



REACH continues reaching out to the community ■ By Wendy Ng

June is the month that not only marks the start of summer break but also the start of a new term for the board of the non-profit organization, REACH of Central Florida. This organization, whose acronym stands for “Recognizing, Experiencing, Asian Cultural Heritage”, was founded in 2010 by three high school students who had a desire to promote Asian cultural heritage in the Central Florida community through service projects and cultural programs and is composed of and led by high school and middle school students. Throughout the last 5 years, this organization has grown to having over 100 members spanning across Central Florida from schools such as Winter Park High School, Cypress Creek High School, Dr. Phillips High School, Freedom High School and University High School. This year, we have expanded to include officers from Lake Nona High School, Timber Creek High School, Olympia High School, and Lake Mary High School.

I have had the privilege to have been a member of REACH for the past 5 years and as an officer for the past 3 years. As President of this organization for the last term, I was amazed to see the dedication and open-mindedness of the members on promoting Asian cultural heritage in the community and building diverse relationships with our community partners. Although these members may only be teenagers, they are all doing their part in changing the stereotypes of our culture and creating a society that is culturally accepting. Each year, we partake in events such as a Toy Drive benefiting the Harbor House and other local organizations. We volunteer at cultural festivals such as the AAHC Cultural Festival and the Lunar New Year Festival. We learn and have the opportunity to partake in cultural activities

such as lion dancing, dragon dancing, and dragon boat racing. Not only do the activities that we do benefit the community, but they also help us to personally connect to and learn more about our own heritage.

One of my favorite REACH activities is the annual Walgreen’s International Dragon Boat Festival. Each year, our organization has a team that competes in this festival. Not only does it provide a great way to exercise, it also helps foster leadership and teamwork skills as well as provide a fun way to learn more about an ancient Chinese tradition. Dragon boat is a sport that is accessible to people of all ages and genders, because it is not necessarily the team with the strongest paddlers that will win, but the team who has the best teamwork.

Having been a part of REACH of Central Florida has been by far one of the best decisions I have made. Before joining, I was rather shy to talk about my Chinese heritage, knowing that people are going to stereotype me because of it. However, five years later, REACH has helped me gain a positive outlook on my cultural heritage, and how I can use it to further my community. As one of the current advisors for the REACH board members this year, I am confident that this organization is in good hands and will further expand not only in numbers but in the work it will do to foster cultural awareness in this community.

On behalf of the members of REACH of Central Florida, I would like to thank our head advisors Pauline Ho and Agnes Chau for their dedication to the organization and guidance. I would also like to thank YESS and Asia Trend for encouraging the organization to grow and for being our partners in the mission to promote Asian cultural heritage.

If you would like to learn more about REACH of Central Florida, check out our website at <http://www.reachcof.org/> or our Facebook page.

2015-2016 REACH of Central Florida Board

- President:** Corey Hsiao
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- Timber Creek High School Coordinators:** Alisha Hill
- Olympia High School Coordinator:** Sarah Tse
- Dr. Phillips High School Coordinator:** Brandon Tran
- Lake Mary High School Coordinator:** Alex Yip



Wendy Ng is recent graduate of University High School. She will be attending Georgia Institute of Technology in the fall and plans to major in Computer Science.