



CULTURAL CELEBRATION. Performers with the Filipino American Friendship Club of Oregon (top left photo) entertain the crowd at The Asian Reporter Foundation's 20th Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet. Also performing at the gala event was the Lee's Association Dragon & Lion Dance Team (right photo). In addition to cultural entertainment, the evening featured a nine-course dinner, the 2018 Most Honored Elder awards, recognition of area Exemplary Community Volunteers, the issuing of Asian Reporter Foundation scholarships (bottom left photo), dinner, a silent auction, and more. (AR Photos/Jan Landis)

20th awards gala celebrates elders, scholars, volunteers

By **Kathleen Liermann**
The Asian Reporter

The Asian Reporter Foundation recently held its annual scholarship and awards banquet at Wong's King Seafood Restaurant in southeast Portland. The evening, celebrating the foundation's 20th event, featured a nine-course dinner, cultural entertainment, awards, and a silent auction.

Approximately 275 people in attendance witnessed the recognition of the efforts and achievements of Oregon's Asian-American community — by elders, community groups, and youth. This year's banquet celebrated two valued community elders, 12 college-bound students, and three organizations.

While mingling with old friends and meeting new ones, attendees began bidding on numerous silent auction items — from gift cards and weekend getaways to artwork, bags, and backpacks — during the social hour. Banquet-goers also gathered near the photo booth to pose for the camera.

Kicking off the evening's program was the Lee's Association Dragon & Lion Dance Team. The colorful creatures started at the back of the room and danced

their way through the tables before reaching the stage. Many attendees, dressed in traditional clothing as well their banquet finest, pulled out smartphones to capture a shot of the vivid red, gold, and white lions.

As the Triple Crown Platter, the night's first course, arrived on the tables, master of ceremonies Zeke Smith and Jaime Lim, publisher of *The Asian Reporter*, welcomed everyone and thanked them for supporting the annual gala for the past two decades. During the evening, attendees dined on the restaurant's special soup, hand-pulled chicken salad, salted pepper pork chops, scallops and prawns, steamed fish, king mushroom with vegetables, pan-fried noodles, and double pastries.

The first awards were bestowed on this year's Most Honored Elders — Tai Duc Tu and Hongsa Chanthavong.

Tai Duc Tu, who spent nearly seven years in prisoner-of-war camps performing hard labor, immigrated to the U.S. from Vietnam in 1991. He now spends his days reading, writing, volunteering, and visiting with his grandchildren. Hongsa Chanthavong, who officially immigrated to the U.S. from Laos in 1983, has advocated for the Asian community during

his 30-year career with the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization and also in retirement. He currently travels, gardens, exercises, and advises younger community leaders.

The commitment and resilience of this year's honored elders 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, Toru Watanabe, and Scott Miyako — who energized the crowd. The group engaged everyone in the room with their creative and imaginative pieces.

Awards were then given to this year's scholars. The 2018 Asian Reporter Foundation scholarship recipients included Chablue Wah, Megan Nellor, Hannah Tan, JJ Pen, Alexis Han, Feeeye Zhen, Catherine Le, Linh Ly, and Catherine Hu, who each received awards ranging between \$2,000 and \$2,500.

The young people, who have been involved in sports, music, theater, student council, language classes, and more throughout their high school years, plan to begin studies majoring in finance, marketing, nursing, computer science, music, ministry, political science, and

international relations in the fall.

Following the Asian Reporter Foundation awards were the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Oregon (PACCO) scholars — Joni Cobarrubias, Ethan Dentler, and Faith Gaviola — who were each awarded \$700 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 — the Cambodian American Community of Oregon, the Muslim Educational Trust, and the Philippines Nurses Association of Oregon & Washington — have contributed to the local community for a combined 70 years.

From organizing celebrations, fundraisers, and food drives to holding community-service projects and language classes, each group has a unique story and a long history of volunteerism.

After the final auction tables closed, people claimed the items they had bid on throughout the evening. The night ended with long goodbyes and more photo booth pictures. The Asian Reporter Foundation extends many thanks to this year's attendees and invites everyone to join the 21st banquet next April.

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