



RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE. *Ku'ulei de Best (left photo, center) performs the Tahitian dance "Ote'a" and Maile Taute performs "Poi Ball Medley," a dance from New Zealand, at The Asian Reporter Foundation's 16th Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet. Both dancers are part of Kaleinani o ke Kukui. In the top photo are this year's Asian Reporter Foundation scholars and pictured at left is Sivheng Pao receiving her Most Honored Elder award. (AR Photos/Jan Landis and Jin Huang)*



Awards and scholarships bestowed at The Asian Reporter Foundation's 16th annual banquet

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The Asian Reporter Foundation's 16th Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet, held at the TAO Event Center for the second year, gathered 375 members of the community for an evening of awards and performances. Held in advance of Asian Heritage Month, the evening honored elders in the community, highlighted the great work of area nonprofits, issued scholarships to hardworking college-bound students, and showcased dances by local performance groups.

Following a welcome by masters of ceremonies Ronault L.S. "Polo" Catalani, Nim Xuto, and Zeke Smith, and remarks by *Asian Reporter* publisher Jaime Lim, the celebration began with the introduction of this year's most honored elders.

Jess F. Osilla, born in 1935 in Pangasinan province in the Philippines, enlisted in the U.S. Navy after earning his associate's degree. Following 20 years of service, he retired in 1974 with the rank of Chief Petty Officer. After working another 20 years for the Farmers Insurance Company, he retired again in 1997. Jess is an avid tennis player who loves to dance, read history books, and volunteer his time to many organizations.

Sary Khauv was born in 1943 in Beung Keng Kang, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He worked as a high school teacher from 1966 until 1975, when the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh and sent his family to perform forced labor. Sary survived the abuse and terror of war, but some of his family members did not. In 1980, he immigrated to

Oregon and became an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teacher. He retired in 2008, but continues to teach Cambodian language and culture.

Sivheng Pao, born in 1940 in Kompong Cham, Cambodia, is one of 10 children in her family. During the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979, remarkably, she, her husband, and children survived starvation and forced labor. Sivheng immigrated to Oregon in 2002 to live with her daughter and two of her grandchildren. She has been an active participant in Oregon's Cambodian-American community since her arrival in the U.S.

Following the honoring of community elders, the dancers of Kaleinani o ke Kukui took to the stage. Featuring four numbers, the performers — Maile Taute, Shalyn Wirfs, Ku'ulei de Best, Franchesca Graf, Anna James, Kailani Pou, and Hanaila Starks — delighted the crowd with "Poi Ball Medley," a dance from New Zealand; "I Ali'i No 'Oe" and "Sophisticated Hula," both originating from Hawai'i; and "Ote'a," a Tahitian dance.

Next up was the issuing of college scholarships to the next generation. Nearly two dozen students received awards this year, starting with 17 awards in the amount of \$1,000 each from The Asian Reporter Foundation. Four \$500 scholarships sponsored by the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon followed.

This year's students — all slated to graduate from high school next month — attend schools in Beaverton, Oregon City, Portland, Tigard, and Tualatin.

After the recognition of this year's young people, Kanchie Fujima of Fujinami Kai mesmerized the audience with two dances. Her first, "Yamaga Koi Akari"

("Obon Dance from Yamaga"), was a variation of a *Bon* dance from the lantern festival on the island of Kyushu in which the dancer laments the loss of her first love. "Manten No Funauta" ("Fisherman's Song under the Sky"), described the hardships and feelings of a fisherman who works in the cold northern seas: pride in his work — performed in freezing, dangerous conditions — while also longing for his sweetheart back in port.

Last, but a long way from least, two worthy organizations that have been serving the community for decades — the IRCO Asian Family Center and the Northwest China Council — were honored with Exemplary Community Volunteer awards.

The Asian Family Center has been providing multilingual and multicultural community-based services to our area's Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Lao, Mien, Nepali, Pacific Islander, Thai, and Vietnamese communities since 1994. The Northwest China Council, established in 1980, helps educate people about Chinese history, culture, politics, and U.S.-China relations.

After the formal program concluded, the audience headed to the dance floor to continue enjoying each other's company to music provided by DJ Jason Martin of Gaucho Records. Several dozen lucky attendees also went home with Oregon Lottery Scratch-its won in a special giveaway. Whether attendees were lucky winners of a lottery prize or not, everyone hit the jackpot with an evening of great food, wonderful company, and well-deserved recognition of exemplary elders, organizations, and students.

The Asian Reporter Foundation extends many thanks to our banquet sponsors. Without them, this annual event would not be possible.



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