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BOISTEROUS BANQUET. Amanda Shannahan of Unit Souzou (top left photo) entertains the crowd at The Asian Reporter Foundation's 19th Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet. Other performers at the gala event included the Mandaue Children's Choir (middle photo) and the Lee's Association Dragon & Lion Dance Team (right photo). In addition to cultural entertainment, the evening featured the 2017 Most Honored Elder awards, recognition of area Exemplary Community Volunteers, the issuing of Asian Reporter Foundation scholarships (bottom left photo), dinner, and a silent auction.

The AR Foundation's annual gala celebrates community

By Kathleen Liermann
The Asian Reporter

The Asian Reporter Foundation recently celebrated its 19th annual scholarship and awards banquet. More than 325 people enjoyed an evening of dancing, cultural entertainment, awards, and a silent auction at the TAO Event Center in northeast Portland.

Attendees mingled with old friends while meeting new ones, bid on numerous silent auction items — from gift cards and weekend getaways to acupuncture treatments and backpacks — witnessed members of the community receiving numerous awards, and dined on a delicious feast of lumpia, yakisoba noodles, Korean chicken, Portuguese sausage, Korean ribs, stir-fried veggies, macaroni salad, and rice, catered by Bamboo Grove Hawaiian Grille.

Zeke Smith, the evening's master of ceremonies, opened the festivities and introduced the Lee's Association Dragon & Lion Dance Team, which performed onstage before filtering out among the tables of banquet-goers. People pulled out their smartphones to snap photos of the vivid red, gold, and white lions winding around the tables of the banquet hall. At the conclusion of the performance, *Asian Reporter* publisher Jaime Lim welcomed everyone and thanked them for their support of the annual event.

While diners filled their plates and sipped beverages,

the Mandaue Children's Choir, who the day before had just arrived in the U.S. from the Philippines, took the stage to entertain the crowd. The young people, decked out in shiny red tops and black pants, wowed the audience with their harmony and choreographed movements. Attendees were mesmerized by the young singers, who ranged in age from seven to 16 years old.

After the performance, the first awards were presented to this year's Most Honored Elders. For 2017, they included Benny Avecilla and Christine Chin Ryan, two incredibly involved individuals.

Avecilla, who immigrated to the United States in 1977 from the Philippines, has been involved in the Portland-area Filipino community for about four decades. Ryan, who came to the U.S. in 1966, has been an advocate for the Asian Pacific American community and small businesses for three decades.

The commitment of Avecilla and Ryan were recognized by the hundreds in attendance, who gave them an enthusiastic round of applause.

The next performance featured members of Unit Souzou — Michelle Fujii, Amanda Shannahan, Scott Miyako, and Gregg Humphrey — who energized the crowd. The group engaged everyone in the room and also invited a few lucky audience members to join them on stage to try out their taiko drumming skills.

Awards were then given to this year's scholars. The

2017 Asian Reporter Foundation scholars included Ryan Horiuchi, Phuong Nguyen, Nancy Nguyen, Whitney Warth, Dawa Gyalpo, Ayush Kumar, Yan-Tung Choi, Phuong Thao Ly, and Vivian Duong, who each received awards for college ranging between \$2,000 and \$2,500.

Following the Asian Reporter Foundation awards were the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon (PACCO) scholars — Brittney Pioquinto and Maria Schaljo — who were each awarded \$500 scholarships.

The final awards of the evening — recognition given for an Exemplary Community Volunteer Effort by an organization — were then handed out. The three groups — Aguman Capampangan Northwest U.S.A., the Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.) - Portland Lodge, and Lac Hong Vietnamese School — have contributed to the Asian community for a combined 130 years.

From medical missions and leadership conferences to community-service projects and language classes, each group possesses a unique history as well as many years of accomplishments and contributions.

After the final auction tables closed, people claimed their treasures. The evening ended with music, dancing, and more mingling. The foundation extends many thanks to this year's attendees and invites everyone to join the 20th anniversary celebration, which will take place in April of 2018.

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

The Asian Reporter

