Interview with Sherry Dong, Director of Community Health at Tufts Medical Center

Sherry Dong was elected the Board President of Chinese Historical Society of New England at the Society’s annual meeting and dinner on September 24. (Photo by Natalie Ornell)

By Cody Yiu

Sherry Dong is a familiar face around the blocks of Chinatown. Known for her dedication to promoting Asian-American health, Dong’s involvement in the community goes above and beyond her role as the Director of Community Health at Tufts Medical Center. On October 29, Dong will be honored at the 2010 Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) Community Awards Dinner for her exceptional contributions to Boston’s neighborhoods and civic life. In the following interview with the Sampan, Dong, shares about growing up in New York City and her desires for the betterment of the Asian-American community.

Sampan: Please tell us about yourself. Where did you grow up and go to school?

Dong: I was born and raised in New York City, the Lower East Side. My father was a taxi driver, my mother was a garment worker. She would often bring piece work home and we would sometimes help her while watching TV. Can you imagine being paid pennies for each pocket you flipped, belt loop you sewed onto a pair of pants or collar sewn onto a shirt? I am still amazed when I think about how well my mother saved and never made us feel like we were lacking.

I am a product of the NYC public schools, P.S. 1 and Hunter College High School, and decided to attend Tufts University, double majoring in Asian Studies and Sociology. I later completed a Masters in Public Administration at Northeastern University.

Sampan: What is your current role at Tufts Medical Center and what does it involve?

Dong: Director of Community Health Improvement Programs. It’s dynamic and multi-faceted, lots of moving parts. Among other things - I oversee our grant giving initiatives – the Asian Health Initiative, Dorchester Health Initiative, and Parent to Parent Program; community partnerships and programs; community relations; am a strong advocate for culturally and linguistically competent care; and troubleshoot as needed. I have a lot of moving parts. Among other things - I oversee our grant giving initiatives – the Asian Health Initiative, Dorchester Health Initiative, and Parent to Parent Program; community partnerships and programs; community relations; am a strong advocate for culturally and linguistically competent care; and troubleshoot as needed. I have a lot

SEE DONG PAGE 8

Three day Immigration Integration Conference inspires national leaders and immigration advocates assemble in Boston

By Natalie Ornell

US President Barack Obama congratulated a group of newly naturalized citizens in Boston’s Exchange Conference Center via video during the opening reception of the “Becoming Americans” National Immigration Integration Conference (NIIC). Hosted by the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, over 400 professionals, immigrant advocates and researchers, and speakers including Governor Deval Patrick and the United States Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis gathered to share thoughts regarding the state of immigration today.

According to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer Denis Riordan, the USCIS chose the next twenty-nine people in line, representing fourteen different countries, to participate in this special naturalization ceremony overlloking the Boston Harbor.

New citizen Y. Zhang, originally from Beijing, China, has lived with her husband in the United States for fourteen years. After receiving her citizenship papers following a ceremony which included a performance of “America the Beautiful” and a group-led Pledge of Allegiance, she said, “I’m happy to do this. This is a new phase in my life. It’s a good feeling.”

Riordan, who has coordinated naturalization ceremonies recently in Faneuil Hall, Pembrey Park, and the JFK Library said, “There’s a sense of appreciation, gratitude, and joy. It’s important to our country that people take the step towards citizenship.”

Topics over the three days ranged from immigrants’ impact on the economy, civic engagement, fostering immigrant community law enforcement and protecting civil rights, and the role of immigrants in their host communities. In his speech, President and CEO of one of the conference’s sponsors, the Boston Foundation, Paul Grogan, explained that the Boston Foundation has “stayed with the [immigration] issue for 100 years” and that the nation must “overcome ambivalence” related to immigration.

Many advocates like conference attendee Beverly Wong from San Jose, California are trying to overcome this ambivalence by easing integration for immigrants in their local communities. Wong serves as the project coordinator for Asian Americans for Community Involvement and works on Silicon Val...
**IMMIGRATION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

Kan believes that through partnering with other community-based organizations (CBOs), AACA can effectively reach out to more minority and disadvantaged residents in the Greater Boston area. “We must proactively reach out not only because immigrants are in need of immediate and long-term assistance, but also because they are usually reluctant as well as unable to locate resources and those who could help,” Kan said.

Participants proudly held up flags of their native countries, including China, Haiti, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and the Dominican Republic. The Office of New Bostonians (ONB) was established in 1998 to meet the needs of the growing and changing immigrant and newcomer communities in Boston. The ONB’s purpose is “to increase the ability of immigrants and the diverse cultural and linguistic communities of which they are a part to fully participate in the economic, civic and cultural life of the City of Boston, and to promote the commemoration of the American Dream and a turn for the Hmong American community.”

Director of the Office of New Bostonians Reverend Cheng Inmm Than enjoyed the opportunity to have the conference in Boston, home of the 7th largest immigrant population in the United States. “It was such a gift to have the conference in town and to be able to hear about successful programs and strategies and meet so many dedicated immigrant advocates. At a time when anti-immigrant rhetoric is rife, this conference provided inspiration and hope.”

**NEW BOSTONIANS COMMUNITY DAY CELEBRATES 11TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY**

Kenneth Kan, an outreach assistant at the Asian American Civic Association (AACA), was manning a booth at City Hall Plaza. He handed out fliers to immigrants who are looking for job training and English-language classes. "Although AACA has primarily been serving Asian communities, especially in the Chinatown neighborhood, the programs at AACA can greatly benefit virtually any immigrant and even some low-income natural born Americans," Kan said.

By Cody Yu

It was a celebration of multiculturalism at City Hall Plaza on September 23, as hundreds of immigrants and supporters partook in the in the city’s 11th annual New Bostonians Community Day.

The daylong event featured ethnic food and live cultural music, legal, housing, English-learning, job-training information for communities to learn about various services offered by City Hall and other organizations were readily available at various booths.

When: Saturday, November 6, 2010, 4:00-7:30 PM
Contact: To purchase tickets, or if you have any questions, please call Chealy Tim at 617-426-9492 ext. 231 or chealy@aaeca-boston.org

The Boston Asian American Film Festival

The Boston Asian American Film Festival (BAAFF) is a project in motion, hosted by the Asian American Resource Workshop, and is taking place between November 11-14th. Premiering and screening films and shorts, in addition to hosting other events, BAAFF invites you and your friends to join the Festival.

To be among the first to hear this year’s film festival line up and watch previews, you are welcome to our Fundraiser Launch Party on October 20th at Splash Ultra Lounge. There will be food, games, raffles and prizes. For ticket sales and additional information about BAAFF, visit www.baaaff.org. Contact: (617) 426-5313, baaaff@aarc.org.

Contests were readily available at various booths.

Registered women will receive a Pap test and mammogram (if necessary). Test results will be provided the same day and physicians will be available to discuss test results if needed. Consultations are free of charge for uninsured and underinsured women. Insured women are asked to bring their health insurance card. Pre-registration is required. Patients can register by calling 617-636-4972. Mandar in and Cantonese language interpreters will be available for pre-registration calls and during the event.

Where: Tufts Medical Center, South 2 GYN Clinic, 860 Washington Street, Boston, MA. When: Saturday, October 23, 2010, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Buds and Blossoms Fall Frolic

Buds and Blossoms will host its first Fall Frolic at the Empire Garden Restaurant in Boston Chinatown on Saturday, November 6, 2010. The event will celebrate children and the excitement of learning. It will feature Chinese buffet, ethnic performances, Chinese crafts and games, face painting, Chinese dress-up photo, auction and much more.

Where: Empire Garden Restaurant, 690 Washington Street, Boston Chinatown, MA 02111.

Women are encouraged to visit www.budsandblossoms.org to register. The entry fee is $25 per person. For more information, please contact Lillian Chan at 617-973-4044.

New Bostonians Community Day Celebrates 11th Year Anniversary

Kenneth Kan from the Asian American Civic Association handing out program fliers to immigrants. (Photo by Cody Yu)

By Cody Yu

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Chinatown Bank, Economic Justice Project, Ropes & Gray offer free business workshop to Chinatown Community

The event was the combined brainchild of the Economic Justice Project (part of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights), Cathay Bank, and Boston-based firm Ropes & Gray. (Photo by Alissa Greenberg)

By Alissa Greenberg

Bankers and lawyers have two of the poorest reputations of any professional groups, but on September 23 representatives of these occupations showed their potential for doing good: they teamed up to present the first in a series of free seminars for small-business owners in Chinatown.

The event was the combined brainchild of the Economic Justice Project (part of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights), Cathay Bank, and Boston-based firm Ropes & Gray. The EJP has been hoping to expand into Chinatown when planning began, and had long been hoping to expand into Chinatown when Cathay Regional Senior Vice President Johnny Ip called them early this year.

“We always want to give back to the community,” Ip explained. “Our roots are in Asia, and we want to help Asians and Asian Americans. I had been seeing flyers around for other free LCCR seminars, so I decided to talk to them about developing our own series.”

As planning began, the biggest concern was developing a program tailored to local needs.

“We asked ourselves, ‘What would be appropriate content for Chinatown? Should we start from the beginning or do something sophisticated? Should it be industry focused?’” EJP fellow Nathaniel Kurtis said.

“Luckily, Cathay has always been a strong partner in the community here, and they helped us reach out to people. They brought in our cosponsors [BCNC, ACDC, Chinatown Main St, and AACA], as well.”

Ropes & Gray proved to be an enthusiastic partner. According to Darren Braham, one of the attorney volunteers, the firm has a “really responsive pro bono department,” that had no trouble recruiting presenters.

With speakers and sponsors secured, Ip offered Cathay’s location on Washington Street as the seminar space and began a publicity blitz, including a press release, a booth at the August evening: the impor- tant of putting every present. “The time when you need a contract is what they called the ‘take-home message of the event.’: the impor- tant of putting every present. “The time when you need a contract is what they called the ‘take-home message of the event.’

At a university where 8 colleges, more than 170 academic programs, nearly 1,000 professors, and over 15,000 students come together on a beautiful seaside campus, we’d like to count you in.

UMass Boston Open House 2010 Saturday, October 16, 8:30am

Sign up at www.umb.edu/openhouse or by calling 617.287.6000

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By Diana Li

On a sunny Saturday with a few clouds, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, Inc. (BCNC) held the 25th Annual Oak Street Fair on September 25th. BCNC is an organization that enunciates the enrichment of the community by providing resources and support.

During the three-hour period, entertainment, activities, games were plentiful. One could hear the scream and shouts of laughter from children having fun. According to Lisa Choi, a parent attending the event with her two kids, called the event, “the perfect Saturday fair.”

The fair was full of entertainment including a variety of performances. The BCNC Acorn Center for Early Education and Care performed several acts that were adored by the crowd. Zhou Hong Liang gave a Tai Chi demonstration. One might think that Tai Chi is practiced for defense, but it is also beneficial to the health. Other performances included Children Chinese Folk Dance by the Boston Chinese Folk and classical Dance Troupe, Taiko Drumming, a Japanese drum, by Genki Spark, and breakdancing by Krazy 88s. Every single performance left the audience in awe.

BOSTONIANS, CONTINUED
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Applications must be picked up in person from Winn Residential:
- 324 Tremont Street on October 6, 6 p.m. - 7 p.m.
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  617-625-7150

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Applications are due by October 28, 2010.

For more information call Winn Residential (617) 265-3200

Voucher Holders welcome—Rent at Payment Standard.
A new luxury condominium building coming to Chinatown

By Joanne Wong

Where a vacant building on 120 Kingston Street now stands will be the location of a new luxury condominium building, South Cove, bounded by Essex, Kingston Street, and Surface Road, the building sits along the Chinatown Park section of the Greenway. The project, spearheaded by the Hudson Group, has been approved by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) since 2008.

On the evening of September 20, the Hudson Group, led by Ori Ron, spoke to the Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council about the changes to the original layout and physical appearance of the building. Physical changes include an additional residential floor, increased to 11 units on each floor for a total of 200 units, and addition of glass fins to the building design for a more modern look. New sidewalks will be built around the building. In terms of transportation and parking, the plan includes a decrease of parking spaces available to 70 spaces within 4 levels. Instead of a free shuttle service, there will be a shuttle service to residents in order to mitigate car trips around town.

To add to that, the Hudson Group claims that the development of the building will generate numerous public benefits. The developer is partnering with the Chinese Economic Development Council (CEDC) for its affordable housing contribution, which will include 38 units. Four parcels of land will be deeded to CEDC, and a peninsula on Avenue de Lafayette will be adopted for green space. Land and cash contributions will total up to roughly $6 million.

Construction is projected to begin on May/June of 2011, and take 26 months to complete. The Hudson Group estimates that approximately 225 construction personnel will be hired. At the end of the meeting, the Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council approved the proposed project changes to the building.

Joanne Wong is a Sampan correspondent.

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Do you like attending cultural events and want to share your interests and expertise with our readers? YOU CAN!

SAMPA is seeking community correspondents, photographers, translators and writers to help us provide coverage of major events and happenings in the Asian-American community in Metro Boston. We are especially seeking Malden and Quincy correspondents to help us stay connected with those communities. Ideal candidates should have an interest in writing (or/and) report-
ing. We welcome students, working professionals, stay-at-home parents, retirees and all others who are interested in Asian-American affairs.

Anyone interested in contributing to SAMPA should e-mail at recruit@sampan.org.
Cancer walk teams raise nearly $100K to benefit Quincy Medical Center. Proceeds from 13th Annual Cancer Walk to go to Surgical Oncology Program

By Natalie Ornell

Around 1,000 people participated in Quincy Medical Center’s (QMC) cancer walk on September 26th to benefit the Marie A. Curry Fund, which provides free cancer screening, cancer education and equipment to promote the state of the art in cancer care for patients. This year’s proceeds, which totaled close to 100,000 dollars, will be used to enhance QMC’s surgical oncology program, including new breast and thoracic surgery clinics that will open this fall.

A closing ceremony in Merrymount Park’s Pageant Field, Medical Dr. Sarah May said, “As an oncologist I know first-hand the importance of community service. Cancer is not a go-at-one-alone journey.”

Supporters who attended the cancer walk emerged from Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch and Candidate for State Representative in Quincy Tackey Chan to Quincy’s Boy Scout Troop #42 and groups of student volunteers from Quincy high school. Cancer survivors and relatives of cancer survivors in addition to families with children came out to take the four mile seashore walk on a beautiful Sunday.

QMC Board of Directors Co-Chair Murphy-McAuliffe said, “36,000 Massachusetts residents are currently battling cancer... The best weapon we have is early detection and agressive treatment...”

Murphy-McAuliffe added that thanks to walkers, over 1.8 million dollars have been raised for the Curry Fund over the last thirteen years.

Man Lai Yuan, a senior citizen who came with her friend from the Wollaston Senior Center, said, “I love walking! I walk every morning on Wollaston beach. I just came to support the Quincy Medical Center.”

Even though she doesn’t have cancer or friends and family with cancer, Yuan has participated in the QMC cancer walk almost every year since 2001.

Natalie Ornell is a Sampan correspondent.

Wolfpack Volunteers

By Kevin Liang

“I only volunteer to make my resume look better.” “I have better things to do on a Saturday morning.” It’s interesting to hear the opinions of the members of Wolfpack Volunteers change for the better over a matter of hours. Immediately, you can hear the sudden bursts of laughter from groups of volunteers. The bright smiles and cheers from the wave of brightly colored volunteer shirts, give away the fact that they are enjoying themselves.

Wolfpack volunteers, founded in 2004 by a group of Boston Latin School (BLS) students, is designed to encourage and engage students in community service not only in school, but across Boston. They seek to help students realize that volunteering is indeed fun, and to humbly appreciate the help that they received from their community, and to give back wholeheartedly.

Annually, the club conducts a canned food drive to donate to the Greater Boston Food Bank. In 2009, Wolfpack Volunteers collected over 2,000 pounds of food, and was recognized with the Nally Award. In school, Wolfpack helps organize volunteers for a variety of events, including the Sixte Tours, Music Night (a seasonal concert), College Fair, and many more. Outside of the school, Wolfpack is actively involved in events throughout Boston. For the past two years, Wolfpack has participated in Boston Shines in Allston-Brighton. Volunteers gathered early morning to paint an elementary school’s playground and assisted in the process of cleaning up and making the school’s garden. Wolfpack also annually partakes in all sorts of Walks and Runs, including the Walk for Hunger, AIDS Walk Boston, Run to Remember, Tafts Harbor Walk and Run, and many more. The members of Wolfpack have been all over Boston, committed to giving back to the community that has helped them tremendously.

Each year, the club chooses a non-profit organization to donate to support their cause. Last year, the club focused on the Children’s Bible Charities for Jars, an organization that aims to not only try to remove stigmataic labels that society give people, such as “geek”, “jock”, or “prep”, but it also works to help feed the people of Lawrence, MA which is one of the poorest cities in the U.S. Wolfpack helped raise awareness of the organization by customizing shirts to sell, and raised over $500 to donate.

The members of Wolfpack Volunteers strive to encourage their friends to tag along to events.

In the halls of BLS, you will hear the occasional buzz of “Are you going to the Samaritan’s Walk on Saturday?” or “Dude, volunteer with us at the Boston Marathon” now. With the officers of Wolfpack Volunteers sending out messages to members, informing them of an upcoming volunteer opportunity, they are sure to remind the volunteers of the limited amount of positions, because they are always overwhelmed with a blast of “Sign me up!” It is reassuring to know that the youth of Boston at BLS is dedicated to giving back to their communities by means of volunteering.

Housing Assistance

By Kevin Liang

Maximum Household Incomes

- 2 Person Household: $36,750
- 3 Person Household: $46,920
- 4 Person Household: $57,250
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Applications available at Hanwha Town Hall, Hanwha Public Library, Brooks Free Library, Chase Library, the City offices and online at caspdp.org.

Youth

By Natalie Ornell

“The wave of brightly colored volunteers, the bright laughter from groups of volunteers. The bright smiles and cheers from the wave of brightly colored volunteer shirts, give away the fact that they are enjoying themselves. They seek to help students realize that volunteering is indeed fun, and to humbly appreciate the help that they received from their community, and to give back wholeheartedly.”

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CHSNE celebrates 18th annual meeting and dinner

By Diana Li

The Chinese Historical Society of New England (CHSNE) held their eighteenth annual meeting and dinner on September 24, 2010 at China Pearl. Throughout the night, dishes after dishes of Asian cuisine were served, totaling 11 courses that ranged from seafood in a bird's nest to yee fu noodles. It was a night of business and social affair. Over 100 members, friends, and guests were present to mingle and dine.

The meeting started with a tribute to David Wong, co-founder of CHSNE, who passed away earlier this year. Wong was an active member of the Chinatown community who made countless contributions to the community and will be remembered by many. One of his many contributions includes the Chinese immigrant memorial at Mount Hope Cemetery.

Part of the agenda for the night was presenting the annual report of activities and the annual election of board members and officers. A notable position change is that Sherry Dong will be taking over Peter Kiang and Deborah Dong. Peter Kiang and Deborah Dong were the former co-presidents of CHSNE. Peter Kiang was president for 7 years and Deborah Dong was president for 3 years. The board will consist of continuing and new members and officers.

In the midst of the event, three awards were presented: the Wong Scholarship Award, CHSNE/Waterman-Waring-Langone Scholarship Award, and the Sojourner Award. The Wong Scholarship Award was established by Stephanie Fan and Valerie Wong to honor their mother Katherine Chin Wong. The award was presented to Daniel Tam, a student from Northeastern University. Anna Nicole Dartley, from Mount Holyoke College, and Jonathan Huang, from Suffolk University, were the two newly inducted CHSNE/Waterman-Waring-Langone scholars. They joined 6 continuing recipients and accepted their award. Recipients of this award must show commitment to community activities and awareness of their cultural heritage. The Sojourner Award was presented to Madeline Wong, who was among the first Chinese females to work in life insurance in Boston. Madeline Wong set an example that opened doors and opportunities. Mrs. Wong is not only successful in her career but she is also cofounder of Kowloon restaurant and a supporter of numerous Chinatown organizations.

CHSNE is a non-profit organization that strives to preserve the history of Chinese immigration in the New England. For more information on scholarships or CHSNE, please visit www.chsne.org or email info@chsne.org.

Diana Li is a Sampan correspondent.
of opportunity to make positive change, and get involved in different things. It keeps me nimble.

I get to work with a lot of people, internally and externally, clinicians, human service providers, marketing and communications, finance, elderly, law enforcement, public officials, the press, just about anyone on almost any topic imaginable.

For example, AACA [Asian American Civic Association] approached me several years ago regarding a potential collaboration on a workforce development initiative. In a nutshell, AACA would assess the need, and provide ESL and GED training to our incumbent employees to help them advance professionally, and personally. I am not a workforce development expert by any means. However, I agreed with AACA that this was an excellent opportunity for the employees and for Tufts Medical Center and determined to secure commitment for this workplace education initiative. It required financial commitment, and support from managers to provide their employees with release time in order to take the classes during work hours, on-site or at nearby AACA. We are fortunate to have a forward looking and community-minded CEO in Ellen Zane who saw the value in this initiative, and managers willing to support it. I am fortunate to work under her leadership.

I have the latitude to develop new partnerships and programs, including the AACA one, and our summer internship program for high school students from the community and a number of BPS schools, including the Josiah Quincy Upper School and South Boston High Schools. We kicked off the program in 2006, and with the support of managers across the Medical Center willing to take a student, we have placed over 60 students in departments ranging from Anesthesiology to Accounting, Gamma Knife Center, Neonatal Intensive Care

Unity, Occupational Therapy, etc.

I get to work with wonderful doctors who want to reach out to the community. I learn more about the health of Asians. I learned from one of our physicians, Richard Wein, an ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) physician specializing in the treatment of head and neck cancer, that nasopharyngeal carcinoma is a cancer that disproportionately affects Asians, particularly from southern China. We worked together to provide free screenings for the community. He has held 5 screenings since November 2008, benefiting 108 community members.

Sampang: Have you always known that you want to be in the healthcare profession?

Dong: Not exactly. I fell into healthcare accidentally, by way of my previous work and familiarity with the Chinatown community. But I love what I do, most of the time, and feel very privileged that someone saw potential in me, despite my lack of specific prior healthcare experience, encouraged me, and empowered me.

I just knew I wanted to do something that helps “the community” – Asian, Chinese, low-income, disenfranchised, limited English proficient individuals, etc. – and have been fortunate in that my personal and professional interests have mostly been aligned, as a student helping Chinese immigrants get employment discrimination, housing, and other legal issues; addressing disability rights issues at the Attorney General’s Office of Massachusetts; and especially in the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services as Mayor Menino’s Asian liaison where I got to go back to the community in my way.

Sampang: You’ve done a tremendous amount of work in the Asian-American community on a professional as well as personal level. Could you share with us your involvement in the community outside of work?

Dong: I spend a lot of time organizing a food pantry program serving the Greater Boston Chinese community. Riceivests and Tea. I was aware of RST as a board member of the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, which co-founded the program under Cheng Imm Tan’s leadership. But I became more actively involved through my role at the Medical Center when I became aware of a funding opportunity that was a perfect match for RST. I contacted them and Tufts submitted the proposal on their behalf, and was awarded funds to provide food assistance and nutrition and education. One thing led to another, and with the help of many dedicated volunteers and friends of volunteers, including AACA, which graciously serves as RST’s fiscal agent, the program is 100% volunteer led and relies on important individual and organizational donations, serving over 100 families each month, representing approximately 300 seniors, adults and children. We organize a holiday party for the families every December, with gifts, food and caroling (my favorite part).

We reach out to our friends, families, supporters to help by adopting a kid, senior, or family and getting them a gift. (This is a shameless plug for anyone who might be interested in supporting RST, and the gift drive.)

I am also on the board of the Chinese Historical Society of New England; have been serving on the Oversight Committee for the Chinatown Masterplan 2010 visioning process over the past 2 years, to help shape the goals and vision for the community in the next decade and beyond; and have co-chaired the Chinatown Coalition for several years, leading several community health education initiatives supported by the Boston Public Health Commission, specifically relating to emergency preparedness and planning and seasonal, avian pandemic and H1N1 flu.

Sampang: You spend much time promoting various health causes. What do you think are some health concerns within the Asian-American population that often go unaddressed or need more attention?

Dong: Before I go into specific health issues, I would be remiss not to point out that there is insufficient data about the health of Asian Americans, so to say that disparities do not exist is not quite accurate since there isn’t enough conclusive data. When it is collected, data is mostly gathered in English. If other languages are included, it would be Spanish, then maybe Portuguese, but generally not Asian languages, so Asian immigrant health issues are understated. On the rare occasion that there is health data about Asians, it is unlikely to be disaggregated, meaning Chinese are lumped with Korean, or lumped with Vietnamese, Cambodian, etc. so any differences in health status or priorities are not captured.

Hepatitis B and Tuberculosis are identified as health problems disproportionately impacting Asians, and should receive resources and attention. But the lack of data to support the health concerns we see in the community and share anecdotally is a challenge in terms of allocation of government and foundation resources and recognition that these health issues adversely affect this community.

One of the programs I am very proud of is the Asthma Prevention and Management Initiative (APMI), which was initiated in partnership with our Floating Hospital for Children’s Asian Clinic and General Pediatrics, and the Josiah Quincy Elementary and Upper Schools, through a health disparities grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA Foundation. Our pediatricians told us experientially that asthma was a problem among their Asian patients, in the absence of a lot of quantitative data or research in this area. We have continued to support the program, and provide workshops to asthmatics at the school as well as to residents and other community service providers, as well as developed several multi-lingual educational materials for parents, teachers, nurses, and children.

Asians experience much higher rates of Hepatitis B, and nasopharyngeal carcinoma, as mentioned earlier, than the general population. Our physicians are working on these issues, and more needs to be done. Diabetes and obesity are also concerns that may not seem as obvious in this community. However, given increasing acculturation to Western habits and Western diets, both are on the rise, especially among youth. You need only walk around Chinatown to see that smoking continues to be a major problem and deserves continued attention and resources. Tufts Medical Center support community health education, outreach and prevention programs through our Asian Health Initiative. With the help of its advisory committee, which includes community leaders who see the issues at the grassroots level, diabetes, smoking cessation and obesity were in fact identified as the priority areas for our most recent funding cycle.

Sampang: What are your hopes for the Asian-American community through the work that you do?

Dong: I hope that through my work at the Medical Center we can improve the health of the community directly through medical services and health education and outreach, as well as by collaborating with our community partners, including AACA, to reach out to the community. I hope people will become their own best health advocates, and support community-wide efforts.