

Members of APAS, friends, welcome guests:

In this, the 39<sup>th</sup> year of Asian/Pacific American Society. I am proud to say:

Welcome to the APAS 2018 Gala!

It is almost two years since I took office as Chair of the Asian/Pacific American Society. I am astonished how quickly the long early days blurred into months. Now we are preparing to have an election next month for a new cadre of Executive Officers to lead APAS into the future. I have watched this organization re-establish its traditions of the Asian Heritage Festival and annual Gala, try some new things both cultural and in outreach to the community, and blossom into an active presence in the Greater New Orleans area. As these two years come to a close, we, all together, have accomplished so much.

In 2017, we, APAS, contributed to the relief efforts for tornado victims and celebrated Lunar New Year in New Orleans East in February. We provided a retreat for board members in March, put on the Asian Heritage Festival at Audubon Zoo in April and held a Volunteer Appreciation Day in that same month. We gathered to enjoy a movie night and exchange cultural understanding in June. In September, we expanded horizons by putting on a Mid-Autumn Festival, a first in Jefferson Parish. Our special guest for that event was Jefferson Parish President, Mike Yenni. For community outreach, we participated in West Jefferson Family Fair in October. In November, a picnic and APAS's Annual Gala were organized for our members, friends and supporters. In December, a successful Children's Party was held in Lafreniere Park.

In 2018, a general membership meeting and Lunar New Year celebration were held in February; APAS members volunteered for Children's World's Fair in March; Asian Heritage Festival and Volunteer Appreciation Day were held in April; members participated GiveNOLA Day in May; online gala dinner tickets were used efficiently through Ticketleap.com for the first time in August; there was a picnic in September; and APAS 39-year slideshow was presented to board members in October. A general membership meeting, election and installation of officers for the next two-year term will take place in November. APAS will reprise the Children's Party in December.

Tonight, we gather here at APAS's Annual Gala. It's a celebration of 39 years of service to an idea, a celebration of all we have been given and we can become because of the opportunities we have in this great country. As Frank Hara put it in his message to the membership on the occasion of the 1984 World's Fair, "We are in a country where we can achieve [our] goals. Americanism is a matter of mind and heart, not race and ancestry. "

*Thuy Vu*

APAS Chairperson