VOICES OF ASIAN COMMUNITIES IN CENTRAL OHIO

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WELCOME!

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Message from the President
On behalf of the board of directors and the many volunteers of the Asian Festival Corporation, I wish you a special greeting for a Happy Lunar New Year!

Although we are still in the midst of a pandemic, economic challenges, and the fight for social justice in this country, we are hopeful that the new administration brings optimism and clear direction for our country. The vaccination program nationwide will start to pick up as the supplies increase and hopefully produce herd immunity. Vaccine hesitancy is still a factor in the success of the vaccination program and is being addressed, particularly in minority and vulnerable populations. I hope that everyone will receive clear, consistent, and transparent vaccine information that will include safety and effectiveness and also disclose possible reactions that can potentially occur. Although it is voluntary, please consider being vaccinated when you have the opportunity to do so. We all know that vaccines do not save lives, vaccinations save lives! The sooner we reach herd immunity, the closer we will be to a new “normal” way of life.

Until then, all events and activities for the Asian Festival 2021 will remain virtual and digital. We are excited to explore this new platform to continue to share with the large community in Central Ohio, all that we can offer to showcase our cultural heritage, foster a healthy lifestyle, and provide fun, educational and entertaining events and activities. Stay tuned, we will update everyone and please check our website that will have the up-to-date information on Asian Festival 2021 @ asian-festival.org.

Asian Festival Origins
The Asian Festival dream began in 1994 when Dr. Yung-Chen Lu proposed the idea to the Asian-American Community Service Council (ACSC). Since the inaugural event attended by 12,000 people in 1995, the festival’s size has increased exponentially to 160,000 attendees in 2019. The Asian Festival has become a showcase of the rich cultural heritage of Asians through cultural performances, music, art, cuisine, sports, career fair, children’s area, marketplace, and community square.

In 1998, the Asian Festival began providing free health screenings and education for Asians and the general public. In 2010, the Asian Festival added the Dragon Boat Race.

All of the activities and events are only possible because of the many volunteers and corporations supporting our mission and goals.

Our mission “to promote the importance of cultural diversity in building a vibrant, prosperous and healthy community” is our beacon for the future.

Click here to view our organizational structure chart
**LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**What is Lunar New Year?**

The Lunar New Year is a major holiday celebrated by about 1.5 billion people in many East Asian countries such as Indonesia, Korea, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam etc., in addition to China. The festivities include family reunions when all members gather to pay respect to the elders, some even hold formal rituals to honor and worship heavenly Gods and ancestors praying for their blessings, while children get “red envelopes” containing money to buy toys, firecrackers, and other goodies. All households are decorated with New Year scrolls and couplets, and always with large Chinese character “福” (luck). On the streets or public squares, there are dragon or lion dances with loud music and firecrackers to drive off evil spirits, parades where people dressed in red to attract good luck. Friends and neighbors exchange gifts, greetings, and good wishes. The celebration lasts two weeks till the 15th culminating in the Lantern Festival.

The Lunar New Year falls on the second new moon after the winter solstice. Because the date of the new moon changes each year, the date of the holiday changes, too. It is most commonly associated with the Chinese New Year. It typically falls sometime between January 21 and February 20 annually. In 2021, it is February 12.

**Zodiac Cycle**

The New Year is the Year of the Ox, according to the Chinese zodiac cycle of 12 animals (rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig in that order), when paired with the five elements of nature (metal, wood, water, fire, earth), the years repeat through a 60-year calendrical cycle, so 2021 is designated “Year of the Golden Ox”.

Each animal has its positive characters; the ox is a valued animal because of its role in agriculture. People born under the sign of the ox are hard-working, intelligent, persistent, and reliable.

**Lunar New Year Service**

This Lunar New Year, APAPA Ohio and the Ohio Chinese American Association collected donations to purchase 300 meals from Supreme Buffet to deliver to residents of the Van Buren Shelter in Central Ohio. (Delivery pictured to the left)
COVID-19 VACCINATION

COVID-19 Vaccine
Hope has arrived! With the news of an effective vaccine finally out in the market, we can breathe a little easier. Pfizer and Moderna, two of the largest pharmaceutical companies, have developed a safe and effective vaccine to combat the spread of COVID-19. The vaccine has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and is currently in distribution to priority groups only. As more vaccines become available, the general population will also have the chance to get vaccinated. It is important for everyone to be patient and cooperative during this time, so the world can return back to normalcy as soon as possible.

Vaccine Hesitancy: Myths vs Facts
With the optimistic news of a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine, some are still hesitant about getting vaccinated. There are many people, especially in the Asian community, who are still having doubts.

Here are some of the most common myths:

Myth 1: The vaccine is not real medicine.
Fact 1: While Traditional Chinese medicine may be beneficial to help some health issues, COVID-19 is a virus that has serious impact on health and can only be prevented by a vaccine.

Myth 2: The vaccine is unsafe because it was developed quickly.
Fact 2: Although the vaccine was developed in record time, the FDA has confirmed that the vaccine has gone through the same careful testing process as every other vaccine that has been created.

Myth 3: The vaccine actually gives people the virus, instead of protecting them from it.
Fact 3: Data shows that Pfizer and Moderna’s vaccines, which do not contain live virus, are 95% effective in preventing COVID transmission after receiving both doses. With any vaccine, there are always possible side effects such as fever, chills, headaches, etc.

It is important to educate yourself on the facts of the vaccine to make a decision best for you.

Town Halls on Vaccination for Asians
The state of Ohio, through the Ohio Department of Health, has scheduled Town Hall meetings for various groups to help understand barriers to vaccinations, answer questions, and develop solutions. The meetings will be live streamed during the week of Feb 22, and on MARCH 1 for Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Ohioans. These events are coordinated in partnership with Ohio’s Minority Health Vaccine Advisory Group. The mission of this group is to help advise the Ohio Department of Health on how to best deliver the vaccine to underserved populations, help eliminate barriers to vaccinations and ensure equity.

Watch livestreams at the following dates and times:
• Feb. 22, 6:30pm - African American Ohioans
• Feb. 23, 6:30pm - Hispanic/Latino Ohioans
• March 1, 6:30pm - Asian American/Pacific Islander Ohioans
• Tuesday, March 2, 6:30pm - Rural Ohioans

Watch live or on-demand after the event:
• Facebook: www.facebook.com/OHdeptofhealth/
• YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/OhioDepartmen-tofHealth1
• Online: coronavirus.ohio.gov/townhall

Watch later on the Ohio Channel. Find the date, time, and your local channel by checking with your PBS station or television provider.
Continue Following COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations!

The COVID-19 vaccine is slowly becoming available to the general public beginning with our elderly and most vulnerable populations first. While this is hopeful news, it’s important to remember that vaccinating the community at large will take time and we all still need to take every step to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by continuing to:

• Wear a mask outdoors and in public settings (double-masking encouraged!)
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
• Maintain at least a 6-foot distance between yourself and others
• Avoid gatherings larger than 10 people
• Stay home if you’re sick unless visiting a health care provider
• Wash hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
• Use hand sanitizer frequently

By following these public health recommendations, you will help protect yourself, your family, and others.

COVID-19 Testing Continues in the Asian Community

Although we now have safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19, testing for this virus must continue since it may manifest in an asymptomatic person. The Ohio Asian American Health Coalition continues to offer testing for the Asian communities in the state of Ohio. Manju Sankarappa, Executive Director of OAAHC stated that close to 1500 individuals have been tested to date.

The Asian Festival Corporation collaborated with the Philippine Nurses Association in Central Ohio to provide testing and COVID-19 education for the Chinese and Filipinos in Columbus, and testing in Dayton that drew 825 people. The Dayton testing, held at Wright State University, was open to Asians and non-Asians and hosted by the Phil American Society of Greater Dayton and the Asian American Council. This was made possible with support from Porter Foundation and NurseHeart who performed the nasal swab testing. Testing has been done in Bhutanese, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, and Muslim communities in Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati.

All positive results are reported to the Center for Disease Control and to their local health department. This information is kept private and confidential. For further information, contact msankarappa@yahoo.com for questions and to arrange testing and COVID-19 education for your community.
The Impact of Surging Anti-Asian Discrimination Related to COVID-19:

There has been an overwhelmingly increase in anti-Asian discrimination since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In October of 2020, the United Nations reported that hate crimes against Asians in the U.S. have undoubtedly skyrocketed. More than 1,800 racist incidents were recorded within a 3 month period, March-May 2020. Many Asian-owned businesses suffered significant drops in business; some even had to shut down, as a result of anti-Asian rhetoric. However, the current administration has recently promised to stop the continuous bullying, harassment, and hate crimes Asian Americans have experienced since the start of the pandemic.

There was an executive action signed on January 26th, 2021 to combat Asian xenophobia in the U.S. This order entails the Department of Justice to strengthen its partnership with Asian American and Pacific Islanders and the Department of Health and Human Services to encourage practices to combat xenophobia in national response to COVID. It is important to be well-aware and educated of this continuing issue and to recognize the physical and mental health consequences.

If you or someone you know that has experienced discriminatory behavior, please reach out for available resources, such as:

• Asian Americans Advancing Justice: www.advancingjustice-aajc.org

Health Literacy Initiative for Asians

Ohio Asian American Health Coalition is planning a health literacy initiative for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). Health literacy is the ability of individuals to obtain, process and understand basic health information so that they are able to make appropriate decisions regarding their health.

Unfortunately, limited health literacy affects nearly 9 out of 10 adults, and the impact disproportionately affects minority populations. Asian populations, in particular, experience poor health literacy due to language barriers and a lack of culturally competent health care providers which creates an incomplete understanding of diseases and a lack of awareness of preventative services; these factors combine to widen health disparities for AAPI.

The Ohio Asian American Health Coalition has proposed a health literacy initiative to address health literacy as an integral aspect of health care. In doing so, the goal is to reduce health care costs, increase civic advocacy, and improve the quality of life for the AAPI population in Ohio. Dr. Greg Lam, Vice-President of OAAHC is leading this initiative.
2021 Asian Festival Goes Virtual!

This year, the Asian Festival celebration goes on but on a different platform. The Asian Festival Corporation Board approved the plan to continue this annual event in May 2021 by creating programs virtually and digitally. Although we desire to have a live outdoor event as in the past, the present pandemic situation leads us to choose to do a fully VIRTUAL series of events for the 27th Asian Festival. We plan to have professionally coordinated stream segments that will feature most of the Asian Festival activities such as performances, cultural hands-on exhibits, food/culinary activities, health education, community square activities, and many more. We will also plan to purchase TV time from 4 local TV stations so that we could showcase our culture. The new delivery format will in fact decrease the overall expenditure but will reach more people in the nation and abroad as compared to the traditional format. We hope that our sponsoring organizations and supporters will welcome the increased visibility and marketing potential. We are looking forward to this new creative and innovative celebration of the Asian culture and heritage through the VIRTUAL Asian Festival 2021.

Streaming will begin on Memorial Day Weekend (May 29th - May 30th)

Stay tuned! There will be more information to come. Visit our website at www.asian-festival.org

Volunteer Feature: Tony and Sally Paz

Sally and Tony Paz have been involved with the Asian Festival for over 25 years. They have been instrumental to the success of the Asian Festival. Tony was one of the original board members for the Asian Festival Corporation and Sally is a current board member. Sally is a retired architect and Tony is a retired engineer. Without any doubt, Sally and Tony Paz have been key contributors to the Asian Festival and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

The Editorial Board (from left): Dr. Qiong Yuan, Ingrid Deng (Editor) Dr. Cora Munoz, Dr. Yung-Chen Lu, Jeff Woo, Jessica Yee, and Hannah Jones (not pictured)