Hong Kong Chief Talks “One Country, Two Systems” at Harvard

BY KANE CARPENTER

Hong Kong’s Chief Executive, Sir Donald Tsang, spent an evening speaking about his term as the leader of Hong Kong, the progress of the “One Country, Two Systems” policy, as well as addressing concerns and questions from audience members in a question-and-answer session at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government on November 8, 2011.

Tsang, who assumed the office of Chief Executive in 2005, spoke to an auditorium of over one-hundred attendees and answered questions regarding hot-button issues such as Hong Kong’s pricey housing market, education and healthcare.

“I hope my people, whom I serve, agree with you,” Tsang said, responding to a comment from David T. Ellwood, Dean of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, complimenting Tsang on his leadership of Hong Kong. “But I also have a little crowd out there [in Hong Kong] that has, in response to Occupy Wall Street, decided to Occupy HSBC.”

Despite Tsang’s acknowledgement of some discontent in Hong Kong society, he noted, “the economy is doing quite well,” adding that, “we have survived several crises quite well.”

Tai’s visit comes a few months before he

Autumn has finally arrived in Boston, bringing its familiar seasonal happenings: beautiful foliage, gusty winds, crisp air…and BAAFF. The Boston Asian American Film Festival—BAAFF—occurs every fall in Boston, and if you don’t already look forward to this event every autumn, then something needs to change.

The Boston Asian American Film Festival is a weekend packed with feature-length films, short films, and interviews with Asian American directors and actors. Each of the films and shorts are hand-picked by the team of BAAFF coordinators based on their content, production value, and diversity of cultures depicted. This year more than twice as many films were submitted than there was room for in the program—a new record. Describing the selection process, co-director of BAAFF Yvonne Ng said, “It was pretty tough. We look for whether or not it fits our theme of social justice and empowering Asian Americans.”

BAAFF is a core program of the Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW). The mission of BAAFF is to empower Asian Americans by showcasing films depicting Asian American experiences. Each of the films and shorts are handpicked by the team of BAAFF coordinators based on their content, production value, and diversity of cultures depicted.

As Chinatown continues its search for a permanent cultural center for the neighborhood, plans are in place to set up a reading room and pilot program in Oak Terrace for early 2012. The Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC) has agreed to allow for the reading room to be located in the Oak Terrace Community Room, a 700 square foot space.

The Reading Room will accommodate 8,000 donated books, which will be on display on a rotation of 2,000 books at a time.

Oak Terrace, located at 888 Washington Street, is set to welcome a community reading room in 2012.

Chinatown To Have Reading Room In Early 2012

BY KANE CARPENTER

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SEE READING ROOM ON PAGE 3

SEE HIGHLIGHTS ON PAGE 3

HIGHLIGHTS

PAGE 3

BOSTON

Donald Tsang, BAAFF Film Festival, Chinatown’s New Reading Room and Immigration Tips.

PAGE 4

HEALTH

When are you considered overweight? Learn how to calculate your BMI and the Great American Smokeout.

PAGE 6

METRO SOUTH

New Affordable Housing in Quincy Center.

See “Almost Perfect” in a film that explores one woman’s journey to find balance between her demanding family and her perfect new boyfriend, and stars well-known Asian American actors Kelly Hu and Tina Chen.

 Chinatown To Have Reading Room In Early 2012

SEE READING ROOM ON PAGE 3

SEE HIGHLIGHTS ON PAGE 3

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PAGE 3

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Donald Tsang, BAAFF Film Festival, Chinatown’s New Reading Room and Immigration Tips.

PAGE 4

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SEE FILM ON PAGE 3

Quick Links

Online: Sampan.org
Chinatown To Have Reading Room In Early 2012
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
as well as a Chinatown historical display, laptop and tablet stations, information and help desk. Pilot programs that will be provided at the Reading Room include storytelling for children, mentoring for youth, basic computer skills workshops, and English conversation practice.

“The Reading Room will provide interim services and programming until we find a permanent site [for the cultural center],” said Alice Leung, Chinatown Cultural Center Start-Up Manager. However, finding a permanent site has proven challenging.

“Personally, I don’t want to have to wait another 10 years before we get a permanent cultural center,” said Leung. “But I don’t know, [finding a permanent site] is a process of looking at a number of different criteria, like size of the site, location, cost and timing.”

According to Kye Liang, the Chinatown Coalition Coordinator, roughly half a dozen sites are being looked into as possible locations for the permanent home for the cultural center: Parcel 12 on Tremont Street, the China Trade Center, Parcel R1 (and the Chinese Christian Church of New England) on Tyler Street, and the Holy Trinity Church are all options.

“Right now,” Liang said, “It’s about evaluating how our program can match up with the site. We’re in the investigative phase.”

The goal of the Cultural Center will be to promote and enhance Chinatown’s character and as a unique and welcoming location for the center, as well as have special capabilities to host performances, galleries and exhibitions. With funding, it is likely that 10,000 to 20,000 square feet will be necessary.

Despite the difficulties in securing a permanent location for the center, Liang shared Leung’s sentiment in wanting to wait another decade for plans to be put in place. “We’d like to get [the Cultural Center] done within the next five years,” he said.
Hong Kong Chief Talks
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sir Donald Tsang, a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, stands on stage at the school to deliver this speech on “One Country, Two Systems.” PHOTO BY MARTHA STERNBERG

Sir Donald Tsang is set to leave office after some seven years as the head of Hong Kong. Having overseen Hong Kong through many of its preliminary years since the former-British colony was handed back to China in 1997 (as well as serving as Hong Kong’s finance chief during the hand-over), Tsang has pioneered much of the feats of the “One Country, Two Systems” program drawn up by Deng Xiaoping.

The ‘One Country, Two Systems’ ideology suggests that even though there is only one China, regions such as Hong Kong and Macau can have their own capitalist economies and political processes while the rest of China uses a socialist political system.

“I under ‘One Country, Two Systems’ we are able to sustain our own way of life, our own systems, and provide a better standard of living for those in Hong Kong,” Tsang said. “And in the process, we’ve been able to help China to reach out to the rest of the world... I think that the enterprise has been mutually beneficial.”

“Don’t know how to acquire U.S. citizenship? Are you wondering what kinds of edible souvenirs can be brought back from a trip in the United States? Are you looking to bring something special home from high-tech applications of pharmaceutical and medical science to fashion shopping websites.

Tips on Import, Citizenship and Immigration Services

BY Teresa Cheong
Don't know how to acquire U.S. citizenship? Are you wondering what kinds of edible souvenirs can be brought back from a trip? The answers were available at the Import, Citizenship and Immigration Services talk featuring the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) on Nov. 12. The Chinatown Main Street and Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) co-sponsored the event at the CCBA’s conference room on 90 Tyee Street, which attracted tens of attendees.

Dana Bradley, Community Relations Officer of the CIS, provided details on the naturalization process and requirements during the first half of the talk. He explained that under some circumstances, the English requirement for naturalization can be waived. It applies to applicants over 50 years of age who have been lawful permanent residents for 20 years, or 55 years of age and become lawful permanent residents for at least 15 years. Applicants over 65 years of age who have been lawful residents for 25 years are required to study only 20 questions out of the 100 interview questions.

Applicants should also apply for naturalization in the state in which they have been residing for more than three months. For those who are applying through marriage, there is a special “3-3-3” requirement, which means that they have to be living in U.S. for three years, married to the same U.S. citizen for three years, and their spouses have to be a U.S. citizen for three years.

Representatives from CBP, Ted Woo and Sean Smith, spoke on the topic of customs declaration. Fresh food, meat and vegetables are not allowed to enter U.S., but canned meat, dried seafood and mushroom as well as dried Chinese herbs are welcome. Any meat products from United Kingdom are prohibited due to the possibility of mad cow disease contamination. Each person or family also enjoys $800 exemptions on items brought back from high-tech applications of pharmaceutical and medical science to fashion shopping websites.

Having worked at the CBP for 35 years, Woo said that he had seen “all kinds of tricks,” and warned people to declare what they bring into the U.S. to customs.

“Know before you go, and you will save a lot of time and money,” Razzaque emphasized at the end of the talk.

When asked about how he thought was the most important aspect to a successful government, Tsang said, “As far as I’m concerned the most important thing a government should want is to learn, and most leaders find it quite difficult to learn. You really need to understand that the people you serve give you a great honor, but they always expect you to be wholly accountable for what you do, and what you don’t do. And it requires a lot of courage to accept that. The second thing is, and it is very important, hard work. You have to prioritize your work well.”

But how far will you go to try something new? Last week, my friend from San Francisco and I converged in Chicago for a food filled weekend! We had lots of great eats but one outing stuck out. My pal had heard about Hot Doug’s (The Sausage Superstore and Encased Meat Emporium 3324 North California, Chicago, IL 60618 Phone (773) 279-9505 website: http://www.hotdougs.com/) a cash only establishment which is open from Monday-Saturday 10:30am-4pm. This is the second location in the Avondale neighborhood after a fire caused the first one to close in 2004. Owner Doug Sohn wants gourmet and quality ingredients in your hot dog or sausages which are made on the premises. Also, he personally takes your order as you get up to the counter.

According to my pal, Hot Doug’s has garnered a lot of praise and fans from all over-locals and tourists alike. From being named Bon Appetite’s “Top 50 Restaurants List in the World” to getting coverage on Anthony Bourdain’s show, New York Times, Chicago Tribune as well as garnering even a Zagat rating, Hot Doug’s definitely was worth a visit. (It ranbled higher than Chicago style deep dish pizza for us!)

Not knowing anything about Hot Doug’s, I followed my friend to Logan Square on the “L” (Chicago’s “T”) thinking we would be able to do this within 2 hours tops! (Little did I know in my ignorance, we would take much longer than I expected.) Firstly solely relying on Google Maps was a big mistake!

After unknowingly going the wrong direction for 15 minutes to a dead end, we finally were on the right path after a
When Are You Considered OVERWEIGHT?

The terms "obese" and "overweight" are labels used to categorize people into ranges that are helpful in identifying those who are heavier than what is generally healthy. To determine whether or not one falls into one of the two categories, medical professionals use the Body Mass Index (BMI), a number that takes into account a person's height and weight, which is then compared to a chart that identifies weight ranges. The BMI is used because it tends to accurately correlate with the amount of body fat a person possesses.

Choose fresh and natural food. Snacks should be small so they don’t spoil the child’s appetite for the next main meal. Avoid unhealthy snacks that are high in sugar, salt and fat.

Choose mainly cereals, fruit and vegetables, meat and dairy products. Dairy products including low-fat and skimmed milk, low-fat plain yogurt or cheese.

Select groups such as whole-wheat bread, high-fiber whole-meal biscuits as well as fresh fruit and vegetables.

Avoid unhealthy snacks that are high in sugar, salt and fat.

Prepare water as drink. Avoid unhealthy snacks that are high in calories. The terms "obese" and "overweight" are labels used to categorize people into ranges that are helpful in identifying those who are heavier than what is generally healthy. To determine whether or not one falls into one of the two categories, medical professionals use the Body Mass Index (BMI), a number that takes into account a person’s height and weight, which is then compared to a chart that identifies weight ranges. The BMI is used because it tends to accurately correlate with the amount of body fat a person possesses.

Go to the gym frequently but are still considered overweight?

It’s always important to remember that even though BMI correlates with the amount of body fat, BMI does not directly measure body fat. As a result, some people, such as athletes, may have a BMI that identifies them as overweight even though they do not have excess body fat.

Other things to consider:

BMI is just one indicator of potential health risks associated with being overweight or obese. For assessing someone’s likelihood of developing overweight- or obesity-related diseases, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute guidelines recommend looking at two other predictors:

• The individual’s waist circumstance (because abdominal fat is a predictor of risk for obesity-related diseases).
• Other risk factors the individual has for diseases and conditions associated with obesity (for example, high blood pressure or physical inactivity).

Watch how and what you eat!

When it comes to maintaining a healthy weight for a lifetime, the bottom line is – calories count! Weight management is all about balance – balancing the number of calories you consume with the number of calories your body uses or “burns off”.

A calorie is a unit of energy supplied by food. A calorie is a calorie regardless of its source. Whether you’re eating carbohydrates, fats, sugars, or proteins, all of them contain calories.

The Caloric balance is like a scale. To remain in balance and maintain your body weight, the calories consumed (from foods) must be balanced by the calories used (in normal body functions, daily activities, and exercise).

Here is how to calculate your Body Mass Index (BMI):

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight (lb)} - 100}{\text{height (in)} - 58}^2
\]

Obese

BMI is 30 or greater

Overweight

BMI is 25 to 29.9

Healthy Weight

BMI is 18.5 to 24.9

Underweight

BMI is less than 18.5

When it comes to maintaining a healthy weight for a lifetime, the bottom line is – calories count! Weight management is all about balance – balancing the number of calories you consumes with the number of calories your body uses or “burns off”.

The Caloric balance is like a scale. To remain in balance and maintain your body weight, the calories consumed (from foods) must be balanced by the calories used (in normal body functions, daily activities, and exercise).

The Great American Smokeout

Despite the passing of the Great American Smokeout on November 17, one should always remember that any day is a good day to quit smoking. In keeping with the purpose of the Smokeout, let’s encourage ourselves or those around us who do smoke to quit or plan to quit smoking – all in an effort to live healthier lives and reduce the risk of cancer.

According to the principle of the Food Pyramid, foods are divided into five main groups including grains and cereals, vegetables, fruit, meat and dairy projects. They serve as both basic components of main meals and choices of healthy snacks.

• Eat snacks only if he or she feels hungry between main meals.
• Snack between main meals and avoid overeating. At least having 1.5-2 hours between two intakes.
• Snacks should be small so they don’t spoil the child’s appetite for the next main meal.
• Choose fresh and natural food.
• Choose mainly cereals, fruit and vegetables such as whole-wheat bread, high-fiber whole-meal biscuits as well as fresh fruit and vegetables.
• Select dairy products including low-fat or skimmed milk, low-fat plain yogurt or cheese.
• Avoid unhealthy snacks that are high in sugar, salt and fat.
• Prepare water as drink.

Information courtesy of the Hong Kong Department of Health.

FOR THE YOUTH

Healthy Habits

Be a Smart Eater

Children grow quickly and are physically active. They require nutrients and energy. Healthy snacks help replenish the water and energy lost during learning as well as exercising, and help children obtain enough nutrients. On the other hand, overeating and unhealthy choices of snacks lead to excessive energy intake, which in turn result in weight gain with negative health impact. Frequent snacking can also make a child lose appetite for main meals. Therefore, snacks for children should be provided in accordance with the principles of healthy eating.

• Eat snacks only if he or she feels hungry between main meals.
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• Prepare water as drink.
Ask the CFP® Professional

By Michael Tow CFP®

**The first of the 80 million baby boomers in the United States reached 65 years old this year which means they will start tapping into the Social Security system if they have not already. If you’ve one of the baby boomers nearing retirement, do you know some of the ins and outs of social security? Are you aware of some of the strategies that can affect your benefits?**

With this in mind I will dedicate my next articles on the basics of Social Security and Part 2: Withdrawal Strategies.

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**What is it?**

Social Security retirement benefits are monthly payments made to workers who have paid Social Security taxes and earned Social Security credits. Most people earn the maximum of four credits per year. Credits are based on how much you earn. In 2011, you must earn at least $1,220 to earn one credit. People typically must accumulate at least 40 credits over their lifetime to qualify for a retirement benefit.

**How is it calculated?**

Your retirement benefit is calculated based on earnings during 40 years of work. The five lowest-earning years are dropped from the equation and any year not worked counts as a zero.

Remember the Social Security Statement mailed each year that showed your estimated benefit amount? No more. Starting this year, the Social Security administration stopped all mailing of statements to save costs. While I miss seeing the statements it saves them almost $70 million per year so I can’t really blame them.

**Full Retirement**

This is the age at which you may begin to receive your full Social Security benefits. The Full Retirement age increases gradually from 65 to 67 for those born after 1959.

**Early Retirement**

You may start receiving benefits as early as age 62. If you retire early, though, your benefits will be reduced based on the number of months you receive checks before you reach full retirement age. Keep in mind if you begin collecting Social Security before full retirement age and earn more than the annual earnings limit ($14,160 for 2011), you will take back $1 of social security for every $2 over the limit. (Note: Investment income doesn’t count.)

**Delayed Retirement**

If you delay collecting your benefit until after reaching full retirement age, your benefit will increase by 7 to 8 percent per year, up to age 70. That can mean an increase of over 30% from your benefit amount at the full retirement age.

Others who can receive benefits: If you are getting Social Security retirement benefits, members of your family who may receive benefits may include: Current and former Spouses who are age 62 or older; Spouses who are younger than 62, if they are taking care of a child younger than age 16 or disabled; Minor children or Adult Disabled Children.

**Survivor benefits**

If your spouse dies and was benefits-eligible, you and your children may be eligible for survivor benefits. Benefit amounts vary depending on age, disability status and several other factors.

**Are Benefits taxable?**

While Social Security benefits are not taxable in Massachusetts, they are federally taxable if your combined income is greater than specific amount. Next up, Social Security Part 2: Withdrawal Strategies.

If you have a question or topic that you would like me to discuss in a future article please email me at mtow@newbostonfinancial.com.

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**Social Security Before Full Retirement Age (Social Security and Medicare before reaching 62)**

People who have paid Social Security taxes and are getting Social Security retirement benefits, members of your family who are getting Social Security retirement benefits, children or Adult Disabled Children. If your spouse dies and was benefits-eligible, your benefit will increase by 7 to 8 percent per year, up to age 70. That can mean an increase of over 30% from your benefit amount at the full retirement age.

For more information, visit your local Social Security office or the official government website, cityofmalden.org.

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**November 18, 2011**

**City of Malden Upcoming Events**

The following information can be found on the city of Malden’s official government website, cityofmalden.org

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**Remembrance Tree Lighting December 8, 2011**

The Malden Chamber of Commerce and Oak Grove Improvement Association (OGIA) are proud to sponsor the 12th annual Remembrance Tree Lighting Ceremony Thursday, December 8, 2011, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Malden Center Government Plaza, 200 Pleasant Street. Remember and honor your loved ones this holiday season by purchasing lights in their name on the Remembrance Tree - $10 per name. Names will be read aloud at the ceremony, listed in the local newspapers and aired on MATV during the holidays. To be included, names and payments must be received no later than December 6.

**Requests for Proposals to Redevelop New Commercial Site at 100 Commercial Street**

The Malden Redevelopment Authority, acting in cooperation with the City of Malden and with the permission of National Grid, is requesting proposals for the development of a parcel of land in downtown Malden at 100 Commercial Street. The Request for Proposals is available for pickup on or after 12 p.m. on Thursday, October 27, 2011 at the office of the Malden Redevelopment Authority, Malden Government Center, 200 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. Tuesday and between 8 a.m. and 12 p.m. Friday. Proposals should be submitted no later than 12 p.m., Thursday, December 1, 2011 to Mr. Stephen M. Wisholski, Executive Director, Malden Redevelopment Authority.

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**Parade of Holiday Traditions November 26, 2011**

The Eighth Annual Parade of Holiday Traditions will be held on Saturday, November 26, 2011 beginning at 12:00 p.m. at the Salemwood School. It will kick off from Waite Street Extension, turn left onto Maplewood Street, turn left onto Salem Street and end at the reviewing stand at the corner of Ferry, Salem and Main Streets. Organizations interested in marching and/or being represented in the parade should contact Margie Drummey at (781) 974-2349 or med576@comcast.net.

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**Hot Dogs at Hot Doug’s**

We can squeeze it in, Hot Doug’s is worth a friend we met while waiting in line. If you our Architecture Boat tour thanks to our cabbage) paired well with the stronger salt, yellow mustard, cucumber spear with white onions, sweet relish, celery the Sriracha Mayo proved to be a worthy point. The nice strong kimchi (pickled leekwood School. It will kick off from Waite Street Extension, turn left onto Maplewood Street, turn left onto Salem Street and end at the reviewing stand at the corner of Ferry, Salem and Main Streets. Organizations interested in marching and/or being represented in the parade should contact Margie Drummey at (781) 974-2349 or med576@comcast.net.

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**Edwards Early Education Center**

early opportunity, affirmative action employer.
New Affordable Housing Opens in Quincy Center

BY KANE CARPENTER

In a ceremony that included speeches from recently re-elected Quincy Mayor Thomas P. Koch and Asian Community Development Corporation Board President Michael C. Tow, thirty-four new affordable housing units were opened in Quincy at 6 Fort Street.

The complex, which has been restored from a predominantly vacant and disinvested building, features some 42,000 square feet of residential space and roughly 1,000 square feet of community space. The building includes 63 parking spaces and incorporates around 8,000 square feet of outdoor recreational space.

According to Tow, the need for affordable housing in areas outside of Chinatown has been a hot-button issue for the last decade as the community expands into areas like Quincy and Malden. The newly renovated building, which underwent careful rehabilitation utilizing green design techniques, is situated within a mile of Quincy Center Station and is only minutes from a large supermarket, making it an attractive location for those looking to move into the Quincy area. However, the income guidelines for applicants were as follows:

7 Unit (20% of building) had to have a household income not more than $30,000.

It was a lottery to decide which of the applicants were accepted,” said Tow, discussing how the pool of more than several hundred applicants was narrowed down to just 34.

The ACDC is fulfilling its mission to build affordable housing where there is a need – as the community expands into areas like Quincy and Malden.

Unlike many developments in the state that have stalled or been delayed due to the tough economy, 6 Fort Street was a relatively smooth process, according to Michael Tow, President of the board at ACDC. “This was a relatively quick [development],” said Tow, in a phone interview. “It only took three or four years.”

Seven units, or 24 percent of the total, are one-bedroom apartments. The majority of the building is made up of two-bedroom apartments, which make up 59 percent of the total (21 units). The remaining six units are three-bedroom apartments.

The Infrastructure Investment Incentive Program, known as I-Cubed, will be used to help pay for public projects that will be the foundation of $1.3 billion in private investment in Quincy Center, including rehabilitation of Town Brook, an access bridge from Burgin Parkway to Cliveden Street, and a new civic space between City Hall and the Church of the Presidents.

The preliminary approval by the State means the City and master developer Street-Works agreed to develop 400,000 square feet of residential, retail and commercial space as part of its Quincy Center plan. National Realty & Development Corp. has most recently, Street-Works announced that it will maintain its work attracting new private investors and the public-private partnership moves forward on state and federal permitting.

Mayor Koch said the approval means the City has met its benchmark for securing state and federal funding for portions of the overall plan, keeping on an anticipated schedule to begin infrastructure work next year.

The I-Cubed program requires that the new development generate enough new state tax revenue to cover the costs of the state bonds issued for the infrastructure. City and Street-Works officials said that even under its conservative findings, that state revenue would far exceed the financing costs.

The approval comes at a critical juncture for the plan’s future, as Street-Works continues its work attracting new private investors and the public-private partnership moves forward on state and federal permitting.

Most recently, Street-Works announced that National Realty & Development Corp. has agreed to develop 400,000 square feet of retail space as part of its Quincy Center plan. One of Street-Works’ financial partners on previous projects, Bonus Properties, is selling all of its American assets, and Street-Works officials said that it was never anticipated that the firm would be a capital partner on its Quincy project.
**January 5** – **16th**

**Monday 9 – 7 Tuesday 9 – 4, Saturday 9 – 1**

**Bloomfield Gardens**

NEW AFFORDABLE RENTAL APARTMENTS SPRING 2012

NEW CONSTRUCTION – LEED SILVER CERTIFIED – NON-SMOKING BUILDING

455-475 GENEVA AVENUE, CORNER, BOSTON

20 APARTMENTS AVAILABLE – 2 BEDROOMS, 1 BEDROOMS AND STUDIOS

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**Real Restrictions Apply**

**Maximum Income By Household Size**

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<td>41,320</td>
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2 units have a preference for disabled households requiring accessible units. Up to 70% of the units have a preference for Boston residents. All applicants have a preference for households with at least one person per bedroom.

**Apartment Features:**
- Heat & Hot Water Included
- On-site Coin Laundry
- Wired for internet service
- Bike Storage
- Parking Avaliable
- Mgmt. Office Nearby
- Located across the street from the Red Line 28th Street Station on the MBTA Red Line

**Applications Available**

**Monday 5 – 16th**

**Monday 9 – 7 Tuesday 9 – 4, Saturday 9 – 1**

**Pick up at:**

Vietnamese American Community Center
42 Charles St.,
Dorchester MA 02122

Vietnamese American Community Center
42 Charles St.,
Dorchester MA 02122

**Information December 5th – 3 p.m.**

Vietnamese American Community Center
42 Charles St.,
Dorchester MA 02122

**Meetings December 12th – 3 p.m.**

Vietnamese American Community Center
42 Charles St.,
Dorchester MA 02122

**Contact:**

Mildred Wong
(617) 236-2020
mildred@citycentrale.com
CONTINUING FROM PAGE 1

A New Kind of Film Festival

All the shorts starred Asian American actors and most were also directed by an Asian American director. Some familiar storylines appeared, such as traditional parents playing matchmaker for their children or children of immigrants struggling to find an identity as an American without shortchanging their cultural heritage. But some new and surprising narratives also cropped up.

Among the more novel storylines included in this lineup was a laugh-out-loud mockumentary entitled "Asian American Jesus" directed by Yasmine Gomez. In this short, a talented young actress Samantha Kem, director and actor in another of the shorts, Chanse claimed her characters are all based on people she knows or has seen with a little bit of herself mixed in. Gomez encouraged aspiring filmmakers to simply pick up a camera and get going. "It doesn’t take that much work," said Gomez, pointing out how affordable video cameras and editing software are these days.

I also attended the feature length documentary "One Big Hapa Family" directed by Jeff Chiba Stearns. The combination of live-action and animated film depicts Stearns’ journey to uncover why everyone in his Japanese-Canadian family married interracially after his grandparents’ marriage. After discovering the word "hapa," which is Hawaiian for half, Stearns felt it was the perfect descriptor for mixed people like him and he latched on. His film is about identity, defining oneself, and how the whole of a person can equal more than the sum of their parts.

In his film, Stearns asked each of his siblings and cousins, "What are you?" a question that is commonly asked to those of mixed heritage. Some of the kids replied with their age or other identifiers, one little boy even claimed he was a fireman. But most of the kids gave their "equation," which is Hawaiian for half. Stearns felt it was the perfect descriptor for mixed people like him and he latched on. His film is about identity, defining oneself, and how the whole of a person can equal more than the sum of their parts.

Another serious issue Stearns broached was whether or not being half of something dilutes the significance that heritage. In other words, is mixing the end of multiculturalism? While some recent immigrant groups, such as Chinese and South Asians, still generally oppose mixed marriages in effort to preserve their culture, Stearns argues that the shift is inevitable, saying, "This is the way we’re moving." World War II expedited the process of assimilation for many Japanese-Canadians who felt compelled to intermarry as a sign of separating themselves from the home country. But now, two and three generations later, Stearns and several other young people in his family are rekindling their connection to their Japanese culture. "I wanted the South Asians and Chinese community in Canada to realize that mixing won’t destroy your culture," Stearns said during a Q&A after the screening.

Reflecting on the broader influence of "One Big Hapa Family" for Asian Americans in Boston, BAAFF Co-director Yvonne Ng said, "Some of [the movie’s] issues about mixed races pertains to our own Asian American community. The issue of identity and what does it mean. It speak[s] to a wider audience as these issues continue to come up." BAAFF Coordinator Janice Wong added, "Identity is something people are always searching for." The process of making this film was the first time Stearns had ever discussed interracial marriage with his parents and extended family. He has been thrilled to learn that his film has opened the door for many other mixed families to talk openly about the challenges and experiences of growing up mixed. "There is a thirst for this kind of media," said Stearns, "This is an important topic to keep discussing."