



# THE DRUM CIRCLE

A communicative gathering of people coming together into the light with their own natural human-beat

The L.A. County Asian American Employees Assoc. Newsletter



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Finding Your Voice
- Redistricting LA County
- Meet a County Leader:  
Akiko Tagawa
- Meet our Liaisons and Updates
- AAPI Contributor Lily Lee Chan
- Celebrating AAPI Athletic
- Support Small Business:  
FishWives

## Finding Your Voice

Jodi Chen, Public Information Officer

If you think that “finding your voice” is difficult as an AAPI, I understand. For a long time, I didn’t share a lot of my experiences and thoughts. I was afraid that my views would not be accepted and I didn’t want to stand out. I wanted to be liked. The thought “what would they think of me?” was constantly in the back of my mind. Over the years, I found myself staying silent because I didn’t think my opinions mattered. I agreed to other people’s point of views and stifled my own voice. Although I wanted people to like me, I realized that people could only like the *real* me if I allowed others in. When we find our voice, we find the freedom to get to know more about who we are.

*Gaman*, a Japanese term derived from Zen Buddhist origin, means “enduring the unbearable with patience and dignity.” What is seen as the highest virtue and inner strength in our cultures is being misperceived by America as a lack of assertiveness or initiative. Living through this unique and difficult time as an AAPI has taught me that silence can be expensive. It costs us our safety, our opportunities, and our voice. In the face of injustice, should we still have *gaman* (‘unquestionable obedience’) or should we speak up despite the cost? For many of us, being AAPI means having to balance our Asian culture vs. what America teaches you. Often, it’s a struggle between submitting to authority vs. free will.

We all have something to say. The fact that most of us in the AAPI community would rather not be seen nor heard is keeping us from moving forward. In your own way, I hope you find the courage within yourself to stand up and speak out against injustices, and let that be ok. Speaking out is not disobedience; it’s the beginning of a conversation to challenge the status quo and a step towards making the world a better place. It is why we call this newsletter *the Drum Circle* because although we may each have our unique rhythmic beat, we can still come together to make sweet music that LA County longs to hear.



On behalf of LACAAEA, I’d like to encourage you and all fellow AAPIs to come together to share your experiences and showcase your talents. We have many opportunities not just through our newsletter, but also through various media platforms. We want to provide opportunities for our members to showcase their unique journey and hear their perspectives on various issues that do matter such as why AAPIs should care about redistricting LA County or get inspired by AAPI Olympic athletes and esteemed AAPI women leaders: Chief Deputy Director of Medical Examiner-Coroner, Akiko Tagawa and former Monterey Park major, Lily Lee Chan.



*Jodi has been working for LA County for over 12 years. Prior to the County, she worked in a wide-range of professions for 20 years, including becoming an award-winning Graphic Designer. She began her County service as a clerk and promoted through various departments including CSSD, DCFS, Fire, and BOS. She is now a Management Secretary for Internal Services Dept. As a volunteer member of the county’s Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (ARDI) equity team, she is passionate about issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.*

*Jodi has been a SoCal native after immigrating from Taiwan with her family when she was younger. She is an adventurous foodie, enjoys trying out dishes from different cultures, and hopes to travel more after the pandemic. Jodi continues to stay involved in the local community as a parent advocate for the special needs community.*

## Our Voice Is Our Power!

LACAAEA will continue to work with leaders of the AAPI non-profits and the County to advocate for the AAPI community and the County’s employees. Please help us in our effort. There are many ways for you to get involved.:

- Be an ally. Share with family, friends and colleagues about LACAAEA.
- Get informed by subscribing to our email notifications, connecting with us on Facebook or LinkedIn to receive events announcements, and checking out to our YouTube channel.
- Whether you’re a former or current County employee or an ally, join our membership to provide your unique voice and perspective on AAPI matters.
- We’re looking for volunteer help!, especially communicators and organizers. Whether you have experience, we’ll train you. If interested, please email us at [notifications.lacaaea@gmail.com](mailto:notifications.lacaaea@gmail.com).

### THE DRUM CIRCLE CONTRIBUTORS

#### Editor

Jodi Chen

#### Writers/Proofreaders

Eddie Yen

Daniel Yen

Jayson Chan

Joanna De La Cuesta

Jodi Chen

LACAAEA Members

Nemanja Pavlovic

Truc Moore

## Redistricting LA County

Contributed by Jayson Chan and Daniel Yen

LA County is divided into five supervisorial districts, each represented by an elected supervisor collectively known as the Board of Supervisors (or Board). Following the Decennial or ten-year US Census, boundary lines within the County must be redrawn to ensure the population is divided equally between the five supervisorial districts. This is called redistricting. In the past, the Board appointed 20 commissioners to advise on a redistricting plan. In the end, the Board had the final say on where to draw and adopt the final district lines. However, this year's redistricting is different. In 2016, former California Governor Jerry Brown approved State Senate Bill 958, which specifically requires LA County to establish a redistricting commission that is independent from the influence of the Board of Supervisors. This commission is called the Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC), which is composed of 14 commissioners randomly selected from a pool of 60 qualified applicants. The selection process helps to ensure that the CRC is not only independent from the Board, but is representative of the County's diversity.

The redistricting process is critical because US citizens have the privilege and right to elect their own representatives. As the County's population grows, the Supervisorial boundaries must be adjusted to account for shifts in population and demographics to ensure that voters in each Supervisorial District have an equal voice in electing their representatives. The elected representatives are responsible for public policy and funding decisions that impact the lives of County residents, such as but not limited to, law enforcement, hospitals, public works, children and family services and public social services. Periodic redistricting can help to ensure diverse populations and communities have opportunities to have their voices heard. Additionally, it enables the public to provide

input about their communities of interest.

For example, since LA Koreatown is split between four city council districts, it might be assumed that the community is strongly represented by four elected officials. However, during the 1992 LA riots, insufficient aid was given to the Korean-American community. This suggests that the community voices were thinly spread across the four districts and underrepresented.

It is our responsibility as constituents to be proactive and to voice our thoughts. This is the time to be critical of the district boundaries so that the commission can truly be aware of existing disparities within our communities due to misrepresentation. The commission will never know unless you voice your opinions to the CRC.

The CRC has held and will continue to hold scheduled hearings to receive public input to make an informed decision on redrawing the district lines. The CRC must finalize the Redistricting Plan no later than December 15, 2021. A few milestones in between are the following: continued public outreach; additional public hearings; availability of US Census Bureau data, mapping software for public use, CRC review of public input, and CRC proposed redistricting plan options. With a few months remaining until the final deadline of December 15, 2021, we highly encourage stakeholders to participate and provide input into the redistricting of LA County. If stakeholders are unable to participate in meetings, public comments are accepted on the website. Redistricting can have long term effects and ultimately impacts the future of communities. Participation from residents ensures populations across LA County all have equal opportunities for their voices to be heard. For more information, go to [www.redistricting.lacounty.gov](http://www.redistricting.lacounty.gov).

DATE/TIME	DISTRICT LOCATION	
Thu 8/19 7:00 PM	SD 2 & Zone H	West LA College Fine Arts Bldg (Culver City) 9000 Overland Ave
Wed 9/22 7:00 PM	SD 3	San Fernando Library (San Fernando) 217 N. Maclay Ave
Wed 9/29 7:00 PM	SD 4	Clifton M. Brakensiek Library (Bellflower) 9945 Flower St.
Fall Meetings (TBD)		Bob Hope Patriotic Hall (Los Angeles) 1816 S. Figueroa St. (by LA Metro or park @ LA Trade-Technical College)

## LEARN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF REDISTRICTING



Tuesday, August 31, 2021 at 7:00PM | [Click to Register for Zoom](#)

**Daniel M. Mayeda**

**Commissioner (Co-Chair), Citizens Redistricting Commission**

The most important process that determines the political power of LA County is happening right now. This year, the LA County Citizens Redistricting Commission is taking public comment from communities across LA County to determine how supervisorial district lines will be redrawn. Join us to hear why redistricting is important!

This month, LACAAEA has invited Daniel M. Mayeda, Co-Chair of the Citizens Redistricting Commission, come speak about the 2021 LA County Redistricting Process: What Is Redistricting? What's Different About It This Year? Why Is It Important that all Residents in LA County Get Involved in the Process?

**Please Note:** Mr. Mayeda will be speaking about the topics above, and will not be taking public comment on how the supervisorial districts should be drawn, as this is not a Commission meeting with a quorum of Commissioners present.

## Meet a County Leader



**Akiko Tagawa**  
Chief Deputy Director,  
Medical Examiner-  
Coroner

### **Why did you choose to work for LA County?**

After graduation, a classmate from college was applying for a position as an Environmental Health Specialist with the Department of Public Health and encouraged me to apply and we joined together in 1995. I had previously told her about an internship opportunity and we did the internship together as well. I chose to work for LA County because the job was something that aligned with what I studied in college, the benefits appeared great, there was stability in pay, and most of all, a 4-day work week that allowed me in my 20's to enjoy 3-day weekends every week.

### **What advice would you give to someone starting out?**

Be open to all ideas and opinions. I always assume that I don't know anything and ask lots of questions. Never limit yourself.

### **What's the biggest factor that has helped you be successful in your career?**

I thought long and hard about this question. It's an interesting question because I've never thought of promotions as a success or something that defines who I am. For me, success in my career is about enjoying the work and feeling like I'm making a difference to someone. I'll always give my 100%. I'm also very liberal in speaking my mind, especially if a new idea or plan may have hurdles that have not been addressed. I like to work in the collective and achieve missions together as part of a team. I've always pursued continuous learning and improvement of myself and my teams. I always try to pass these values, ideas and practices to all the teams I work with. The team growth gives me much more pleasure and level of accomplishment than my own.

As a team, we will never say no to an assignment or project, and are never afraid to try things that no one else has attempted.

### **What are your success habits?**

My success habits are that I am extremely comfortable in my own skin and will make sure to start projects, and close out projects. The ability to follow through on an assignment and complete a task is a must.

### **Whose career inspires you and why? If you weren't a Chief Deputy Director for LA County, what career would you like to explore?**

I'm inspired by the day-to-day function of life and work. Most of my colleagues and bosses have inspired me throughout my career. Each person comes to work and they do their best to make the County a better place. It's not something one person does; it's something that happens because of the collective. How amazing is that? I'm inspired by the housekeeping staff that make sure our offices are kept clean each and every day, I'm inspired by the secretaries that make sure my

hectic calendar is kept at bay, and remind me to take my breaks, I'm inspired by my bosses who work all the time to keep the departments running, keep staff happy, and make their departments the best in the country. The list goes on.

If I must choose inspirational careers, I'd say, Eleanor Roosevelt, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Madeleine Albright, Michelle Obama, Yuri Kochiyama, and Barbara Ferrer, who are all very intelligent, strong women who have utilized their platforms to offer a voice, and uplift others. They are confident and never afraid to speak up.

I wonder if I'd be a gourmet dog food caterer or a food blogger. My family and friends all believe that whatever it is that I decide to do, they know I'll always be busy and fully engaged.

### **What personality trait should every leader have?**

Leadership requires an array of traits, and what works for one person may not work for others. For me, the traits which have been helpful have been compassion, relentless pursuit of improvement, a systems approach to completing tasks, the ability to foresee and respond to challenges, the ability to evaluate the "whole picture", tenacity, perseverance, and finally to have the self-confidence to know when and how to say, "I need help," or "I made a mistake". I always remember what a supervisor in my past has told me younger in my career, "Akiko, you can't do everything by yourself. You will only be as successful as your team. Take care of your team and make sure your team succeeds."

### **What was the hardest decision you ever had to make?**

I feel many decisions are hard and difficult. Some of the simplest decisions may end up with serious unintended consequences. For that reason, I do everything I can to follow best practices, evidence-based approaches, and be as transparent as possible by involving as many people as I can. I anticipate all positive and negative outcomes that could arise as a result of my decision, but also keep in mind that some consequences are beyond my control. I also solicit advice and guidance from the people around me. The collective decision is so much stronger and safer.

### **How do you push through your worst times?**

Good or bad, we must keep moving forward. When I had a bad day, I breathe, cry a little (quietly and by myself), apply mindfulness exercises, and hug my dog. Then, I pick myself up, dust myself off, and get back to the tasks at hand. I feel "safe" knowing that I always have a "team" that'll help me get back up and encourage me to keep going. The show must go on.

### **What mistakes have you made along the way? If you could start all over again, what would you do differently?**

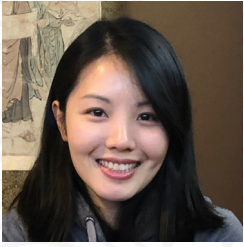
Everyday is filled with mistakes. I'd never start over because the mistakes I make and the subsequent learning I do from them is what makes me who I am today. I'm ok in my own skin and will own all of the mistakes I've made throughout the years.

### **Have you personally experienced any form of discrimination as an Asian American?**

Yes, I have experienced discrimination because of my race/ethnicity, but also because of my religion,

*(continue to page 8)*

## Meet Our New Liaisons and New Board Members



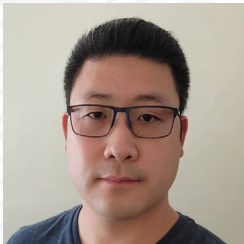
### WINNIE XIAO | CITY GOVERNMENT LIAISON

Winnie received her bachelor's degree from USC Marshall School of Business. She currently works as an appraiser at the Assessor's Office handling business property valuation. She enjoys working closely with the public and helping people navigate through the complex system of property assessments. In addition, Winnie is assisting with LACAAEA's outreach efforts to recruit more AAPI youths to participate in the Youth@Work program.

Winnie's favorite pastime is sitting down with a coffee and reading a good book. She also enjoys traveling, drawing, singing, and playing the piano.

### LAWRENCE LIU | ASIAN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Lawrence has been with LA County for over two years working for the Legal Services unit with the Assessor's office. Prior to his public service work, he was in a private practice focusing on medical practice, family law, estate planning, and served as in-house counsel for a commercial property management company. He was admitted to the State Bar of California in 2005. Lawrence is a first generation Chinese American and is fluent in Mandarin. His hobbies consist of snowboarding, softball, and martial arts.

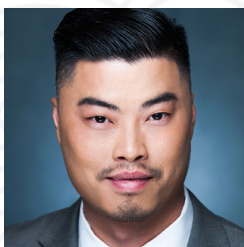


### JOHN PARK LEE | RETIREE LIAISON

Born in New York and raised in New Jersey, John moved to California in 2011 and started with LA County in 2013. He joined the Association soon after and has enjoyed meeting members and learning about how they serve the County. In his free time, he enjoys photography, hiking, and spending time with his young kids. John is currently a Network Administrator with the Health Services Dept.

### SARAH TRUONG | RECORDING SECRETARY (Newly Appointed)

Sarah began her County career as an Intermediate Typist Clerk with the Health Services in 2001. She promoted within the department and further her career by joining County Counsel as an Administrative Assistant II. Sarah's analytical skills advanced while gaining knowledge in contracting. Soon after, she promoted to the Assessor's Office as a Management Analyst. Presently, she continues her dedication to public service as an Administrative Services Manager I. With a supporting husband also in the County workforce, they hope to build the American dream of choice and voice for their two delightful daughters.



### VINH TRUONG | COMMUNITY SUPPORTER

Vinh recently joined LACAAEA as a non-County employee member after hearing about LACAAEA's goal to advocate for the AAPI community. Vinh is a public servant serving as a Councilmember of Duarte's 2nd District. Vinh also served as a commissioner on the Duarte Economic Development Commission and looks forward to building a solid foundation and stable community for LA County. Professionally, Vinh's passions include biking with his son, woodworking, golfing, gardening, and spending time with his family.

## Welcome New Members

- Ara An** (Board of Supervisors)
- Cesar Sevilla** (Health Services)
- Christian Villanueva**  
(Workforce Development, Aging & Community Services)
- Daniel Yen** (Auditor-Controller)
- Hanna Choi** (Human Resources)
- Jonathan Won** (Internal Services)
- Jayson Chan** (Board of Supervisors)
- Karen Magsino-Natividad**  
(Board of Supervisors)
- Katrina Lacerna** (Library)
- Mixim Chor** (Public Social Services)
- Stephen Niwa** (Board of Supervisors)

## Congratulations Eddie!



After nearly a decade of exemplary performance in local government, our President, Eddie Yen has been promoted as the Assistant Executive Officer at the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors, where he will oversee Technology, Planning, Legislation, the Assessment Appeals Board and Operations. This includes overseeing the Board operations.

The Executive Office manages technology, staffing, procurement and facilities, as well as the publication of information for the LA County Board of Supervisors, various County depts and the public. The office also oversees the Office of Inspector General and other County commissions, such as the Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission, Office of Child Protection, Commission on Disabilities, and the County Equity Oversight Panel.

Check out the press release [HERE](#):

## LACAAEA Scholarship Program

Contributed by Nemanja Pavlovic

LACAAEA recently awarded scholarships totaling \$1,500 to three promising young students. This program was started in 2000 to recognize the accomplishment of this organization's founders and to financially assist members with their children's higher education.

### EDWARD W. LEE CONTINUING EDUCATION

Awarded to students already enrolled in a four-year college. Mr. Lee was one of the founders of the LACAAEA, who was a visionary and worked tirelessly to help promote AAPIs, fight discrimination in the workplace, and ensure that future generations would not face the same issues and problems that he observed and experienced. Mr. Lee was a Division Chief with the Dept of Health Services in the Environmental Mgmt Division, and then became the Director of Community Relations.



This year's winner is **Chris Lew**. Chris was very grateful for this award and explained: "First off, I would like to say I am super appreciative of the Edward W. Lee Continuing Education Scholarship! Through the various efforts of those before me, I know that I am able to be a successful person not only on an individual level, but on a global level as well. Currently, I am attending the USC and am planning to major in Computer Science. I hope to one day be able to make a real difference in the world and whether this be in cyber security/counter-terrorism, software, or entertainment, I am confident that I will be the best version of myself."

### HOWARD TAKATA TRADE/VOCATIONAL

Awarded to graduating high school seniors planning careers where certificates of completion are acceptable and college degrees are optional. Mr. Takata was one of the founders of the LACAAEA, who fought for recognition of AAPIs in the County workforce and development of AAPI with qualifying job skills to compete for promotional opportunities. Mr. Takata retired in 1998 from the Internal Services Dept, but remains active with LACAAEA.



This year's winner is **Stephan W. Hahn** who states that he is very grateful and humbled for being chosen for the Howard Takata Trade/Vocational scholarship award. Stephan will be entering Cal Poly Pomona as a Civil Engineering major in the Maximizing Engineering Program. Some of Stephan's recognitions include biliteracy in Korean, captain of the football team at his high school and being accepted into the Nat'l Society of High School Scholars. Living in the less fortunate areas of DTLA has touched a special part of his heart that he wants to keep his focus on helping to fix or even just improve homelessness situation, no matter how big or small it may be. Through civil engineering, he hopes to bring more affordable and efficient housing for many, if not all those who just need a roof over their head.

### SHIRLEY BOLINGER FOUR-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE

Awarded to graduating high school seniors entering a four-year college. Ms. Bolinger was a Division Chief with the Chief Administrative Office. She was an active member of the LACAAEA and pushed for the creation of these scholarships. Sadly, Ms. Bolinger passed away before the first scholarships were awarded.



This year's Shirley Bolinger Four-Year Undergraduate winner is **Alexandra Fung** who is a rising freshman at the UCSD. At UCSD, she will be studying Political Science with a concentration in Public Policy as well as Urban Studies and Planning. After graduating, she would love to become an urban planner or transportation specialist. In high school, Alexandra was involved in Arcadia High School's Future Business Leaders of America Club, Interact Club, Constitution Team, and school newspaper.

LACAAEA warmly congratulates this year's scholarship winners and takes a special pride in playing a small part in their future education!

## AAPI Youth @ Work

Contributed by Winnie Xiao



LACAAEA is proud to join Faith and Community Empowerment (FACE) to promote the Youth@Work program to AAPI youths of LA County. Youth@Work is a paid internship program offered by WDACS to provide those age 14-24 a chance to gain work experience within either County departments or private businesses. Currently, only 3% of the students participating in Youth@Work are AAPI while the population of LA County is made up of 15% AAPI. We are working hard to raise awareness of this program to the AAPI community so that our youths

have equal access to the advancement opportunities available. For those interested in the Youth@Work program, please follow the directions on the flyer to join.

Businesses operating within LA County can also host students through the Youth@Work program. Students will be working through subsidized wages and businesses have a chance to help mentor our youths to a brighter future. For employers that have possible openings, please fill out the interest form through this link [HERE](#).



**AAPI  
Contributions:**

**Lily Lee Chen**

*Contributed by Joanna De La Cuesta*

Lily Lee Chen is most famously known for becoming the nation's first Chinese American female mayor in 1983. Born in Tianjin, China in 1936, Chen's passion for advocacy and coalition building began during her early school years when her family moved to Taiwan due to the civil war. As a young teenager, Chen notably delivered a speech on



behalf of Taiwan's youth. In 1957, Chen came to the US to study at San Francisco State University and subsequently, earned a master's degree at the University of Washington, while also starting a family with her late husband, Paul. Chen's degree in Social Work allowed for the beginning of her government career at LA County Dept. of Public Social Services where she served for 27 years. She established the first Asian Pacific Outreach program by making government services accessible to the AAPI community throughout LA County. The program was incredibly successful as it was later used as a prototype by the Dept. of Health and Human Services to implement similar programs in other counties. Eventually she was promoted to Director of the Social Services Planning and Resource Development Office. During her role as Director, she was responsible for the planning and distribution of Title XX General Revenue Sharing funding of \$70 million to the United Way and other Social service Agencies. Additionally, Chen contributed to the development of Community Resource Information Bank (CRIB). Prior to her retirement, she moved to the LA County Dept. of Children and Family Services serving as one of the department's executive managers.

As a resident of Monterey Park, Chen witnessed the city's emerging issues in the early '80s, including the potential construction of casinos, and the influx of racist responses to the growing immigrant community. Additionally, Chen was actively involved in the local PTA and the Neighborhood Watch program which also provided an opportunity for her to observe and voice community concerns. In response to the city's increasing problems, her fellow community members urged her to run for City Council. With the support of family and friends, Chen ran for the seat in 1981. Though she lost the election by 28 votes, her enthusiasm to help her community was not deterred. Chen continued to devote her time to building strong relationships with AAPI community, continuously advocating for their

rights. She worked with Cesar Chavez, Mrs. Martin Luther King, and other community leaders. Lily launched a major Voter Registration Drive and published a bilingual voters' handbook to encourage AAPI voter participation. In 1983, Chen claimed a victorious election, receiving the largest number of votes for any candidate for municipal office in the history of Monterey Park. She was the first of three new council members to serve as mayor.

Chen's mayorship in Monterey Park soon became worldwide news as she was recognized for being the first female Chinese American mayor. Chen leveraged her international recognition to benefit the city, paving the way for Monterey Park to become a recipient of USA Today's "All-American City Award." The accolade was an esteemed response to Chen's countless contributions to the city, including its successful "ethnic mix," its shutdown of casinos and gambling proposals, as well as its acquisition of a \$1.7 million State grant to build a new cafeteria and auditorium at Monterey-Highland Elementary School. Chen also lobbied for Monterey Park to become an Olympic City. The city hosted the 1984 Olympic games.



Chen's altruistic contributions also extended to a national level throughout the 80s' and 90s'. Her roles included the Chairperson of Peace and Security Taskforce of the Platform Committee at the 1984 Democratic National Convention, as well as the Chair of the Asian Pacific Leadership Council at the 2000 convention. She also served on the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in Armed Services (DACOWITS), allowing her to continue advocating for women's rights. One of Chen's most notable achievements was her lobbying for English and Second Language Programs (ESL). After being appointed as a member of the National Advisory Council on Adult Education by Jimmy Carter in 1980, Chen vigorously lobbied for Federal Funding to help low-income minorities and immigrants learn English. Collectively, Chen's unyielding efforts and political accomplishments are still significant to this day, and for generations to come.

*Chen has earned a variety of recognitions. At the LA County's bicentennial celebration, the Chairman of the LA County Board of Supervisors, Kenneth Hahn, honored Chen as the symbol of immigrants' contribution to America. Most recently, in 2016 former President Obama awarded her the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year; and in 2017 in celebration of International Women's Day, the LA Times named her as one of the "8 LA Women You Should Know" alongside the first female astronaut, Sally Ride.*

*Lily Lee Chen has two children Helen and Arthur. Helen Chen MD is the medical director of radiation oncology at City of Hope. Arthur Chen is a supplier program manager at the Boeing Aerospace company. She also has three granddaughters.*

## Celebrating AAPI Athletic Achievements

Contributed by Eddie Yen  
and Winnie Xiao

Since 2020, AAPIs have struggled with the anti-AAPI hate felt across the country. The Tokyo Summer Olympics reminds us that Americans of all races, culture and gender are competing in the Olympics representing one country, USA. The Olympics help remind us that what makes the US a great country is the fact that we are a country made of immigrants succeeding not despite being diverse, but rather because we are diverse. In this article, LACAAEA celebrates the outstanding achievements of all our AAPI Olympic athletes that are proudly representing all of us on the world stage. In this article, we've highlighted just a handful of unique stories to inspire you to stand taller.

### **Torri Huske, Chinese American Swimming – Women's 100m Butterfly**

Torri is a biracial Virginia native who started swimming at 7. She credits her Chinese American mother as her inspiration for reaching her dreams. As a young adult, she quickly rose through the ranks and won competitions that placed her on the Olympics team. During the swimming trials for the Olympics, Torri broke the US women's record for 100-meter butterfly not once, but twice!

Swimming has traditionally been a white-dominated sport in which other racial minorities seldom get the encouragement to participate. However, in this Olympics, Asian swimmers from different countries have shown the world that they are just as capable to excel in this sport.

### **Sakura Kokumai, Japanese American Women's Karate-Kata**



Sakura is a first-generation Japanese American, born in Hawaii and raised in Japan. She proudly represented the US Olympics team in karate for the Olympics. Sakura is an eight-time USA National Champion and a six-time Pan American Champion.

In April 2021, she was verbally threatened by a man while training at a local SoCal park. Sakura felt compelled to share her experience and used her platform to raise awareness of AAPI-hate, reminding everyone that "... it could happen to anybody. And we all just have to be there for each other."

### **Sunisa Lee, Hmong American Women's Gymnastics – Women's All-Around**

Being regarded as a highly decorated American female gymnast, "Suni" is no doubt one of the brightest stars of the 2021 Olympics with a total of 6 world championships and now, an Olympic medalist. She is the first Hmong American to compete with the US Olympic gymnastics team, bringing home a gold for the all-around, a silver for the team event, and a bronze in uneven bars.



At an early age, Suni's father, John, was her biggest supporter who built her first balance beam because they couldn't afford to buy one. The family was left devastated when her father had an accident and was left paralyzed days before the 2019 National Championships. Despite this tragedy, John encouraged her to push forward.

The Hmong community is a tight-knit community that supported Suni on her Olympic journey by raising funds to support her competitions. Although Suni's family couldn't attend the Olympic competition, they watched her performance at home with pride. She later tweeted a video of her family's reaction to her winning gold with the text: "the people I do it all for."

### **Jordan Windle, Cambodian American Diving – Men's 10m Platform**



Long before Jordan dove from the 10 meter diving platform in the first round of the event's finals, scoring five out of seven perfect 10s, he was adopted from a Cambodian orphanage by Jerry Windle who helped to nurse him back to health from malnutrition, scabies, and parasites. Although Jordan's beginning wasn't easy, he was surrounded by love and dedicated coaches, who supported his Olympic journey.

With a big heart and smiles, Jordan uses his platform to inspire others. After co-writing a children's book with his father, "An Orphan No More: The True Story of a Boy," a testament to their remarkable bond, Jordan returned to Cambodia to inspire the children by establishing the Jordan Pisey Windle Foundation to provide a nonprofit diving program for disadvantaged Cambodian children.

Other noteworthy AAPI Olympic athletes that proudly represented the Team USA are as follows:

#### **Kanak Jha, Indian American Table Tennis – Men's Singles, Team**

#### **Lee Kiefer, Filipina American Gold medalist in Fencing while in med school**

#### **Jay Litherland, Japanese American Swimming – Men's 400m**

#### **Collin Morikawa, Japanese American Golf – Men's Individual Stroke Play**

#### **Kawika and Erik Shoji, Japanese Americans Volleyball – Men's Team**

#### **Erica Sullivan, Japanese American Swimming – Women's 1500m Freestyle**

#### **Justine Wong-Orantes, ChineseMexican descent Volleyball – Women's Team**

#### **Lily Zhang, Chinese American Table Tennis – Women's Singles, Team**

#### **Laura Zeng, Chinese American Rhythmic Gymnastics – Individual All-Around**

The AAPI athletes mentioned above have all come from diverse backgrounds. Despite having to endure any hardships or any anti-Asian hate sentiments back home, by competing in the Olympics as elite athletes, they've modeled to the world their uniqueness instead of seeing them through their race. May they be the shining light to all AAPIs who have been misunderstood or held back because of their race and culture. "Anything is possible" shouldn't be a privilege to some, but a right for all.

## Meet a County Leader: Akiko Tagawa

(continue from page 3)

age, gender, and just because of who I am. It has shaped me to be who I am today.

**In light of the rise in AAPI hate crimes that are occurring in our community, what are some (or one thing) our community can do as a response?**

The wonderful thing about the United States is that it is a country that offers the right to free speech and assembly. We have rights, and I strongly believe that it is our duty to speak out with one voice against discrimination and hate. That one voice can bring about thoughtful and purposeful institutional change.

**What is the best advice you can give LACAAEA and its membership?**

Be a continual learner. Be kind to internal and external partners. Live in the here and now. Be careful of confusing the destination with the journey, the pursuit of career advancement may be your goal but shouldn't be your only focus in your work or your life. Try to give your very best that you

can. Always keep alert - be aware and ready for situations that may lead you to unexpected opportunities.

*Akiko Tagawa has over 25 years of County experience, mostly associated with administrative and process improvement work. She started her County career as an Environmental Health Specialist (restaurant inspector). Her inquisitive mind and penchant for asking questions helped her develop many friendships and working relationships with the State, federal, and local gov' agencies which helped her develop a reputation of expertise in food safety, quality assurance regulations and best practices. She also supported the implementation of the restaurant grading system and helped establish the public relations program within Environmental Health.*

*Her administrative career has since evolved from legislative analyses and process improvement projects with the Substance Abuse Prevention and Control program, management services for the Probation Department, and most recently as the Acting Deputy Director of Public Health where she was instrumental in supporting the expansion of the contact tracing program and implementation of the vaccination mega-PODs during the COVID19 pandemic response. The combined experience and knowledge over the past 25 years and being a strong change agent has allowed her this opportunity as the new Chief Deputy of the Dept of Medical Examiner-Coroner's office.*

## Supporting Local AAPI Businesses Doing Some Good!

### Fishwives – Serving Up Lobster Rolls and Second Chances

88 N. Fair Oaks Ave, Pasadena  
(626) 219-6199  
[www.fishwives.com](http://www.fishwives.com)

Contributed by Truc Moore and Vinh Truong

Fishwives is an incredible, Asian owned, small business by Tim Tang serving up fantastic New England style seafood in Old Town Pasadena. It is known for classic seafood dishes like amazing lobster rolls and fish and chips, and reimagined classics like fried oyster deviled eggs! Fishwives opened in 2017 and has remained successful when other seafood restaurants in Pasadena like McCormick & Schmick's had to close their doors. Aside from operating a successful restaurant, Tim is giving back to the community by hiring justice impacted individuals and former substance abusers to work in his restaurant and learn the restaurant business. He's a big believer in giving people a second chance who want it!

What was Tim's inspiration for opening Fishwives? *Grandma!* Tim, who grew up in San Gabriel Valley, had heard many stories about how grandma---a fish wife---worked so hard selling fish at the markets in Taiwan to make money to support her family. That, combined with his love for New England seafood at a young age, set his desire to open a seafood restaurant one day. While he was conflicted in college to follow the science path many Asians choose to please their families, Tim graduated from college with a degree in Chemistry but went straight into working at restaurants. He worked in the kitchen, and was also a busboy, waiter, short order cook and took roles in management, always working his way up and learning the business of running a successful restaurant. Along the way, he made great contacts with suppliers and vendors who now provide his super fresh seafood.

It was Tim's hard work that kept Fishwives afloat during the pandemic. Fishwives packed fresh shucked oysters for takeout to their loyal customers. The restaurant had built such a reputation for fresh seafood and a loyal following of locals, that when restaurants were ordered closed for a time during the pandemic, local customers continued to look to Fishwives to meet their demands for fresh oysters.

If you haven't been to Fishwives, or it's been some time since you sank your teeth into a buttery New England lobster roll, it's time to head on over! Fishwives is open for lunch and dinner six days a week, and is closed on Mondays. Fishwives does take reservations.

