



NEW JERSEY

Embracing the Hopes & Aspirations of Asian Pacific Americans

ACTION

December 2021 Vol.3 No.2

CAWW2 Congressional Gold Medal to My Dad, Park Gee

by Virginia Ng, OCA-NJ Chapter Advisor

As far back as I can remember, I knew that my father served in the US Army during World War II. As a child, we would play with his uniform and take turns wearing it. We also had his old army blanket, and it was so warm. I loved having it on my bed at night, and it was such a comfort to me.

Dad would go to the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Affairs) meetings in town, and he would bring home the supplies for making the poppy flowers every year. We children, there were 4 of us, would sit around the kitchen table and assemble them. To this day, I support the poppy sale, and purchase them every year in support and remembrance of my dad and all those who served.

Over 20,000 Chinese-Americans served their nation and sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom, even as the Chinese Exclusion laws were still in place. My father was very proud of his service and his adopted country, the United States of America.

My father passed in 2002. When the Chinese American WWII Veterans Recognition Project got underway, I knew that I had to be a part of it. We encouraged people to write to their congressman in support of S.1050, the “Chinese American World War II Veteran Congressional Gold Medal Act (CAWW2)”. The bill was introduced to the Senate by Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) and was passed by both houses in September 2018. On December 20, 2018, President Trump signed S.1050 into law. With that, a huge effort to search for and find the names of the over 20,000 Chinese American WWII veterans got under way (<https://www.caww2.org/>).



The Gee Family

Serving 3 different branches of the Armed Forces during WWII

Left to Right, Num Gee (Marine Corp), Jack Gee (Navy) and Park Gee (Army)

As the Congressional Gold Medal award ceremonies and the commemorative journal were being planned, I sent off my Dad’s photo (above) to be included. The first commemorative journal was printed and released in early 2021. In December 2020, Ed Gor, National Director of the CAWW2 Recognition Project, contacted me. He had received an inquiry from someone

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President’s Message

To all the Members and Friends of OCA-NJ,

We concluded 2021 with many of our friends and families, members from our sister chapters and supporters at OCA-NJ’s Annual Holiday Ball. It was a very successful event, and I thank all of you for your continued work and support for our chapter. The 2021 Ball honored Corky Lee posthumously with the Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Community Award honorees were Sue Pai and Chung S Yang. The evening was enjoyable and memorable, and the newly renovated, The Grand, provided an elegant setting and good food.



Sadly about a week after the Ball, on December 12th, Nai-Ni Chen, a dear friend and a long-time supporter of the OCA-NJ Chapter, passed away from a swimming accident while on vacation in Hawaii. She was the founder and driving force of her dance company. Nai-Ni Chen gave my students and me the opportunities to perform the Chinese Dragon and Lion dance and at various venues including New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC) and Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center. Nai-Ni Chen will be missed greatly. Her legacy and dance company will continue. The [Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company](#) will celebrate the legacy of Nai-Ni Chen and the Year of the Tiger at NJPAC on Saturday, May 21, 2022 so bring the family.

2022 is shaping up to be another busy year. Our team is finalizing the details for OCA-NJ’s Annual Lunar New Year banquet at Noodle Wong’s on February 12th, 2022. We are expecting the Lion dance to welcome the Year of the Tiger 4720, along with raffles, prizes, and a ten-course Chinese banquet. I wish everyone well and I hope to see you at our next event.

Henry Lee

OCA-NJ, President 2021-2022

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CAWW2 Congressional Gold Medal to My Dad, Park Gee

who had sent in the same photo and asked who I was and why I have a photo of her father — Jack Gee. He arranged for us to contact each other. The person in the center of the photo was her father. He was a cousin to my own father and they grew up in Tennessee. They were long lost cousins whom we never knew.

And to make it even more interesting, in March 2021, Ed Gor reached out to me again and that the person on the far left — Num Gee — had submitted the same photo. This person I knew as he was my father's brother. We used to visit each other's families when we resided in North Carolina where I was born and raised. The families met every year at Easter in Atlanta, Georgia. I remember them because the children were the same ages as my siblings. They moved to San Francisco in the early 1960s, and except for the occasional Christmas card, we lost contact with them.

“Over 20,000 Chinese-Americans served their nation and sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom, even as the Chinese Exclusion laws were still in place.”

We planned to meet Jack Gee's family in Washington D.C. for the Gold Medal Gala Celebration Dinner (held in September 2021). This entire journey has not only recognized the contributions of the many Chinese Americans who served but has also reunited their families.

Attending the ceremony and presentation was a very momentous time for so many of us. Receiving my Dad's Congressional Medal made me so proud. As we approached the stage, each Veteran's name was announced, along with the family member who would be receiving the award. My brother, Franklin and I approached the stage, and as my father's name was announced, I barely heard mine. I was so proud. Lillian, my sister, was watching from the floor in front of the stage, screaming with approval.

Afterwards, we got to mingle with the other guests, and I saw so many others, whom I've known for years (working in OCA and the community). So many of us had relatives who served at this time. During this, my cousin from Tennessee approached my family. She had heard Lillian screaming and realized we were her cousins from North Carolina.

Almost 600 people attended that presentation, and the ceremony was long, but no one seem to notice, as the excitement and announcement of the Veterans names made us all so proud. One of the highlights was the presentation to four of the Veterans who were over 100 years old. They sat in honor during the presentation at the WWII Memorial earlier that morning and now sat in honor at the awards ceremony. I wish my own father was there to witness this.

I, for one, am grateful to CAWW2 Recognition Project Leadership, for all of the efforts by the many volunteers who brought this to fruition. A hearty congratulations to the families of the over 20,000 Chinese Americans who served during WWII. **OCA**



Chinese American World War II Veteran Congressional Gold Medal Act was signed into law in December 2018

Summer Family Picnic

by Christine Braccino, OCA-NJ Board Member

September 12th On a beautiful sunny day, OCA's four chapters (NYC (host), NJ, Westchester-Hudson Valley, Long Island) and Families With Children From China NY held their annual Summer Family Picnic at Van Saun County Park in Paramus, NJ. It's a great time outdoors each year for family and friends to connect and reconnect again! Cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, it was extra special to be able to gather together. In addition to burgers and hot dogs, guests brought a huge array of savory and sweet foods! There was even a clown doing face painting, tattoo stickers and balloon creations for the children and even some young at heart adults!

There were many delicious dishes at the picnic, and one stood out for me as well as for many others who asked for the recipe! OCA-NJ Board Member, Theresa Chan and her family's salad with a unique ingredient — bitter melon! You've got to try it; email for the recipe to cbraccino.ocanj@gmail.com!

Look forward to seeing you at the 2022 picnic! **OCA**



OCA's Four Chapters and Families With Children From China Picnic at Van Saun County Park

2021 OCA-NJ Holiday Ball

by Laura Lee, OCA-NJ Immediate Past President



OCA-NJ Board Members at the Holiday Theme Selfie Station

December 4th OCA New Jersey capped off 2021 with our annual Holiday Ball held at the elegantly renovated, The Grand, in Totowa, NJ. This year's Ball festivities were enjoyed by guests attending in-person and virtually. In person guests enjoyed a wonderful cocktail hour followed by a delicious dinner. Our virtual guests had dinners delivered to their homes.

The Holiday Ball is OCA-NJ's opportunity each year to recognize and honor AAPI individuals in our community. OCA-NJ posthumously honored and celebrated the lifetime achievements of Chinese American photographer, Corky Lee. Guests were treated to a lovely tribute by Karen Zhou, a preview of the upcoming Corky Lee documentary, "Photographic Justice" presented by Linda Lew Woo, and a special appearance by Corky's brother, John Lee, who joined via Zoom from California to update us on what's next in preserving Corky's work.

Our presentation of the 2021 Community Award Honors highlighted the many contributions of Dr. Chung S. Yang and the Honorable Sue Pai Yang. Dr. Yang is a highly distinguished researcher and educator in cancer and disease prevention, and his wife, the Honorable Sue Pai Yang, was an attorney and a judge who worked to gain



Clockwise from Top: Laura Lee and Henry Lee presents the Lifetime Achievement Award for Corky Lee Posthumously to Karen Zhao, Right: The 2021 Community Award recipients, Dr. C.S Yang and Honorable Sue Pai Yang, Bottom: John Lee on accepting his father's Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of Corky and the preservation of his brother's legacy, Left: 2021 Christine Braccino is presented with the Unsung Hero Award



a voice for those facing systemic bias. Together they became charter members of OCA in 1973 and subsequently joined as lifetime members of OCA. They have served in leadership positions representing the AAPI community and in professional organizations. An exhibit of their many achievements and accolades assembled by OCA-NJ Board member, John Tan, was displayed at the Ball.

OCA-NJ's 2021 Unsung Hero was presented to Christine Braccino for her dedicated service and collaboration with corporate sponsor, AARP NJ.

The evening was rounded out with our annual gift baskets, silent auction, guessing game prizes, door prizes, a holiday themed selfie station, and of course a lot of music, dancing and merry making. It was a great way to celebrate the year and a great way to kick off the holiday season. We thank all our members, friends, and sponsors for joining us in celebration and for your continued support. Happy New Year! **OCA**



Part of our annual gift basket collection on display at the 2021 OCA-NJ Holiday Ball

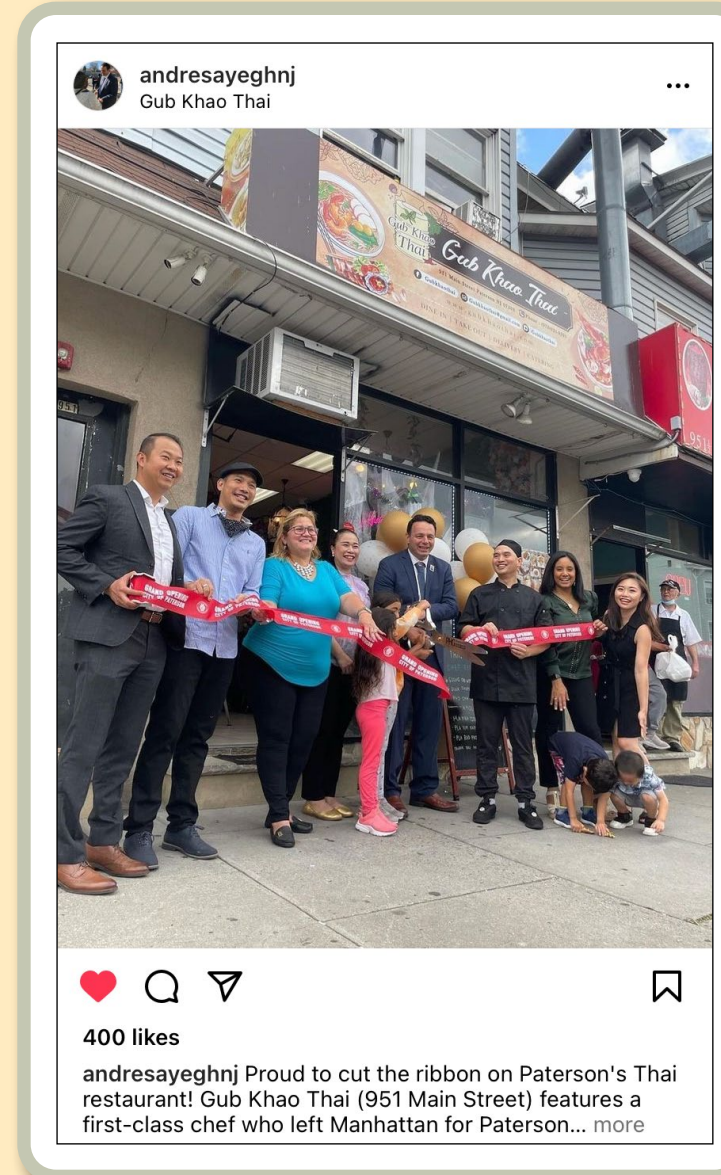
Community Building & Business Outreach:

by Eric Chau, OCA-NJ Chapter Vice President

September 18th As a part of OCA-NJ's mission to advance the social and economic well-being of Asian Americans, it's important to provide support to Asian-owned businesses and other APIA organizations. On September 18, OCA-NJ President Henry Lee and I attended the Mid-Autumn Festival Party hosted by the New Jersey Vietnamese American Community Association (www.njvaca.org), an organization that focuses on preserving Vietnamese heritage, promoting cultural activities to sustain self-identity, and enhancing leadership among the younger Vietnamese generations. Performances such as traditional Vietnamese dance, Vietnamese songs performed by young children, and rock band performance by college students were all part of the entertainment throughout the night! As OCA-NJ representatives, Henry Lee and Eric Chau were honored to present Certificate of Excellence and Scholarship "red envelopes" during its Scholarship Award Ceremony to 20 students in attendance.

As we develop our Business Outreach Program to provide technical assistance to business community, we have taken initiatives to connect with local Asian-owned businesses, such as the newly open Thai restaurant Gub Khao Thai (www.gubkhaothai.com) in Paterson. Due to our on-going conversation with Paterson Mayor's office to encourage

diversity in its business community, we were able to connect Gub Khao Thai to the Mayor's office to address some immediate business issues such as proper trash removal and cleaner curbside for its carryout customers. We were also able to coordinate with the Mayor's office to organize a successful, well-received Grand Opening for Gub Khao Thai on October 16, 2021. It's owner, Andy, is very appreciative of OCA-NJ's outreach efforts and has supported OCA-NJ at our Holiday Ball. Andy also stated that his business presence and customer awareness have improved due to the formal Grand Opening and Mayor Andre Sayegh's Instagram post! **OCA**



Volunteer Opportunities

OCA-NJ Chapter hosts and/or sponsors many events each year. These events are possible due to the continuing support and hard work of our board, members and friends. We need more volunteers to help us, and if you would like to volunteer, please contact us at ocanj.events@gmail.com. Skills such as organization, planning, communication, networking, graphic design and most important, teamwork, are valuable to OCA-NJ achieving its mission and goals. You don't need to be an OCA-NJ Chapter member to volunteer. Thank you for your interest and support!

Current roles seeking volunteers -

1. Project manage the compilation of the chapter's Annual Holiday Ball Dinner Journal including receipt of journal page orders and content, organization of content into journal, and coordinate for the publishing of the journal.
2. Support OCA-NJ's ACTION e-newsletter team with compilation and formatting of articles and photos into e-newsletter. Articles and photos are submitted to the team. See sample of e-newsletter at <https://www.oca-nj.org/>
3. Develop event flyers and marketing materials. **OCA**



Private Danny Chen Remembered 10 years later

by John Tan, OCA-NJ Board Member

October 3rd Well over six feet tall, Danny Chen was taller than your average teenager. In all respects, he was just a teenager from Chinatown who attended school there and took Chinese lessons. He played handball on most other days, ate McDonald's and hung around Manhattan's Chinatown where he was born and raised. And to his parents' apprehension, he dreamed of being a soldier. His goal was to return from the military and to become a police officer with the New York City Police Department.

After graduating high school and receiving a scholarship to Baruch College at City University of New York, Danny decided to pursue his ambition and enlisted in the Army on January 2011. He completed his basic training in Georgia in April 2011 and was assigned to his unit in Fort Wainwright, Alaska. By August, he was deployed with his unit to Kandahar Province in Afghanistan. On Oct. 3, 2011, Private Danny Chen died by suicide after his fellow soldiers brutally hazed him and subjected him to racist treatment. He was 19.

Ten years later, Danny's neighbors and Chinatown residents, community advocates, public officials, American Legion Lt. Kimlau Post 1291 and members of the Chen family gathered on Sunday October 3rd, 2021 for a walking tour of local businesses and restaurants he frequented. The tour served as a way to commemorate who Private Chen was in his everyday life and bring attention to the broader

issues affecting his community today, like the toll of the pandemic on local businesses and the rise of violence against people of Asian descent.

The tour's 9 stops included Danny's childhood home, locations of his early learning years, Columbus Park where his grandmother took him to play, Good Field Trading where his parents bought red envelopes to give him, a hobby shop where he bought trading cards with his cousin, and Jing Fong where he ate dim sum with his parents. The last stop of the tour was at Private Danny Chen Way where a moment of silence and a commemoration ceremony was led by civil rights attorney Elizabeth OuYang, with a speech by former City Council member Margaret Chin, a singing concert tribute to Pvt. Danny Chen and ending with the beating of a ceremonial drum 29 times to signify his would be age. At the conclusion of the commemoration, members of American Legion Lt. Kimlau Post 1291 saluted as they looked up at the street sign named after Private Chen where flowers marking 10 years hung below it.

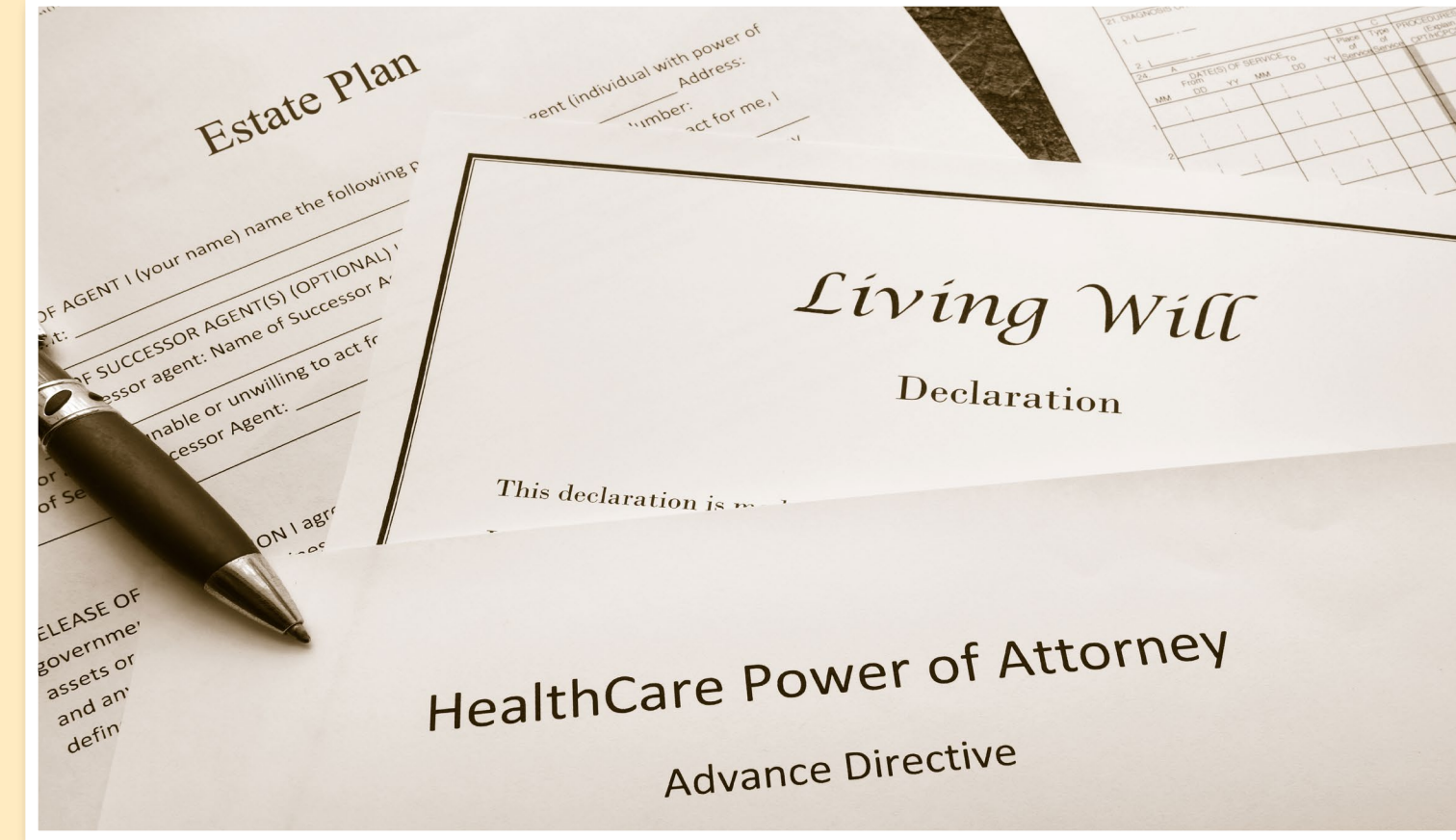


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Left: Volunteers holding up annual posters commemorating Private Danny Chen

Right: "We Are Danny" signed banner



"...they are very important conversations that need to happen."

Perspectives From a Frontline AAPI Nurse

by Theresa Chan, OCA-NJ Board Member

Nurses are frontline workers of the COVID-19 pandemic. That has been apparent throughout. I wouldn't say I'm the kind of frontline nurse you automatically picture. I'm a hospice nurse who works in the community. I do have to go into the homes of dying COVID positive patients to provide End of Life (EoL) care and support to families. Lots of people died of COVID in hospitals or nursing homes away from their loved ones. My patients were stable enough for the journey home, and could pass surrounded by their families. Perhaps it was always the patients' wish to die at home. Maybe it was the choice and wish of their families to be able to be together. Choices. Wishes. Decisions.

COVID-19 made a lot of patients and families face hard decisions. Most never even thought about their own long-term care planning, let alone

discussed any wishes with their families or friends. It's not surprising these important conversations don't occur. Many are afraid of morbid conversations, discussing their own mortality, or family members aren't ready to have these tough conversations either. But they are very important conversations that need to happen. COVID led to a lot of people who declined to the point they could not speak for themselves, and in a lot of cases, no one knew what they would have wanted or how to proceed with care or EoL decisions.

Afflicted by COVID, living with serious chronic illnesses or not, advanced care planning (ACP) should be considered at any age. ACP can come in many forms, such as putting decisions in writing in a legal document, designating a specific person to make decisions on your behalf (power of attorney or health care proxy) if you can no longer speak

for yourself, or just initiating the conversation with your family and/or friends. Deciding not to make any decisions is also a decision in itself. But making your wishes known can take a lot of burden away from yourself and your loved ones, and direct your preferred medical and long-term care if you can no longer speak for yourself.

There's many options for ACP. It can be overwhelming when deciding which route to take. Talking with your primary care provider is a great way to discuss medical wishes. The National Institute of Health's (NIH) [National Institute on Aging](#) has many resources for initiating ACP. OCA's long-time supporter, [AARP](#) also has information on ACP, palliative care and EoL care. Stay tuned for future OCA-NJ Chapter events focused on advocacy, health, well-being and culture. An OCA-NJ event geared towards your advanced care planning is on its way!

OCA

OCA NEW JERSEY – ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN ADVOCATES
Embracing the Hopes and Aspirations of Asian Pacific Americans

2022 - 4720

協美會華

Come and Celebrate the Year of the Tiger!

NOODLE WONG RESTAURANT
770 ROUTE 46 WEST, PARSIPPANY, NJ 07054
Located in the Arlington Plaza. Turn right at the light immediately after the Longhorn Restaurant. Bear right in the parking lot. Noodle Wong Restaurant is located between Home Depot and Staples.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2022 AT 5:30 PM
TRADITIONAL CHINESE LION DANCE PERFORMANCE

House Special Cold Platter • Jumbo Shrimp with Walnuts and Crispy Milk Buns
House Special Cube Steak • Crab Meat with Fish Maw Soup
Black Mushrooms with Abalone & Vegetables • Crispy Fried Chicken with Minced Garlic
Twin Lobsters with Ginger and Scallions • Steamed Whole Fresh Fish
Seafood Crabmeat Bacon & Dry Scallops Fried Rice • Crab Meat Yi Mein Noodles
• Sweet Red Bean Soup • New Year Cookies

For additional information, e-mail: Alyocanboard@gmail.com • www.oca-nj.org

OCA – NEW JERSEY CHAPTER • LUNAR NEW YEAR DINNER • FEBRUARY 12, 2022
PAYMENT MUST BE RECEIVED BY THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2022

Name(s) Attending _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
Home Address _____ e-mail _____
Telephone _____ Children's Names/Ages _____

Children under 12 ~ \$40 Full Table of 10 ~ \$675
Members \$70 Non-Members \$80 Couples \$138

\$8 from each Adult Ticket will go towards the support of the OCA National Center for Asian Pacific American Leadership in Washington, DC, an educational and resource center to the Asian American community. OCA is committed to creating an environment to nurture the future leadership of our community and of our country. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by the Internal Revenue Service. Tickets will NOT be available at the door. ALL ATTENDEES MUST SHOW PROOF OF COVID VACCINATIONS.

For Dinner, please make your check payable to: **OCA - NEW JERSEY CHAPTER**
Mail to: **Alyson Yee, 7 Lyle Avenue, Wayne, NJ 07470**

OCA-New Jersey Chapter is a state chapter of OCA, a section 501(c)(3) national organization dedicated to advancing the social, political and economic well-being of Asian Pacific Americans in the United States. Our goals are: (1) To advocate for social justice, equal opportunity and fair treatment. (2) To promote civic participation, education and leadership. (3) To advance coalitions and community building. (4) To foster cultural heritage. Founded in 1973 as the Organization of Chinese Americans, OCA maintains its headquarters in Washington, D.C. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Join Us for an Evening of Celebration at Noodle Wong Restaurant on February 12

go to www.oca-nj.org for details

ADVOCATE NEW JERSEY

2022 Year of the Tiger Toiletries and Food Drive

OCA-New Jersey Chapter is collecting toiletries and non-perishable food items for the underserved.

Have you been fortunate enough to travel- and stay at hotels?
• How many of us travel just for OCA related events?
Do you have a full pantry of food?
• Are you able to share your good fortune with others?

Lets turn our good fortune into a donation for others!

Bring your UNOPENED [travel] toiletries and non-perishable food items to our Lunar New Year Celebration on Saturday, February 12, 2022 at Noodle Wong, 770 US-46, Parsippany-Troy Hills, NJ 07054
Register here to attend the event: <http://oca-nj.org/>
Don't just drop off, come and enjoy the event too!



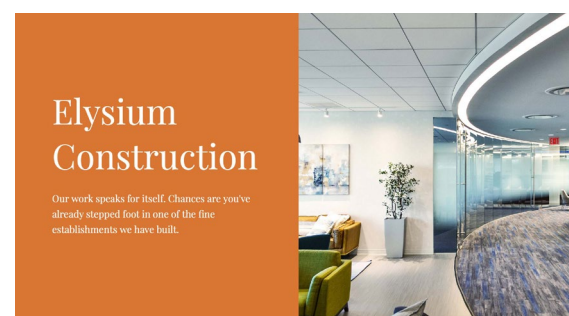
Mission Statement

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OCA's PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- Promoting active participation of Asian Pacific Americans in both civic and national matters;
- Securing the social justice, equal opportunity and equal treatment of Asian Pacific Americans;
- Eliminating prejudices, stereotypes and ignorance of Asian Pacific Americans, and;
- Promoting the cultural heritage of Chinese and Asian Pacific Americans

Sponsored by the following:



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