

# AT THE CENTER

July 2008

## BLOOM 2008 — A&PI Wellness Center's Annual Community Event and Fundraiser



A&PI Wellness Center blossomed on the evening of May 17, 2008. **Bloom: Open Your Heart** gathered more than 500 allies and community supporters at the Metreon's stunning City View Terrace. The event commemorated the 4th Annual National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, acknowledging the significant impact HIV/AIDS has had on the lives of Asians and Pacific Islanders by honoring Commissioner Cecilia Chung of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. Commissioner Chung's stellar track record and tireless efforts to improve the lives of transgenders and those living with HIV underscore her leadership, dedication, and commitment to the community. The evening's festivities included powerful, intimate stories of stigma and hope, along with moving song and dance performances. California State Assembly Majority Whip Fiona Ma and San Francisco Assessor-Recorder Phil Ting, both close friends of the agency, offered stirring addresses inspiring us all to persevere to create lasting change.

Over \$85,000 in unrestricted funds were raised for A&PI Wellness Center, making Bloom our most successful spring fundraiser to-date. We could not have achieved this goal without the generosity of the individuals, businesses, and foundations who share our vision. Thank you!

Photos (Top to Bottom, Left to Right): Roma Tanaka, Commissioner Theresa Sparks, Jason Chan & Francis Tsang, Office of the Mayor, and Honoree Cecilia Chung; Alfredo Victorio, Jane Rabanal, Calvin Lum, Jordan de Peralta, and JR Reyes; Board Co-Chair Stephen Huey, Roma Tanaka, and Executive Director Lance Toma; John San Agustin, Randall Mackie, & Fumihiko Momota; Executive Director Lance Toma and California State Assembly Majority Whip Fiona Ma.



Photos: Steven Underhill

## BREAKING NEWS

According to the June 27, 2008 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report:

**"From 2001 to 2006,... [t]he largest proportionate increase (255.6%) in number of HIV/AIDS diagnoses was among Asian/Pacific Islander MSM aged 13-24 years."**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR — Lance Toma, LCSW



Erik Webb and Executive Director Lance Toma at their wedding ceremony with officiant Margaret Cho. *Photo: Rachel Lozada-Matillano.*

We are all living in a very special moment in time, when LGBT equality is within our reach. Same-sex marriage is legal in two states of our country. And, on June 28th at San Francisco City Hall, my partner of eight years and I were married—again. Four years ago, we took our first walk together down that path. At that time, it was an overt proclamation by us (me, my partner and our son) to our families and friends of our commitment to each other. But this time, it was about so much more. We were taking part in a movement for LGBT people; we were actively participating in changing age-old norms in our society.

As we made our public and legal commitments to each other, I was moved to tears because this was truly bigger than us. This was, and is, about all of us.

As A&PI Wellness Center fights HIV-related stigma in A&PI communities, we continue to see our brothers and

sisters suffering alone with this disease while we simultaneously advocate for funds to sustain our services. This is our work. This is our responsibility.

We speak on behalf of underserved, marginalized members of our communities so that everyone will have access to quality health care services. We fight because we must. Beyond the 780 people who came to us for HIV testing, and beyond the 29 new HIV-positive clients who enrolled in our program last year, we know that there are countless more who need us to keep fighting. This is our commitment. This is our mission.

In the past few months, amazing individuals have stepped forward to support the work of A&PI Wellness Center, speaking out about the unacceptable silence and intense shame surrounding HIV and AIDS in our communities—comedian and actor Margaret Cho, US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, and actor and filmmaker Joan Chen, just to name a few. If we are to halt the HIV/AIDS epidemic and if we are to care for all members of our communities, we must realize that this work is about all of us.

If you are reading this, I know you believe in and care about the work of A&PI Wellness Center. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support. We are in a perfect moment to talk about these issues—same-sex marriage and HIV and AIDS—with our family members and friends. We must share our personal stories. If you live in California, bring one of your family members to your county office to witness a same-sex marriage. What I know first hand is that you will see big smiles and a lot of love for LGBT people who are entering into a lifetime commitment and a legal institution in the state of California. The happiness and acceptance that abounds is contagious.

This is the kind of change we must keep fighting for.

## A&PI WELLNESS CENTER'S NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center welcomes Royce Lin, M.D. to our Board of Directors. Dr. Lin is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine at UCSF where he has been on the faculty since 2004. He practices HIV medicine and Internal Medicine at the Positive Health Program at San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH) and is the current Director of the AIDS Consult Service at SFGH. Additionally, he is the incoming Co-Director of ASPIRE (AIDS Services, Prevention, Intervention, Research and Education), which is the international arm of the HIV/AIDS Division at SFGH. Royce is especially interested in providing comprehensive HIV care to underserved populations, outreach and health services for the A&PI and LGBT communities in particular, medical education, and building HIV service capacity internationally.

**TRANS:THRIVE**, which stands for Transgender Resource and Neighborhood Space (TRANS), and Transgender Health & Resource Initiative for Vital Empowerment (THRIVE), is the new incarnation of the transgender drop-in center initiated by UCSF and transferred to Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center in 2007. Targeting all transgenders of color, services also include educational workshops, support groups, case management, social events, and HIV testing and counseling. An average of 67 clients access services per week. TRANS:THRIVE convenes over 35 educational and support groups per month, on such topics as hormone therapy, self defense, cooking on a budget, and job counseling.



## BANYAN TREE PROJECT — Launches Its 4th Year with Celebrity Public Service Announcements

Kicking off the fourth year of its national HIV/AIDS anti-stigma campaign, the Banyan Tree Project produced three star-studded 30-second public service announcements (PSAs) highlighting the alarming increase of HIV infections within U.S. Asian and Pacific Islander (A&PI) communities. The PSAs emphasize the importance of showing compassion to those living with HIV and the need for A&PIs to get tested for HIV.

The PSAs feature International award-winning star Joan Chen; Hawaiian singer/songwriter legend Amy Hanaiali'i Gilliom; and actor James Kyson Lee of NBC's critically acclaimed television drama *Heroes*.



Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi also joined forces, filming a PSA appealing to A&PIs to end HIV stigma in their communities.

The PSAs are the latest development in a series of so-

cial marketing outreach efforts initiated by The Banyan Tree Project, a groundbreaking national campaign that fights against stigma, shame and discrimination towards A&PIs living with, or at risk for HIV/AIDS. The Banyan Tree Project aims to stop the cycle of discrimination and silence surrounding HIV by eliminating barriers that delay or prevent access to HIV prevention and care services while fostering acceptance and compassion in Asian and Pacific Islander communities.

The PSAs were created using the findings of A&PI Wellness Center's social marketing research and are regionally relevant for distribution in our five partner cities: San Francisco, Boston, Los Angeles, Honolulu and Chicago. The PSAs are available on our website at [www.apowellness.org](http://www.apowellness.org) and are being broadcast across the country with help from cable and telecommunications industry AIDS action group, Cable Positive.

Amy Hanaiali'i  
Hawaiian singer/songwriter



James Kyson Lee  
Actor



Joan Chen  
Actress



## News in Brief — Program Updates

Our **Testing Clinic** screened over 780 people for HIV and over 180 people for Hepatitis B. 45 people received Hepatitis B vaccinations. Contact us and make an appointment to get screened! Make wellness a part of your life!

In 2007, 29 new clients were enrolled into case management services in our **HIV Care Services** department at all three sites (San Francisco, East Bay and San Mateo County). Of these, 55% were newly diagnosed with HIV. 31% had an AIDS diagnosis upon entry into our program, of which four had late stage-HIV diagnoses. 35% were uninsured and 38% had mental health and/or substance issues. Care Services currently serves 200 HIV-positive clients.

The **California Statewide Treatment Education Program (CSTEP)** continued to offer a multi-tiered training and certification program for HIV and HIV-related service providers throughout California. Over the past 7 years, CSTEP trained over 1000 service providers (74% were people of color: 39.9% Latino, 17.7% African American, 8.2% Asians & Pacific Islanders, 1.3% Native American, 7.5% Multi-Racial) with 100% of participants self-assessing that CSTEP added to their knowledge and/or skills. Please go to [www.cstep.org](http://www.cstep.org) for the most recent training schedule.

**Fostering Leadership for Asians & Pacific Islanders through Research & Evaluation (the FLARE Project)** completed five community needs assessments in the Filipino, Vietnamese, South Asian, Burmese and Pacific Islander communities in three San Francisco Bay Area counties. They also provided group level trainings and capacity building to providers and facilitated the creation of the Santa Clara County Collaborative. This group has spearheaded an expanded ethnicity data project, to collect disaggregated HIV testing data among all

ethnicities in various communities of color. More information is available at [www.apiflare.org](http://www.apiflare.org).

On February 15th, **San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom** named A&PI Wellness Center's **Health Education Program Supervisor Nikki Calma** also known as **Tita Aida** to the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women. Calma is the first transgender individual to be a member of the seven body commission.

**Asian & Pacific Islander Transgender Empowerment (ATE)** is our transgender program that strives to foster the development of a vibrant, empowered and supportive Asian & Pacific Islander transgender community to reduce HIV infection in San Francisco. In the past year ATE provided critical education and support services to 222 participants.

Our men's program, **Responsible Advocates Making Education Necessary (raMEN)**, held workshops and support groups for 343 participants this year. raMEN is an umbrella program consisting of:

- **Downe & Out:** A safe and friendly space for gay, bisexual, queer and questioning Asian, Pacific Islander, Hapa/Mixed Heritage, and Transracial Adoptee men.
- **Purely Honest Onwards (P.H.O.):** A men's program that embraces the unique challenges of A&PI men over thirty.

Our youth group, **Asian and Pacific Islander, Queer, Questioning, 25 and Under, Altogether (AQU<sup>25</sup>A)**, held their first-ever Youth Pride Week this June with over 100 youth attending the kick-off party. 327 participants took part in AQU<sup>25</sup>A workshops and events this year.

## SF LGBT PRIDE CELEBRATION AND PARADE WRAP-UP

**“United by Pride, Bound for Equality”** was the theme for the 38th Annual San Francisco LGBT Pride Celebration & Parade on June 29, 2008. This year’s celebration was bolstered by the historic May 15th California Supreme Court ruling to overturn the state’s ban on same-sex marriage.

For the ninth year, Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center hosted the A&PI Pavilion and Stage. Our Health Education Department organized several pre-Pride events including the AQU<sup>25</sup>A Youth Kick-off Party at The Crib and the raMEN Kick-off Party at the ‘n Touch Club.

For the first time, two A&PI Grand Marshals were selected for the Pride Celebration & Parade: Campbell City Councilmember Evan Low and the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA) through community voting. They were joined by a contingent of A&PI Wellness Center staff, volunteers, and clients along with A&PI Family Pride, GAPA, A&PI Queer Women & Transgender Community, Gay Vietnamese Alliance, South West Asian North African Bay Area Queers,

Trikone and others.

After the parade, our Testing Clinic provided free HIV tests and Hepatitis-B screenings. A&PI Wellness Center’s Nikki Calma (aka Tita Aida) hosted the A&PI Stage with generous support from A-MED Specialty Pharmacy, Moonstar Catering, and the Banyan Tree Project. Featured performers included Melissa Reyes from Season 1 of “The Next Pussycat Doll,” Eric Hsu of Johnny Hi-Fi, and singer/songwriter Gabe Bondoc.

Margaret Cho made a very special appearance, signing the Banyan Tree Project Pledge against HIV/AIDS stigma in our community. While in San Francisco, she was deputized by Mayor Gavin Newsom and officiated the wedding of Executive Director Lance Toma and his partner, Erik Webb.

***Thank you to all the volunteers and community collaborators who made this year’s Pride an enormous success!***



**Left to Right:** Margaret Cho and Tita Aida with the BTP Pledge; Margaret and Tita work the crowd; Lance Toma, Margaret Cho, Cecilia Chung, and Lance Dwyer. **Photos:** Danny Dan Photography.



## A&PI PRIDE CELEBRATION GRAND MARSHALL RECEPTION — A&PI Wellness Center Honors the Community

On Monday, June 23, 2008, A&PI Wellness Center hosted a very special reception in recognition of our Asian & Pacific Islander Grand Marshals of the SF LGBT Pride Celebration & Parade 2008: Campbell City Councilmember Evan Low and the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA). The festive evening inaugurated Pride Week and many luminaries of the community joined us to honor these groundbreaking Grand Marshals, including Dan Bernal from Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office, Jason Chan from Mayor Gavin Newsom’s office, GAPA Co-Chair Raphael Buencamino, and Hong Chang from Governor Schwarzenegger’s office.

**Top:** Tita Aida, Lance Toma, Jason Chan, Cecilia Chung, Evan Low, Rafael Buencamino. **Bottom Left:** Alfredo Pedroza & Alex Rudolph, Office of the Mayor; Lance Toma, Executive Director. **Bottom Right:** Tommy Huie, Fred Dea, & Jack Henyon  
**Photo:** Steven Underhill





## A&PI MODEL FOR HEALTH — Reaching and Serving A&PIs

Asians and Pacific Islanders (A&PIs) are the fastest growing ethnic/racial population group in the United States, comprising 4.2% of the U.S. population, or 12.8 million people. The A&PI population grew six times faster than the nation's population overall, increasing by 75% in 1990 to 2000. A&PIs are a diverse group of individuals with unique histories, cultures, languages, traditional beliefs and values. There are over 40 distinct ethnic groups who speak over 100 different languages. This diversity also leads to cultural and linguistic barriers to medical, mental health, and other support services.

The agency's mission, as well as its care and prevention services, are informed by the *Comprehensive Asian & Pacific Islander Model for Integrated, Holistic Health (A&PI Model for Health)*. This model focuses on comprehensive and culturally competent health services to improve the quality of life for significantly underserved A&PIs living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Interventions in general, especially around HIV/AIDS in the U.S., have largely ignored communities of color and are not appropriately tailored to reach immigrants and refugees with limited English proficiency. In these communities, HIV-related stigma and discrimination are the primary accelerators for the epidemic, which traditional interventions fail to adequately address.

In developing the *A&PI Model for Health*, we have moved towards a client-centered approach to care. We are adapting evidence-based practices from HIV prevention to address health disparities and promote wellness for A&PIs living in San Francisco. We have leaned heavily on

models that shift from disease to health, recognizing that beliefs, relationships, and stress can greatly impact holistic recovery and recuperation from illness and disease.

Similarly, the *A&PI Model for Health* seeks to address cultural issues by having doctors ask questions in different ways: *What do you call this problem?* or *What do you believe is its cause?* and *What do you fear most about treatment?* This enables doctors and service providers to better communicate with their patients while allowing patients to understand their illness from their own viewpoint.

The *A&PI Model for Health* also utilizes peer leaders, volunteers, and clients to participate in HIV prevention workshops. Participants then tell others about their activities and what they learned. This leads more people into prevention programs offered at the agency. These workshops and leadership opportunities provide clients access to a collective effort to address the various risk factors around HIV. Participants and clients develop a sense of power in their own lives, ultimately leading to change in the community.

The model also includes a framework that addresses a client's immediate needs and can alleviate stress that affects health and wellness. Housing and employment assistance, substance use and mental health counseling, and legal and immigration issues are all areas covered under the model.

The *A&PI Model for Health* incorporates not just traditional, but holistic health care affecting not just the individual, but also the community. With this model we will achieve the highest quality of life for the people we serve.

## EXPANDING CLINIC SERVICES — Responding to the Challenge

Many Asian and Pacific Islander LGBT, refugee, immigrant, undocumented and low income individuals and families are not accessing health care services. They are marginalized and alienated due to gaps in cultural and language competency in the healthcare system. Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center responds to this troubling disparity by convening the Wellness Clinic Initiative Task Force, a group composed of staff, board members, and community stakeholders dedicated to researching the expansion of our identity and services as a "free clinic".

Currently, the Task Force is assessing our clinical services, reviewing other viable and sustainable models responsive to the needs of the various communities we currently serve, as well as those we might include in the future.

The Task Force has conducted site visits, meeting with federally qualified health centers and free clinics in the San Francisco Bay Area. In March, Rachel Lozada-Matillano, Director of HIV Care Services, attended the annual

conference of the Free Clinics of the Western Region in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She explored various free clinic models, visiting local free clinics with diverse histories, target populations and models of care.

Thus far, all the clinic providers and community stakeholders the Task Force has met have encouraged and supported A&PI Wellness Center's Wellness Clinic Initiative due to the ever-increasing need for clinic services. A&PI Wellness Center establishes another level of expertise in providing effective, holistic clinical care for marginalized populations.

The Task Force is aware of the challenges of expanding the agency's clinical services and is committed to steering A&PI Wellness Center in the right direction, at the right time, to respond to the growing healthcare needs of Asians and Pacific Islanders in San Francisco.

## **Giving to A&PI Wellness Center**

A gift to A&PI Wellness Center directly benefits those in our community living with, or at-risk for, HIV/AIDS. Your dollars ensure our clients — your allies, friends, and family — receive the education and care they need. But giving is not limited to writing a check — there are many ways to financially support our high-impact services!

Here are two other giving options:

### **Monthly Pledges**

Making a monthly pledge allows you to contribute a small amount each month or quarter while making a long-term investment in our community. Simply make a monthly or quarterly pledge to A&PI Wellness Center on your credit or debit card: \$10, \$25, \$50, \$125 or more. Select an amount that fits your budget. We will process

your payment once a month or quarter. It's that simple. No checks to write! No stamps to buy!

### **Employer Matching Gifts**

Increase the value of your gift in one easy step! Many employers match the gifts their employees make to non-profit organizations. Please ask your personnel office or go online for your employee matching gift forms, sign and send them in to A&PI Wellness Center. We'll take care of the rest!

For more information, or to make a donation pledge, please contact Saurabh Bajaj, Development Manager at 415-292-3420 x 375 or [saurabh@apiwellness.org](mailto:saurabh@apiwellness.org).

***Thank you for your support!***

**THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!** — April 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008

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350 Frank Ogawa Plaza,  
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Oakland, CA 94612  
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c/o Daly City Community  
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350 90th Street, 1st Floor  
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Lance Toma, LCSW  
Lina Sheth, MPH  
Luke Woodward  
Malou Valdez  
Khin Thiri Nandar Soe

Marc Roman, MFTI (intern)  
Mike Nguyen  
Ming Ming Kwan, MSW  
Nathaniel Manuson  
Nicole Thierry  
Nikki Calma "Tita Aida"  
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Noel Cervo  
Philip Ng  
Philip Tsui, Psy.D, LCSW  
Pollie Bith-Melander, Ph.D  
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Tommy Huie  
Vinya Sysamouth, Ph.D  
Yvonne Watson



730 Polk Street, 4th Floor  
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