Immigration laws to see change

By the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition

Immigration legislation underwent changes in 2015, affecting policy on the federal and state level in the coming year.

DAPA/DACA headed to Supreme Court

On Nov. 20, 2015, the Obama Administration appealed the 5th Circuit’s decision in Texas v. United States to the Supreme Court, paving the way for the Court to allow Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to move forward. The 5th Circuit had upheld the District Court’s preliminary injunction blocking implementation of deferred action in a 2-1 decision released on November 9. The Supreme Court still has to decide on whether it will hear the case, and denied the states’ request for a longer briefing schedule, which could have pushed the case in the 2016 session. Should the Court decide to take the case, a decision is expected in late June.

Congress targets Syrian and Iraqi refugees

On Nov. 19, 2015, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the “American Security Against Foreign Enemies Act of 2015” (HR 4038) by a vote of 289-137. A knee-jerk reaction to the terror attacks in Paris, this bill would make it substantially more difficult for refugees from Syria and Iraq to be approved for status in the United States. Mass. Congressmen William Keating and Stephen Lynch both voted in favor of the bill despite the fact that it was fast-tracked with no Committee hearings.

State policy updates

The Special Juvenile bill (S.740, H.1416) got a boost on Nov. 9, 2015, when the Supreme Judicial Court reversed a lower court decision that had dismissed the claim of a young immigrant seeking classification as a Special Immigrant Juvenile. SJJ status provides a route toward regularizing status (a green card) for undocumented youths under 21 who have suffered abuse, neglect or abandonment by one or both parents. People seeking SJJ status must first ask state courts to make certain findings — but Massachusetts Probate and Family Court has no jurisdiction for people over 18, a problem the bill aims to address.

Sampan publishes every other Friday. For more news, please visit Sampan.org
Event Calendar

Fuel assistance program
Friday, Jan. 8
87 Tyler Street SF
Boston, MA 02111

The fuel assistance program is a federally-funded program that helps low-income households with their home heating bills in winter season. All eligible fuel assistance applicants will receive discounted gas, electric and telephone rates. Residents of Boston, Brookline or Newton may apply from now to April 30, 2016. To apply, please call (617) 426-9492 x 0 or make an appointment at the Asian American Civic Association.

Clean Up Chinatown meeting
Tuesday, Jan. 12
11 a.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111

The Clean Up Chinatown meeting will take place at the Asian American Civic Association, SF. The public is welcome to attend.

Free health care service
Every Tuesday
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02110

The Sharewood Project offers free, unscheduled health care to the medically underserved populations of the greater Boston area. For more information please call (781) 324-8991 or e-mail shawooddirector@gmail.com.

Free dental screening
Wednesday, Jan. 13
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
1 Kennedy Street
Boston, MA 02111

Tufts University’s School of Dental Medicine’s senior dental students will provide free dental screenings. Space is limited. Call (617) 636-6791 to schedule an appointment or visit dental.tufts.edu/screening.

First-time homebuyer classes
Jan. 23 to 24
9:30 a.m.
38 Crane Street
Boston, MA 02111

The Chinatown Coalition meeting will take place at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, SF. The public is welcome to attend. For more information, visit tc.boston.org.

Free legal clinic
Monday, Jan. 25
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
1590 Hancock Street, Suite 207
Quincy, MA 02169

ACDC offers HB101 classes in English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Each session is a 9-hour class over the course of a two-day weekend. Tuition is $40. Registration required, by calling (617) 482-2380 x 208 or 212, emailing CHPD@acdcinc.org or visiting www.acdcinc.org/content/free-time-homebuyer-workshop-

Spring ESL classes
Jan. 25 to May 12
8:30-10:15 a.m. (levels 1-3)
10:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. (levels 1-2)
244 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02111

ACCESS will hold ESL classes from Mondays to Thursdays. Register on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Free workshop on taxes
Monday, Jan. 25
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
38 Crane Street
Boston, MA 02111

Do you have to file a tax return this year? How do you file taxes, and where can you go for help? Learn about taxes at this free workshop by Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center in English and Mandarin. Free and open to all. Sign up with Shirley Doan at (617) 625-5129 x 1088 or shirley.doan@bcnc.net.

Free workshop on taxes
Saturday, Jan. 30
1 p.m. to 7 p.m.
316 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02171

QARI’S Lunar New Year Market and Food Festival will be a celebration of the Year of the Monkey and will feature retail vendors selling goods for New Year’s (red envelopes, seeds, flowers, bamboo) and craft retailers from local artists at North Quincy High School. A Food Festival will celebrate Asian foods and restaurants from the Boston and South Shore area. There will be a children’s carnival area, an afternoon karaoke competition, and fun activities for people of all ages. Free admission.

Tet in Boston 2016
Sunday, Jan. 31
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. festival
8:00 p.m. to midnight concert
6 Billings Street
Randolph, MA 02368

The Vietnamese Lunar New Year celebration of Tet rings in the Year of the Monkey at Lombardo’s. Festival admission is $5, evening concert tickets $15. For more information, email teitinboston@gmail.com.

Chinatown Safety Committee meeting
Wednesday, Feb. 3
10:30 a.m.
821 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02111

The Chinatown Safety Committee meeting will take place at the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. The public is welcome to attend.

Chinatown Resident Association meeting
Wednesday, Feb. 3
2:30 p.m.
885 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02111

The Chinatown Resident Association meeting will take place at the Josiah Quincy Elementary School cafeteria. The public is welcome to attend. For more information, email chinatownresidents@gmail.com.

Chinese New Year flower market
Feb. 4 to 7
Chinatown Gate
Chinatown Main Street
will host a Chinese New Year flower market.

Year flower market.

Boston Chinatown Chinese New Year celebration
Sunday, Feb. 14
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Chinatown Gate
Chinatown’s 2016 Dragon Dance for the Chinese New Year will take place in Chinatown.

CORRECTION

An article in the Sampan’s Dec. 18 issue page 6, “Boston ranks 4th least expensive city to rent a residential unit,” placed a wrong number. Boston is the most expensive city to rent in Massachusetts at $485. The Sampan sincerely regrets the error.

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AFFORDABLE LOTTERY

Village Crossing Billerica
Three 3RB, 1/6 BA townhouses w/1-car garage $189,500. Max income 1P $46,100; 2P $52,650; 3P $59,250; 4P $65,800.
Info session 1/17/16 Lottery 1/25/16 both 6pm @ Billerica Town Hall.
Apps Kristen Costa L.A. Assoc. 978-758-0197 kristencosta@verizon.net.

AFFORDABLE OVER-55 LOTTERY

North Meadow Village Middleton
(4) 2BR, 1/2 BA townhouses w/gar $167,000.
Max income 1P $48,800; 2P $55,800; 3P $62,750; 4P $69,700.
Info session 1/17/16 Lottery 1/26/16 both 6pm @ Flint Public Library.
Apps Kristen Costa L.A. Assoc.
978-758-0197 kriscentcosta@verizon.net.

Boston Chinatown Chinese New Year celebration of Tet rings in the Year of the Monkey at Lombardo’s. Festival admission is $5, evening concert tickets TBA. For more information, email teitinboston@gmail.com.

Chinatown Safety Committee meeting Wednesday, Feb. 3 10:30 a.m. 821 Washington Street Boston, MA 02111

The Chinatown Safety Committee meeting will take place at the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. The public is welcome to attend.

Chinatown Resident Association meeting Wednesday, Feb. 3 2:30 p.m. 885 Washington Street Boston, MA 02111

The Chinatown Resident Association meeting will take place at the Josiah Quincy Elementary School cafeteria. The public is welcome to attend. For more information, email chinatownresidents@gmail.com.

Chinese New Year flower market
Feb. 4 to 7 Chinatown Gate Chinatown Main Street will host a Chinese New Year flower market.

Year flower market.
Film review: “Heroin: Cape Cod, USA”

BY SARA BROWN

“Heroin: Cape Cod, USA” is an HBO documentary directed by Steven Okazaki that follows eight young Cape Cod residents who are struggling with an addiction to heroin.

The film begins with Cape Cod police officers responding to someone passed out on a sidewalk, likely from an overdose. Officers try to wake the person up by shaking his/her lifeless body.

From that point on, the documentary’s 76 minutes are filled with one heart-wrenching moment after another as it follows these young men and women through their drug addiction, from shooting up heroin to talking about how they hate their addiction and how they wish they could stop.

The film features Jessica Haskins, who started taking prescribed painkillers after a traumatic car accident left her with more than 200 stitches in her face.

Haskins explains in the film that she soon became depressed about her looks after the accident, and drugs helped her forget her pain.

“When I did drugs I didn’t have low self-esteem anymore. I felt beautiful, and I felt awesome, and I felt cool,” she said in the film.

Others said the despair of Addictions gets worse everyday.

“You lowest low — there’s a trapdoor below it,” said one of the subjects, Daniel, who also sold drugs to support his habit.

While the movie is tough to watch, it is also deeply poignant. It personalizes drug addiction and seeks to end the stigma around those who suffer from it. Eight young people could be your sons, daughters, friends, loved ones. The film hammers home the fact that this can happen to anyone.

Asian American local politicians work to overcome stereotypes

BY LING-MEI WONG

Michelle Wu was elected as the first Chinese president of Boston’s city council on Jan. 4. (From left) Wu’s husband Conor Power, city councilor leader Frank Chio, Wu, Wu’s son Blaise and Wu’s sister Sherrille Wu. (Image courtesy of Tieyi Huang.)

Newly elected Boston city council president Michelle Wu took office on Jan. 4, making history as the first Asian American to lead the city council.

Wu was first elected in 2013 as Boston city councilor-at-large, winning reelection in 2015.

“It’s always been very proud of my heritage and roots,” Wu said. “The Asian American community has contributed so much to our country at all different levels. So many of the values you associate with Asian American culture make for great public servants, in terms of hard work, thinking of the larger community and reflecting history.”

Not far from Boston, Quincy, too, is experiencing more diversity in city council with the election of its first two Asian American city councilors, Nina Liang and Noel DiBona, who took office on Jan. 4. Liang’s parents are from China, while DiBona’s mother is Thai.

State Rep. Tackey Chan’s parents met in Hong Kong in late 2015. His brother.

For more information on the Development, the Units or the Lottery and Application Details, please visit www.e-b.com lottery or call 617.782.6900 x2. A Public Info Session will be on Jan. 13th, 2016 at 6 pm in the Sweet Meeting Room in Fiske Public Library (110 Randall Road, Wrentham).


Three councilors elected on Nov. 29, 2015 for the 2016-2018 term introduced themselves. Raymond Pau was elected in the resident category; his son attends Josiah Quincy Elementary School and his wife works at Tufts. Andy Yan Bin Kuang was elected in the organization category and owns a Chinatown business. Lili Mei was elected in the other category and has been president of the Moy Shue Family Association of New England for 11 years, along with working at the Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center.

John Fitzgerald, deputy director of Imagine Boston 2030, conducted a visioning workshop to gather community input.

CSC

The Chinatown Safety Committee held its monthly meeting Jan. 6 at the DoubleTree Hotel.

Boston Police Department District A-1 Capt. Ken Fong said crime has been down 10 percent in the district this past month. In the past 30 days, there were three arrests, two aggravated assaults, one breaking and entering incident, 13 larcenies and 11 car break-ins. Overall, there were 34 arrests.

CRA

The Chinatown Resident Association met on Jan. 6 at the Josiah Quincy School. Doug Brugge, professor of public health and community medicine at Tufts University, spoke about the Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health’s air pollution research and mitigation project.

Eagle Brook Village in Wrentham

Affordable Housing Lottery

www.e-b.com

Six 4BR Single Family Homes for $235,300

Nine 3BR Single Family Homes for $217,700

Ten 2BR Age-Restricted Single Family Homes for $194,600

This is a lottery for the 25 affordable Single Family Homes being built at Eagle Brook Village. These 25 homes will be sold at affordable prices to households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income. The first affordable homes will be ready in late 2015.

All affordable homes have master bedrooms with walk-in closet, Harvey double-hung Low-E Insulated Glass windows, laundry closet/room (washers and dryers not included), garage parking for one car, an unfinished basement, tile in bathrooms, laundry rooms/laundry, kitchen and mudroom, and carpeting in the bedrooms and living room. The 3BR and 4BR homes have two zones and the 2BR age-restricted units have one zone of forced hot-air heating and central air conditioning.

Maximum Household Income Limits:

- $48,800 (1 person), $55,800 (2 people), $62,750 (3 people), $69,700 (4 people)
- $75,300 (5 people), $80,900 (6 people), $86,450 (7 people), $92,050 (8 people)

Maximum House Asset Limits for the 2BR and 4BR homes is $75,000. The Maximum House Asset Limits for the 2BR AGE-RESTRICTED HOMES is $275,000 (which includes equity in a dwelling to be sold).

At least one household member must be age 55 or older to qualify for a 2BR (Age-Restricted) home.

Applications and Required Income Documentation must be delivered, not postmarked, by 2 pm on February 2nd, 2016.

Applications and Info Packets also available in the Fiske Public Library (110 Randall Road, Wrentham).

Hours: Tu-Th 10-8, F 10-5, Sa 10-4
CCBA president promises
to overhaul bylaws

BY LING-MEI WONG

Paul Chan, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of New England president for 2016 to 2017, at his election on Dec. 1, 2015 at 90 Tyler Street. (Image courtesy of Ling-Mei Wong.)

Chan was born in Guangzhou, raised in Hong Kong and studied law as an undergraduate in Taiwan. He and his wife came to Boston in 1970, playing active roles in the Chinese community. Chan was one of the founders of the Sampan Newspaper and the South Cove Manor nursing home. He is a long-time member of the Gee How Oak Tin Family Association and is involved with Kwong Kow Chinese School.

The unpaid position of CCBA president makes Chan one of the busiest volunteers in Chinatown. He was part of CCBA involved in Taiung Village, Tremont Village, Waterford Place, the 90 Tyler Street headquarters and 50 Herald Street, currently leased to supermarket C-Mart. CCBA owns all five properties in downtown Boston.

“All these created trouble now because CCBA has money,” Chan said. “CCBA has $20 million net worth from rental income.”

The CCBA is a cultural and educational nonprofit. Originally formed as an arbitrator for squabbles between family and fraternity associations, its members today also include civic organizations. Currently facing problems from lack of clarity in the bylaws, which Chan hopes to revise.

“Members should hold officers accountable to the board. They must show compliance with the bylaws,” Chan said.

To inform the 40-plus voting directors, Chan wants to hold an orientation on the CCBA bylaws, finances and the long-term purpose of 50 Herald Street. The site was purchased by Tufts University and New England Medical Center (today Tufts Medical Center) in 1986 for CCBA to develop affordable housing, which Chan plans to gather community input on.

“The main thing I want to do, which is a basic principle of democracy, is have an informed electorate,” Chan said. “The first thing is get the board members to understand what is going on. The only way to do that is to disseminate information.”

The Asian American Civic Association held a graduation for the Next Steps Transitional English Program on Dec. 18, 2015 at Emerson College. (Image courtesy of Natalie Ornell.)

The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS) was the recipient of the 2015 Confucius Classrooms of the Year Award — presented to ten schools across the world for excellence in teaching and learning, curriculum, cultural richness, community engagement, and extracurricular activities.

Information Session
Saturday, February 6 at 1:00 pm
317 Russell St. (Rt. 9), Hadley, MA

Details at www.pvcics.org or 413-582-7040

PVCICS is an equal opportunity employer and provider
What you need to know about winter driving

BY STATEPOINT

Winter can be an especially perilous time to be on the roads. Snow, ice, fog and longer nights present challenges to drivers that can lead to crashes.

People do less driving in winter, yet we have more crashes per mile driven. Some 10,780 people were killed in car crashes between December and March in 2013—fully one-third of the total for each year. Non-fatal collisions also occur with greater frequency in winter months.

You may be an ace behind the wheel when the sun is shining and roads are dry, but driving in winter weather can be a different story. Drivers need to recalibrate and adjust their driving for winter road conditions.

“Travel can be treacherous when roadway surfaces are compromised during winter storms,” said Deborah A.P. Herskowitz, president and CEO of the National Safety Council (NSC). “The good news is that in-vehicle technologies can help drivers by providing advance warnings and preventing loss of control.”

NSC and the University of Iowa recently partnered to launch a campaign called MyCarDoesWhat, to educate drivers about vehicle safety technologies designed to prevent crashes. The MyCarDoesWhat campaign offers three major pieces of advice for driving in wintry conditions:

• Slow down. This is the golden rule of winter driving. Drivers frequently underestimate how long it takes to brake and how difficult it can be to steer on slippery roads.
• Do not use cruise control when driving on slippery surfaces; it will not maintain your control over the car and reduce your reaction time in the event of a skid.
• Bridges and overpasses freeze before roadways, so be alert in cold weather when approaching a bridge.

While a careful and skillful driver is always a vehicle’s best safety feature, many safety technologies can help prevent or reduce the severity of winter-related crashes.

They include:

• Anti-lock braking systems (ABS) help drivers maintain control by preventing wheels from locking up. Your ABS works differently than traditional brakes, and requires you to drive differently too. It delivers and releases precise braking pressure to each wheel as needed, so you shouldn’t pump the brakes when you have ABS. Just hold them down firmly and look and steer in the direction you want to go. They may buzz and vibrate when the ABS has activated.
• Traction control helps you accelerate without spinning out on slippery surfaces. With the right knowledge and skills, you can make your winter journeys safer.

AARP Driver Safety is seeking bilingual volunteers to help keep older drivers independent, safe and confident on the road.

AARP Driver Safety offers the AARP Smart Driver course, the nation’s largest classroom and online driver safety course designed especially for drivers age 50 and older. More than 16 million participants have gone through AARP Driver Safety classroom and online courses, taught by more than 4,000 AARP Driver Safety volunteers.

“Helping people learn how to be safe behind the wheel is very rewarding,” said Chao Chi, an AARP Driver Safety volunteer based in Southern California. “People who attend our courses find the information we provide very practical and easy to understand. They are also pleasantly surprised to find that after they complete the course, they may qualify for a discount on their car insurance.”

ASIANs: Local politicians fight prejudice

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

His mother, brother, sister-in-law and nephew all reside in Quincy to this day. Quincy is 25 percent Asian, based on 2010 census data. Its Chinese population ranks as the second-largest in Massachusetts, after Boston.

Chan recalled an incident in 2010, when angry residents prevented him from getting on the walkway. But the racist incidents were few and far between.

“The term you never want to hear is ‘you people’ when being described,” Chan said. “Whether you’re white, Asian or black, you never want to hear those two words.”

Wu wants to see more Asian Americans run for office.

“My hope is that more Asian Americans, particularly young Asian Americans, will see themselves as future leaders of our society,” Wu said.

While Chan has faced scrutiny as an elected official, he feels his heritage is no barrier to public service.

“It’s about the person, not race. If you’re perfectly wonderful and upstanding, people will see it,” Chan said.

AARP Driver Safety volunteers are fully trained and make a difference in various roles, including organizing and teaching classroom courses in their local communities, locating potential classroom host sites and promoting local AARP Smart Driver courses and other related events. There is also a big demand for bilingual speakers in all roles.

“Our bilingual volunteers help drivers who don’t speak English or speak English as a second language,” said Daphne Kwok, AARP vice president of multicultural leadership, Asian American and Pacific Islander audience. “If we find more bilingual volunteers, we can really grow our Driver Safety program and offer more classes in cities around the country.”

To learn more about becoming an AARP Driver Safety volunteer or to learn how to refresh your driving skills, visit aarp.org/drive.

Volunteer with AARP Driver Safety

BY AARP DRIVER SAFETY

AARP Driver Safety volunteer Chao Chi (far left) shares car safety tips with class attendees in Southern California. (Image courtesy of AARP Driver Safety.)

AARP Driver Safety volunteer Chao Chi (far left) shares car safety tips with class attendees in Southern California. (Image courtesy of AARP Driver Safety.)

AARP Driver Safety volunteer Chao Chi (far left) shares car safety tips with class attendees in Southern California. (Image courtesy of AARP Driver Safety.)
Sudbury youth ties for second at national chess tournament

BY LING-MEI WONG

Eric Feng, 13, loves chess more than roller coasters. Which is why, when his family accompanied him to Orlando, Fla. for the U.S. Chess National K-12 Championships, held from Dec. 4 to 6, 2015, Eric wanted to practice his chess moves while his 4-year-old sister explored Disney World. His dedication paid off, as he tied for second in the eighth grade division (fourth on tiebreak) after seven grueling rounds.

“It’s really cool to get second in such a competitive tournament,” Eric said, who brought home a four-foot trophy. Eric currently attends Ephraim Curtis Middle School in Sudbury, Mass. He enjoys soccer, baseball and piano. However, chess has been his passion since the age of 7.

Eric’s father, Howard Feng, signed him up for chess in the second grade, after missing the ping pong registration date at his after-school program. “I didn’t realize what I started. He’s been playing ever since…. He’s on a mission,” Feng said.

His son is part of the scholastic chess boom, attracting more youth nationwide. In 2015, Andover’s Carissa Yip became the youngest female chess master in America at 11 years old.

Edward Chin, Massachusetts Chess Association board member, said, “The Chinese and Chinese-American community will be well represented at this year’s state championship across all age levels.”

Training focus As a second grader, Eric used to drift off in class. His initial forays into chess eventually, Eric began beating him and reading chess books on his own. As a parent, especially Asian parents, we ask them to do dancing, piano when they’re little. But sometimes they don’t fall in love with it. Eventually, Eric fell in love with chess,” Feng said.

Eric’s current goal is to reach the master level. “There are a lot of things to get out of chess,” he said. “It helps you think better. It requires logic. It really helps your concentration in school. If you lose, you have to learn to get back up and play another game.”

While Feng is thrilled about his son’s success, he feels even prouder of his son’s hard-work discipline. “Everyone looks at how many trophies he has, but in eight years, he’s won almost 300 tournament games and lost 150. His teacher said you learn more from the games you lose than the game you win.”

Eric trains with multiple coaches, including a chess grandmaster. His father has taken him to 150 chess tournaments.

At one adult tournament in New Jersey, Eric took on a college-age opponent for six hours, resulting in a draw. “Over the years, Eric built his maturity so he doesn’t get flustered,” Feng said. “I was really happy Eric held his own.”

Feng is less concerned about his son’s ranking, however. “Chess builds character. I will be happy if Eric pursues his interests and does something good with his life,” he said.

Eric’s next major tournament will be the U.S. Chess National Junior High competition in Indianapolis, Ind., which will be held from April 15 to 17.

The Residences at Acorn Park
Belmont, MA

Affordable Apartments for Households Under 50% AMI Studios @ $747*, 1BRs @ $770*, 2BRs @ $899*, 3BRs @ $1,024*
*Rents subject to change in 2016. Utilities not included. Tenants will pay own Gas Heat, Gas Hot Water, Gas cooking fuel, Electricity and Water.

MAXIMUM Household Income Limits:
$34,500 (1 person), $39,400 (2 people), $44,350 (3 people), $49,250 (4 people), $53,200 (5 people) and $57,150 (6 people)

Residences at Acorn Park includes a total of 298-units across five buildings. The first affordable units will be ready for move-ins in June/July/August 2016. Apartments will have high end finishes including granite counter tops and wood cabinetry in the kitchens and bathrooms. Apartment will also feature nine foot ceilings, balconies, walk-in closets, carpet and vinyl flooring, central air conditioning, washer and dryers, refrigerators, microwaves, dishwashers and garbage disposals. The clubhouse will have the leasing office, WIFI, a great room with fireplace, catering kitchen, business center with meeting rooms, pool table, fitness center and men’s and women’s locker rooms. In addition, there will be an outdoor pool. 100% smoke free apartments. Pets welcome, breed restrictions apply.

Completed Applications and Required Income Documentation must be delivered, not postmarked, by 2 pm on February 25th, 2016. The Belmont Public Library (336 Concord Ave) will be the location for a public Info Session on Feb 10th, 2016 at 6 pm (Assembly Room) and the Lottery on 6 pm, March 15th (Flett Room).

For Details on Applications, the Lottery and the Apartments, or for reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, go to www.s-a-b.com/lottery or call (617) 782-6900 (x1, then x3).

For TTY Services dial 711. Free translation available. Applications and Information also available at the Belmont Public Library (M-Th 9-9, F-Sat 9-5, Sun 1-5).
Mentor pays tribute to heroic protégé

BY CLIFF WONG

As a former guidance counselor who served thousands of young people over the years, it’s always a pleasure to see protégés succeed. Most were graduates of Boston Latin Academy (BLA) and John D. O’Bryant High School. In my semi-retirement, one also cannot overlook my counselees from Quincy. Wherever they’ve graduated from, I’m proud of them all. The first to come to mind attended Bowdoin College, then law school, and now works for the government. Several others currently attend dental school and may soon be performing root canals (Ouch!). There’s the late bloomer who eventually achieved success as the Spanish play-by-play announcer for the Boston Red Sox. Where are those tickets anyway? Then there’s the O’Bryant student who currently serves as the Asian neighborhood liaison for the City of Boston. I can go on with the success stories, but for the moment, one stands out from the rest.

Allow me to introduce Yanyi “Emily” Weng, my protégé from the BLA Class of 2011. We first met at the BLA volleyball tryouts, when she was a six-ee (7th grade) candidate and I was the moon-lighting junior varsity coach. My first impression of Emily was less than optimistic. By all appearances, she was too small and shy to make the high school team. Yet she soon proved me wrong and developed quickly into a top-notch competitor. Despite her youth, she demonstrated a unique sense of self-discipline and maturity. Each year, she improved dramatically as a player and ultimately became a team leader, all while maintaining academic and social success as well.

To better understand Emily, let’s examine her fascinating history. Born in Taishan, China, Emily was 11 years old when her family immigrated to the United States. Despite great odds, Emily persevered. Living in a tiny apartment in Boston’s Chinatown, her family struggled to make ends meet. Emily embraced the challenge of achieving at school and mastering her adopted language and surroundings. While in middle school in Chinatown, she excelled in her studies. Without fully understanding the examinations placed in front of her, Emily prepared for each with intense purpose.

Among these tests was the Independent School Entrance Exam, the placement test for private and examination schools throughout the state. In spite of her disadvantages, she earned a high score and was accepted to Boston Latin Academy. Although she wished to remain with friends in Chinatown, they convinced her that Boston Latin Academy would provide a better opportunity for her future.

Over the years, I became more than just Emily’s coach; I was her mentor as well. I admired her drive and initiative at such a young age. Despite early disadvantages, she was seemingly good at everything she did and never shied away from challenges. In spite of her accomplishments, she remained grounded and likable by her peers and teachers.

I took an early retirement but returned to attend her 2011 graduation. Emily went on to Boston College to study education psychology. Not surprisingly, she soon graduated and entered the workplace. Last year, she began her new career as a case worker advocate in the Asian community. True to form, she serves professionals and with dedication.

All of this is to say that Emily is a remarkable young woman. But something even more remarkable happened in November 2015 that compelled me to write this article about her. In late October, there was a two-alarm fire in Chinatown. The fire displaced about 40 residents, leaving most homeless. Many victims lost everything. A number of community agencies and the Boston Chinese Evangelical Church (BCEC) came to the victims’ rescue. The church provided temporary housing at its new facility on Shawmut Avenue. Members of the congregation who spoke Cantonese and Teoisanese were asked to help the victims. Since many of the victims worked late hours, the demand for graveyard shift duty was crucial. I was among the volunteers who worked the front desk for our temporary guests.

As I entered the Shawmut Avenue facility, to my delight, I was greeted by none other than Emily — whom I hadn’t seen in years. We were both thrilled to be on the same team again. That evening, Emily confided that I was more than just her mentor and coach. She thanked me for being like a second dad to her and helping her manage those difficult early years. Conversely, I was proud to see how she has turned out. In many ways, Emily and I are cut from the same cloth. Both of us are products of Boston’s Chinatown, Boston’s public schools, and are members of the same church. Now I find myself equally dedicated to giving back to her community as well.

In fact, she outdid her mentor. While I served two shifts from midnight to 6 a.m., Emily volunteered for seven consecutive shifts. Not to mention that she also pulled double duty during those seven days. Each day, she served in the middle of the night, then — in the morning — went on to her day job. She did this for seven days without a murmur. Emily’s fine character and noble deeds merit full recognition. This is not to take away from others who served during this tragic event, but to acknowledge the actions of one who stood out among the rest in terms of sacrifice.

That first evening at BCEC, Emily thanked me for being there for her during dire times. However, I feel that it is I who should be thanking Emily Weng for being there for so many others. I am proud of her for becoming the outstanding person she is today. She is my mentor’s hero.
What is heroin addiction?

BY SARA BROWN

The country is becoming ravished by heroin addiction leaving many to want to learn more about the drug. The median age of overdose victims is 41. In 2013, more than 8,200 people died from heroin overdoses, according to the July 2015 CDC report.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), heroin is “synthesized from the seed pod of the Asian opium poppy plant. Heroin usually appears as a white or brown powder or as a black sticky substance, known as ‘black tar heroin.’” Because heroin is an opioid drug, most people who become addicted to heroin start with opioid prescribed painkillers like Oxycontin.

“Heroin use is increasing at an alarming rate in many parts of society, driven by both the prescription opioid epidemic and cheaper, more available heroin,” said CDC director Tom Frieden, in a CDC news release. Heroin can be taken in multiple ways. It can be injected into a vein, inhaled by snorting or smoked. No matter what method is used, heroin intake leads to significant health problems, particularly in the brain.

According to the NIDA, heroin use often leads to stalled breathing, which deprives the brain of oxygen and can lead to serious and permanent brain damage. This lack of oxygen is also the primary cause of overdoses.

In addition to brain damage, if users inject the drug into their veins and share needles with friends, they are at a higher risk of developing HIV and hepatitis C. Heroin is considered one of the most addictive drugs. The brain quickly develops a tolerance for the drug, meaning the user has to take progressively larger amounts of it in order to experience the desired effect. Nevertheless, treatment is available for those seeking to recover from this addiction.

First, there is medication. The most commonly used medication to treat heroin addiction is methadone, which helps those who are detoxing, or trying to get off heroin. It is taken orally so the brain will receive it slowly. Methadone is only available through approved outpatient treatment programs, where it is dispensed to patients on a daily basis.

The second option is therapy. Therapy helps the patient learn healthier behaviors and deal with issues underlying their drug use. Health officials recommend a mixture of both medication and therapy for the highest chance of long-term recovery.

On the state level, Governor Charlie Baker recently filed substance use legislation to provide medical personnel with the power to intervene with patients suffering from addiction, control the spread of addictive prescription opioids and increase education about substance use disorder for providers and in the community.

A total of 113 treatment beds have opened in six communities (Quincy, Plymouth, New Bedford, Boston, Westborough, Fall River) with more expected in Greenfield this winter.
Cardiovascular disease is No. 1 killer of Americans

BY SARA BROWN

Cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure and stroke, is responsible for one-third of deaths in America, according to American Heart Association (AHA) data.

Medical professionals define cardiovascular disease as a class of diseases that involve the heart or blood vessels. Cardiovascular disease has claimed 801,000 lives. Globally, heart disease and stroke were the No. 1 and 2 killers worldwide.

According to the AHA, there are seven key factors that contribute to heart disease. Those are smoking, exercise, diet, body weight, cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar.

In 2013, 31 percent of all deaths were from cardiovascular disease, with 80 percent occurring in low- and middle-income countries.

High blood pressure

The AHA stated 80 million American adults have been diagnosed with high blood pressure. It can have serious health risks if not treated. If someone’s blood pressure is too high too often, it can cause the tissue that makes up artery walls to get stretched beyond its healthy limit and become damaged.

High blood pressure often does not have symptoms, which is why it is commonly referred to as a silent killer. There are often myths that someone with high blood pressure is too old to get what they need. However, the only way to know if the blood pressure is too high is to measure it.

Experts recommend regular visits to a primary doctor as a way to stay educated on one’s health. Some preventive steps include a healthy diet, exercising regularly, reducing stress and avoiding tobacco smoke.

Stroke

Stroke is the fifth cause of death among U.S. adults. “A stroke occurs when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts (or ruptures). When that happens, part of the brain cannot get the blood (and oxygen) it needs, so it and brain cells die,” according to the AHA website.

A stroke can have serious and lasting impact. Depending on what side of the brain the stroke occurs, it can cause memory loss, paralysis, speech problems and vision problems. Every year around 129,000 people will die from a stroke.

FAST is an acronym for the most commonly known symptoms for a stroke. These signs tend to appear quickly and all of a sudden.

● Face. Ask the person to smile. Does the face look uneven?
  ● Arms. Ask the person to raise both of their arms. Is one arm unable to move?
  ● Speech. Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does their speech sound unusual?

These signs tend to appear quickly and all of a sudden.

Seniors learn to prevent falls at South Cove Manor seminar

BY SOUTH COVE MANOR

Seniors had a fall prevention breakfast seminar on Dec. 17, 2015 at the Mass Pike Tower community room. The speakers were Amy Griffith, occupational therapist and rehab program director, and Bess Lin, RN, MSN and nursing supervisor, at South Cove Manor.

Griffing and Lin introduced falls, as they have a negative impact on one’s ability to remain steady on one’s feet. Risks include deconditioned muscle mass, arthritis, Alzheimer’s disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, low and high blood pressure, heart disease, infections, some prescription medications and stress. Some seniors who have trouble maintaining their balance have an increased risk for falling.

In the United States, one in three adults aged 65 and older falls each year. Of those who fall, 20 to 30 percent suffer moderate to severe injuries and increase their risk of early death, according to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). When it comes to serious injuries, more than 90 percent of hip fractures are caused by falls.

Control and Prevention (CDC). When it comes to serious injuries, more than 90 percent of hip fractures are caused by falls.

Griffing demonstrated how to get up after falling. She urged the seniors not to panic to roll on one side. Then they should get on their hands and knees, bring one leg underneath and place their feet on the ground. Eiders should brace themselves with one hand on their knee and the other hand on a solid piece of furniture to push upward, raising their bodies to a standing position.

If seniors cannot get back up, they should call for help or drag themselves to the phone to call 911. They should try to stay warm and hydrated as much as possible. After the fall, even if they were not injured, elders should tell their relatives and family doctor, to understand why they fell and prevent other incidents.

Balance exercises

Griffing and Lin demonstrated four quick exercises that seniors can do to improve their balance at home.

1. Walking the tightrope: Stand straight with arms out to the sides. Walk in a straight line, stopping for a second or two at each step, or taking a step back. Take five to 10 steps, while facing straight ahead and keeping one’s eyes on a wall.

2. Balancing on the boat: Seniors should stand with their legs a shoulder-length apart. Slowly shift one’s weight to one foot, lifting the other foot for not more than 30 seconds, then put the foot back down. Continue on the other side, making sure to maintain balance. Start with five repetitions and increase as balance improves.

3. Touching toes: Similar to walking the tightrope, place one foot in front of the other, touching the toes to your heel. It is fine if the feet do not touch, as long as the feet are as close together as is comfortable. Keep your eyes up and fixed on a distant point, such as a wall.

4. Balance on one leg: Place both hands on the back of a chair and stand on one leg for 10 seconds. Repeat five to 10 times on one leg, then repeat with the other leg. Seniors may find it easier to balance on one leg than the other. Make sure to maintain good posture, with head, shoulders and back straight and ears in line with one’s shoulders. Once seniors can hold this position, they should try to touch the lifted foot.

Fall prevention tips

• Install rails on both sides of a stairway.
  • Clear your home of things you might trip over, like pets, rugs, uneven flooring and beds without guardrails.
  • Place a bathmat in bathtubs.
  • Watch for phones or phone cords in the middle of a room.
  • Sign up for a phone or medical alarm service.
  • Install good lighting, use night-lights.

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Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School receives Global Excellence Award

BY PIONEER VALLEY CHINESE IMMERSION CHARTER SCHOOL

The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School, one of the top performing charter schools in Massachusetts, is the recipient of the 2015 Confucius Classrooms of the Year Award presented to 10 schools across the world for excellence in teaching and learning, curriculum, cultural richness, community engagement, and extracurricular activities. Only three schools in the United States received the award.

“This is a tremendous honor for our public charter school and for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,” said Richard Alcorn, executive director of the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCCS). “It recognizes the hard work by our teachers and students and shows that language immersion schools offer an innovative and beneficial approach to public education.”

The Confucius Institute presented its 2015 awards at its World Conference in Shanghai. Alcorn accepted the award from China’s Vice Premier, Liu Yandong. The Institute, also known as Po Yin Secondary School, was established in 2004 and provides resources for overseas Chinese students who are learning Chinese that has not been available to them.

As a tuition-free, public charter school, we give students access to learning Chinese that has not been available to them.”

Long an advocate for removing the barriers for entry for new and innovative charter schools in Massachusetts, Alcorn recently testified before the state Joint Committee on Education telling lawmakers that Massachusetts — and the New England region — are behind the national curve in adopting language immersion programs.

“State law should reflect the fact there is no single school model that is the best for all students, and it should support innovation and choice with a variety of quality alternatives,” Alcorn testified.

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