

OCA San Mateo County Chapter

Embracing the hopes and aspirations of Chinese and Asian Pacific Americans

San Mateo County Chapter P.O. Box 218 San Mateo, CA 94401

President's Message

Greetings All---

The fall newsletter is a proper time to reflect back on this and the past five years of OCA San Mateo's activities and actions. OCA San Mateo has marked time with its annual events — annual galas, scholarship recognition events, signature Speak & Lead programs, summer picnics, Lunar New Year dinners, and other activities. Our members and friends have enjoyed our times together, making new friends and re-acquainting ourselves with former friends. These are the social activities which bring us together and help us connect.



OCA San Mateo has also worked on activities related more to its core purpose of being an organization which was initially created to ensure that the Chinese in the United States received fair and equal treatment and to fight racism in its many faces. OCA has evolved into a Pan Asian group which is focused now on advocating for Asian Americans from birth through the golden years. San Mateo OCA concentrates on helping our youth become leaders by honing their public speaking and leadership skills, and thanks to its chair, Dr. David Chai, by continued mentoring of these young people; by offering scholarships to high school students so that they may continue their education in college; by our active participation in the community through sponsoring and co-sponsoring talks and events; and by helping to ensure that mental health services are available to the Chinese population, especially its youth, in San Mateo County; and by making sure that there is a strong Asian voice in our community ready to defend our civil rights.

Our interns have learned of the inequities suffered by Professor Xi and Sherry Chen, and given focus to their dreams of becoming lawyers and fighting for Asian rights. The youth who have participated in our Speak & Lead Program have explored parts of their Asian background and understand that their unique cultures set them apart from the rest of our society and that frequently there is a need to be more assertive in claiming their rights in this culture. OCA San Mateo is laying the groundwork for our young to continue the mission of OCA.

OCA San Mateo has been a respected presence in the greater San Mateo community, and has added its voice to those of others advocating for Asian Americans across the country. Recent events demonstrate that now is a time that organizations such as OCA stay more vigilant against any encroachment on our liberties and rights.

Cheers!
Melodie Lew

SMOCA's annual picnic kicks year off to a great start

By Intern Julia Qiao

The San Mateo County Chapter of OCA held its annual picnic on August 13th at Ryder Park in San Mateo. The picnic provided a place for members to meet each other and the SMOCA leadership team to update members about upcoming events.



Former SMOCA president, Franklin Kang, grills hot dogs for the picnic.

As the sirloin hamburgers and hot dogs sizzled on the grill, members mingled and chatted amongst themselves. A local Boy Scout troop member was also there to provide entertainment for children, setting up stations for balloon animals and sack tossing. This was the first time the picnic, normally held at Central Park, was held at Ryder Park. As the group convened under the sheltered group picnic area, the breeze of the bay swept through the gathering on a perfect sunny afternoon.

A local voter engagement organization, specifically targeting Asian Americans, was present. Members were able to register for the November 2016 election, as well as receive information on where and how to register. California State Senator Jerry Hill and 2014 Chapter Award Honoree Ben Toy, were also there, mingling with crowd and updating participants about various issues.

After members finished their meal and grabbed a few cookies and chips, speakers quickly spoke about different programs. Board member Chris Bush first welcomed the crowd, thanking them for attending the event. Sarah Chew, representing the San Mateo Youth OCA chapter, also spoke about upcoming events for student members, including the popular Habitat for Humanity volunteer project. She urged members to help recruit more students and spoke about her plans to expand the chapter through different volunteer projects. Chew emphasized the importance of involving the youth, and the impact that OCA had on her own life.

Additional speakers included Dr. David Chai, leader of the San Mateo OCA's Speak and Lead with Pride program. The signature Speak and Lead with Pride program teaches students public speaking skills as well as leadership skills. Chai discussed the work of the organization and their work within the Asian American community at San Mateo County high schools.

After the speakers concluded their speech, the picnic wrapped up as members said their goodbyes. As the last of the food was passed out and members exchanged contact information, the SMOCA looked forward to a new year of inspiring events.



Leader of SMOCA's Speak and Lead with Pride program, David Chai, discusses his organization's work and future plans.

The Importance of Voting

By Intern Emily Xu

For the past decade, Asian American voter turnout rates have been low despite a rapidly growing population, and with a variety of issues coming up, it is necessary to increase the number of Asian American voters.

In the 2010 midterm election, whites and African Americans had turnout rates of 48 and 44% respectively, whereas the Asian American turnout rate lagged behind at 31.0%, meaning that only a third of all eligible Asian Americans voted.

Voting is important because it determines representation. With the Asian American turnout rate so low, it means that the Asian American population is underrepresented in government, putting Asian Americans at a disadvantage.

Underrepresentation leads to the government and political candidates overlooking Asian American needs and/or opinions. For example, while use of force by police officers on African American suspects has been identified as a major concern, prosecutors have been reluctant to pursue criminal charges in such cases. However, in November 2014, when Peter Liang, an Asian American police officer, accidentally shot an unarmed African American man, the officer was prosecuted and convicted.

The bullet from the Liang's accidentally fired weapon ricocheted off a wall, piercing the heart of the 28-year-old man in the stairwell. While this incident involving a tragic accident was pursued by prosecutors, other many other incidents under questionable circumstances were not pursued, raising concerns about the these decisions. Social injustice is only one of the many effects on underrepresentation.

Some other effects include reduced services to the Asian American community, such as bilingual services, access to hospital interpreters, and bilingual voter guides. In America, some Asian languages are not translated at all, whereas those that are, e.g. Chinese, are often translated with many errors. Some documents of local groups translated into Chinese, but because the translations were so poor, the documents became unusable. In the end the correct translations were made but the overall process was extremely inefficient and wasteful of money. By boosting the voter turnout rate, more politicians will take into account the needs of the Asian American community and the changes needed will be made much more efficiently.

There are a variety of reasons for this low rate in voter turnout. One reason is the language barrier. A large chunk of Asian Americans are first-generation immigrants who cannot speak English very well, and that makes it difficult for them to vote.

Another reason would be the underrepresentation itself in government. Currently there are not many Asian Americans on the political scene nationally and that itself would deter some Asian American votes. However, choosing not to vote will only fuel the vicious cycle, resulting in even more underrepresentation for the Asian American community. Voting shows that the Asian American Community has a voice, that Asian Americans, who are often regarded as the "model minority," have needs that should not be ignored. So why not register to vote today?

Life of an Asian American News Reporter

By Intern Emily Xu

At 5 years old, David Louie had been offered a regular position on a Sunday morning public affairs TV show by a neighbor. This experience became his first exposure to the TV set and broadcasting, but at that time he never thought that it would become a major part of his future career.

Louie was one of the first recruited Asian American news reporters in the industry when he joined ABC7 News in 1972. In his 44 years of experience, he has won four Emmys, two lifetime achievement awards from the Asian American Journalists Association and the City & County of San Francisco, and the Governors Award from The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

"No one knows exactly what your interests are until you have those opportunities in front of you," says Louie.



ABC7 reporter David Louie discusses his work and experience working on live television.

In high school Louie's interest in reporting began when he joined his high school newspaper team, and found that he really enjoyed interviewing people and getting exposed to a variety of different angles and stories. After high school Mr. Louie went to Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and interned at two TV stations where he got more exposure to the news industry. Upon graduation, he was recruited by ABC7 News as a reporter. He still works at ABC7 to this very day.

"Being a reporter is like doing a term paper everyday," Louie said.

Every morning the team assigns stories to each reporter with each reporter getting around four hours to research, to interview the necessary people, and to finish writing the story before it's aired that day. Efficiency and organization is extremely important to being a reporter according to Louie.

"It means a lot of thinking on your feet" Louie says, "You have to convince people sometimes to get interviews, they're not always willing to talk to you--they're busy."

After interviewing, Louie checks databases, other newspapers, and other sources to add information, discover new angles, and to polish up his story.

Once on air, Louie has a minute and a half to report all the key points in his story.

Live news differs in that Louie has no time to even write a script, "you organize the information in your brain [on] what you want to say, and when the camera goes on live, you got to just summarize the whole thing" he says, "and sometimes they tell us to go live before we're ready to go live because the immediacy of news is getting on the air fast and being accurate at the same time".

Louie says that blanking out can happen, but there's a higher tendency in a reporter's early career. "It's daunting to be in front of a live camera and know that anything you say is going to be heard by thousands and thousands of people, and if you make a mistake, they're going to hear that too...you have to overcome it with experience." Now when it happens to him, he tells himself to slow down, or pause a bit to help himself to reorganize his thoughts while still looking natural.

Life of an Asian American News Reporter continued

Based off his many years of experience, Mr. Louie says that is easy for a reporter to become jaded by all the bad things going on, but at times you're reminded of the good.

During Louie's 44 years of news reporting experience, Louie has also gradually seen an increase in Asian Americans on the scene. In the 1970s, when he first started out, there were no Asian American role models in the news industry. It was intimidating to go into an industry where there were no Asian Americans like him. Louie says that he's extremely proud of the fact that his parents didn't steer him away from his decision and that they supported him.

Another issue that arose in Louie's experience was that "there has been a big emphasis in our industry for many years to Asian American women and not Asian American men...it's frustrating for us that for many years we didn't have enough Asian American anchors-- male anchors-- and that's partly why we started the Asian American Journalist Association".

The Asian American Journalist Association (AAJA), is a nonprofit organization that encourages Asian Americans nationwide to pursue their interests in journalism by providing advice, information, and scholarships in addition to a network to help young reporters advance into the news industry. Another goal of AAJA is to heighten awareness of unfair coverage on Asian Americans.

According to Louie, the Bay Area has a healthy amount of Asian American news reporters because of the relatively high numbers of Asian Americans living here, but it is a goal for Asian American news reporters to be able to enter into the news industry regardless of location.



Louie shows off one of the pictures he took on his trips to South America. He is an avid traveler and enjoys taking photographs of his adventures.

He believes that in order to increase the numbers of Asian Americans in the news industry, the community must be supportive, and that there needs to be more people in power (e.g. news directors, assistant directors, managers, hiring managers, etc.) who are willing to hire Asian Americans. And most importantly, there is a need for Asian Americans who are willing to go into journalism.

Author's commentary: For myself, I have always noticed a lack of Asian American presence in Hollywood, which is one of the reasons why I enjoy to listen to K-Pop, or follow celebrities in China and Korea rather than the ones in America. It's also one of the reasons why I've never considered Hollywood as a career path. For me, seeing Asian American role models in any career shows me that that path is open for me to choose, which is why Asians like David Louie, Asians who take the risk, who undertake an unprecedented path, are so important for the Asian community.

Beyond the headlines: The real story of Palo Alto high school students

By Intern Julia Qiao

When I tell people I am from Palo Alto, I get one of two responses. There are those who have a picture of the town as a rich, white suburban town, while others remember Palo Alto for its competitive high schools. There has been an abundance of media coverage surrounding our school district, the vast majority is negative. There is reason for this skewed reporting of our town: our community has experienced tragedies and scandals time and time again. In the past eight years, our two schools, Palo Alto High School and Henry M. Gunn High School, saw two suicide clusters and several misconduct allegations against our teachers. Naturally, these pressing issues have gained deserved media attention and have been the center of conversation in the Bay Area, and to a greater extent, the nation. This coverage has painted our school district with a simple narrative: a pressure cooker waiting to explode.

However, this skewed perception of Palo Alto high schools fails to acknowledge the positive aspects of our community, our resilience and our strong support system. Despite the multitude of tragedies life has thrown at us, we have emerged as a stronger and more unified community. The expectation is that Palo Alto is a very cold and calculating place, everyone competing for the top spot with little regard for others. This however, does not represent the true spirit of our schools. We are a very warm and welcoming community, ready to support anyone who reaches out.

There is also a common misperception of the “stressed Asian Palo Alto student.” Recently, in December of 2015, the image of a young Asian male with his hands in his face plastered the pages of the Atlantic’s article on Palo Alto’s suicide clusters. This idea of the stressed Asian student continues to pervade the discussion on stress and competition within the school environment. While it is true that there are many Asian American parents in our community with high expectations for their students, this idea that all Asian students are stressed and depressed is simply incorrect. Yes, there is a lot of pressure on students, but that applies to every student of every race, as well as to every school in the nation. In a large student body with only a few spots for esteemed colleges, it is only natural that there will be competition and stress. However, these pressures do not define the Asian American students at our schools, who are much more than a statistic and stereotype.

Our schools also work extremely hard to mitigate the stress that comes with the high school experience and the college application process. Both recently added a wellness center, a place where students go to relax and distance themselves from academic pressures for a while. They are con-

Beyond the headlines: The real story of Palo Alto high school students continued

stantly coming up with new initiatives and events to promote wellbeing and to destigmatize mental health problems.

Of course, there are always a few students whose entire life seems to revolve around getting into a good college, but these people only make up a small minority of the population. A majority of the students are involved in many different extracurriculars; but while the activities may add to their resume, students are mainly involved in these activities for their personal benefit. Many join a sport to destress and exercise, and because most of these students are not good enough for colleges to recruit them, their primary purpose in joining such teams are to make friends and have fun. Some are involved in clubs that reflect their interests. For example, at my school, Palo Alto High School, there are over 80 clubs, including juggling, Korean pop dance club, or a gardening club. Others are involved in art or music as a way to relax. With over a quarter of students enrolled in our schools' art and music programs, many take the class not as a way to bolster their resume, but as a way to de-stress and explore a different side of themselves.

It is no secret that school is stressful, with multiple tests and projects scheduled each week. There are times when the loads of homework seem to swallow us alive, and we spend each day just trying to stay afloat. There are always moments when we question why and what we are doing as we struggle to balance all our activities. There are weeks when getting enough sleep and finishing all our homework is something that we can only dream of. But despite all the struggles, we know how to take care of ourselves and we know that there is help. Palo Alto high school teenagers are no different than any other; we are like any other student, worrying about college and grades, but at the same time, excited to experience and learn new things. We are so much more than the stressed out, uber-competitive students that the media has painted us as. The love and support within our community makes us stronger with each passing day, as students, adults and professionals all work together to promote a healthier, happier Palo Alto.

Meet the Interns



Julia Qiao — Julia Qiao is a junior at Palo Alto High School, where she enjoys writing for The Paly Voice, her high school's online news publication, and competing for her school's speech and debate team. She is also involved with swimming, competing for both Palo Alto Stanford Aquatics and her school's varsity swim team. Julia loves politics and is part of a model United Nations team as well as her school's politics club. She hopes to one day pursue a path in law or international relations. When not working, Julia can be found painting or hiking with her parents and younger sister.



Emily Xu — Emily Xu is currently a sophomore attending Aragon High School. She has 1 younger sister but is raised as an only child. She lives with her mom in San Mateo whereas her sister lives with her dad and her stepmom in San Jose. Her interests are vast, including but not limited to art, track and field, public speaking, writing, economics, and science. She loves to learn and experiment with new things all the time, participating in a variety of clubs from model UN and Red Cross to HMC and Chinese Conversation club. Last March she was a participant of OCA's 6-week Speak and Lead program and won the final competition with her speech about the pros and cons of being raised in a multicultural environment. In her free time she enjoys drinking bubble tea, drawing, and reading classical fiction such as The Count of Monte Cristo, The Three Musketeers, and Gone With the Wind.

Membership Application / Renewal Form

Membership is open to all U.S. citizens or permanent residents at least 18 years of age, except agents of foreign governments. Members pay annual dues, of which more than half of the members' dues go to OCA National for programs, etc. The balance of the dues remains in the Chapter and provides some of the funding to operate the Chapter and its activities.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Family Membership \$50; Single Membership \$40; Student Membership \$10

Please make your check payable to:

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