

# Asian Community Health Fair celebrates 17th year

By Kelly La Croix  
The Asian Reporter

The 17th annual Asian Community Health Fair was held last month at the Asian Health & Service Center (AHSC). The annual event offers free health screenings and services to all attendees. This year's fair was the first to take place at the center's new location at 9035 S.E. Foster Road, and as in the past, it attracted a large crowd. In recent years, as many as 1,500 people have attended, with more than 350 community partners involved, including health professionals, multilingual volunteers, and sponsors.

The health fair offered a wide array of services, from screening and testing for diseases such as lung cancer and diabetes to booths that measured participants' body mass index, blood pressure, and blood glucose levels. Other services included respiratory examinations, hearing and lead tests, mental-health information and screening, naturopathic consultation, osteopathic manipulation medicine, a station for women's health, stroke prevention, and a mobile truck featuring dental screening and hygiene care. Vision and glaucoma screenings, also considered part of the health fair, were held a week prior.

In addition to stations focused on physical and behavioral healthcare, the event also included 18 booths. Some handed out information about AHSC and its various programs, ranging from its mental-health resources to its health education classes. Other stations focused on community care or featured the health fair's sponsors, including REACH Community Development (an organization whose focus is on affordable housing and property management), the Korean American Health Professionals Alliance (a nonprofit promoting Asian and Pacific Islanders to pursue careers in healthcare), Health Share of Oregon (a coordinated care organization serving Oregon Health Plan members), Aging and Disability Resource Connection (which provides information about services related to aging and disability needs), the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services, Multnomah County Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Rosewood Family Health Center, and CareOregon, among others.

One new feature of this year's event was the demonstration kitchen, where participants were shown how to prepare regional dishes in ways that promoted health. AHSC founder and chairman of the board Dr. Erik Szeto remarked that patients who require a low-cholesterol diet, for example, can now be taught to utilize ingredients and techniques tailored to their medical needs in a way that is culturally relevant.

As having a kitchen that prepares regional food demonstrates, the Asian Community Health Fair sets itself apart from other similar functions by making an effort to provide care that is culturally specific. Another way it effectively serves the needs of the community is by populating the event with multilingual volunteers. Executive director and CEO Holden Leung estimated that 150 bilingual and trilingual volunteers took part in the event. To make themselves easily identifiable, they wore colored lanyards denoting the languages they were fluent in, including Mandarin,



Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

"This health fair is very culturally tailored to the clients' needs," said Leung. "Healthcare should be for everyone, even if they don't speak English well."

He went on to note that not only were there multilingual volunteers, many of the medical providers themselves were bilingual or from the community they serve. This, he believes, helps bring providers and clients together. It also helps to reduce the potential for confusion when dealing with language barriers.

Dr. Szeto added that AHSC offers services that are not only culturally tailored to its clients, but also culturally sensitive. He explained that in some communities, particularly close-knit ones, a client may not want to talk to an interpreter about mental-health problems or other sensitive issues because of the stigma attached. Speaking directly to a doctor who shares the same language can help ease patients' minds.

Understanding that the complexity of a culturally sensitive approach can be difficult to comprehend, Leung shared a concrete example of how the organization was able to profoundly help a visitor: during last year's vision screening, a patient was found to have a hole in their retina.

"If we didn't find it at that moment, that patient may be blind today," he reflected. "At a health fair, maybe we touch 1,000 lives; we may be able to save a few."

AHSC has been serving the needs of the Portland metropolitan region's Asian communities since its founding in 1983. The nonprofit's aim is to act as a bridge between Asian and American cultures by reducing health inequity and improving

healthcare quality for all Asians. In addition to its annual health fair, the organization hosts talks, classes, workshops, clinics, clubs, wellness groups, outreach programs, and a senior lunch program. It also operates both the Yu Miao Chinese Immersion Preschool and the Chinese Medicine Clinic (the latter in partnership with the National University



**COMMUNITY HEALTH.** The 17th annual Asian Community Health Fair was held last month at the Asian Health & Service Center (AHSC). The annual event offers free health screenings and services (bottom photos) to all attendees. Pictured in the top photo are AHSC staff, health professionals, volunteers, and community partners gathered in front of the center's new location at 9035 S.E. Foster Road. The 2018 health fair was the first one held at the new building. (Photos/Brian Lau, courtesy of the Asian Health & Service Center)

of Natural Medicine), among many other diverse programs.

To learn more, call (503) 872-8822, e-mail <info@ahscpxd.org>, or visit <www.ahscpxd.org>.

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