



**ASIAN AMERICAN COALITION OF CHICAGO
HOSTS 29th ANNUAL LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION
“IT’S TIME.....”**

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 25TH AT HYATT REGENCY O’HARE

AWARDEE AND SILENT AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

RAYMOND LEE NAMED PAN ASIAN AMERICAN PING TOM MEMORIAL AWARDEE

**ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE JESSE WHITE NAMED GRAND ASIAN AMERICAN SANDRA
OTAKA MEMORIAL AWARDEE**

(N.B. MEDIA: FULL HOUSE EXPECTED, EARLY SET AND BATTERY PACKS ADVISED)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 9, 2012**

**CONTACT: GENERAL: info@aacchicago.org
(773) 463-8424 (c/o TAAI)
MEDIA: info@enericom.net or
(312) 635-0888
TICKETS: Tippi Lee
tickets@aacchicago.org
(e-mail preferred)**

CHICAGO, IL - - Final plans are underway for the **Asian American Coalition of Chicago’s 29th Annual Lunar New Year Celebration, “IT’S TIME.....”** to be held **Saturday, February 25, 2012** at the **Hyatt Regency O’Hare, 9300 West Bryn Mawr Avenue in Rosemont, Illinois**. Over 1,000 people are expected at the black-tie optional gala. Cocktail reception, silent auction and exhibits begin at 5:30 p.m.; opening ceremonies are at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner, entertainment and awards ceremonies until approximately 10 p.m. Tickets are available at \$800 per table of ten for this popular star-studded event, on a **first-funded, first-seated basis**. Purchase information appears below and on the website **www.aacchicago.org** . **As of presstime, 80% of house tickets have been sold, and immediate purchase is encouraged as the event is on track to be sold-out.**

Every year a different Asian community takes turn playing host of Lunar New Year. This year it is the Thai American Community, which has thrice before (1988, 1996 and 2004) held the gavel for the Asian Pacific American community’s most important event of the year. The Thai American Association of Illinois (TAAI) holds the leadership honors.

AWARDS

The Asian American Coalition of Chicago previously announced that **Raymond B. Lee**, Owner and President of Golden Country Oriental Food Co. (since 1979) and Golden Ocean Seafood, Inc. (since 1984) has been named the **2012 Pan Asian American Ping Tom Memorial Awardee**. Raymond Lee

(MORE)

ASIAN AMERICAN COALITION 29th ANNUAL LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION
-- ADD ONE

built his business from a small warehouse on Wells Street in Chicago to what is now one of the largest Asian, African, Caribbean and Oriental wholesale food importers and distributors in the United States. Lee was instrumental in the formation of the Asian American Alliance and served as the President of its Board for three years (1996-1999) and as Director Asian American Alliance (Asian American Small Business Center) (from 1996-2002). The Alliance was an organization comprised of various Asian Chambers of Commerce (Chinese, Korean, Filipino and Vietnamese). He also served as a Chicago Park District Commissioner (1988-1989) and Chicago Board of Education member (1989-1990), becoming the first Asian American appointed to each such position, at a time when there was little or no representation of Asian Pacific Americans on such important boards in Chicago.

Among numerous community and civic service affiliations, Lee is past Chairman, President, and current Secretary of the Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce (service in various roles, 1983-present); Managing Director, Chinatown Parking Corporation (service since 1984); Chairman of the Board, Chinese American Development Corporation (since 1985); a member of the Ping Tom Memorial Park Advisory Council (since 1994); and a member of the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (2001-present). (See full profile www.aacchicago.org.)

Attorney and community leader **Darryl Tom** will assist in the award presentation, on behalf of **The Tom Family**. The Coalition renamed its Pan Asian Award in 1996 after the late legendary Chicago civic leader Ping Tom. Ping Tom was also one of the original founders of the Asian American Coalition of Chicago.

The Coalition previously announced that the 2012 recipient of the Coalition's **Grand Asian American Sandra Otaka Memorial Award**, is **Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White**. This award is periodically presented to someone of non-Asian descent, who has made significant contributions to the Asian Pacific American community. The Coalition renamed its Grand Asian Award in 2010 after the late Cook County Circuit Court Judge Sandra Otaka.

The Coalition announces its 2012 Community Service Award recipients as follows:

1. **(Mr.) David Lee**, Professor Emeritus of Optometry, Illinois College of Optometry; and Board Chairman, Chinese American Association of Greater Chicago, **Chinese American Community Awardee**;
2. **(Mr.) Jose Renato N. (Napoli) Abella**, Quality Assurance Coordinator, John Stroger County Hospital, Chicago, Illinois; Secretary, Filipino Military Alumni Association of Illinois, **Filipino American Community Awardee**;
3. **(Dr.) Vijay Khiani, M.D.**, Medical Director, Esophageal Program and Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Illinois at Chicago; Founder, New Life Volunteering Society, **Indian American Community Awardee**;
4. **(Mr.) Kismet Sabbath Argopradipto**, Accountant, Proficient Business Systems, Inc; Member, Executive Event Committee, Indonesian American Community of Illinois, **Indonesian American Community Awardee**;
5. **(Ms.) Sharon Harada**, (Retired) Assistant Executive Director, Japanese American Service Committee; Newsletter Editor, Midwest Buddhist Temple "Bulletin", **Japanese American Community Awardee**;
6. **(Mr.) Tai Ryang Shin**, Founder, Owner and President, Wagger Foods Corporation; Board Chairman, Korean American Association of Chicago, **Korean American Community Awardee**;

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-- ADD TWO**

7. **(Mr.) Eric C. Tee**, 3rd-Year Medical Student, Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, North Chicago, Illinois; Secretary, Malaysian Club of Chicago (2010-2012), **Malaysian American Community Awardee**;
8. **(Mr.) Bala Ghimire**, Manager, Chicago Curry House and Curry Hut (Nepalese Cuisine); President, Education Foundation of Nepali Community, **Nepali American Community Awardee**;
9. **(Mr.) Muhammad Munir Akhtar**, (*community title to be inserted*); Founder and CEO, RNA Corporation, **Pakistani American Community Awardee**;
10. **(Mr.) Ruangsuk Chamnankict**, Medical Technician, Cook County John H, Stroger Hospital; Member, The Thai Cultural Center and Fine Arts Institute of Illinois (1984-2011), **Thai American Community Awardee**; and
11. **(Mr.) Michael Nghia Nguyen**, Manager, AT&T; Vice President, Vietnamese Association of Illinois, **Vietnamese American Community Awardee**.

The Coalition announces its 2012 Youth Who Excels Award recipients as follows:

1. **(Mr.) Kai Yang E. (Eddie) Lei**, 17, Senior, Thomas Kelly High School, Chicago, Illinois, **Chinese American Community Awardee**;
2. **(Mr.) Ryan P. Singh**, 19, Sophomore, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, **Indian American Community Awardee**;
3. **(Ms.) Ni Made Nias Yunirika Asnawa, and (Ms.) Ni Nyoman Nias Yonitika Asnawa**, 18, Juniors, Parkland College, Champaign, Illinois, **Indonesian American Community Co-Awardees**;
4. **(Mr.) John Kim**, 20, Freshman, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, **Korean American Community Awardee**;
5. **(Mr.) Shiva Updhyay**, 17, Senior, Stephen Mather High School, Chicago, **Nepali American Community Awardee**;
6. **(Mr.) Aftab Ali**, 17, Junior, Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire, Illinois, **Pakistani American Community Awardee**;
7. **(Ms.) Jaichana Sookhakitch**, 19, Freshman, College of Lake County, Grayslake, Illinois, **Thai American Community Awardee**; and
8. **(Ms.) Michelle M. Le**, 14, Freshman, Stephen Mather High School, Chicago, Illinois, **Vietnamese American Community Awardee**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION / SILENT AUCTION NOTE

For ticket availability, to make a silent auction donation, or for general inquiries, please contact info@aacchicago.org (*e-mail preferred*). Guests are encouraged to bring along their checkbooks that evening to help support a unique Silent Auction, which will feature A-level culinary experiences and collectors' items worth thousands of dollars, among others. **(Stay tuned for partial list to be posted at: www.aacchicago.org .)**

(MORE)

**ASIAN AMERICAN COALITION 29th ANNUAL LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION
-- ADD THREE**

MAJOR SPONSORS

The Asian American Coalition of Chicago welcomes its generous major sponsors, which include Fred Eychaner as a \$30,000 Presenting Sponsor; The Hartford as a \$10,000 Global Sponsor, WinTrust Financial Corporation as a \$7,000 Pan Asian Sponsor; American Family Insurance, CNA Foundation and David Storch as \$5,000 Continental Sponsors; and Kendall College as a \$1,500 Coalition Sponsor, among others.

MEDIA

Media requests for interviews and images should be directed to ENERI at info@enericom.net or (312) 635-0888. **ALL MEDIA MUST BE CREDENTIALLED ahead of time for entrance to cover from the PRESS PLATFORM. Please send requests to ENERI Communications at rsvp@enericom.net by February 15, 2012 C.O.B.** Media wishing to sit at dinner tables should pre-arrange purchase of dinner tickets through the assistance of community organizations.

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**2012 ASIAN AMERICAN COALITION OF CHICAGO
29th ANNUAL LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION**

AACC 2012 Mailing Address: c/o Thai American Association of Illinois
3260 West Irving Park Road, Chicago, Illinois 60618
Tel. (773) 463-8424 Fax (773) 463-3004
e-mail: info@aacchicago.org
website:www.aacchicago.org

FOR: 2012 Asian American Coalition of Chicago Planning Committee

THE AACC 2012 HOST COMMITTEE

Vallapa Kongsri, Chair
Arun Sampanthavivat, Co-Chair
Tippi Lee, Secretary/Tickets Chair
Surachai Moraras, Treasurer

FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES ONLY, CONTACT:

Irene Cualoping, JD (ENERI/Rieny), Chair, AACC 2012 Media Committee
Managing Partner, ENERI Communications
tel. (312) 635-0888
e-mail general: info@enericom.net

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This release posted at: www.aacchicago.org and www.enericom.net/blog

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February 25, 2012 Hyatt Regency O'Hare**

**2012 PAN ASIAN AMERICAN PING TOM MEMORIAL AWARDEE PROFILE
RAYMOND B. LEE**

**Owner/President, Golden Country Oriental Food Co.
Owner/President, Golden Ocean Seafood, Inc.**

The Asian American Coalition of Chicago is pleased to announce that **Raymond B. Lee**, Owner and President of Golden Country Oriental Food Co. (since 1979) and Golden Ocean Seafood, Inc. (since 1984) has been named the **2012 Pan Asian American Ping Tom Memorial Awardee**. Raymond Lee built his business from a small warehouse on Wells Street in Chicago to what is now one of the largest Asian, African, Caribbean and Oriental wholesale food importers and distributors in the United States.

Lee was instrumental in the formation of the Asian American Alliance and served as the President of its Board for three years (1996-1999) and as Director Asian American Alliance (Asian American Small Business Center) (from 1996-2002). The Alliance was an organization comprised of various Asian Chambers of Commerce (Chinese, Korean, Filipino and Vietnamese). He also served as a Chicago Park District Commissioner (1988-1989) and Chicago Board of Education member (1989-1990), becoming the first Asian American appointed to each such position, at a time when there was little or no representation of Asian Pacific Americans on such important boards in Chicago.

Among numerous community and civic service affiliations, Lee is past Chairman, President, and current Secretary of the Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce (service in various roles, 1983-present); Managing Director, Chinatown Parking Corporation (service since 1984); Chairman of the Board, Chinese American Development Corp. (since 1985); a member of the Ping Tom Memorial Park Advisory Council (since 1994); and a member of the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (2001-present).

He previously served as a Member, Advisory Board Member and Finance Committee Chairman for the Chinese American Service League (various roles, 1988-2009); Member, City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations Advisory Council on Asian Affairs (2001-2002); and as a Member, Asian American Advisory Council to the Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White (2001-2002).

From the AACC Nomination Package (Compiled by Leonard M. Louie):

“Raymond Lee built his business from a small warehouse on Wells Street to what is now one of the largest Asian, African, Caribbean and Oriental wholesale food importers and distributors in the United States. During this time, he has always been a strong supporter of Asian organizations, both financially and most important, volunteering his time and personal services. In other words, he was a “doer”! “If you need me, I will be there and I will help!” “

“At a time when Asian representation on Government positions were strictly in non-decision making Boards and commissions, Raymond Lee was appointed a Commissioner of the Chicago Park District by then Chicago Mayor Eugene Sawyer, and later he was moved by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley to the Chicago School Board. These appointments opened the door for more Asians to be appointed to key

(MORE)

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-- ADD ONE

positions. While serving his terms with the Park District and School Board, Raymond initiated the work which resulted in Ping Tom Memorial Park and a new Haines Elementary School. He accomplished this by inviting his fellow Commissioners to accompany him to view the desolated abandoned rail property near Chinatown Square. He did likewise by bringing the Board Members to visit the 100-year-old former Haines property”.

“His greatest achievement was the fulfillment of a request made by legendary Ping Tom just prior to Ping’s passing. Ping indicated that the Chinatown Square Project was having severe financial problems but had to be completed since the Community desperately needed more residential and commercial space. Raymond took over the leadership of the Corporation upon Ping’s untimely death and used all his business acumen and committed personal finances, to eventually complete the Chinatown Square Project.”

“Raymond felt strongly that Asian Businesses needed help in obtaining government assistance and preparing procurement proposals. His initiative resulted in the formation of a Coalition of Asian Chambers of Commerce (Asian American Alliance and the Asian American Small Business Center). He helped finance their early operations and served as their first President.”

“When the Chinatown Museum Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, committed to preserving the culture of the Chinatown and Chinese American Community in Chicago was in its early stages and still searching for a home, Raymond Lee again stepped forward. He felt that the history and culture of the Community needed to be preserved for future generations and that the museum needed a home if they were going to become a reality. A property which his family had originally owned was on the market where Raymond spent his early years working for 35 cents an hour. He had an emotional attachment to the property and felt this to be the perfect scenario to retain the building and help the museum. He purchased the property* for \$660,000 and donated it to the Museum.” (In addition, after the fire in 2008 destroyed the upper two floors of the museum, Ray donated an additional \$500,000 to renovate and rebuild the damage caused by the fire.)

“In a capsule, this is Raymond Lee.”

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**January 20, 2012
January 25, 2012 (Rev.)**

**CONTACT: MEDIA: ENERI Communications
info@enericom.net or
(312) 635-0888**

**The museum building, formerly the Quong Yick Co., and now known as the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, the Raymond B. and Jean T. Lee Center, is located at 238 West 23rd Street in Chicago’s Chinatown. The Museum opened to the public in May 2005. After a devastating fire in September of 2008, the Museum was closed for renovation and reopened in 2010.*

Raymond B. Lee Nominated by: Leonard M. Louie, Chair - 2007 AACC Lunar New Year Celebration and Member of AACC Board of Directors; President, Ping Tom Memorial Park Advisory Council; Executive Director, Chinese American Development Corporation; Treasurer and Past President, Chinese American Civic Council; Director, Chinese American Service League; Advisory Board, Chinatown American Museum of Chicago and Member, Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community, With Letters of Support from Tony Shu, President, Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, Woodrow M. Lee, 2011 President, Chinese American Civic Council of Chicago and Bernarda Wong, President, Chinese American Service League.



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Owner/President, Golden Ocean Seafood, Inc.**

**ERRATA January 25, 2012 to AACC12pr2
-- ADD ONE, Last Paragraph**

Corrected the wage reference from 25 cents per hour (in original release) to 35 cents per hour.

Corrected the actual price of the museum to \$660,000 from \$600,000 (in original release) and added line:

"In addition, after the fire in 2008 destroyed the upper two floors of the museum, Ray donated an additional \$500,000 to renovate and rebuild the damage caused by the fire."

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January 25, 2012

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