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Published by the Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS. APICHA is a non-profit organization providing HIV/AIDS related services, including HIV primary care and testing, prevention education, food and nutrition, and other support services for Asian and Pacific Islander communities, especially people living with HIV/AIDS in New York City.

Hot Shot is Coming to a Bar Near You

Hot Shot is not the name of a new trendy cocktail. It is the new community outreach program funded by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), which goes where few government agencies have gone before, into gay bars. No they are not closing down the bars for inappropriate behavior. They are going into the bars to make gay men healthier. Hot Shot: Healthy Men's Night Out is making gay men think about their health in new ways.

The city hired party promoter Aaron Tanner to help out by coordinating the campaign. He brought bars and organizations including APICHA, Positive Health Project, Drag Initiative to Vanquish AIDS, CHEST, and GMHC together to go into the bars and talk to the customers. Tanner worked with bars and organizations to find events that were already planned and that he and his merry band of volunteers and DOHMH workers could attend and spread messages about health and wellness.

The idea began in response to the increase of new syphilis cases among gay men in the city. In the early 1990's syphilis had pretty much disappeared in New York City. Then in 1998 there was a dramatic increase in new syphilis cases. Between 2002 and 2003 there was a 22% increase, most of them in gay men. It was time to get the word out in a more effective way. DOHMH decided that one of the best ways to get the word out was to go to the most popular gay bars in New York and tell people.

To toot our own horn a bit, in a recent story about Hot Shot that appeared in the New York Blade (March 26, 2004 Issue) Mr. Tanner called Asian and Pacific Islanders Coalition on HIV and AIDS the best HIV counseling group he has worked with. (continued on p. 3)

Federal Officials Visit APICHA

Carol Thompson, Acting Director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, Ladd Wiley, Counsel to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson, and Christopher Bates, a longtime friend to APICHA and the Acting Director of HIV/AIDS Policy at HHS, came to visit APICHA on May 4th. They were briefed by our staff about the impact of HIV/AIDS in the A & PI community and the difficulties in providing services and creating prevention materials for the diverse populations that make up the community. After the briefing they were given a tour of our clinic and offices. A week after her visit President Bush announced that he was promoting Ms. Thompson to Director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy.

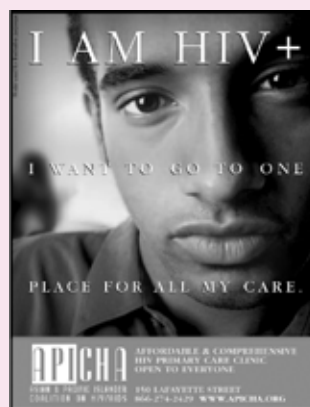
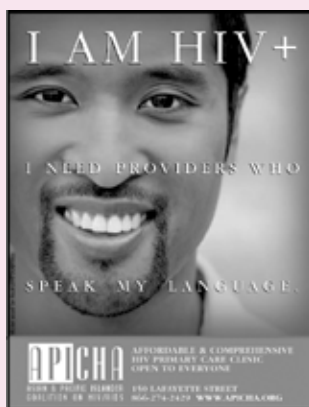


APICHA's Clinic Kicks-off Advertising Campaign

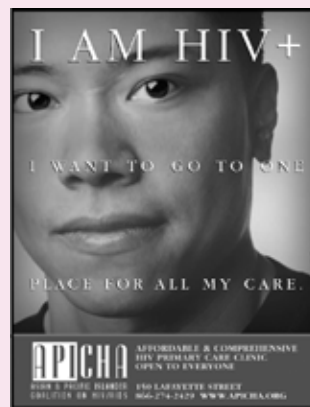
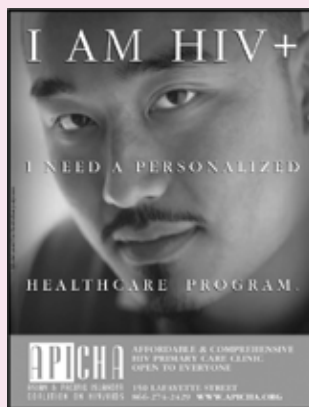
APICHA, working with MK Advertising, is kicking-off a new advertising campaign to inform and attract more clients to our HIV Primary Care Clinic. The clinic, which opened a year ago, makes APICHA a one-stop facility to better serve the needs of our clients. Ads similar to the photos below are currently running in various publications.

Dr. David D. Kim, APICHA's Medical Director said, "The number of HIV infections in Asia is continuing to grow at alarming rates and will soon surpass Africa as the part of the world with the most people living with HIV and AIDS. As more and more people travel between Asia and the United States, the epidemic will travel along with them. Asia and the Pacific Islands are made up of 49 different cultures with people who speak more than 100 different languages. To serve those people is a daunting task. APICHA was founded to do just that for A & PI's living in New York City. Our new HIV Primary Care Clinic was created to provide confidential and comprehensive care in an environment that is sensitive to the cultural and linguistic needs of A & PI's who have limited access to affordable healthcare."

Clinic services include: free and confidential HIV and STD testing, comprehensive primary care from HIV specialists, mental health counseling, support groups, acupuncture, nutrition counseling featuring ethnic cuisine, legal assistance, and help in obtaining government benefits and services. APICHA's services are provided regardless of your income, insurance, or immigrant status, and are free of charge or based on a sliding fee scale. For info call 1-866-APICHA-9 or 1-866-274-2429.



The many faces of Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) in the Asian and Pacific Islander Community. Our goal is to raise awareness among the MSM population and to convince them to come in and get an HIV test at our clinic. It is important for people to know their status. If they test positive they can get the proper care and treatment. If they test negative they can learn how to stay negative.



LEGAL BRIEF: Shibani's Story

Many clients come to APICHA with unique legal problems. The U.S. legal system can be difficult to navigate, even for people who are born here, but the courts and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services can be extremely difficult to navigate if you are an immigrant, with a limited knowledge of English, and you are living with HIV/AIDS.

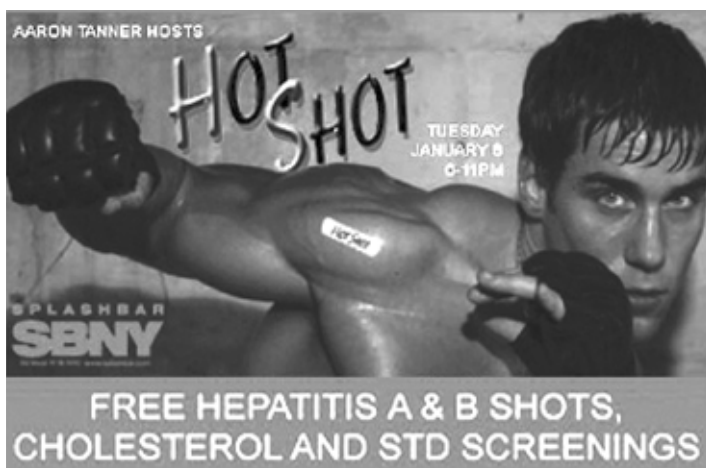
Three years ago a woman came to APICHA for legal help after no other immigration attorneys would take her case. She arrived in New York full of hope for a new life in the U.S. but life doesn't always turn out the way you expect it to. The woman, let's call her Shibani, emigrated from a small, remote village in a South Asian country. She had to travel a long distance from her village to the large city she departed from. It was necessary to sell all of her possessions to pay for her journey. Her husband and children, who were already in the U.S., had acquired legal status as either U.S. citizens

...the courts and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services can be extremely difficult to navigate if you are an immigrant...and you are living with HIV/AIDS.

or as permanent residents. Shibani, who was undocumented, arrived to discover that her husband was in a hospital bed, gravely ill with AIDS. Since she had sexual contact with her husband on his visits back home, she was advised to take an HIV test. Her test came back positive. Often a positive test result can mean immediate deportation. Finally she came to APICHA for help. One of our case managers took Shibani under her wing. The case manager spoke Shibani's language, understood her customs, and knew how to help her. APICHA's consulting attorney agreed to take her case. It took more than 3 years to resolve but finally Shibani was granted asylum and issued a green card. She and her family are doing very well. They are now APICHA clients, living legally in the U.S. and getting the proper life sustaining medical care they so desperately need. This story has a happy ending.

Gerson Visits APICHA

City Council Member Alan J. Gerson visited APICHA's offices on April 20th. He was given a tour and a briefing about AIDS in the A & PI community and the services provided by APICHA. Council Member Gerson represents Lower Manhattan including Chinatown. He is working with his Council colleagues to secure additional city funding for APICHA. He is seen in this photo with Associate Director, Client Services Shu Hui Wu, Executive Director Therese R. Rodriguez, Chair of the Board Kevin Huang-Cruz, and his Health Care Coordinator Luis Reyes.



Hot Shot... (continued from cover)

The program keeps growing and now offers testing for HIV, gonorrhea, syphilis, cholesterol, and administers hepatitis A and B vaccines, flu shots, smoking patches, and drug abuse information. Bars that have held successful events include SBNY, Therapy, The View, XL, Urge, and The Eagle. At one of these bars, 4% of the men tested were seropositive and did not know it. To date more than 183 men have participated and 5 tested positive.

So the next time you are standing in a bar and a stranger comes up to you and asks about your health, don't think he is coming on to you. He might be one of the Hot Shots. For more information about dates and venues where APICHA will be offering HIV tests, contact Bric Bernas at (212) 334-7940 ext. 202.

APICHA Awarded Government Funds

APICHA was recently awarded 3 new allocations of money from federal and city government.

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) awarded APICHA a grant of \$366,000 for HIV testing and prevention for people at high risk, which includes Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), sex workers, and people who are HIV positive. Although the amount falls short of our needs, we are grateful to be able to provide these important services at a time when the disease is increasingly affecting the A & PI communities.
- New York City Council awarded APICHA with 2 grants totaling \$150,000. This money will pay for prevention work, the operation of our toll free Infoline 1-866-APICHA-9 (1-866-274-2429), and for a new computer system for the agency.

APICHA in the News

APICHA recently had 2 great "press hits".

- *NY 1 News* – On May 11th NY 1 News Health Reporter Itay Hod did an important story titled, "Asia May Surpass Africa as Region with the Greatest Number of AIDS Cases". Hod interviewed APICHA's Medical Director, Dr. David Kim and client Gregory Huang-Cruz to discuss AIDS among A & PI's, stigma, medical care, and APICHA. It was broadcast repeatedly as part of the Asian History Month series on NY 1.
- *Gay City News* – In the Pride Issue of GCN (June 24-30, 2004 Issue), Editor Paul Schindler did a terrific profile on APICHA. The story titled, "Serving a Diverse Asian Community", informs readers about the services and work APICHA does to prevent the spread of HIV and to treat People Living with HIV/AIDS in New York's A & PI community.

AIDS WALK NEW YORK

APICHA joined with thousands of other New Yorkers to raise money and awareness about AIDS, on May 16th in the 19th annual AIDS Walk New York. People from throughout the New York metropolitan area raised approximately \$5.4 million and 45,000 participants walked. AIDS Walk, which is sponsored by Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), invites other AIDS service organizations like APICHA to organize their own teams. Any money raised by these teams is awarded to the participating organization. This year APICHA's team registered more than 100 people to walk and raised \$2,500. The team was made up of APICHA's staff, clients, peer educators, and volunteers. To energize the team, APICHA held a kick-off party on Friday, May 14th. Special thanks must go to all members of our team, and especially to our team leader Diana Roygulchareon.



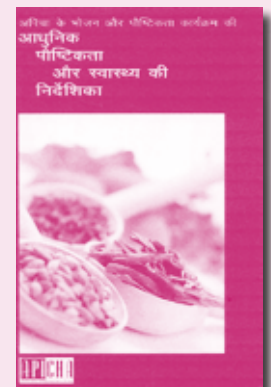
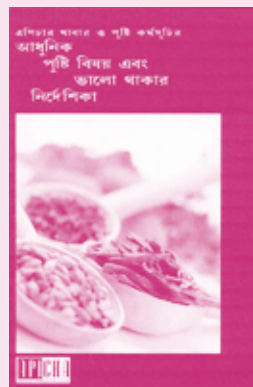
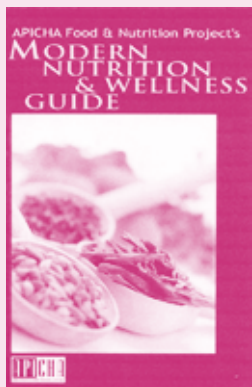
Above: APICHA fielded a team of more than 100 people at AIDS Walk on May 16th. The team raised nearly \$2,500 to fund client programs at APICHA.



Right: Peer Amir Gadit and staff members Bi-Jeng Cheng, Shefali Rowshan, joined team leader Diana Roygulchareon at the Walk.

APICHA'S Food & Nutrition Project

APICHA trains clients on how to eat nutritiously and how to make wise food choices on a budget. Clients who meet the eligibility requirements for the project receive food twice a month from our nutrition coordinator. They are given fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, and fish and can choose between five different diet categories, East Asian, South Asian, South East Asian, Vegetarian, or Diabetic. After being in the program for six months clients graduate to the next level. They are given food vouchers which they can redeem at supermarkets or ethnic food stores. This summer APICHA will distribute our new *Modern Nutrition & Wellness Guide*. It will rate foods on a star basis with three stars being the most nutritious and one star being the least nutritious. It will be published in five different languages, English, Hindi, Japanese, Chinese, and Bengali.



POLICING THE GIRLS: Know Your Rights and How to Handle Yourself on the Street and in Court



APICHA's Transgender Asian and Pacific Alliance (TAPA) is a safe space for transgender people. Pamela and Cindy are seen enjoying themselves at a TAPA dinner.

APICHA's Transgender Asian and Pacific Alliance (TAPA) sponsored "Policing the Girls", a dinner and forum for A&P's of transgender experience on February 18, 2004. The group came together to socialize and to be educated about the law and civil right protections for transsexual, transgender, and gender variant people. Everyone settled down to hear the special guests, Juhu Thukral and Pauline Park speak.

Juhu Thukral, an attorney, is the director of the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center. Ms. Thukral began quite bluntly by saying, "Police often assume that all transgender persons are sex workers." She continued by telling the story of a thirteen-year-old transgender person who began to live on the streets after she was thrown out of her home because of her gender identity. She was arrested multiple times for prostitution without even knowing what a prostitute does.

Ms. Thukral warned people not to walk in the Meat Packing District near West 14th Street west of 9th Avenue. She warned, the police almost always arrest transgender people stopped in this area for prostitution. Survival tips she gave included:

- Stay calm and be polite.
- You are not required by law to give your name or show any identification, but it is probably a good idea to be prepared to do so if it prevents the situation from escalating into a confrontation or arrest.
- If you feel uncomfortable don't ask, "Am I under arrest?" Instead ask, "Am I free to go?" The police cannot detain you unless they arrest you.
- The police are permitted to pat you down to search for weapons only. If they find anything else that is illegal, like drugs, it could be used against you later.
- If they ask to search your bag or come into your home, ask to see a warrant. If they insist in searching you without a warrant say, "I do not agree or consent to a search."
- If you are arrested ask to see a lawyer. Do not answer any questions without your lawyer being present. If you do not have a lawyer, the court will appoint one for you free of charge.

- Make sure you get your lawyer's name, phone number, and your case docket number.
- Make sure to immediately tell your lawyer that you were searched without your consent.
- It is important to plead "not guilty". If you are told that you must plead "guilty" or you have any other questions, call the Urban Justice Center's Sex Workers Project Hotline at (646) 602-5617.

The other speaker was Pauline Park, Co-Chair of New York Association for Gender Rights Advocacy (NYAGRA), and a long-time transgender community activist. NYAGRA advocates and lobbies on behalf of gender and expression identity with New York State and New York City government officials. Ms. Park explained that the bad news is that New York State still does not have any legal protection for transgender or transsexual people. The good news is that New York City does. On April 30, 2003, New York City became the largest city in the United States to outlaw discrimination based on gender identity.

Pauline told the group the long history of how the law came to pass. First introduced in June 2000, and then re-introduced in January 2002, the law amends the New York City Human Rights Law by prohibiting discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations for transsexual, transgender, and gender variant people. The City Council passed the new law on April 24, 2003 and Mayor Michael Bloomberg signed it into law on April 30.

If you feel uncomfortable don't ask, "Am I under arrest?" Instead ask, "Am I free to go?" The police cannot detain you unless they arrest you.

If you feel you are a victim of discrimination make sure you document the incident by noting the date, time, name of the establishment or business, the address, and the name or the description of the employee who perpetrated the discrimination. To file a discrimination complaint contact the New York City Human Rights Commission, 40 Rector Street, New York, N.Y. 10006 or call them at (212) 306-7450. For more information call NYAGRA at (212) 675-3288.

Pauline also discussed the ongoing problems of a lack of homeless and domestic violence shelters for transgender people and the lack of special provisions for transgender people in jails and local police precinct holding cells.

The floor was then opened for discussion. Issues that were raised included the need for information on hormone treatment and the counseling for the effects of hormone treatment, the lack of general counseling services for transgender people and their partners, job training and placement, affordable healthcare, and immigrant rights. TAPA does monthly programs. For more information call Sunny or Sasha at (212) 334-7940.

Written by Marty Algaze and reported by Russell M. Tilaro



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Become an Advocate

This issue of the APICHA News focuses on advocacy, what we are doing to advocate on behalf of our clients and how you can become an advocate by using your political power in the voting booth to influence AIDS policy and funding.

ADVOCATE – Funk and Wagnall’s Dictionary defines “advocate” as, “To speak or write in favor of; defend; recommend.” From the early 1980’s when AIDS first appeared in the United States until the present, AIDS activists have had to be advocates on behalf of treatment, prevention, medical research, prescription drugs, government funding, healthcare, civil rights, etc. APICHA has been in the forefront in advocating specifically for HIV and AIDS services for the Asian and Pacific Islander (A & PI) communities for more than 15 years.

BEING COUNTED – Although we have had much success, to many people A & PI’s are invisible and therefore constantly being under-counted in all health studies on AIDS, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, etc. The impact of being invisible is that the services and programs our community so desperately needs are not funded. AIDS is a life and death issue and we must demand to be counted or government will continue to ignore us.

In the early years of the epidemic when government agencies calculated the number of people living with AIDS, they lumped A & PI’s into the category of “other” along with Native Americans and people not designated as “white”, “black”, or “Latino. APICHA’s founders used their political power to get the government to change that policy and to designate A & PI’s in our own category. Unfortunately we need to do more because there are still no accurate statistics on how many A & PI’s are living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. and what they think about HIV stigma, prevention information, testing, etc. (See HOW DO A & PI’S FEEL ABOUT AIDS?).

FUNDING – AIDS organizations depends on the federal, state, and city governments to fund our programs. Government involvement = politics. AIDS has always been influenced by politics. APICHA began to get some government funding in 1994. We have been successful in getting more government funding in recent years but our contracts need to be renewed on a regular basis or we will be forced to close our doors. Government funding can vary depending on who is elected to office and how much they care about AIDS. When the government cuts taxes or the nation goes to war, AIDS and other domestic spending gets cut. Cutting taxes, going to war, and funding healthcare programs are all choices made by the people in power.

There are three major federal AIDS programs that states and municipalities depend on to treat People Living with AIDS (PLWA), Medicaid, AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), and the Ryan White Care Act, in honor of the young man who died of AIDS on April 8, 1990. Some conservatives in Congress are proposing to “reform” Medicaid. Medicaid is administered by the states, nearly 55% of PLWA’s depend on it to pay for their healthcare costs, and it is the single largest source of AIDS funding. The proposed “reforms” actually would equal cuts. ADAP is federally funded and administered by the states. It pays for prescription drugs for low

HOW DO A & PI’S FEEL ABOUT AIDS?

What do A & PI’s think about AIDS? To better understand what people are thinking, APICHA is participating in four different studies that will more accurately assist us in determining that information. The first study is part of the RARE (Rapid Assessment and Research Evaluation) Project, under the leadership of Dr. Margaret Abraham, and will survey South Asian women to assess their knowledge and attitudes on HIV/AIDS, ideas about sexuality and gender relationships, perception of risk behaviors, and access to information and services. The second study, conducted by Dr. John Chin at the New York Academy of Medicine, will examine Chinese and South Asian people in various religious communities about their perceptions and stigma about AIDS. The third study is being conducted at Columbia University and will concentrate on men who are already living with HIV or AIDS and how they are complying with their prescription drug regimen, ongoing medical care, and their ideas about AIDS. The fourth study is being conducted by Dr. Frank Wong of Georgetown University and targets men who have sex with men when they go to get screened for HIV. They will be questioned about why they are getting tested, their perceptions of HIV, risky behavior, stigma, etc. We will report back to you on the results of these important studies.

income PLWA. New York State's ADAP program also pays for doctor visits. Federal budget cuts have forced 11 states to stop enrolling new people and put them on ADAP waiting lists. Eight other states have cut ADAP services and 10 are anticipating service cuts soon. In recent years the Care Act has been flat funded, which means there have been no cuts, but there have been no increases in funding to reflect inflation, the cost of living, or the growing number of PLWA who need services (more people are living longer and more new infections are being diagnosed, therefore more people need services for a longer period of time). So flat funding really amounts to a cut. In June the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) announced it was also cutting funding for AIDS. After all, we do have a war going on.

You might ask why is AIDS funding being cut if more people need these services? The answer is, there is a concerted effort on behalf of right wing politicians, organizations, and media to cut AIDS funding because they don't like the people who get AIDS. They want to influence how prevention materials and information is presented to the public too. They don't really care about AIDS, especially AIDS in America. Many of them actually still believe that people who have AIDS got what they deserve. They definitely do not want us to talk about sex, homosexuality, condom use, substance abuse, etc. even if talking about them might save lives. In fact they want us to promote sexual abstinence as the only method to prevent the spread of HIV even though experts and more than 20 years of prevention experience show that ignoring people's sexual behavior does not work. The best way to prevent the spread of HIV is to tell people about all their options and let them choose the best way to protect themselves.

POWER – There is power in numbers and numbers only count if people vote. For too many years government officials have often ignored our communities' needs because we don't show up on Election Day to vote. As you can see, our elected officials and the people who work for them decide how much to spend on AIDS and who gets to spend it. We have the power to influence this process by voting for people who support AIDS funding, and other social needs of A & PI's. (See VOTER AWARENESS.)



HOW GOVERNMENT FUNDING IS STRUCTURED

- **FEDERAL:** President Bush, the U.S. Senate, and the House of Representatives are responsible for federal AIDS funding. Most federal dollars are distributed through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) or the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- **STATE:** Governor Pataki, the New York State Senate, and Assembly are responsible for state AIDS funding. Most state dollars are distributed through the New York State Department of Health (DOH) and their HIV/AIDS unit named the AIDS Institute.
- **CITY:** Mayor Bloomberg and the New York City Council are responsible for city AIDS funding. Most city dollars are distributed through the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

Do you know who your elected officials are? It is easy to find out by going to the New York City League of Women Voters web site at www.lwvny.org. Click on "Find Out Who Represents You", type in your home address, and a list of your local elected officials will pop up on the screen. Do you know whether or not they are supporting AIDS funding and other health needs for A & PI's? Write or call and ask them.

CHALLENGES – Advocating on behalf of AIDS in the A & PI communities has unique challenges because of the different cultures, languages, and views on sex, drugs, homosexuality, economic disparities, and access to adequate, affordable healthcare and health information. Many A & PI's are complacent about AIDS because they think AIDS only happens to other people (gay men, IV drug abusers, other racial or ethnic groups, etc.) and not to them. Young people think it only happens to older people and older people believe it only happens to the young. The truth is AIDS can happen to anybody, including you. Become an advocate and get tested so you know your HIV status.

VOTER AWARENESS

On May 13th APICHA participated in a big press conference on the steps of City Hall with a coalition of Asian Pacific Islander organizations to announce the formation of APAVA (Asian and Pacific American Voters Alliance). APAVA is a non-partisan alliance of organizations intent on raising awareness in the A & PI community about the importance of voting. City Council Member John C. Lui, the only Asian elected official in New York State, appeared at the event and spoke about the importance of voting. The press conference was used as an opportunity to announce a citywide voter mobilization campaign to register new voters. The goal is to get A & PI's into the voting booth so that the community will gain political power, elect supportive candidates to office, and to increase government funding and services to the community. Are you registered to vote? If not there is still time to register to vote on Election Day, November 2nd. You must register no later than October 8th. For voter registration information call APICHA at 212 334-7940 or the New York City Board of Elections at 1-866-VOTE-NYC or 1-866- 868-3692. For APAVA information go to www.apava.org.

APICHA BANQUET OF 1001 CHAMPIONS



Left: Paul Huang, President of the C.J. Huang Foundation, Therese Rodriguez, Executive Director, Suki Terada Ports, Board Member, Council Member John C. Lui, actor B.D. Wong, and Kevin Huang-Cruz, Board Chair
Right: City Council Member John C. Lui and Grace Lyu-Volckhausen, President of the Tiger Baron Foundation and a leader in the Korean American community.



Photos by Corky Lee

September 11, 2001 was a dark day for America. Along with the destruction of the Twin Towers came the destruction of the local economy in Lower Manhattan. No community was more adversely impacted than Chinatown. In February 2003 a new disease named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) appeared in Asia. Many people falsely believed that SARS had spread to the U.S., and specifically to New York's Chinatown. Tourist all but disappeared from the area. APICHA decided to show our solidarity in supporting efforts to rebuild the Chinatown community by holding our Banquet of 1001 Champions at Jing Fong Restaurant on Elizabeth Street. On October 15, 2003, 400

people attended our banquet, we raised more than \$60,000 to fund our programs, and we commemorated our 15th anniversary. Special guests included City Council Member John C. Lui, actor B.D. Wong, and on behalf of Mayor Bloomberg, Frank Oldham Jr., the City-wide AIDS Policy Coordinator. We also used this festive event to screen our new DVD film, which tells APICHA's story, the services we provide, and how these services impact on the lives of people living with HIV and AIDS in the A & PI community. Also in attendance were many leaders in the AIDS and A & PI communities.

APICHA STAFF RETREAT

On April 8th and 9th APICHA's staff, board, and peers left the city and went upstate New York on a group retreat. It was an opportunity to reflect, be introspective, build solidarity and morale, and to get some fresh air. After an eventful year we felt it was important to sit back and take some time to enjoy nature, assess all that had happened, both the good and the bad, and to contemplate what the future holds in store for the organization. There were many things to reflect upon including the growth of the agency, the opening of our HIV Primary Care Clinic, how APICHA views itself, and how the community views APICHA. Everyone came back to work refreshed and ready for the challenges ahead.

