



THE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF HAWAII

夏威夷中華總商會



LANTERN

NEWSLETTER

June & July, 2020

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Father's Day at Palolo Chinese Home

On June 21, 2020 Narcissus Queen Jamie Lee, 1st Princess Sabrina Young, 2nd Princess Amanda Kurose, and Michele Choy, Court Advisor and 2019 - 2020 Chamber President, volunteered at Palolo Chinese Home for their Father's Day event. While at the care home, the Queen and her Court took photos of the residents and their visiting families before gifting the pictures to them. All five members of the court also hand-wrote cards to each male resident of Palolo Chinese Home to wish them a "Happy Father's Day." The event was truly a memorable experience for the queen and her court as they witnessed families reuniting with their loved ones after months of quarantine due to the coronavirus. Much thanks to Darlene Nakayama, CEO of Palolo Chinese Home and Chamber Member for welcoming the 2020 Court to participate in their Father's Day event.

Keeping Safe in the Pandemic

While coronaviruses, a family of viruses with crown-like spikes, are not new (previous such viruses include MERS in 2012, SARS in 2003, and avian flu in 1996), the coronavirus now identified as COVID-19 (for **CO**rona**VI**rus **D**isease-**2019**) is new and therefore referred to as a "novel" coronavirus. As such, when it first appeared in late 2019, little was known about it – transmission, incubation period, infectiousness, virulence, and so on. Under the circumstances, some of the personal safety or mitigation measures used for other zoonotic epidemics were used in an effort to contain the epidemic.

On March 25, a shelter-in-place or stay-at-home requirement became effective in Hawaii. Other mitigation measures were adopted and have largely remained unchanged: frequent washing of hands (for at least 20 seconds), keeping a 6-foot distance from others when outdoors, and avoiding crowds. Early on, face masks were not recommended, but finally, on April 3, the CDC recommended their use when outside your dwelling. (The masks are more for the protection of others since you may be infected but asymptomatic). Unfortunately, thanks to some politicians

intent on the November election, the matter of whether or not to wear a face mask has become part of a divisive national culture war.

(According to a July 11 Bloomberg article, Gallup polling in late June (just as new cases were beginning to spike upward) found that 98% of Democrats said they wore a mask outside home during the past week, compared with 66% of Republicans and 85% of independents. (A Pew Research poll produced similar results). But regardless of your political persuasion, the vast majority of Hawaii residents support the use of face masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. So if you must venture out in public, maintain the six-foot social distance, avoid crowds, wash your hands frequently, and wear your mask because it's required by law in Honolulu.)

Early on, there was no national shelter-in-place order, it being left up to the states to make that determination and shoulder that responsibility. (Similar to acquiring personal protective equipment (PPE), the states were essentially told that "you're on your own" or YOYO). As a result, 42 governors issued stay-in-place orders of



President
Elvira Lo

Dear Chamber officers, directors, and members:

It is my distinct pleasure and honor to serve as president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii for this upcoming year. I thank the board of directors and the membership in advance for giving me and my executive committee this opportunity to lead in 2020-2021.

Let's strive to work together with the Chamber staff to lead the Chamber toward fulfilling the mission: To create and foster excellence for every member in their professional skills and knowledge, learning more about our Chinese culture and heritage, and providing an opportunity for networking and personal development.

A major renewed concern is development in the Chinatown Historic District that affects its residents and businesses. I attended the town hall webinar hosted by IHS director **Connie Mitchell** regarding the proposed \$2.6 million purchase of 65 N. Beretania to establish a "triage and care station" for the homeless. The Chamber wrote a letter on behalf of a number of organizations, addressed to the City Council and Mayor Caldwell in opposition to this program. On June 1, I was invited to a press conference hosted by Councilmember **Carol Fukunaga** in front of 65 N. Beretania St. KITV-4 interviewed some community leaders, including me, as well as some residents of Chinatown, for us to express our concerns. Soon after, IHS announced cancellation of this project.

The mayor's office invited a number of Chamber presidents to participate in an Office of Economic Development (OED)-sponsored Zoom conference. The Chinese Chamber was asked to represent the Chinese community regarding aid to Chinese businesses through the City's additional \$25 million to the Small Business Relief and Recovery Fund, bringing the total funds provided for this program to \$50 million.

According to City representative **Edwin Hawkins**, "It is very encouraging to hear expressions of support for the program from the different representatives of ethnic communities and chambers of commerce. It is especially reassuring that some of you volunteered facilities and personnel to assist those businesses that have language and/or technology challenges in applying for the grants. This is truly one moment when the *aloha* spirit is made visible and alive in our community." More information on One Oahu and the fund as well as program qualifications and information required for applications can be viewed at <https://www.oneoahu.org/> and <https://www.oneoahu.org/small-business>, respectively.

In a June 15 blast email to Chamber officers, directors, and members, I shared a summary of new forgiveness rules for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Flexibility Act. One of the most important changes being an option to extend the eight-week coverage to 24 weeks, better suiting some businesses, especially restaurants, which may have to wait until they're allowed to reopen.

The state Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism (DBEDT) shared its new (or perhaps revamped) promotion program, "Buy Hawaii, Give Aloha," a one-stop portal for publicizing Hawaii products to fellow Hawaii residents as well as potential customers in Japan and on the mainland. The program for "Made in Hawaii" products is at NO COST for participating companies. The application can be viewed at <https://invest.hawaii.gov/bhga-application/>

Other matters that were settled, such as the renewal of the Chamber liability insurance package on June 7. Building maintenance and repair of the air conditioner insulation was completed on June 12.

Due to the COVID-19 and lock down, the Chamber office was shortened working hours in April and part of May. It's now open and again operating with regular hours, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. However, due to concerns for the health of our staff as well as all members and visitors, we ask that you wear a face mask for Chamber office visits.

As far as the 71st Narcissus Goodwill Tour and Business Mission 2020, which was scheduled in early June, due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is postponed to further notice. I put in a lot of effort to arrange business meetings in Beijing, Shanghai, and Macau, including a tour of the American-owned casinos in the latter city. The plan is to put Hawaii businesses and individuals in touch with successful American businesses in China. And of course, the sightseeing part of the tour includes exceptional selected sites, such as a thousand-year old hanging monastery to bring a memorable experience for group members. Safety is my #1 priority, so if the COVID-19 travel ban is lifted and it is safe to travel, this goodwill tour and business mission will proceed.

As for the installation banquet, which had to be postponed due to the ban on large group gatherings, all executive officers took the Acceptance of Oath of Office on May 29 at the Chamber office before officially assuming their duties on 2020-21 executive committee.

Annual Awards for 2020 went to the following: Outstanding Chamber Volunteer of the Year – **Jill Fukumoto**; Outstanding Business Person – **Mona Choy**; Lifetime Achievement Award – **Alvin Wong**; and Young Professional Award – **Ashley Fu**. Congratulations to each of the awardees; we hope to present the awards and recognize recipient at the installation banquet when the large group gathering ban loosens up.

Our executive vice president **Wen Chung Lin** helped apply for a PPP loan and the Chamber received \$21,400 in April. Also, we received an SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan of \$2,000. Thank you, Wen, for your dedication.

This is the new beginning, new direction, and strategy. It is the time for our members to support, network, and collaborate with each other, and together, we will make things better in these challenging times.

Please read the weekly blast e-mail. We try to bring updates of important federal and state programs to help members to sustain their businesses during this unprecedented period, along with other marketing articles and related information.

Hawaii Census 2020 update from Robert Su: A quick update to share with you. The 2020 census Nationwide response today is 60.5% and Hawaii's response rate is 55.3%. Hawaii's ranking has moved up from one of the worst in the nation to 39 now. We are getting better and better. Honolulu's response rate is better than the national response rate now. Hope our success will bring more Federal funds to help our communities in the next 10 years. Chinese Chamber is an official partner of Hawaii Census 2020 represented by **Michele Choy**.

I would like to thank our immediate past president Michele Choy and her executive committee members who did an excellent job on various projects and events during 2019-20.

varying length. In Hawaii, that policy took effect on March 25, and is still largely in place as the Hawaii economy is gradually opened up again, unlike some other mainland states where people are acting as if COVID-19 has magically disappeared with warmer weather. According to Business Insider, more than half the states were premature in "opening up," and now there are surges of thousands of new cases in California, Arizona, Texas, Florida, and Georgia. (**Emily Baumgarten** has an article in the July 12 *Los Angeles Times* on how California failed at testing after initially seemingly containing the coronavirus, and on July 13, California Gov. **Gavin Newsom** ordered a shutdown of bars and indoor dining).

The danger, pointed out by epidemiologists and other public health experts, is that if restrictions are eased too quickly, there would likely be a "second wave" of infections and the need to once again shelter-in-place. The concern was that the second wave would occur in the fall, just as seasonal flu returns. However, according to Dr. **Anthony Fauci**, what we're seeing now is a surge or spike in the first wave, not a second wave.

As Dr. **Thomas Tsai** of the Harvard Global Health Initiative summarized the last six months, "We started off with a peak, we settled for a plateau, and we ended up with a mountain range." What was believed to be the first wave began with the first American case on January 20; peaked in early April as most Americans began to shelter-in-place; gradually sloped downward until late May when states began an ill-advised rush to "reopen the economy;" and began

a steep, renewed rise in early June. According to the July 5 *Washington Post*, the U.S. 7-day average case total set a record for the 27th straight day. As a result, early opening states like Arizona, Texas, and Florida are seeing a surge in new cases since the Memorial Day weekend, with hospital ICUs rapidly filling up.

Meanwhile, deaths are a lagging indicator, following the increase in new cases. (A prominent example is Broadway actor **Nick Cordero**, who fought an infection for more than three months before he succumbed on July 5). It's likely that the death toll will start to rise in a few weeks. As it is, just after the Memorial Day weekend, the U.S. death toll reached 100,000. Estimated deaths in mid-July are nearing 135,000, and according to a July 7 Reuters report, the University of Washington Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) model projects that the tally will be over 208,000 by November 1. (The White House has favored the IHME model in the past since its projections have been lower than other models). However, according to the IHME model, if 95% of Americans used face masks, the death toll could be lowered to just over 160,000.

And before closing, **Angela Fritz** has an article in the June 28 *Washington Post* on why a simple cloth face mask is better than one with valves; **Tara Parker-Pope** has some handy tips in the June 25 *New York Times* on making getting the most out of your mask; and **Scottie Andrew** has a July 7 CNN health article on how to properly wear a mask. (Just Google the writer and publication to access the articles).

Nevada Beats Hawaii for Spam® Musubi

by Eddie Flores

Hawaii is known for its high per capita consumption of Spam®. (Incredibly, according to the Hormel Web site, it's Guam that has the highest Spam® consumption in the world). However, a recent survey by Yelp may shock many people in Hawaii: During the current coronavirus pandemic, Nevada beats Hawaii for Spam® musubi as the most popular delivered comfort food.

The trend started in 1999 when L & L Hawaiian Barbecue opened its first store in Puente Hills, California. We introduced plate lunch (rebranded as Hawaiian Barbecue) and Spam® musubi to California as our core menu offering. When I told my wife that I would be selling Spam® musubi in California, she cautioned me: "Don't do it! No one in the mainland will eat Spam® musubi." Well, she was wrong. I am glad that for once, I did not listen to her.

A few years later, L & L expanded to Nevada. The growth of L & L in Las Vegas was even more spectacular. Las Vegas is known as Hawaii's "ninth island." It has the largest population of Hawaii expatriates on the mainland. So Las Vegas has the ideal demographic for Spam® musubi. In addition to Hawaiian expatriates wanting a taste of home, Nevadans were quick to catch on and to join the Spam® musubi craze.

It is a no-brainer that Spam® musubi became the #1 food delivered during the pandemic crisis in Nevada. You can find Spam® musubi in all 18 L & L locations throughout Nevada, and there are an equal number of Hawaiian Barbecue copycats that sell it, too. In fact, Spam® musubi is so ubiquitous in Nevada today that you can find it in casinos, food stores, supermarkets, and in most 7-Eleven stores.

Would you believe that L & L now sells 15,000 Spam® musubi a day? If you stack them on top of each other, it will be the height of three and a half times that of New York's Empire State Building! Spam®

musubi came a long way to be the #1 food for delivery in Nevada. Hawaii should be proud of it. It is a unique export dish from Hawaii. Spam® musubi will always remain a part of our Hawaiian culture, but there is nothing to be ashamed of in losing the #1 rank to Nevada.

Finally, I would like to say that L & L should receive credit for putting Spam® musubi on the map on the mainland. Oh yes, I may be biased, but L & L Hawaiian Barbecue has the best Spam® musubi with our special, proprietary BBQ sauce.

Chinese as Scapegoats or Partners?

Over the last five years, racism directed at people of color (POC) by some politicians and segments of the U.S. population has been growing. Directed initially at Latinx, especially Mexicans, in more recent years, it has been directed at Chinese. Never mind that quite a few Chinese-Americans can trace their roots in the U.S. to the 1849 California gold rush and then the building of the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s, far longer than some of today's most vociferous *laowai* and "China hawks."

As some of you may know, a country's balance of trade consists of its export and import of goods and services. A couple of years ago, due to a trade imbalance in goods, tariffs were initially slapped on certain goods from overseas, including washing machines made in China, then expanded to a variety of imports from other countries. The ignorant claim was repeatedly made that the Chinese (or other exporters in Canada, Mexico, Europe, and Asia) would be paying the tariffs when in reality, U.S. tariffs are essentially a tax, paid by American importers or passed on to their American customers. Fortunately, unlike after the stock market crash and onset of the Great Depression, Congress did not enact anything resembling the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1932, which led to tit-for-tat tariffs imposed by our trade partners, thereby deepening the Depression.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(Postponed or Cancelled)

Jun 23 • Tue

Executive Board Meeting

Chamber's Office – 6:00 p.m.

Jun 30 • Tue

Board of Directors Meeting

Maple Garden Restaurant – 12:00 p.m.

Jul 3 • Fri

In Observance of Independence Day

Office Close

Jul 21 • Tue

Executive Board Meeting

Chamber's Office – 6:00 p.m.

Jul 28 • Tue

Board of Directors Meeting

Homer Maxey Conference Center at Foreign
Trade Zone No.9 – 12:00 p.m.

109th Chinese Chamber Installation

Banquet – Postponed, TBA

The LANTERN a monthly publication of the
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8 South King Street • Suite 201
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Ph: (808) 533-3181 / 533-3886
Email: info@chinesechamber.com

Editor: Gerald Y.Y. Chang
Graphic Designer: Angela Wu-Ki
Staff: Wen Chung Lin, Tina Ge

Nevertheless, over the years, China has been a favorite scapegoat, the target of claims that it was a “currency manipulator,” thereby causing the trade deficit, as well as stealing trade secrets or proprietary information. Less well known or appreciated, China has been our largest creditor, over the years (according to Investopedia), having purchased \$1.07 TRILLION in U.S. Treasury bonds or about 5% of the \$23 trillion U.S. national debt. (After two and a half years as number two, as of August 2019, the Japanese were again the largest holder of U.S. bonds).

In addition, until the start of the ill-considered series of U.S. tariffs in 2018 and 2019, the Chinese were the largest purchasers of American soybeans and made large annual purchases of other American agricultural products. (In August, 2019, they stopped agricultural purchases). And more recently, the onset of the coronavirus pandemic earlier this year has shown the major role played by Chinese factories in producing non-surgical face masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) still desperately needed by U.S. medical personnel and hospitals. A lengthy article on the Chinese role by **Keith Bransher** appeared in the July 5 *New York Times*, “China Dominates Medical Supplies, in This Outbreak and the Next.” So some Americans inside the Beltway should be more circumspect about referring to the “Wuhan flu” or making “kung flu” a racist joke. (On April 9, **Ryan Miller** reported in *USA Today* that the “new coronavirus began spreading in New York weeks before the first confirmed case and came to the area via travelers from Europe, not China”).

MEMBER NEWS

In late May, McDonald's franchisee and former Chamber president and former chair of the Hawaii Restaurant Association (HRA) **Victor Lim** participated in the “COVID-19 Care Conversation,” along with the Retail Merchants Association's **Tina Yamaki**. More recently, in his role as legislative liaison for the HRA, Victor testified before the City Council's Economic Assistance and Revitalization Committee. He painted a grim picture of the tourism-dependent Hawaii economy not recovering for another four or five years and that by the end of 2020, there might be shrinkage of 20-30% in the restaurant industry. He pointed out that while restaurants still have to pay 100% of rent and wages, now that dining-in is again allowed in Honolulu, there would still be social distancing, capping seating at 50%. The Council may consider pushing back the effective date of the ban on plastic and foam containers as well as plastic utensils to January 1, 2022.

Eddie Flores is busy working on his latest community improvement project: raising funds for the design and construction of a Chinatown gateway arch near Kekaulike Mall. According to an article in the July 1 *Star-Advertiser*, among some revitalization plans to improve the looks (and smell) of Chinatown, there will be trash containers that will supposedly prevent street people from rummaging through them. (However, from the photo, the containers look much like the green-colored two-wheel plastic containers in residential areas that residents put their trash in). There will also be increased police patrols as well as power washing and disinfection of Chinatown sidewalks. Then on **Saturday, July 11**, Hotel Street between River and Richards Streets will be closed from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. so that pedestrians can stroll along, patronizing shops and restaurants.

One of the newer members of the Chamber board of directors is **Ina Chang**. She is the owner of Aloha Data Services, Inc., which provides business document services from its location downtown. In addition, Ina is also a skilled and talented calligrapher, and you may purchase her work at Chinese community events, such as during the New Year celebrations (New Year couplets), as well as for birthday celebrations and custom orders.



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8 South King Street • Suite 201 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813