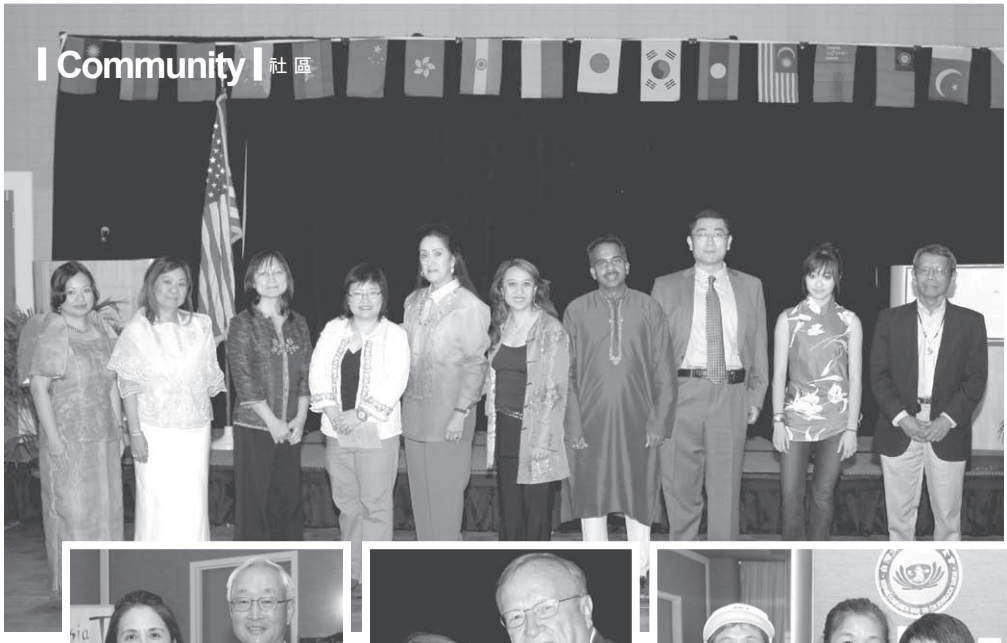

Orlando Taiko Dojo

Jean Hsu and C.T. Hsu

▲Agnes Chau and Commissioner Fred Brummer

▲Tzu Chi Foundation Orlando

Leilani Fontanilla, Master of Ceremonies

Lita Martija, one of the founders of AAHC

►Muthamizh Sangam of Central Florida

Asian American Heritage Council of Central Florida – "Together We Accomplish More!"

■ *By Lita Martija* 📷 *C.K. Lau*

Orlando -- Over 1000 Asian Pacific Americans converge May 15, 2011 at downtown Orlando's Double Tree Hotel for a day long

"Cultural Festival". in celebration of Asian Heritage Month, traditionally proclaimed annually by the U.S. Congress in May. Heritage month is a community acknowledgement of the vital contributions of Asians to the economic vitality and social fiber of the United States. Asians alone in 2010 now represent 2.4% of the population in Florida, a change from 266,256 in year 2000 to 454,821 in 2010, according to the recently-released Bureau of Census figures -- a 70.8% increase to almost half a million Asians this year.

The festival, sponsored by the Asian American Heritage Council of Central Florida, and its Asian American organization partners, showcased the unique customs and traditions of Asians, in its ethnic cuisines, colorful dances, and music. China's "Lion Dance" and martial arts performers opened the cultural program which featured an amazing aerial silk entertainment performed by 15-year old Tiffany Tang, daughter of the Heritage Council president, Agnes Chau. Tiffany is a co-founder of a new youth group called REACH. Other numbers were presented by the Filipino Student Association of Central Florida, the Bayanihan Dance Troupe of Wedgefield, the Orlando Taiko Dojo's Japanese Drums, the Wat Florida Dhammaran's Thai dancers, the Muthamizh Samgam Mukkala Dancers, Karagattan Dancers, and Bharatanatyam Hula Hoopers. The Chinese American Association presented its Folk Dances. The Orlando Professional Association showed its Red Opening Chinese Dance. Vovinam showed the rudiments of Vietnamese martial arts. The Situ Samuel Winters presented the calm and harmony of Tai chi.

The festival was sponsored by Darden, Florida College of Integrative Medicine, Bright House Networks, Orlando Magic and Double Tree Orlando Downtown Hotel. Media sponsors were Asia Trend Magazine and the United Chinese News of Florida.

The current officers and board of AAHC are Agnes Chau (Chair), Babuji Ambikapathy (Vice Chair), Alan Ababon (Secretary), Leilani Fontanilla (Treasurer), and Gang Ye (Auditor).

Who are Asian Americans? It is not one country or one place. It is an area between Europe and North America comprising of forty one countries, twenty five in or on the Pacific Ocean, sprawling from Persia (Iran)to the west and Hawaii in the east, about two thirds of the world population, each with its own history, government, minority groups and tribes, languages and dialects, customs, traditions and culture.

According to an article published in Orient Magazine, Asians are a part of America since 1763. The first Asian settlers came to America as Chinese and Filipino merchants, sailors, stewards and artisans. Filipinos settled in Louisiana in 1763, and Chinese began arriving in Hawaii in 1789 to work in pineapple plantations. In 1865, the Chinese were hired to build the western half of the

Transcontinental Railroad. To quote the article-- " The history of Asian Pacific Americans is the story of a dynamic group of Americans who have hoped and struggled, fought and survived and who have made their mark on American History"

For more photos: www.asiatrendmagazine.com/ATM_EventsPictures.html

Cultural performances presented by member organizations include Asian Pacific Women's Association, Bayanihan at Wedgefield, Buddhist Light International Association, Chinese School of CAACF, Chinese American Association of Central Florida, Council For Filipino American Organizations, Muthamizh Sangam of Central Florida, Orlando Chinese Professional Association, Orlando Taiko Dojo, REACH of Central Florida, VN Bureau of Commerce, Wat Florida Dhammaram. Special thanks to Hung Fut Hung Man Fei Chinese Martial Arts & Lion Dance Association and VOVINAM Vietnamese Martial Arts and Sifu Samuel Winters for Tai Chi Demonstration.

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YouTube Watch this on www.YouTube.com/AsiaTrend

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If your organization would like to be one of the members, please email *asianamericanheritagecouncil@gmail.com* or visit *www.aahc-cf.org* for more information. AAHC will be organizing the Asian Student Achievers' Scholastic Awards in November.

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