



## 2016 APAPA Albany Chapter Grand Opening



ALBANY, NY— The communities in the Greater Capital district celebrated the Grand Opening of Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA) Albany Chapter on September 10 at the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library. This is the second APAPA Chapter in New York State, and the 17th nationally.

Packed into a ballroom were descendants from all over Asia and the world: Nepalese, Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Korean, Pakistani, Italian and many from the diverse people of America, celebrating the collective determination to empower Americans through education and civic engagement.



HP Wang, Chair of APAPA-ALC

Alice Han, a student from Acadia Middle School, led the Pledge of Allegiance. A passionate rendition of the National Anthem was delivered by Paul Tan, a junior from Niskayuna High School.

In his opening remarks, HP Wang, chair of APAPA-ALC, stressed the fact that despite the increasing population of Asian Americans in New York State (Asian Americans now account for 9% of the state population), they are underrepresented in NY State Legislature, with only ONE Asian American Assembly Member out of 213 seats. Similar



Paul Tan

situations are also found in the judicial and executive branches of the New York State government. In order to have representation that represents the diversity of America we will move forward to have a Judicial, Legislative and Executive branches be representative of America as a whole. This same sentiment was also shared by Ram Lalukota, President of the Tricity Indian Association, who is planning to work together on program development with APAPA-ALC. Dr. Swatantra Mitta, another Indian community leader, also proposed to connect the Indian American youth group to APAPA-ALC through the Internship Program. Mr. Ashok Sedhain, President of the Albany New York Nepalese Society, will invite Nepalese community members to join APAPA-ALC.

APAPA Founder CC Yin recounted how the idea of establishing a local chapter at Albany was conceived, and noted the tremendous space to grow in terms of civic participation by all communities in the Capital District of New York. Congressman Paul Tonko, citing his own Polish ancestry, stressed that Asian Americans not only contribute to society through hard work, but also by bringing unique culture and diversity that should be celebrated with pride in this immigrant-built country.

In her keynote speech, Congresswoman Grace Meng from New York District 6 used several incidents that affected Asian communities as examples to point out the importance of civic engagement by Asians Americans. She urged all to support and work in a more diverse setting. The more diverse our government is the better we are all represented. It is important for New York and rest of the nation to come together and work to make America a more "perfect Union." Grace Meng is the only female Asian American who to be elected for Congress on the East Coast.



Grace Meng, Congresswoman (NY6)

David Wu, a former Congressman from Oregon, who was once a local resident of Latham in the 1960s. As a second generation immigrant, he shared his own journey in politics and encouraged local high school and college students who attended the APAPA grand opening to get involved in politics and public affairs. The Grand Opening was concluded with a seminar by Sandy Chau, a member of the APAPA National Governing Board, on entrepreneurship that intrigued the attendees, many of whom were engineers and scientists. "Now it is time to hit the ground running, as the voter registration deadline in New York State is a month away," said HP Wang.

The last 20 years witnessed a large influx of Asian Americans into the Capital District of New York, mostly immigrants seeking integration and participation in local communities. APAPA-ALC will be focused on encouraging Americans to be civically engaged. It will raise funds to sponsor all American students in high schools and colleges who are committed to civic leadership, and provide mentoring programs, scholarship awards, and place young people in intern programs at all levels of government.



Meeting scene



Social hour



Paul Tonko, Congressman (NY20)



Meeting scene