By Yengtaova Yuatongjerxiong

Many people have lived with fear, uncertainty and difficulty the last two years since the pandemic hit. Everything was shut down and went on virtually.

Lives have changed and adapted to a new normal. However, 2022 is a remarkable year to start off fresh and head back to a normal life again.

As COVID-19 infection cases decline and mandates are lifted, it is a good opportunity to reconnect with the community and interact with people.

One of these opportunities will come up this April with Asian Fest.

After two years of not being able to host the event, it has now finally come back.

Asian Fest is one of the oldest Asian festivals in Fresno organized for nearly 18 years at Fresno City College.

The event originated from the mind of John Cho, an Asian studies instructor at Fresno City, who had a vision of creating an event to celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month for Fresno City College as well as the community.

He hopes that through presenting the cultural heritage of the thriving Central Valley, he would be able to emphasize the significance of cultural diversity and inclusiveness.

Asian Fest will be held from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 30 at Fresno City College. It is a free event and parking is free.

At first, Asian Fest was small and consisted of a few booths, said Maile Martin, senior program specialist and Asian Fest director.

She first attended the event in 2006, and as a Korean American, she was greatly inspired by Cho’s vision.

Ever since, she dedicated herself to helping make the event bigger and better each year by getting sponsorships from Table Mountain Casino, Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino, EECU and Student Activities.

“This year, the year of the tiger, the event is going to be extra special because we have not done it for a while. People are excited to go and meet up. We will also make it memorable to honor John Cho since he will retire this year,” Martin said.

The festival celebrates Asian cultures and offers a variety of food from different cultures including Hmong, Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese.

There will be over 300 performances, in martial arts, Bollywood dancing, fan dancing and more.

There will also be events for all anime lovers with an anime and cosplay village featuring anime-wrapped cars.

There will also be children’s activities, an international fashion show and craft vendors.

Asian Fest is not only a place to bring the community together, but it also contributes back to the community as well.

It helps local food and craft vendors make money. Performers can have a place to show their talents to the public.

At the same time, the festival will launch a new fundraising initiative called Sake Garden, where festival-goers can go and try alcoholic beverages from Japan and other countries and cultures.

The money raised will be used to fund Asian student scholarships.

By Katie Xiong

The fourth annual Southeast Asian Journey to Success Conference was attend-
sed by many from all over the Central Valley on March 19. The Journey to Success Conference was held at Fresno State in partnership with the Fresno Unified School District, Parent University and The Fresno Center.

The main purpose of the annual conference is to “bring together our Southeast Asian families to a university campus and provide them with the resources, information, workshops ranking from higher education, financial aid, culture, leadership to our families and students,” said Chankeo Vang, a representative from Parent University.

The conference provided many workshops led by professionals from around the Central Valley, but this year the main attraction was guest speaker Neng Thao, most known for his YouTube personal-

ity Neng Now which has over 2,000 sub-
scribers who follow him on his adventures around the world. He is especially known for his documentary “Among Mountains,” which follows him as he learns more about the Hmong people in Laos.

“If there’s one thing I want young folks to leave knowing, it’s that they can be a leader,” Thao said during the conference.

“We have so many great, beautiful, amazing minds here.”

Along with workshops and guest speakers, the conference also provided amazing performances from traditional Lao dances to traditional Hmong dances that brought an aspect of culture that brought the conference alive.

The last Southeast Asian Journey to Success Conference was held virtually in December 2020 during the pandemic. Neng Now summarized the conference by saying, “sometimes when we think of the juxtaposition of words ‘youth leadership,’ it seems like an oxymoron, but it is so important about that, because it is an oxymoron, when it does happen it is so powerful.”

Photo Credit: Maile Martin

Photo Credit: Maile Martin
Laotian mixed martial artist encourages students to pursue their dreams

By Yengtaova Yuatongjerxiong

More than 270 high school students from the Fresno Unified School District participated in the fourth annual Laotian American Educational Conference at the Satellite Student Union on April 1. It is an annual event that brings together Lao American students and professionals to spend a day learning, growing and empowering one another. The conference was established by the Laotian American Community of Fresno in 2017, which is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for the Lao community in collaboration with community partners and passionate leaders. It is inspired by the original Sacramento City Unified School District conference that started over 10 years ago by Dr. Khonepheth Lily Liemthongsamout. This year, the conference theme was "Make Your Mark and Leave a Legacy," which aims to leave a lasting impression on future generations.

One can leave a legacy and make an impact by becoming a mentor to others and changing their lives for the better, or by empowering and campaigning for resources and tools that will lift a community out of poverty. The keynote speaker this year was André Soukhamthath. He is known as "The Asian Sensation" in the mixed martial arts world and is the first Lao American fighter, André Soukhamthath. He is known as "The Asian Sensation" in the mixed martial arts world and is the first Lao American fighter. He was born in Laos and moved to the United States at the age of 12. He faced many challenges growing up, including poverty and discrimination. Despite these challenges, he never gave up on his dream of becoming a successful mixed martial artist. His passion for martial arts and his dedication to his craft have given him the opportunity to become a successful athlete.

Soukhamthath’s life was not easy. It reminds himself of the day that he only had $20 left in his pocket to survive for two weeks. Thus, Soukhamthath said he wants students to pursue their dreams and get an education. "It doesn’t matter where you come from," he said. "It doesn’t matter where you live or what people think of you. It doesn’t matter what you’ve been through. If you want to be something, you have to make that happen." During the conference, there was also a cultural performance to demonstrate the beauty of Lao culture.

The four workshops were on leadership, cultural identity and awareness, financial literacy and career exploration. They are specifically designed to prepare each participant for their future education and career, but most importantly, to enrich their awareness and understanding of Lao culture. "I think this event really gives students plenty of information and guidance to help them think about what they are going to do in the future. I know sometimes people don’t like to talk about it, but I am glad that this event brought it up," said Deken Jones, a junior from Clovis High School. "Also, it helps me connect back to our Lao culture because it is an event created by Lao people to help push us forward and get us somewhere to be. I hope that everybody in this room plans to do something with all the things they learned today."

The conference brings students from all around the city and county together to learn about Lao culture and heritage, to make new friends while strengthening old ones, and to learn about college and the skills needed for future success. "Your participation here today demonstrates each of you care about higher education, your community, culture and the opportunity to succeed in life," said Dr. Khampha Mouvongkham-Phelan, board member of the Laotian American Community of Fresno.

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The 21st annual Fresno Chinese New Year’s parade took place on March 5 in the heart of Chinatown, in Downtown Fresno. The parade had various groups like the Fresno Chinatown Preservation and Boy Scouts Troop 199 and a variety of food like boba and chicken bowls. There was a small parking lot off to the side that had tents with everything from small $5 jewelry to The Family Resource Center handing out information. Fresno Police Chief Paco Balderrama made an appearance as well as the Fresno Firefighters. This event was family friendly, and brought people from all over Fresno to come together in support of this small city within a city that is only about 18 blocks.

By Vanessa Rosario

Asian Pacific Review – Spring 2022 Staff

Katie Xiong
Staff Writer
Katie Xiong is a first-year student who is enrolled in pre-health, and her intended major is nursing. She is from Clovis, CA. Katie loves creative writing. One fun fact about Katie is that she is a BTS fan, and she hopes to see them in person one day.

Yengtaova Yuatongjerxiong
Staff Writer
Yengtaova Yuatongjerxiong (Yeng) is a third-year international student from Laos. He is majoring in computer science. Yeng likes to hike when has free time and enjoys playing video games as a hobby.
A conversation with Dr. Varaxy Yi

By Jesus Delgadillo

During my time at Fresno State, I have met several amazing educators and staff that have impacted my life as a graduate student. I wanted to highlight one staff member in particular: Dr. Varaxy Yi. Dr.Yi serves in multiple roles throughout the campus.

She is the coordinator and advisor for the Higher Education Administration Leadership (HEAL) graduate program, as well as the president of the Asian Faculty and Staff Association (AFSA). I first met Dr. Yi during an office visit to find out more about the HEAL graduate program. I wanted to pursue a master’s degree but was not sure which would be the best fit for me.

During our initial meeting, she described the program and its focus on social justice in education. Dr. Yi could see that I was still deciding on applying. She invited me to another information session, and I finally applied.

Dr. Yi was a great motivation for applying to HEAL. I felt reassured in my ability to pursue this master’s program, and she was a welcome guide to the world of higher education.

As a Khmer American child of refugees and the first of her family born in the United States, she was challenged with the idea that her Southeast Asian community experienced low enrollment and retention rates in higher education.

“Why are they not there?” she asked herself.

With this question in mind, she decided to contribute her knowledge to the research and provide her own insight and perspective. Dr. Yi also wanted to explore the roles of identity and faculty support, and how they impact a student. With her doctorate in higher education, Dr. Yi gained insight on how to be a supportive figure, and she said that she “knows how to better support a diverse student population.”

“I seek to create conversations that foster support. I am committed and invested in training scholar-practitioners to serve student bodies and to be interested in student success,” she said.

I asked Dr. Yi about some trends that she feels will be occurring in higher education. She said she feels that there must be a racial reckoning in universities, as well as engaging in more anti-racism efforts in order to support students, staff and faculty.

“Part of this recognition should be focused on the ways that racist structures and policies have shaped higher education institutions, according to Dr. Yi.

“And we must acknowledge and work through the pain and trauma from our institutions,” she said.

I asked her what some fun facts about herself are, and which she would like to share. She used to be an extreme couponer, and she enjoys weeding her garden as a meditative practice.

Through her own journey through higher education, Dr. Yi has experienced lows and highs which have shaped her philosophy on student guidance. Dr. Yi offered advice to future scholar-practitioners entering her field.

“In order to better understand and support students and other campus community members, one of our utmost priorities should be to commit to engaging in critical reflection and reflexivity,” Dr. Yi said.

“We must continue to learn and to grow because the work of equity requires us to recognize that we can never become complacent or believe that we have reached the pinnacle. This work is a journey, and we must reflect on all the ways we are complicit in systems. Acknowledging and accepting this can make us more aware of how we do our work.”

Dr. Yi has been a constant support to both first- and second-year cohorts through our journeys within HEAL, and I am grateful to have gotten the opportunity to have received her guidance.

Thank you, Dr. Yi.

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Welcome to the second printing of the new Asian Pacific Review!

As the editor-in-chief, I was happy to see the positive response that our relaunched APR has had. The staff is greatly appreciative of having the opportunity to spearhead the new printings of the paper for the spring semester. Working with our faculty advisor BoNhia Lee, I learned a lot about The Collegian, the history of Asian Pacific Review and the importance of having a space for students to provide their voices.

As we wrap up our spring semester, I want to thank our readers for welcoming APR back. Having the opportunity with the Asian Pacific Review staff to begin printing the paper was a great learning experience for us all. The staff is excited to continue writing for APR for the next school year and fall semester.

I am a senior who is graduating in May, so this is my final edition of Asian Pacific Review. Although I am leaving my post as editor in chief, I look forward to seeing Asian Pacific Review provide insightful stories from the staff and see the growth of the paper. Thank you BoNhia for entrusting me with guiding the paper back into print. Thank you staff for our time together, and having the opportunity to know each other as we pitched our stories for printing.

Signing off,
Editor in Chief
Jesus J. Delgadillo
Meet the Staff: Part 2

Hi everyone! Welcome to the second part of the Asian Pacific Review (APR) meet the staff. In our first issue for this relaunched APR, I highlighted a few of the staff with a brief bio and some fun facts about them. In this part, I would like to introduce staff members Kalyan Madoor and Sarah Vor.

Kalyan Madoor
Staff Writer

Kalyan is a junior in his third year at Fresno State. He is a double major, studying kinesiology and media, communications and journalism. He is originally from Manteca. During his free time from work and school Kalyan enjoys watching TV and movies, with his favorites being "Friends," "The Dark Knight," "Interstellar" and "Sherlock."

A fun fact about Kalyan is that he is an anime fan, whose favorite titles include "Attack on Titan" and "Naruto."

Sarah Vor
Staff Writer

Sarah Vor is a third-year student, who will be receiving her BA in liberal studies. She is a hometown girl born and raised from Fresno. Her hobbies include playing tennis and shopping. Sarah is also an avid gym fan who likes to work out when she can. Some fun facts about Sarah- She is double jointed in one pinky finger, and she also lead her club tennis team to fourth place recently.

One of Sarah’s favorite movies is "The Blind Side" with Sandra Bullock.

Thank you APR readers, for welcoming Yeng, Vanessa, Katie, Sarah, Kalyan and I onto the pages of Asian Pacific Review. The staff looks forward to providing readers with many new articles and stories to come.

Asian American Pacific Islander graduation ceremony

By Vanessa Rosario

The Fresno State Asian American Pacific Islander Graduation Ceremony is back in-person this year after being virtual in 2021 and canceled in 2020 due to COVID-19.

Earl Aguilera, an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Fresno State said, "Asian American cultural experiences are treated as an "outlier" to dominant, Westernized ceremonies in the U.S. This event centers the experiences and accomplishments of Asian American and Pacific Islander students, families, and communities."

It is a celebration that combines culture, academics and community and is one of several affinity graduation ceremonies for the 2022 graduating class.

This ceremony highlights the graduating students of Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage.

Any graduating student of the class of 2022 can also join, to support the AAPI students.

Date: May 21,2022
Time: 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Location: Save Mart Center
Registration deadline: RSVP by April 21, 2022

For more information or special accommodations please contact Shimel Her Suychou at 559.278.4435, or ssuychou@csufresno.edu and Phong Yang at 559.278.1164 or pyang@csufresno.edu, by no later than April 21, 2022.

For guest information, contact Brian Tsukimura at briant@mail.fresnostate.edu.