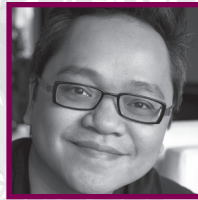


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ASIAN SERVICES IN ACTION, INC. NEWSLETTER

FALL 2010



Participants enjoy group exercise during a diabetes prevention class.

Diabetes continues to be a rising national health crisis. The fastest growing cases of diabetes are among Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) and Hispanic adults. In Northeast Ohio, it is estimated that nearly 3,000 people within the AAPI community are living with diabetes. Each of these communities have unique socio-economic, historical, cultural, and linguistic factors that attribute to their higher risk for diabetes.

Addressing these unique factors requires the kind of cultural competency that has become the standard at ASIA. Because there is currently no specific AAPI diabetes program available in Northeast Ohio, with the support of the Ohio Commission on Minority Health, ASIA implemented a diabetes prevention program for AAPIs who are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

In order to provide culturally competent health services, ASIA recruited bilingual members from different ethnic communities to be trained as community health workers.

Promoting Health through Diabetes Prevention

The health workers became a vital part of the Diabetes Prevention Program by assisting in outreach, teaching classes, and following up with participants.

Participants included members of local Korean, Asian Indian, and Chinese senior organizations as well as Bhutanese, Karen, Pakistani, and Laotian communities. Participants took a risk assessment test to determine if they were at risk for pre-diabetes and those whose test showed a greater risk were invited to attend a 6-8 week program on preventing diabetes.

The program classes focused on education about diabetes and on nutrition, calories, and how to eat better. Each class also included an exercise break to introduce group exercise such as calisthenics and yoga to the participants. Program Specialist Sujata Burgess noted that participants really responded to the exercise part of the program and that while originally intended for those with pre-diabetes, others who showed interest in the nutrition and physical fitness aspects of the class were encouraged to attend. Burgess adds, "As a community health education and outreach program, we welcomed all who were interested in improving their health status."

In total, 111 people were served through the Diabetes Prevention Program and 233 people received free glucose screenings. The program also successfully created a community amongst the participants where people could come and share their health concerns. With the right tools, education and culturally appropriate information, participants became more invested in their health and more interested in preventing diabetes through lifestyle changes.

What is needed for further prevention is greater outreach to AAPI communities about the role nutrition and lifestyle play in health and diabetes. Mainstream health providers also need greater awareness about culturally specific needs of AAPIs. Combined, these efforts can help stop the spread of type 2 diabetes.



A community health worker teaches the class.

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In a season of change and uncertainty, most of us are feeling frustrated and disempowered as the recovery moves slowly and the political climate remains in a state of flux. Despite these conditions, ASIA is moving forward and continues to provide outstanding resources and support to the communities we serve. The agency's staff is growing, including a new staffing structure that has brought a number of new jobs to Northeast Ohio. New programs are being added and current programs like the Diabetes Prevention Project (DPP), are seeing an increase in participants. Most importantly, ASIA's outreach is thriving and more people who need our services are being reached.



Amidst the changing healthcare landscape ASIA is hard at work combating health disparities through prevention, education and outreach. DPP has successfully been integrated into the community with the help of trained bilingual community health workers who will educate others about active living and healthy eating choices. ASIA is empowering these communities to increase knowledge and awareness about diabetes, good nutrition, and exercise options for optimal physical health.

A combination of education and advocacy is propelling ASIA toward a stronger presence in local, state, and national issues that affect our communities. The groundbreaking Ohio AAPI Legislative Day was coordinated by ASIA and other partnering agencies across the state who support the mission of civic engagement for AAPIs. This special event introduced people to government and their legislators and was further enhanced by ASIA's current voter registration initiative. The success of the Legislative Day encourages us to seek new ways to involve the community and continue the dialogue of civic engagement in our neighborhoods, schools, and region.

Moving forward is not possible without the efforts of those like you who continue to support ASIA's mission and programming. Your interest in this community is essential to give voice to those who so often remain hidden due to cultural and linguistic reasons. With your support we look to a future where ASIA's programs and services are strong and the voice of our communities is unified to address their needs no matter what the climate.

Respectfully yours,
Michael Byun, Executive Director

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ASIA's Mission and Programs

Asian Services In Action's mission is to empower Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Northeastern Ohio to access quality, culturally, and linguistically appropriate information and services. ASIA's five program areas are:

- ◆ Aging & Adult.
- ◆ Children/Youth/Family
- ◆ Community Health Promotion
- ◆ Consultation and Cultural Outreach
- ◆ Self-Sufficiency

Informally, ASIA is considered by many to be the new "settlement house" for the Asian American community. ASIA's programs and services touches the lives of 8,000 people each year.

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Take me to Columbus: an eye-opening journey to the Ohio Statehouse

By Charu Gupta

It was June 8, 2010. The Cleveland bus alone had carried 50 passengers and was one of five from around the state that would converge on Columbus for Ohio's first-ever Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Legislative Day at the Statehouse.

The objectives for the day were simple: introduce new and old generations of AAPIs to the political process and their elected leaders and show them how to use their voice to affect change. But what exactly attendees like 79-year-old Yu Yun Qing would get out of the event remained unclear.

The day had been a chance for Yu and her friends to get out and do something new; a field trip. "I've never been [to Columbus] before," Yu said through a translator. "I want to look around, I want to see a government leader. I'm not sure what I'll say to them because of language barriers. If they say hello to me, I will be happy."

Buses from Cleveland, Akron, Toledo, Dayton, Cincinnati and Columbus pulled into the state capital just before 10:30 a.m. Almost 400 AAPIs, with many older first-generation immigrants from India, Pakistan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Nepal, Japan, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, stepped out and made their way inside the Statehouse and into the Main Atrium.

"A lot of people here might not get outside their ethnic enclaves very often," said Kitty Leung, children, youth and family program manager at ASIA. "Some don't know exactly how government works. Today is going to be a big step to show them they can



Yu Yun Qing, 79 of Cleveland at the AAPI Legislative Day in Columbus.

be part of the political discussion, but it is a slow process."

Asian Americans make up 2 percent of Ohio's population. Their median income, at \$55,000, tends to be slightly higher than that of all households combined, which is \$45,000. Because many have high levels of education and job success, especially in the science and technology industries, pervasive and damaging stereotypes of the "model minority" abound. This hides the fact that in Ohio alone, 13 percent of all AAPIs, including children, live below the poverty line. A large number of AAPIs remain without even a high school diploma. Many face language barriers, accent discrimination, lack of mainstream job opportunities and career advancement and access to health care services.

Access to health care services is a growing concern. When asked what problems she faces day-to-day, Yu shook her head, as if to say, "I'm good." She revealed more

only when prodded further and more specifically: Did she have any health-related concerns? Yu has no health insurance and no money to see a doctor. "I have no choice," she said. She's worried. She wants health insurance but cannot get any. She's never worked in the U.S. so doesn't qualify for Medicare. What will she do if she falls sick? Go to the low-income discounted program at the county public hospital or the emergency room and see what happens.

It's not a surprising tale. The "model minority" stereotype, one that puts forward Asian Americans as only English-speaking doctors and engineers with no need for help, hides predicaments like Yu's, one of poverty, language barriers and lack of access to critical services.

"I'm almost 80 years old already and I've never been here. I'm going to tell my grandchildren about my trip to Columbus."

– Yu Yun Qing

One goal of the Legislative Day was to plant the seed for change into the hearts and minds of those like Yu. "For many people here," said Kitty, "it's trying to create an awareness of our government and how to be involved."

Dr. Yung-Chen Lu, a long-time advocate of AAPI issues and chair of the Legislative Day gave the opening remarks. Dr. Lu helped establish the Ohio Asian American Coalition to help address these problems.

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Take me to Columbus: an eye-opening journey to the Ohio Statehouse

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“Today, we are here to learn and dialogue with each other,” he told the crowd at the Legislative Day. “We are here to raise our community’s visibility and begin identifying issues and concerns and organize around them.” The Coalition was formed in 2000 to address AAPI health issues and the main organizing arm of the Legislative Day.

“If we don’t tell and share our stories, politicians won’t know about the needs in our community.”

– Kiran Ahuja

Next up was Sen. Roy Miller, from Ohio’s 15th District, Senate Minority Whip and Founder and Chairman of the Ohio Commission on Minority Health, who tried to combat how some AAPIs cope with the model minority stereotype. “If you just “blend in” then there’s no value to the community,” Miller said. He ended with: “Any time you need me, you know you can call me.”

Similarly, Kiran Ahuja, the executive director of the White House Initiative on AAPIs, brought her years of fighting for civil rights and against racism to bear in her keynote address. “If we don’t tell and share our stories, politicians and others won’t know or care, they’ll think all is OK in our communities,” Ahuja said. She continued. “I got some advice once: Act like you own the place, because you do. You’re supposed to be here. So go in with that confidence.”

A Georgia native, Ahuja also served as a civil rights attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice, where she filed the Department’s first peer-to-peer student racial harassment lawsuit. Ahuja took the helm of the AAPI Initiative in December 2009, after President Barack Obama re-established it through Executive Order. The last time an executive order impacted Asian Americans was February 1942 and it justified the internment of Japanese Americans.

By 3 o’clock, all the speakers, panels and tours were over. Yu, her friends,

Kitty and the remaining passengers gathered at the back of the atrium to board the bus back to Cleveland.

For Kitty, the Legislative Day was step one in a long mission yet to be accomplished and part of ASIA’s ongoing expansion from outreach and service into advocacy and organizing. “This was an introductory trip for all the groups,” Kitty said. “It will be important to have follow-up community meetings and town halls for feedback and questions; for ASIA to develop a shared agenda across the diverse populations. That’s been a challenge but we can do so much more as a collective grassroots group.”

Yu said she had been entranced by the Statehouse during the hour-long tour. It was also the first time Yu saw a map of Ohio and, when the guide pointed out Cleveland, her place in it. “I’m almost 80 years old already and I’ve never been here,” she said. “I’m going to tell my grandchildren about my trip to Columbus.”

AAPI Legislative Day



Keynote speaker Kiran Ahuja gives her address.



Over 350 participants from across the state were in attendance on June 8.

[left] Executive Director of the White House Initiative on AAPIs, Kiran Ahuja.

[right] Ohio’s first-ever AAPI Legislative Day was held in the Main Atrium of the Statehouse in Columbus. Close to 400 AAPIs from across Ohio came together to understand their collective power and learn about each other’s communities and the importance of political engagement.

Grants / Donors



The gifts here are from 06/30/09-09/21/10. We regret if we have inadvertently not acknowledged your support or have misspelled your name. Please email asia@asiainc-ohio.org with any changes or corrections. Thank you.

Grants

Corporations, Foundations and Contracts

\$100,000-\$300,000

APIAHF - W. K. Kellogg Foundation	Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)
Cuyahoga County Commissioners	
Ohio Commission on Minority Health	

\$10,000-\$99,999

ADAMHS Board of Cuyahoga County	Northern Ohio Golf Charities Foundation
Akron Community Foundation	Orange County API Community Alliance
The Althans Foundation	Ohio Dept. of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services
Area Agency on Aging, 10B	Ohio Traffic Safety Office
Asian American Justice Center	Office of Criminal Justice Services
Bruening Foundation	Project Learn
Catholic Charities Health and Human Services	Summit County Area Agency on Aging
The Cleveland Foundation	Summit Education Initiative
County of Summit Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board	The United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland
Ellie Fund	United Way of Greater Cleveland
GAR Foundation	University Park Alliance
Kaiser Permanente	Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging
McGregor Foundation	
Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation	
National Asian Women's Health Organization	

\$150-\$9,999

AirTran Airways	Incept Corporation
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Catholic Campaign Human Development Fund	Laurel Lake
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Cleveland Asian Festival 2011
Mark your calendars for **May 21-22, 2011** for the second annual Cleveland Asian Festival. The successful event has been extended as a 2 day celebration. Visit www.clevelandasianfestival.org for more information.

ASIA's Community Garden opens Spring 2011
The wait will soon be over for a community garden in AsiaTown. The E 45th Street Community Garden will open in spring 2011. We are seeking gardeners and volunteers (no past experience needed!). Contact Kitty Leung to join the project at 216.881.0330 or kitty.leung@asiainc-ohio.org

Is your company preparing to do business in Asia? Or is your organization interested in improving its cultural competence in working with multi-ethnic, multi-lingual Asian population? ASIA offers consultation services tailored to meet your needs, please contact Michael Byun at 330-535-3263, ext. 233 (michael.byun@asiainc-ohio.org).

ASIA PROGRAM UPDATES

Program Updates

Akron's READY program helps immigrant and refugee parents maximize their preschooler's early childhood development.

Northeast Ohio Asian Women's Leadership Initiative (NALI) hosts training program to develop advocates for victims of domestic violence.

ASIA partners with NEO Literacy Corps, a part of the Literacy Cooperative. Corps members will provide literacy tutoring to students in the after school program and adult ESOL.

Staff Updates

Congratulations to:

Eunice Park
Promoted to Program Coordinator of NALI project

Yoon Kim, JD
Promoted to Community Legal Advocate and General Counsel

The agency welcomes new staff:

Mona Wong, *Programs and Finance Assistant*
Gothai Jayaraj, *Program Assistant*
Allison Arsouzy, *Program Assistant*
Bishnu Samal, *Program Assistant*
Nar Pradhan, *Program Assistant*
Ea Hal, *Program Assistant*
Monarath Adhikari, *Program Assistant*
Heather Morris, *Program Assistant*
Tuyet Ngo, *Community Outreach/ Education Consultant*

We also welcome new interns:

Eric Ouer, Bonner Scholar from Oberlin College
Zack Hicks, Undergraduate Intern
Laura Dellplain, Oberlin College Intern