wang’s extraordinary life journey took her from a bungalow in Taipei where she was born, to wartorn Saigon where she grew up, to suburban Westchester where she went to college and raised three children, Christine, Stanley and David, to the penthouse tower in White Plains where she lived and worked with Alan Neiditch, her partner in business and in life. Braving a long, fatal illness with unstinting courage and faith, she became an accomplished linguist, an award-winning realtor, a designer of fine jewelry, a mentor to fellow sufferers of cancer and an activist whose crusade against anti-Asian slurs by radio “shock jocks” made history.

In 2011, we awarded Jeannette the Chapter Award for Community Service. In his tribute, Alan Neiditch praised her, saying “her greatest love was OCA and her shining moment was her determined battle to fight racial discrimination.”

Xiaochun Luo (1957-2014)
OCA-WHV President 2009-2010

Born in Luzhou, China, Xiaochun Luo Ph.D., was a woman whose accomplishments won her international acclaim: research scientist, author of scientific articles, industry leader, innovator in the technology of cosmetics, community activist and champion of STEM education for young women.

In 1987, she married her husband Wei Dai and left China for the United States to pursue a Ph.D. in biochemistry at Purdue University. Her career took wing in America. She joined Avon in 1999 as Director for Global Hair Care and rose to become Chief Scientific Officer and Head of Global R and D.

Xiaochun was a noted mentor to other scientists as well. She was founding President of the Chinese American Cosmetics Professional Association and was named one of 100 Women Leaders in STEM by STEM Connector.

TWO “FIRST GEN” AWARDS ESTABLISHED IN THEIR NAMES

In 2015, Alan Neiditch granted OCA-WHV seed money for an endowment fund in Jeannette’s name. His donation was quickly doubled by friends and family. It was her wish that the Jeannette Wang Award give $1,000 annually to a high school junior or senior exhibiting courage in the face of obstacles and need.

The memorial endowment for Dr. Xiaochun Luo was established by her husband Wei Dai and her sons Brandon and Byran with a generous matching contribution by Avon. The Avon Xiaochun Luo Award grants $1,000 annually to a needy STEM student who will be first in his or her family to attend a four-year college.
JOIN OCA/WHV Membership Drive at Special 35th Anniversary Rates:

Family: $50 for one /year, $90 for 2 years or $180 for 5 years
Individual: $40 for one year, $70 for 2 years or $140 for 5 years
Senior: (65 or older) $20 for one year, $30 for 2 years or $60 for 5 years
Youth/Student:$10 per year
Lifetime Membership: $1,000 (individual) or $1,500 (family)

Download a membership Application Form from our Website: http://www.oca-whv.org

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