



ASIAN SERVICES IN ACTION, INC. NEWSLETTER // Fall 2011

ASIA celebrates 15 years with Gala & Auction Benefit Nov. 4

On November 4th ASIA will celebrate its 15th anniversary empowering Asian American families and communities with a gala benefit and auction. In honor of this milestone the agency reflects back on how it all began in Akron during the mid-90s. May Chen, former Executive Director and co-founder of ASIA shares some of her thoughts about the history of ASIA and where she sees the agency in the future.

"I remembered well a statement made by a renowned Asian family therapist," May begins. "She said Asian families are like



May Chen, upper right, with Asian leaders in the mid 90s

all other families, like some other families and like no other family. Having lived most of my life in the US closely connected to the Asian community, I concur and attest the validity of this statement. However, as a service provider in a mainstream agency, Asian families who have special needs like all, some and other families are often invisible in the delivery system."

May took time to learn the needs of many Asian Americans in her community and was astonished by some of the disparities. "In essence we had a high risk population affected by war and immigration, underemployed or unemployed, limited English proficient and not yet acculturated to their new country's culture. Starting ASIA was like venturing into a new frontier of service delivery. I believe if nothing was done it served a great injustice to these refugees and immigrants who lost and sacrificed so much already, left with only the hope of a better life the US."

May and her co-founders, three Asian immigrant women, faced many of the challenges common to organizations built from the ground up. "When ASIA was first conceptualized there were no tangibles in terms of data for the targeted population,



ASIA's senior wellness participants celebrate a birthday

limited financial resources to administer or implement programs, little capacity to serve the target population, and few working partnerships. We were supported by the intangibles: goodwill, compassion, perseverance and a strong work ethic." They were also supported by their mission statement that continues

[continue on page 03]

**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE**

**Letter from the
Executive Director**

page 02

**Special Focus: Self-
Sufficiency program**

page 04

**Grants and
Donors**

page 05

**ASIA Events &
Programs**

page 06

In the busyness of our daily lives balancing work, family, and community activities, moments of growth and achievement can often pass us by. Amidst the programs and projects happening everyday in our Akron and Cleveland offices, we are thrilled to set an occasion to celebrate ASIA's 15 years of work empowering Asian American families and communities. Our 15th Anniversary Gala & Auction Benefit will be an opportunity for the community to join the celebration with a live auction of wonderful prize packages, silent auction gift baskets courtesy of local Asian corporate and community groups, live entertainment, hors d'oeuvres, dessert, and a wine reception, and a special public announcement. We welcome your attendance at the event on November 4, 2011 and we are still accepting auction item donations and sponsorship. For tickets and information, visit our website (www.asiainc-ohio.org) or call 216-881-0330 ext. 0 and ask for Ivy.



In celebrating 15 years of service, May Chen, one of ASIA's founders and former Executive Director sat down to share her memories of the agency's beginnings. Her interview is a testament to the time and effort it takes to grow an organization and the importance of dedicated staff and partners in the community.

One of our newest partnerships is with the Cleveland Housing Network (CHN). CHN supports our computer training class and provides a free computer to our students who complete the basic training course, helping them to use these new skills in their home and connect more families with internet access. This successful program also teaches students how to look for jobs online and navigate other resources.

We also recognize the population growth of Asian Americans in Northeast Ohio as our staff continues to provide quality programming and services to meet the needs of immigrants and newcomer families. Our 2nd Asian American Pacific Islander Legislative Day brought nearly 300 attendees from across Ohio to the Statehouse to meet with representatives and share their stories. Photos from this event are on page 4 and video highlights can be found on our website.

As we look ahead to the next 15 years of service we know that success is not possible without the commitment of those like you in the community who continue to support our mission and programming. Let us celebrate together these past 15 years and work to create a future of possibilities for our community.

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.

ASIA's Contributors

Michael Byun
Robin Nau
Charlie Parker
May Chen

ASIA's Designer

Jacq Davis – Jacq Design

Akron Office

730 Carroll Street, Akron, OH 44304

P: 330-535-3263

F: 330-535-3338

Cleveland Office

3631 Perkins Ave., Ste. 2A-W
Cleveland, OH 44114

P: 216-881-0330

F: 216-881-6920

Web address: www.asiainc-ohio.org



[continued from page 01]

ASIA celebrates 15 years with Gala Auction & Benefit

to drive ASIA's work in the community today, to empower *Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Northeastern Ohio* to access quality, culturally and linguistically appropriate information and services, with the belief that the right supports will allow the community to flourish and thrive. "In order for an agency to be linguistically and culturally relevant, it was important to build capacity within the targeted communities," May adds. The mission of ASIA began to take shape as programs like Lucky Seniors, a health and wellness group for older adults, and the International Community Empowerment Project, an after-school mentoring program for immigrant youth, gained participants and became more widely known in the community. ASIA's staff also made data collection a priority in order to increase the visibility of Ohio's Asian American population. By 1999, ASIA was positioned to become a leader in statewide efforts to address tobacco control, a project that set the foundation for ASIA's future advocacy work and connections with other Asian groups throughout the state.

Now in 2011 ASIA is a trusted leader in this dynamic community recognized for its innovative, culturally competent health and social service programs that improve the lives of over 8,000 people annually. With a staff of 30 people and two office locations, it is clear that ASIA's

programs and services continue to be critical to Ohio's growing Asian American population.

To celebrate the impact of 15 years empowering Asian American families and communities ASIA is hosting an Anniversary Gala and Auction Benefit. The event will take place Friday November 4th at Tri-C's Corporate College East and will feature a wine reception and hors d'oeuvres, live entertainment, and silent and live auction. The celebration will be an opportunity for friends of ASIA and community members to gather and enjoy a festive evening while bidding on wonderful prize packages to benefit ASIA's continued work in the community. Tickets may be purchased online at www.asiainc-ohio.org or by phone (216-881-0330). Auction donation items and sponsorship opportunities are still available for businesses, organizations, and families who want to share their support.

"Our early efforts were limited in scope but were undertaken with authenticity and commitment. We touched lives in ways that are far reaching."

- May Chen

The 15th Anniversary Gala & Auction Benefit not only commemorates ASIA's past but helps raise funds to support

the agency's future impact. As Ohio's Asian American population continues to grow, ASIA's next fifteen years of service will be critical and will require the same commitment and purpose instilled by its founders. While reflecting on the impact of ASIA, May notes, "Our early efforts were limited in scope but were undertaken with authenticity and commitment. We touched lives in ways that are not immediate but far reaching. We were there for many youth, mothers, fathers and the elderly in a meaningful and purposeful way. We see many of them thrive and engaged with their community and family."

She adds, "I am so elated when I see a refugee woman who suffered unbearable tragic losses, rise above her circumstances and invest to improve her English to obtain citizenship and then be recognized as employee of the month at work. How far she has come from when I first visited her! How rewarding to run into the first participants in our afterschool program 15 years ago and they would say, 'Mrs. Chen do you remember us? We finished college and are working,' Or for me to see our elders engaged in educating mainstream audiences about their cultures, valuing and utilizing their cultural expertise and knowledge often forgotten and wasted. My favorite part is to see individuals thrive and live a quality life."

We are grateful to our current sponsors, Presenting Sponsor Summa Health System, Partner Sponsors Margaret Wong & Associates and Shah Capital, Associate Sponsors Akron General Health and Huntington Bank, and additional sponsor Visiting Nurses Association.

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Computer training class offers basic skills, new computer, and links to family

ASIA's computer training class offers basic skills and a new computer for immigrant and refugee students

Charlie Parker is a former software developer for IBM. After changing careers he now finds himself teaching computer classes to immigrant and refugee students at Asian Services In Action.

Parker's students meet six hours a week for eight weeks to learn basic computer skills. Some of his students are immigrants but most are refugees from Burma and Nepal who have recently been resettled to the United States and to Cleveland. Unlike immigrants who come to the US voluntarily for work, education or family reunification, refugees leave their home country due to persecution and violence and face major cultural and environmental transitions. Many have never used a computer.

But the students are eager to learn computer skills. They want to look for work online and Parker helps his students conduct job searches once they have learned how to use a web browser. Students also want to be able to write emails to their friends and relatives who may have been resettled in other parts of the country. Not surprisingly, most students want to join Facebook.

"I'm teaching and learning and having a great time."

- Charlie Parker

"When the government brought them to the States they didn't keep the entire extended family together," Parker says. "Cousins, relatives went elsewhere. So this way they can stay in contact with them and that's what we're trying to do."

ASIA is also trying to expand home computer and internet access to the refugee community. ASIA works with the Cleveland Housing Network (CHN) with the goal of reaching the Asian American and refugee communities.



Charlie Parker teaching his computer

ATT also supports this project and offers all participants who complete basic computer training classes a free computer for their home and two years of free internet access.

ATT installs DSL internet in the students' homes and provides a refurbished Dell computer for the family to keep. CHN provides free warranty service for three

years. So far all 13 of Parker's students who completed the eight week course have received a free computer.

Completing the computer course is not easy. Some students have dropped out when they found jobs but are able to make-up missed classes. Most students are learning basic typing skills for the first time.

"We have a student who started typing at two words per minute," Parker says. "By the end of the class she had progressed to 25 words per minute." Beyond any technical skills, the most challenging aspect of the computer class is the language barrier. Many students are limited English proficient and are attending ASIA's ESOL classes. Parker notes, "The difference is the language barrier. I have a syllabus, but often we have to take things slower and talk slower. But the students help translate for each other which is a huge help."

Parker describes his current students, a mix of Karen, Nepalese, and Chinese speakers. The classroom is a buzz with different languages as students translate to their friends, a man translates for his wife, and one Chinese student translates for her father. The students are multi-cultural and multi-generational but are united in their focus on learning and advancement for themselves and their families. Parker smiles, "I'm teaching and learning and having a great time."

2nd AAPI Legislative Day June 14



Participants from Columbus visit their local legislator's office



Senator Charleta Tavares addresses the crowd

Ohio's second annual AAPI Legislative Day brought over 300 participants from across the state to Columbus.

The event featured a legislative panel, remarks from Senator Charleta Tavares, an opportunity for legislative office visits, and a special youth program for high school students.

See more pictures and stories in the news section of our website.

Grants / Donors



The gifts here are from 06/30/11-09/21/11. 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

Asian Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Catholic Charities Health and Human Services

The Cleveland Foundation
Office on Violence Against Women
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

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Asian Services In Action, Inc.
www.asiainc-ohio.org

Akron Office
 730 Carroll Street
 Akron, OH 44304

Cleveland Office
 3631 Perkins Ave.
 Ste. 2A-W
 Cleveland, OH 44114

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Flu Clinic at ASIA's Akron office
 on Monday, **November 14th**. Come and receive a flu shot from 1-3pm. The clinic is hosted by Summit County Public Health.

15th Anniversary Gala & Auction Benefit
 on Friday, **November 4th**. Doors open at 6pm for hors d'oeuvres, a wine reception, and dessert, live and silent auctions, and live entertainment. Tickets available online at www.asiainc-ohio.org or by phone, 216-881-0330, ext. 0.

Community Advocacy & Training on Cancer and Health (CATCH) November 17-18
 This 2 1/2 day free leadership and training program teaches health advocacy and the important of cancer support groups. To register, email Trish Quema at tquema@apiahf.org

ASIA PROGRAM UPDATES

Program Updates

Akron's ICEP summer program serves 30 students with over 1,000 hours of programming.

As of January 2011, ASIA's Immigration legal services program has served more than 100 clients to secure their immigration status as lawful permanent residents or US citizens.

ASIA's HAPI farm teaches job skills to refugee farmers and sells produce twice a week at area farmers markets in Cleveland and Summit County.

Staff Updates

Congratulations to:

Bao Vue, promoted to Finance Assistant

The agency welcomes new staff:

Deb Wang, Consultant
Yamin Lwin, AmeriCorps Member
Deanna D'Amico, AmeriCorps Member
Elle Heeg, Literacy Corps Member
Amanda Welch, Literacy Corps Member
Tiffin Staib, Literacy Corps Member

Thank you to our intern:

Yurie So, Dr. K.C. Juan Community Fellow

