



# 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

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## President's Message by Melodie Lew

President's Message—Summer Edition

Hello! I hope everyone's summer has been relaxing and pleasant. San Mateo OCA has been busy during the first part of 2015. The Chapter held a delicious Lunar New Year dinner at the Joy Restaurant in Foster City. While attendance was not a high point, those who attended enjoyed an intimate time and a chance to chat and get to know each other. The presentation of slightly different Lunar New Year fare was fantastic and provided an interesting topic of discussion about the great variety of Lunar New Year celebratory meals. SMOCA also completed another successful year of Speak & Lead with Pride, our free public speaking workshop for local high school students, ably chaired by Dr. David Chai. In addition, we gave out nine scholarships to deserving and qualified high school seniors who will be attending colleges and universities throughout the country.

Over the Fourth of July weekend, the San Mateo County Chapter of OCA, together with the Northern California Chapters of Greater Sacramento, Greater East Bay, San Francisco, and Santa Clara hosted the OCA Convention in San Francisco. Each Chapter took the leadership in one of the aspects of convention. The San Mateo Chapter was well represented by a large contingent of volunteers. In addition, many local high school students participated in the work-

shops created especially for them, and many Chapter members attended the Convention as well. The event was well attended by friends and members from across the country and participants commented on the high quality of workshops and presentations. In addition, our own Chris Bush was selected as one of OCA National's Unsung Heroes. Congratulations, Chris Bush! What a well deserved honor!

We moved into the second half of the year with our annual San Mateo OCA Picnic, and this well-attended event will be followed by our holiday gathering. The San Mateo Chapter decided earlier this year to postpone our own gala celebration until early 2016 due to our participation in the National Convention this past July. Please look for announcements to come regarding future activities. Enjoy what is left of the final warm days of summer and pray for rain this winter!

Cheers!  
Melodie Lew

## OCA National Convention



Opening day, as the crowds of people filled the hallway of the Hilton Hotel located in downtown San Francisco, you couldn't help but feel a sense of community. A community where every single person there is here for the same reason. To continue the ongoing support of Asian Americans.

Upon arrival on the first day, the presence of the next generation was extremely vibrant. Workshops tailored to high school students included Asian Pacific Islander (API) awareness workshops as well as college readiness courses. While the high school students were busy getting ready for college, students who were already enrolled in college attended the college track. The college track consisted of speakers who spoke words of wisdom and shared life experiences and memories. Through these experiences and memories, the college students were able to relate these to their own lives and use them as life lessons.

The first day ended with a wonderful welcome reception where many local performers such as SanFran6 and a local Haka group made appearances. It was also

an event where notable politicians were present such as San Francisco's Mayor Lee. The night was filled with conversation, laughter and delicious food.

As the convention continued, the second day was one where many interesting workshops and seminars were held. These workshops included *Beyond Dragon Ladies and Sexless Nerds: Asian Americans in the Media*; *Truth Behind the Data: Affirmative Action and the Model Minority Myth*; and many more. These workshops and seminars gave insightful information about different issues and controversial topics in today's society regarding Asian Americans.

As the sun began to set, the guests loaded up on to buses and were transported to Francisco Middle School where the Friday Night Event was being held. The guests were greeted at the start of the event with a lion dance performed by local middle school and elementary school students. That night, guests were able to sample great San Francisco Bay Area Asian Cuisine. Dishes such as kimchi fried rice, Filipino lumpia and lao sausage were only some of the many food items being served. The night was one to remember.



## OCA National Convention (cont.)

As the convention was coming to an end, one of the biggest events of the entire convention was the Gala. This festive event was held on the last night of the convention and left all the guests talking about it for days after. The ballroom was decorated to perfection and the guests were dressed to the nines. As the night progressed, awards were presented, food was devoured, and memories were made. The Gala awards banquet came to a close, guests made their way up to the cityscape to dance the night away and view the fireworks. I guess you could say the night ended with a bang. This year's OCA National

Convention's theme was "Unifying Asian Pacific Islander America." Over the course of three days, the convention did unify the Asian Pacific Islander community, as demonstrated by the wide participation of a broad group of Asian and Pacific Islanders who came together at this National OCA Convention.

*By  
Meghan  
Chang*



## Speak and Lead with Pride 2015

On January 31st, a Saturday, at 10:00 am, students from varying San Mateo County high schools gathered in one room in the Foster City recreation center for the annual Speak and Lead with Pride program. This program focuses on helping students with public speaking as well as enriching and refining their leadership skills. This was the start of what would be a six-week program ending with a final competition. On the very first day, the students were required to stand in front of the class and present a speech on the topic of their choosing. With shaking hands and nervous smiles, each individual went up and presented his or her speech. The courage and bravery that the students displayed speaking before a room of strangers were magnificent.

On the day of the final competition, four young ladies each gave a speech on the topic of immigration. Each young lady presented her speech with poise and grace while making convincing arguments on the issue of immigration. At the end, sophomore Annie Lu won the event. That night was also the graduation ceremony for all the students. As they all lined up one by one next to each other, you could see the changes and leaders they had become within those six weeks.

*By Meghan Chang*



## High School Seniors Headed to College

By Jennifer Zhang

On Sunday, April 26, 2015, OCA members and new friends gathered at the San Mateo Senior Center for the Scholarship Luncheon. Scholarship recipients, parents, and OCA members enjoyed a delicious lunch catered by Yan Can Asian Bistro in Santa Clara. John Lau, Speak and Lead semi-final judge, spoke as the inspirational speaker.

The scholarship essay readers and judges consisted of:

Derek Lang, Marilyn Luong, and Dora Wong

The outstanding scholarship recipients of this year are as follows:

*Jackie Chen* served as Interact District 5150 Governor during his senior year and was an active participant of the Mills High School Cross Country and Track & Field Teams. He will be studying Economics at Dartmouth College in the fall.

*Ryan Cruz* was involved at the Second Harvest Food Bank and the Samaritan House during his high school career and will be heading to University of California, Davis in the fall to study Mechanical Engineering.

*Chia Wei Kuo*, who immigrated from Taiwan just six year ago, was a member of the Burlingame High School Choir and Mills Peninsula Auxiliary. She also held an internship with Senator Jerry Hill. In the fall she will be attending University of California, Santa Barbara to study Psychology.

*Kristen Lee* was involved in year-round athletics at Mills High School: Cross Country, Basketball, and Track & Field, all while taking on rigorous academic loads. She will be attending the University of California, Los Angeles in the fall.

*Lotus Lum* competed in fencing at the NCAA college level and was the captain of the swim team at El Camino High School. She will be studying Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at University of California, Berkeley in the fall.

*Julie Meriales* holds a black belt in Tae Kwon Do and a motto to overcome misfortunes with persistence. In the fall, she will be studying Political Science at Cal Poly Pomona.

*Morgan Ome* participated in the Burlingame Robotics Club and Model United Nations, and completed a documentary on cancer. He will be studying at Johns Hopkins University this fall.

*Tobin Vedder*, in his high school career, made it onto the Principle's List multiple times. He enjoys soccer and camping and aspires to stop racism and to help others. In the fall, he will be studying Biology at Santa Clara University to prepare for a future career as a dermatologist or pediatrician.

*Flora Wang* obtained the National Merit award, one of the most prestigious academic awards of the nation. She served as a captain of the cross country and track team at her high school. She aspires to become a pediatrician and will be studying Human Biology at Stanford University in the fall.

## Interview with Beverlyn Law

*By Meghan Chang*

Beverlyn Law, a recent graduate from Hillsdale High School and incoming first year at Santa Clara University recently took the time out of her day to discuss the YOCA club at her school. Law started a YOCA (youth OCA) club, a branch of OCA focused on the younger generation. Law explains to me that students in YOCA participate in local volunteer opportunities in the community as such the First Harvest Food Bank, Lunar New Year Festival, and many other events. The goal of the club is to promote awareness of the social, political and economic well being of Americans of Chinese and Asian descent. Since the start of the club, Law has seen growth in its membership as well as its presence in the community. Law hopes to see more YOCA clubs started in the neighboring schools in the coming of years.



**Asian American  
Youth, Asian  
American Future**

## Interview with Annie Lu *By Jennifer Zhang*

Annie Lu, freshman at Mills High School, enjoys public speaking which led her to join the Speak & Lead program, in which she earned first place. The Speak and Lead program has educated her on Asian American politics and culture and further improved her confidence in public speaking. Though it was only a weekend program, Lu was grateful for the mentors and practice she received with peers.

Lu is most passionate about advocating for those who need help, especially in areas revolving around immigration issues and females. She believes that “dreamers should be able to get citizenship in the United States.” As an Asian American youth, Lu embraces common stereotypes such as the aspect of hardworking. Lu aspires to pursue a career in politics, possibly as a senator, and an education at the Ivy Leagues.

A well-rounded teen, Annie Lu spends her time playing soccer, debating in Model United Nations, serving as the business manager of the Mills High School newspaper, working as a defense attorney in Mock Trial, and many more. She also participates in scholarship pageants in which she continues her advocacy for others. Recently Lu was able to speak at the national OCA convention and even won the title of Miss Northern California MAC Jr. Teen. Stay updated with this teen as she carries her dreams and others’ to make great changes!



## Interview with Jennifer Kao



Jennifer Kao who graduated from Mills High School in 2013, recently sat down with me to discuss her take on the 2013 AP Testing issues at Mills High School. In 2013 at Mills High School, hundreds of AP scores were cancelled, affecting and devastating many students who had taken AP tests. This mass cancellation was due to an issue with the seating arrangements made that day. This small mistake was not the students' fault and yet they were still being punished for it. College board issued a retest date to all those who were affected. However, many students who were affected were already graduated seniors and the retest date was after the deadline for their college AP score submission date. Kao realized that this was unfair and was not right. Kao alongside other students, parents, and teachers came together to try and find a solution to this debacle. As they became more and more active in the issue at hand, they began to catch the attention of local politicians such as Senator Hill, California Assembly Member Mullin, and Congresswoman Speier. Kao took the liberty of creating a website ([whyweneedourscoresback.com](http://whyweneedourscoresback.com)) where students, teachers, and parents could voice their opinions on the AP testing recall. This was also a place where the public could see how this issue was affecting their local community. This also allowed community members to become aware of what was happening and support the fight for justice.

After over a year of fighting this battle and many bumps along the way, the fight was finally ended. With the help of Senator Jerry Hill, many parents, teachers, and students, SB 915 was passed. This legislation requires that an investigation be launched immediately, while addressing retests and seating charts. Throughout this prolonged journey, it was difficult at times to continue to strive on and keep going due to the bumps along the road. However, during this process, an amazing thing happened. The community came together as a unified front to take action and support one another. Looking back almost a year after the legislation was passed, Kao says that none of this would've been possible without the help and support of her community.

Although the students were not able to retrieve back their AP scores, their hard work and sacrifice ensures future AP test taker will not have to undergo the painful ordeal that they went through. The other bright side in this situation is that after going through this whole process, the community was able to connect with one another and it was beautiful to see people within the community supporting each other.

Kao is now a rising third year at UC Berkeley and will be majoring in business. Kao also plans to continue to be involved with social issues throughout her community. She feels that it is extremely important to be connected with her community and to support issues within her community.

*By Meghan Chang*

## City Spotlight: Redwood City



Chinese American Jeffrey Gee currently serves as the Mayor of Redwood City. In addition to serving as a mayor, Gee is also a Chair of SamTrans Board of Directors, Chair of the Peninsula Congestion Relief Alliance, President of a Homeowner's Association, President of Broadway by The Bay, father of two children, and much more.

Gee's roots in America began when his father, at the age of seven, and grandfather immigrated to San Francisco, California from Taishan (*Cantonese: Toisan*), China for a better life. With hard work, they were able to purchase a triplex in North Beach. At the age of seven, Gee and his family moved to Belmont. In 1995, Gee moved to Redwood City, the city he called "one of the best kept secrets of the Bay Area."

Located in the middle of the Bay Area, approximately 27 miles from San Francisco and 24 miles from San Jose, the city of Redwood City is comprised of bustling city life. Redwood City is conveniently located near freeways, universities, airports, technology companies, and businesses, all without having to surrender to high rents and living expenses. Redwood City is also a global city, sharing a sister relationship with Zhuhai, People's Republic of China, since 1993, and with Colima, Mexico since 1998.

Gee has implemented plans for affordable housing and environmental programs in Redwood City. Under his direction, Caltrains reaching Redwood City will soon add an extra car to ease transportation in and out of the city. Gee hopes that people will soon be able to live and work without needing to use a car, further reducing the carbon footprint.

Redwood City also has a foundation of funding through the Capital Improvement Program. Started in the 1980s, the funds accumulate from a five percent cut from the bills of utility users. Without having to raise taxes, the city is able to afford water and sewage infrastructure improvements, street pavement resurfacing, playground renovations, and many more projects.

The city also complies well with the current drought situation of California. The city runs a recycled water program, computerized irrigation systems, smart meters for leak warnings, and other water conservation projects. Recycled water is filtered for irrigation and non-drinking purposes. With updated systems, the city estimates a low average of 68 gallons per day per resident, compared to the 175 gallons per day per resident in 1999.

Mayor Gee pays attention to the citizens of his city, including children and seniors. In addition to serving as Principal of the Day, Gee has helped form a partnership with Facebook to use technology to help seniors connect and "bridge the gap." All in all, Gee hopes to lead people to make differences in the world. As for Asian Americans, especially the youth, Gee hopes that they step out of quiet and reserved stereotypes in order to take on more significant roles in society.

*By Jennifer Zhang*

## **Affirmative Action: Asian American Students**

*By Jennifer Zhang*

Would a rare research project, positions as club presidents, 2400 on the SATs, or straight A's in 20 APs get you into the most prestigious college such as Harvard? Maybe. Or maybe not.

Affirmative action was developed in the 1960's under President Kennedy to address inequality in public systems. In the seventies, Asian American's were only about 3% of the population and occupied around 10 to 15% of a university's student population. However, times have changed and Asian Americans have achieved greater levels of success in education, employment, and income, and are calling for more opportunities and chances.

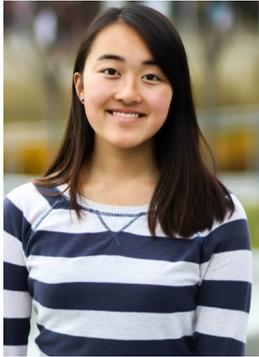
Blum's mission began in 2012 when he encouraged a friend, Abigail Fisher, a white woman, to sue the University of Texas for allegedly discriminating her because of affirmative action (*Fisher v. Texas*). The controversy remains active.

Blum decided that the problem was not limited to white Americans: In November of 2014, Edward Blum decided to sue Harvard University to end discrimination against Asian Americans. Blum argues that, according to data, Asian Americans have been held to higher standards in terms of admission to elite schools. He has organized an advocacy group, Students for Fair Admissions, "a coalition of prospective applicants and applicants to higher education institutions who were denied admission" to universities similar to Harvard. Also, he has dismissed the idea that his fight will instead hinder admission chances of for other minorities.

Harvard reveals little detail about its admissions process but claims to admit each applicant holistically. Also, its admission data cites evidence that this year's undergraduate class was comprised of 21% Asian Americans, compared to the 17.6% ten years ago. However, as the numbers of Asian American applications continue to rise each year, the proportion of admitted Asian American students remains stable.

The case has not yet concluded, but many await results that could revolutionize the meaning of equality. Meanwhile, the majority of Asian Americans support affirmative action. In a recent poll of Asian American adults in California, 70% supported affirmative action programs judged merely on abilities and not on ethnicity. Also, there is great diversity among the Asian American population in socioeconomic success and ethnicity.

## 2014-2015 SMOCA Interns



### **Jennifer Zhang—Public Relations Intern**

Jennifer Zhang is currently a rising senior at Mills High School in Millbrae. She is actively involved with different youth clubs such as Millbrae Leos Club, Interact Club, and Sierra Student Coalition. In her free time, she also plays tennis, explores music, and attempts to learn new things. Zhang hopes to bring forth youth innovation and empowerment.



### **Meghan Chang—Public Relations Intern**

Meghan Chang is currently a rising senior at El Camino High School in South San Francisco. She was the 2014 San Mateo Chapter Speak and Lead with Pride winner. Ms. Chang enjoys spending her free time playing tennis, volunteering at her church and reading great books. She aspires to be a successful attorney in the future and hopes make a positive impact in not only her community but everywhere she goes.

## 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:

OCA-San Mateo PO Box 218 San Mateo, CA 94401

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Melodie Lew,

**Committee Chairs**

David Chai, *Speak & Lead Program*

Chris Bush, *Events*

Melodie Lew, *Scholarship*

Leonard Chan, *Website*

Sarah Chew, *YOCA*

*Franklin Kang and Melodie Lew, Interns*

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