

Asian American Federation Celebrates 23rd Anniversary at Spirit of Asian America Gala

The Federation celebrated its 23rd anniversary at its annual Spirit of Asian America Gala on May 3rd at The Pierre. Preeminent individuals attended the Gala. Honoring 4 talented, distinguished individuals, the event celebrated the Asian Heritage Month, corporate diversity, and giving back to those less fortunate. Executive Director of the Federation Jinggao Wu said that we are proud of those individuals, who spare no efforts to serve the communities.

Khee Lee, Head of Agency Business Development from Google New York, is one of the most legendary honorees. After earning a pharmacy degree in 1995, he took an exploratory path, heading for Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, to work as a volunteer. When he returned to the U.S., Khee began his professional career with Merck & Co. in Philadelphia. Fueled with enthusiasm towards eBusiness and the Internet, he moved to New York and started his own company. There he learned of entrepreneurial failure. After a short stint at an advertising agency, Khee joined a health management company. Soon after the company was acquired, Khee went on to join another start-up.

“My parents took me to America when I was little, for a better life and opportunities to achieve my dream. Everyone has his/her own story, which could be inspiring. My story is that my parents wanted me to become a pharmacist, because it is stable. After I graduated, I found that there is no “mandatory” path in life. I was faced with an ocean, which was intimidating”. Khee said.

Inspired by the philosophy he learned from school: A person or a career, or be penniless. He would rather give it a shot without regretting later. Luckily, his parents are always supportive even when he was in his down time. “They hoped that I could experience more so that I could learn from the experience and achieve something.” Khee said.

Another honoree changed her career path halfway too. SungEun Han-Andersen started to learn piano at age of 5 and began her career as a pianist and teacher, performing extensively in North America as solo pianist and chamber music player. Later joining a management consulting firm, SungEun led two major cost reduction efforts for a major steel company and she also conducted full analysis of a leading university. “My life is full of fun. I changed my career from music to finance, which is a big leap.” SungEun said. Currently, she serves as board member of several private funds, and enjoys fundraising for classic music causes.

Vice President David Cohen from Comcast Corporation said that he was honored to get the award. Comcast has established many services targeting Asian customers and staff, in order to serve more Asian population or other minorities. All the staff at Comcast feel that serving Asian communities is not only their responsibility, but they are proud to do so.

Anderson Cooper from CNN was also an honoree.

Jinggao said that the honorees were awarded not only for their professional leadership, but also their substantive impact on the community. For instance, Google represents a booming industry the honorees are pioneering. They represent the future.