



2024 ANNUAL GALA

VOICE & Vision



Celebrating stories of
thriving families and the
entrepreneurial spirit

VOICE & Vision

THRIVING FAMILIES, ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

April 11, 2024

Friends,

Welcome to Chinese Mutual Aid Association's Voice & Vision Annual Gala: Thriving Families, Entrepreneurial Spirit!

The American Dream is not merely learning English and finding work. We dream of better lives for our children and their future children. The path towards our dreams means finding financial freedom, and for many, becoming our own boss. Think of the many generations of immigrants who open restaurants, salons, retail shops and manufacturing companies. They bring the flavors and products of our AAPI and immigrant heritage. They bring us joy, even with the sweat and toil of hard work.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit us and Asian Hate ensued, many of our local businesses and ethnic enclaves faced unfounded fear. Patrons did not want to visit our beloved restaurants on Argyle and Chinatown for fear of the "China Virus." Our community members and elders were physically assaulted. Too many local AAPI businesses permanently closed their doors.

When resources started to emerge to help our local entrepreneurs and businesses, many AAPI businesses missed opportunities for assistance because they could not speak English as well, or they were not familiar with the complexities of government. So CMAA filled in the gap.

CMAA stepped up and opened a Small Business Development Center in 2020, the only AAPI-led center in the State of Illinois. We knew that we already provide impactful social services in several disciplines since our agency's founding in 1981. We knew that our talented and dedicated staff, who represent over 20 countries, would provide an excellent foundation for this new Small Business Development Center to provide language access in a stellar way. CMAA staff are not only Chinese and Vietnamese, but also Filipino, Lao, Burmese, Thai, Afghan, Cambodian, Korean, Nepalese, Indian, Bangladeshi, Bosnian, Latinx, and more.

And we are really proud to share that our Small Business Advisors have grown our client base from 60 clients to over 500+ in just a few years. Our SBDC

continued next page

provides regular office hours targeting the AAPI business community not only in Uptown, but with partners like the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce and the South Asian Chamber of Commerce, we have a steady, continuous presence in Chinatown, West Ridge, Elgin and Skokie. Strengthening small businesses not only helps the owners, they positively impact the lives of the employees with new jobs and their families through wealth building.

We hope you enjoy this evening's celebration and see the hope that our entrepreneurs represent for the future.

Yours sincerely,



Bart Moy, Board Chair



Dennis Mondero, Executive Director



2024 MUTUAL AWARDEES



2024

Visionary of the Year Award
Grace Hou-Ovnik
Deputy Governor for Health
and Human Services



2024

Duc Huang Founder's Award
for Immigrant Success
Suzanne Yoon
Founder & Managing Partner of
Kinzie Capital Partners



FIFTH THIRD

Outstanding Community Partner Award
Fifth Third Bank

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President,
Gim Electric Co.



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Director of Chinatown
Parking Corp. and
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VOICE *& Vision*
2024

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*Deputy Director of the Central
Hub U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development*

Dennis Mondero
Executive Director, Chinese Mutual Aid Association

EVENING PROGRAM

Opening Ceremony

Performed by: CMAA Youth Lion Dance Troupe

National Anthem

Performed by: Jay Cruz

Welcome Remarks

Cate Cauquiran, ABC 7 News Reporter

2024 Outstanding Community Partner Award Presentation

Fifth Third Bank

Accepted by:

Bernard Bartilad, Senior Vice President - Market Executive

John Sassaris, Senior Vice President, Senior Commercial Banker

Dinner

Vietnamese Cultural Hat Dance

Performed by: CMAA Youth Lotus Dancers

2024 Duc Huang Founder's Award for Immigrant Success Presentation

Suzanne Yoon, Founder & Managing Partner of Kinzie Capital Partners

2024 Visionary of the Year Award Presentation

Grace Hou-Ovnik, Deputy Governor for Health and Human Services

CMAA SBDC Stories

Support Our Programs

Tianyi "Joe" Zhu, CMAA Board Member

Closing Remarks: Voice & Vision

Dennis Mondero, Executive Director, CMAA

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DR. JEROME AUSTRIACO



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ABOUT CMAA

Proudly founded by refugees in 1981, Chinese Mutual Aid Association serves the needs, promotes the interest, and enhances the well-being of diverse immigrant and refugee communities across Metropolitan Chicago and Elgin through social service, advocacy, educational programming, and assistance for clients of all ages. Since our founding, CMAA has evolved into a pan-immigrant social services agency, serving clients from over 40 countries representing Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. With our wraparound service model, CMAA serves 5,000 clients annually.

We currently offer:

- job preparation & placement services
- youth programming
- adult education
English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- in-home elderly care services
- immigration and citizenship case assistance
- and most recently, an Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

OUR PROGRAMS

CMAA's programs serve our community across generations. For young people, we offer after-school, summer camp, and mentoring programs. For adults, we provide case management and social services, education including English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, job preparation and placement services, and immigration and citizenship case assistance. We connect older adults to in-home care support and community through our Golden Age Club, and finally, we support entrepreneurs and small business owners as the only AAPI-led Small Business Development Center in Illinois.

Find out more
chinesemutualaid.org



ADULT EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



CMAA's Adult Education and Workforce Development Department partners with individuals from diverse immigrant populations to realize their personal, educational, and professional goals by providing quality tailored curriculum, instruction, and case management. CMAA leads a consortium of 8 partner organizations, offering English as a Second Language (ESL) and Adult Basic Education to hundreds of adults annually and coordinate one-on-one and small group tutoring for clients needing additional support. CMAA's Workforce Development program works on a spectrum to support students and clients in both their short and long-term career goals. Clients looking for good jobs immediately meet with our Workforce Career Coaches for individualized case management to assess skills, build a resume, apply for jobs, prepare for interviews, and more. Clients seeking upskilling or specific long-term educational and career training receive case management and career guidance and enroll in CMAA's Healthcare Employment Preparation Program or Office Administrative Technology class.

As an organization founded by refugees, CMAA's

CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship Department is at the core of helping diverse immigrant communities as they become naturalized US citizens. Citizenship staff leverages over 20 years of experience to assist clients at every step in the naturalization process. As an agency, CMAA is certified by the US Department of Justice to provide limited family-based immigration legal services and, in the past year, filed 196 immigration applications.



SENIOR CARE



With over 20 years of experience, CMAA's In-Home Care program assists senior clients in maintaining independence while enjoying the comforts of home. Our team of home care aides provides high-quality and culturally sensitive services. In a year, CMAA delivers over 250,000 hours of care to hundreds of residents in Cook and Kane County. Recognizing that a strong indicator of longevity for aging adults, especially for immigrant adults, is social connectedness, the Golden Age Club promotes well-being by offering seniors opportunities to interact with one another regularly. A natural extension of our In-Home Care program, Golden Age Club allows older community members to be out of the house and socialize with people like themselves.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

After becoming certified as an Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in July of 2020, CMAA has offered support to 826 small businesses and entrepreneurs, serving the highest number of AANHPI clients of all 40 of the state's SBDCs by more than double. Now a Neighborhood Business Development Center with the City of Chicago's Bureau of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, CMAA provides no-cost hyper-local business development, including permit guidance and technical assistance.



SOCIAL SERVICES

CMAA's Social Services program supports immigrant and refugee families by providing case management, language support, and assistance in accessing a wide range of valuable community resources and information. Our diverse team speaks languages including Cantonese, Burmese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese, allowing clients to receive service in their first language. With their help, this year, 364 families received food assistance, and 1136 adults received energy assistance.



YOUTH



CMAA's Youth Department supports immigrant origin students from kindergarten through college graduation. Flagship programs include Diverse Young Leaders (DYL) after-school and summer camp program and adolescent cohort-based mentoring programs, Young Women Warriors (YWW) and Young Men Making Moves (YMMM). Both of these programs support the assets and cater to the needs of immigrant origin, refugee, and BIPOC youth living in Chicago's northside immigrant-rich neighborhoods. Our Youth Department provides over 1,000 service hours annually, reaching 200 students. Students receive academic support, nurture healthy relationships with adults and peers, and at the end of the last program year, 100% of graduating high school students enrolled in post-secondary education. Finally, the Youth Department is home to CMAA's Lion & Lotus Dance Club, both performing tonight.





Fifth Third Bank proudly supports **Chinese Mutual Aid Association** and their commitment to serving the needs, interests, and well-being of low-income, diverse immigrant and refugee communities across metropolitan Chicago



FIFTH THIRD

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Proud to Support Chinese Mutual Aid Association's 2024 Voice & Vision Annual Gala



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UPTOWN

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A A B A

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C H I C A G O



Theresa Mah

State Representative • 24th District
2108 W. 35th Street • Chicago, IL 60609
Phone: (872) 281-5775

April 1, 2024

Dear Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I extend a warm welcome to the Chinese Mutual Aid Association's (CMAA) 2024 Annual Gala. This gathering marks a significant occasion to celebrate and honor the exceptional contributions of CMAA.

For over four decades, CMAA has served as a cornerstone of support and hope for countless individuals in our community. Since its inception in 1981 by ethnic Chinese refugees, CMAA has been unwavering in its dedication to providing vital social services, advocating for the marginalized, offering educational opportunities, and supporting the growth of youth, adults, seniors, and small businesses alike.

The visionary leadership of CMAA within the Asian American community is truly commendable. Your tireless efforts in addressing the needs, championing the interests, and enriching the lives of low-income, diverse immigrant, and refugee populations across metropolitan Chicago are a testament to the resilience and fortitude of our community.

To all those in attendance tonight, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on your steadfast commitment to the Chinese Mutual Aid Association. Your hard work and achievements serve as an inspiration to us all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theresa Mah".

Theresa Mah, Ph.D.
Illinois State Representative - 24th District



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

207 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

Greetings!

As Governor of the State of Illinois, I am pleased to welcome everyone gathered for the Chinese Mutual Aid Association's (CMAA) 2024 Annual Gala. This occasion offers an exciting opportunity for everyone in attendance to join fellow members of your association and generate ideas that implement solutions. I commend the work you have done to help make Illinois a stronger and more enjoyable state.

Illinois is proud to have enjoyed your service to our state. As you reflect on your accomplishments, I urge you to make plans for the future of your association that will build on your past successes. I am grateful for all the ways your organization has supported a strong future for Illinois.

On behalf of the people of Illinois, I offer my best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable occasion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JB Pritzker". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Governor JB Pritzker



SUSANA A. MENDOZA
ILLINOIS STATE COMPTROLLER

April 11, 2024

GREETINGS

As Illinois State Comptroller, it is my sincere pleasure to send my warmest greetings and congratulations to everyone gathered for the 2024 Chinese Mutual Aid Association Annual Dinner at the beautiful Galleria Marchetti in Chicago.

From its inception 43 years ago to the present day, the Chinese Mutual Aid Association has continued to work towards achieving a better quality of life for immigrants both young and old. Having assisted thousands of newly arrived immigrants from over 40 different countries over the years, CMAA continues its advocacy to secure social, economic, and educational opportunities for all.

Thank you to the CMAA for the remarkable work you have accomplished since opening your doors. You have my very best wishes for your continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susana A. Mendoza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Susana A. Mendoza
Illinois State Comptroller

555 West Monroe Street, 1400S-A
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(217) 782-6000

325 West Adams Street
Springfield, Illinois 62704-1871
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RICHARD J. DURBIN

ILLINOIS

MAJORITY WHIP

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304

April 11, 2024

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Dear Friends:

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Chinese Mutual Aid Association's 2024 Annual Gala "Voice and Vision." Tonight's gathering is a special opportunity to celebrate the work and achievements of the Chinese Mutual Aid Association.

Since 1981, the Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA) has been committed to providing social services to low-income immigrants, refugees, youth, and the elderly. CMAA's mission is exemplified through its range of programs, including free English classes, immigration assistance, after school programs, small business development, and advocacy campaigns that focus on the rights of refugees and immigrants.

CMAA's legacy of leadership and its vision for the future of the Asian American community is truly admirable. I commend your commitment to empowering those you have served by providing them with the tools to make their voices heard and the skills to contribute to the broader community. Tonight's event is an opportunity to recognize the many people whose voices and visions have echoed through the decades to grow CMAA into the organization it is today.

Again, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to tonight's attendees for your dedication to the Chinese Mutual Aid Association. Congratulations on all your work and achievements.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dick Durbin".

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

711 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304
(202) 224-2152

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durbin.senate.gov

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United States Senate

Chinese Mutual Aid Association
1016 West Argyle Street
Chicago, IL 60640

April 11, 2024

Dear Friends at the Chinese Mutual Aid Association:

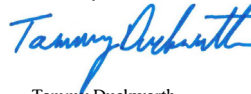
As we gather once again for your annual gala, I extend my warmest greetings and heartfelt congratulations on over 40 years of remarkable service to our community.

The journey that CMAA embarked upon over 40 years ago has served as an incredible support system for immigrants from diverse backgrounds. Your dedication to providing essential services to over 5,000 clients from across the globe exemplifies the power of unity and compassion.

Tonight, as we celebrate your achievements, I am especially proud to extend my congratulations to Grace Hou-Ovnik for her remarkable achievement as the Visionary of the Year, Suzanne Yoon for her invaluable contributions recognized through the Immigrant Success Award and Fifth-Third Bank for their commitment as an Outstanding Community Partner.

May this gala serve as a testament to the enduring impact of your work and inspire us all to continue fostering a more inclusive and supportive community.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

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TONI PRECKWINKLE
PRESIDENT

April 11, 2024

GREETINGS



Dear Friends:

I'm honored to welcome you to the Chinese Mutual Aid Association's (CMAA) 2024 Annual Gala. CMAA is an incredible organization that makes a tremendous impact on the Asian American community and beyond.

Since 1981, CMAA has been a vital resource in providing essential social services, advocacy, educational programming, and assistance for youth, adults, seniors, and small businesses. The leadership of CMAA has had a lasting impact on the ongoing work and long-term vision of the organization, all of which is deeply admirable.

Because of organizations like CMAA, Cook County is stronger and more resilient. Serving the needs and enhancing the well-being of immigrant and refugee communities make us all better and stronger.

I extend my congratulations for another year of wonderful work and send my highest regard for all that CMAA does.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Toni Preckwinkle".

Toni Preckwinkle
President, Cook County Board of Commissioners



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER
MICHAEL W. FRERICHS

April 11, 2024

Chinese Mutual Aid Association
1016 W. Argyle St.
Chicago, IL 60640

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 2024 Voice & Vision Annual Gala of the Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA). Tonight, we celebrate the foundation of opportunity CMAA has cultivated for the mental, physical, and social health of individuals and the well-being of communities.

The Chinese Mutual Aid Association has long been a champion of immigrants and refugees, from around the globe, who are unfamiliar with the challenging environments they navigate. CMAA has taken on a leadership role in communities across metropolitan Chicago, fostering relationships with a network of healthcare, legal, and community programs to promote self-reliance, inclusion, and the expansion of opportunity for the newly arrived.

Congratulations to the awardees for your vision and successes, and I commend the board members, leadership staff, volunteers, and partners of CMAA for your continued advocacy. Your work is key to maintaining sustainable communities.

Thank you for your service to the people of Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Frerichs".

Michael Frerichs
Illinois State Treasurer

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Jan Schakowsky
9th District
Illinois



Member of Congress
Washington, D.C.
202-225-2111

April 11, 2024

Dear Friends:

I offer my warmest wishes to all those gathered for the Chinese Mutual Aid Association's 2024 Annual Gala. This annual event is a great chance for us all to celebrate the critical work of this amazing organization.

I am proud to have had the opportunity to work alongside CMAA over the many decades that they have been operating in our local communities, and I have no doubt that the individuals who rely upon this organization are better off because of their efforts.

Over my 25 years in Congress, I have had the privilege to build relationships with CMAA staff and volunteers, and the broader Asian-American community at large.

On behalf of the residents of the 9th Congressional District of Illinois, congratulations on another successful year, and best wishes for your continued work moving forward.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Schakowsky".

Jan Schakowsky

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