Asian Pacific American Day at the State Capitol

AAP staff report

ST. PAUL, Minn., (March 14, 2013) - Several hundred Asian Pacific American (APA) Day at the State Capitol event Monday, giving representatives a chance to present their legislative priorities and for the community to learn about advocacy training and a chance to meet their elected representatives. Organizers stated that the diversity and breadth of events of contemporary politics around the nation and the world demonstrate why both traditional relationships and coalitions including elected officials are so important. With a state budget deficit in the billions and 60 new legislatures, convening with those who will be making the decisions at the Legislature is central to promoting the well-being of the Asian Pacific community. The event presented two “Advocacy Training” sessions where CAPM Executive Director Dennita Ting and others taught people effective tools to making their voice heard at the capital. Participants on the floor were rotated with elected officials speaking ininclude State Senators’ John Marty (DFL), Sandy Pappas (DFL) and Ellen Anderson (DFL), along with Reps. Reps. Paul Thissen (DFL), Rozana Mitchell (DFL), and Joe Morrow (IRL). Community members and non-profit organizations present included: Cultural Society of Pacific Islanders; Asian Social Service Center; Neighbors Helping Neighbors; Asian Women United of Minnesota; Minnesota Asian-Pacific Partnership; Asian Women United of Minnesota, Keener Service Center and Vietnamese Social Services. The two workshops included: The who’s who at the Capitol, and The Capitol Judy’s: Navigating the Capitol, led by Minnesota Representative DFL Rep. Erin Murphy. The two workshops included: The who’s who at the Capitol, and The Capitol Judy’s: Navigating the Capitol, led by Minnesota Representative DFL Rep. Erin Murphy.

Kris Yamaguchi releases her children's book at MOA

AAP staff report

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (March 17, 2013) - Karen Yamaguchi was at the Mall of America Sunday to sign copies of her new children’s book, “Dream Big, Little Pig!”

Kris Yamagushi has had much written about her, including biographies and sports memoirs — especially because she's a woman in sports — and now she has a children's book. "Eiger, Skating for Democracy" published in 1997. "Dream Big, Little Pig!" is Yamaguchi’s debut picture book for children and young adults. Designed to ignite children of all ages to dream. The story centers on Poppy, a young wandering pig who has big dreams of becoming a firefighter. poppy was not pleased. In fact, poppy is not much interested in trying out her skates. The book Yeun Sang Kim and her daughter, who is in the process of becoming a firefighter, have brought it to the stage with costumes, skates and a stage set.

Marilyn Tam at General Mills

By Tom LAVERTY

GOLDEN VALLEY, Minn. (February 18, 2013) – Asian and Pacific Islander employees at General Mills can expect around 20 percent more during this year’s Lunar New Year holiday, the company headquarters in Golden Valley.

The first Lunar New Year Day was held in 2008, and the event has new goals to include a two-day schedule and broad program. More than 200 employees, members of the General Mills Asian Heritage Network and its South Asian Heritage Network, collaborated on the event that included the presence of company officials and an address from Ken Fewell, president and CEO. Perma Malhotra, a chemical engineer from Research and Development at General Mills, created a South Asian American Columbus dinner and culture, and the conference is a major annual event in the Asian Heritage Network’s calendar.

Marilyn Tam delivers her lantern address at Lunar New Year Day at General Mills headquarters. (AAP staff photo by Tom Lavernty)

Asian American Pacific Islander in Minnesota
Lordia Fok, standing left, a General Mills employee and member of the Asian Heritage Network Advisory Board, has a copy of How To Use What You’ve Got to Get What You Want, signed by the author and guest presenter, Marilyn Tam at Asian Leadership Day.

General Mills action plans. She had things that you can take back to your own life and actually use. Oftentimes you hear the inspirational speakers and you just don’t know how to apply it.

General Mills has seven employee networks, which also include the American Indian Council, the Hispanic Network, Betty’s Family (for GLBT employees), the Black Champions Network, and the Middle East/ North African network.

Asian Heritage Network President Alyssa Buckalew noted that the event is about building personal relationships and becoming leaders. They have networked with the longer established Black Champions and Hispanic Networks and they invited leaders from each to their events.

“We are newer and I think events like this help us to become more of a community and for others to see that as well,” said Buckalew.

Ken Charles vice president of Diversity and Inclusion, said Tam comes from a very authentic place. He said her personal journey through child labor and immigrating to the United States gave people the reason to believe that she has been there before achieving such great heights.

“The successes that she’s had in corporate America and philanthropy gave her the voice of somebody who okay who’s done it,” said Charles. “She shared the wisdom of that journey and gave people the tools that they could use so they could be more effective.”

Charles said the key message he took from the talk was the thought of opening your arms wide to those that are around you and then ultimately giving to others, is a model I think everyone can aspire to and really create value from.”

Charles said that as a global company General Mills wants an environment where they recruit, retain and develop talent representing the various perspectives of society and the world. The challenge, he added, is to ensure that once great people are in place that they continue to feel included and valued so they will stay with the company for the long hall.

“From that we get great folks that make a contribution to the organization, great ideas that drive the business forward and great insights that allow us to connect with communities and customers in a new way,” said Charles.

He said its important to ensure people are valued for performance and merits and not the color of their skin or their economic origins, but to work there needs to be a business rationale that recognizes the company does business in all communities and that these consumers bring great ideas and capabilities to the organization.

“it really is a virtuous cycle,” he added. “At the end of the day the goal is making the pudding – so when people see the value that folks bring to the organization its very easy for them to appreciate and to understand.”

He said that the demographics of the nation is changing and so its no longer a matter of choice about whether people believe it’s the right way to think or not. It is also a matter of globalization and embracing new realities to be an effective business in the future.

The Midwest presents a unique scenario where the building blocks need to be put in place to ensure may people who may have not experienced people of other cultures or backgrounds than their own will understand and appreciate the differences. The cultural days and workshops increase the comfortable level by getting people to know each other and they learn about one another.

“Every one of us has something different about us, whether it’s from our experience, whether its from our culture, whether it’s a physical capability – there is something unique about each of us,” he added. “We look at the world in a certain way because of the experience that we have.”

Charles said once the foundation of mutual value is reached then it is easier to get to a place where people need to value the uniqueness of others as much as their own. Its about getting over the sense of ‘my way is the right way and your way is wrong’ in a more natural and holistic approach.

“It’s a journey and you have to focus on the organization,” he added. “So diversity inclusion training, great management training, these cultural events, they help the environment – but you have to also focus on the individual, and not just the people of color, but everyone in the organization so that they understand how important this uniqueness is and how to value it in themselves and other people.”

When leadership follows this commitment then he said it is real and sincere. “If you do both of those pieces then you create an environment where good things start to happen,” he added.