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The parents of satellite babies send them to live with relatives overseas. Family reunions are often digital for children of Chinese immigrant parents in Boston's Chinatown. (Image courtesy of Flickr user JJD.)

‘Satellite babies’ raised overseas, as immigrant parents struggle in Boston

BY DORA CHI

Fang Qin Chen remembers moving from Fujian to Boston alone, trying to make each day meet while caring for a newborn. When her array of responsibilities proved all too exhausting, she decided to send her baby to China in the trusted care of relatives, so she could focus on working. Chen’s first child lived in China for four-and-a-half years; her second, nearly three.

Sitting at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) with her friend Mei Lin Lim, a mother of two who also emigrated from Fujian, they recounted parallel stories about their early struggles to build stable lives in America while juggling parenthood, prompting them to place their babies in the temporary care of relatives overseas.

“If I could do it all over again, I’d still hope that I wouldn’t have to send my children overseas so that I could focus on earning money,” Chen said. “It’s still better to take care of them myself.”

Faced with economic strains, language barriers and other pressures of resettlement, Chen and Lin are part of a community of immigrant parents with “satellite babies,” children temporarily sent overseas and raised by extended relatives. In a 2018 study published in “Contexts” that featured 30 families from Boston Chinatown, researchers urged a deeper look into the mental health impacts of these separations. They cited early small-scale research showing satellite babies are more prone to depression and behavioral problems, due to the stress of losing relationships and communication challenges during separation and reunion. Researchers also highlighted concerns about inadequate resources for immigrants’ families, including lack of affordable childcare, as factors driving this practice.

Chen and Lin believe their children were young enough to escape such impacts, although interviews with Boston Chinatown families in the study illuminated how the separation and reunification can create lasting pain points for both parents and children.

University of Massachusetts Boston sociology professor Leslie Wang, who co-authored the study, said this practice “tends to correlate by educational status, as Boston Chinatown parents typically haven’t attained much education in the United States and tend to work more blue-collar jobs.”

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Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center rings in 50 years

BY LING-MEI WONG

Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) celebrated half a century of serving children, youth and families for greater economic success and social well-being on May 30 at the Intercontinental Boston Hotel, with more than 600 guests. The agency raised more than $1 million.

“It’s an honor to be serving the community for 50 years,” said Giles Li, BCNC executive director. “There is more work to be done with our allies … Together, let’s celebrate the next 50 years.”

The gala honored actor Hudson Yang of ABC’s “Fresh Off the Boat” and his father Jeff Yang, best-selling author and journalist.

An award was also presented to longtime supporter Jeremy Lin, founder of the Jeremy Lin Foundation and Toronto Raptors point guard.

The Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center 50th anniversary gala took place May 30 at the Intercontinental Boston Hotel. (From left) Chummy Yu, Yanyi Weng, two BCNC youth leaders, BCC executive director Giles Li. (Image courtesy of Ling Mei Wong.)

Clients Yanyi Weng and her mother Chummy Yu were honored. Weng came to Boston in 2003 from China with her mother and brother.

“BCNC is like our second home,” Weng said. “As new immigrants, you don’t really have a home yet, but the community at BCNC is very welcoming.”

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(詳文請見反面中文第二版)
Event Calendar

Chinatown history tour
Friday, June 7
6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
2 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116

Mulan Society classes
June 8, June 10
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111
Mulan Society Center for Women’s Empowerment classes will take place Saturdays at 11 a.m. and Mondays at 11 a.m. at the Asian American Civic Association. Register at (617) 426-9492 x 251 or mulan@aaac-boston.org.

Chinatown Legion 70th gala
Sunday, June 9
6 p.m.
690 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02111
The American Legion Chinatown Post will celebrate its 70th anniversary at Empire Garden.

Workforce training assessment
Tuesday, June 11
2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111
AAACA offers workforce training programs Building Energy Efficiency and Career in Banking and Finance, and with their assessments. The New Roots to Employment program is for people with a degree from their native country. Applicants should be at least 18 and have a GED/high school diploma.

Chinese chat group
Tuesdays
6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
677 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
A Mandarin chat group will meet at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, Kenney 201 on 2F. RSVP at www.meetup.com/bostonchinese/.

Financial aid assistance
Wednesdays
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111
Get free assistance on college planning and applying for financial aid towards higher education. To make an appointment, call (617) 426-9492 x 0.

The Chinatown Coalition meeting
Thursday, June 13
9:30 a.m.
38 Ash Street
Boston, MA 02111
The Chinatown Coalition meeting will take place at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, 4F.

Free yoga class
Thursday, June 27
12:45 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.
2 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116
Attend free yoga at the Chinatown branch library.

English for college or job training
Monday, June 17
8:30 a.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111
Attend testing for the AACAs’s English classes for college or job training. For more information, call (617) 426-9492 x 250.

Free immigration clinic
Wednesday, June 19
9 a.m.
1 City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201
The Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement offers free private immigration clinics at the Boston City Hall Room 806. For interpreters other than Spanish, please call at least one week in advance at (617) 635-2980.

BCNC Quincy opening
Friday, June 21
9 a.m.
1458 Hancock Street, #306
Quincy, MA 02169
Celebrate BCNC Quincy’s new location with refreshments and an open house.

First-time homebuyer classes
June 22 to 23
9 a.m.
2 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116
ACDC offers HB101 classes in English and Chinese at the Metropolitan. Each session is a nine-hour class over the course of a two-day weekend. Tuition is $55; $25 for Boston residents. Sign up for a workshop, graduate and receive a certificate, and become eligible for discounted mortgage products. Registration required, by calling (617) 482-2380 x 206 or emailing CHOP@asiancdc.org or visiting https://asiancdc.org/hb101.

Breakfast seminar
Thursday, June 27
9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.
120 Shawmut Street
Boston, MA 02118
All are welcome at the BCCE auditorium. Refreshments provided. For more information, call Terry Yin at (203) 893-7963.

SaturPLAY
Saturday, June 29
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Mary Soo Ho Park
A play session will take place at the Greenway, next to the Chinatown Gate.

Chinatown’s National Night Out
Tuesday, August 6
3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
230 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02111
National Night Out will take place at Chinatown’s Tai Tung Village.

South End’s National Night Out
Tuesday, August 6
5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
476 Tremont Street
Boston, MA 02116
South End’s National Night Out will take place at Castle Square.

Boston August Moon Festival
Sunday, August 11
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Chinatown Gate
The annual Boston August Moon Festival will take place at the Chinatown Gate.

Quincy August Moon Festival
Sunday, August 18
Noon to 5 p.m.
Coddington Street
Quincy, MA 02169
Quincy Asian Resources, Inc. will host the 31st August Moon Festival at Quincy High School.
The city of Boston is developing a Downtown Climate Ready Plan to protect downtown Boston from coastal flooding due to climate change.


Singage for the Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council met May 20 at Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. A forum will be up this summer, said Rachel Lake, Greenway management and community affairs manager. A bathroom at the Gate is delayed, as the contractor found sewer and water lines at its proposed location.

The males lion at the Chinatown Gate has been defaced with graffiti and had its teeth chipped, Lake said. It is on the right of the gate, while the female lion on the left is largely intact.

Chef Sarah Wade of the upcoming Stillwater restaurant at 120 Kingston Street sought support for a liquor license. Stillwater will be a modern American restaurant at 120 Kingston Street, said Stephanie Seskin, active transportation director for the Slow Streets program, said Stephanie Seskin, active transportation director for the Slow Streets program.

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A customer service training program celebrates graduation.

After completing an eight-week English training program, she received her upgraded graduation on May 31 at the Pao Arts Center. The students were Jurema Schmoeller, Regina Rodrigues, Li Mei Chen, Yongguan Qiu, Zhihong Rong and three other graduates.

Graduate Chen found her second job in Boston through a program, “My ultimate goal is to get a steady, beauty store where I will use my customer service skills I learned to provide the best service to my customers,” Chen said.

Boston residents planning to work more than 30 hours each week can apply. The next cycle begins June 17.

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BABIES: Local children separated from parents

Continued from page 1

As one mother in the study said, “When he first came back he was so unfamilial with me that he didn’t even want me anymore. I was thinking about how having other people raise your child turns the child into someone who doesn’t even belong to you anymore.”

Wang, who has interviewed dozens of parents and satellite babies within Boston and Greater Boston, also highlighted cultural tradition as a factor: “Those from Fujian often view parent-child separation as a cultural tradition rather than merely an economic need.”

Both Chen and Lin brought their children back sooner than anticipated, citing concerns about parenting styles and mistrust in China’s health care. The mothers are trying to raise their youngest children at home instead.

The mothers, who eventually met through their children’s school, wish they had known earlier on about the supportive networks and services available to those in their circumstances. These resources were echoed by the study’s researchers, including child care and language training that can ease their transition.

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Forum explores mental health challenges

BY YIYAN ZHENG

The 10th annual Asian American Mental Health Forum was held at the Malden Senior Community Center May 18.

Its theme was “Recognizing our value: Forging solutions to combat stigma and internalized racism.” Keynote speaker Josephine Kim, faculty at Harvard Graduate School of Education, addressed deterrents to mental health for Asian Americans.

Social determinants include inter- nalization. Kim discussed the correlation between internalized model minority pressure and psychological distress.

“One internalization of the model minority myth will let you tell yourself you don’t need help, because that’s a sign of weakness,” Kim said. “The more we buy into that, the more we’re actually perpetuating something that’s so damaging.”

One in four adults suffers from a mental disorder, according to the National Institute of Mental Health Disorders.

“Mental health vulnerability is a bar advocate representing indigent clients charged with crimes. Attorney Allison S. Cartwright of the Cartwright Law Office has evaluated Isenberg since 2015 to ensure he meets the Public Defender’s standards for attorneys.

Cartwright said, “Will puts his clients first, not himself. This will carry over to his constituents as well. He’s a very personable, low-key guy but don’t let that fool you — he’s a fighter and a hard worker.”

Before becoming an attorney, Isenberg worked as a legislative staffer for former Rep. Steve Rothman of New Jersey’s 9th Congressional District from 2007 to 2010.

“His impact, he’s a fighter, he’s got skills and experience that would be an asset on any city council,” Rothman said. Isenberg opposes the reconstruction of the Long Island Bridge.

Public defender Will Isenberg to run for Quincy council

BY LING-MEI WONG

Quincy resident Will Isenberg is running for the Ward 6 seat on the Quincy City Council. (Image courtesy of Ling-Mei Wong.)

Quincy resident Will Isenberg wants to represent Ward 6 on the Quincy City Council. Ward 6 covers Squantum, Ma rina Bay and parts of north Quincy, presently represented by William Harris.

“I’m running because of the March 2018 storm,” Isenberg said. “I also intend to ensure that our ward receives its fair share of funding and attention for road improvement and pest elimination.”

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In 2008, Wang sustained an injury while running the bases. The Yankees decided not to resign him in 2009, and over the next years, he travelled from New York to Washington to Toronto, from the majors to the minors to independent leagues. In 2013, eight years after Wang’s major league debut, Chen met him in person for the first time. Chen felt compelled to make a documentary about him.

Chen encountered obstacles during the four years of filming, including funding as well as the uncertainty of Wang’s career. Chen admitted to having doubts, as he wasn’t sure Wang would ever make it back to the major league. He considered focusing the film’s narrative on the pitcher “contributing back in Taiwan.”

Chen’s hope for the film is for “people [to see] a side of a person like him (Wang). You can even forget about him, and just remember what he represents and his spirit. Which is somebody who is not willing to let go.”

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**TREMONT ST DESIGN PROJECT**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2019 6:30 P.M.**

Blackstone Innovation School Cafeteria
380 Shawmut Ave, Boston, MA 02118

Join us for a meeting to discuss pedestrian safety improvements on Tremont St in the South End between Herald St and Massachusetts Ave. We’ll share an update on the design and gather community feedback.

Learn more at boston.gov/transportation/tremont. After the meeting, we’ll post the presentation and other materials online.

We will provide interpretation in Cantonese and Spanish. If you need interpretation in a different language, please contact us by Friday, June 21.

Contact us: stefanie.leskin@boston.gov | 617-635-4156

**Wakefield Affordable Housing Lottery**

**Wakefield Landing**

**www.s-e-b.com**

$213,700 for a 2BR unit (condo/HOA fees are $195/mo)

$390,000 for a 1BR unit (condo/HOA fees are $173/mo)

The affordable homes will be ready for occupancy in Spring 2019

This is a lottery for the 4 affordable homeownership units being built at Wakefield Landing in Wakefield, MA. All four homes will be sold at an affordable price to households with incomes at or below 80% of the Area Median Income.

Named for its proximity to the Blackstone Innovation School, Wakefield Landing offers simple elegance and easy living in its garden-style condominiums with quality craftsmanship by developer David Barrett. The Wakefield Landing is situated at 3 Bennett Street, and melds a brilliant design aesthetic with an ideal transportation. The affordable homes will be ready for occupancy in Spring 2019.

**$213,700 for a 2BR unit (condo/HOA fees are $195/mo)**

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The Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center hosted its 47th fundraising banquet May 22 at the China Pearl Restaurant, honoring David Ko (center) for his service as a social worker. (From left) Board member Peter Chan, executive director Ruth Miyu Ko, Boston Age Strong Commissioner Emily Shea, and Douglas Hsu, Director-General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Boston, came to celebrate the agency’s continued service. More than 300 people attended the event.

The banquets honored those who improved the health of the elders in the community. This year’s honoree was David Ko, a dedicated social worker. He immigrated to America in 1990 and worked at the Golden Age Center until his retirement in 2016.

Tufts Medical Center was honored for providing health care for more than 200 years.

**In ‘Late Life,’ Frank Chen studies Chien-Ming Wang off the field**

**BY LIVIAN YEH**

Frank W. Chen, director of “Late Life: The Chien-Ming Wang Story,” at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with film editor Amy Lee. (Image courtesy of Livian Yeh.)

Frank W. Chen fell in love with baseball as a child, when his father took him to a game in Taiwan.

“That was the very early stage of professional baseball in Taiwan, but I fell in love with it,” he said. Though he didn’t fully understand what was happening on the field, he was drawn to the game and wanted to learn more.

In 2005, Chen was studying at the Rhode Island School of Design and visiting his sister in New York. He learned a pitcher from Taiwan would be starting for the Yankees that day, so he bought a ticket and arrived late at the original Yankee stadium.

“I just saw him standing in the middle of the [stadium],” he said. That pitcher was Chien-Ming Wang.

Born in Tainan, Taiwan, Wang pitched for the New York Yankees from 2005 to 2009. He won 19 games two seasons in a row and was runner-up for the American League Cy Young Award in 2006. To his fans in Taiwan, Wang was more than a baseball player. He was “the pride of Taiwan,” a term coined by the Taiwanese media, and the island projected its hope for international visibility on him.

In 2008, Wang sustained an injury while running the bases. The Yankees decided not to resign him in 2009, and over the next years, he travelled from New York to Washington to Toronto, from the majors to the minors to independent leagues.

In 2013, eight years after Wang’s major league debut, Chen met him in person through a mutual friend. Chen felt compelled to make a documentary about him.

Chen encountered obstacles during the four years of filming, including funding as well as the uncertainty of Wang’s career. Chen admitted to having doubts, as he wasn’t sure Wang would ever make it back to the major league. He considered focusing the film’s narrative on the pitcher “contributing back in Taiwan.”

Chen’s hope for the film is for “people [to see] a side of a person like him (Wang). You can even forget about him, and just remember what he represents and his spirit. Which is somebody who is not willing to let go.”

In today’s society, a good sense of humor is the foundation of a happy life, the lubricant of a successful relationship. Only through humor can one be charming and witty; only through humor can one have wisdom and the ability to enjoy what is amusing or comical.

However, we must bear in mind that humor is not sarcasm, but a language of language. Humor is infinite in its profundity and inspiration. Humor is not derision, but a vehicle of self-mockery. A humorous gesture conveys genuine affection and concern.

Humor is like sunshine that can brighten our day and bring a smile to our faces.
Former smoker Shanon had throat cancer in her 30s and now breathes through a hole in her neck. She shared her story to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) marks the eighth year of the “Tips From Former Smokers” campaign featuring real people who are living with the effects of smoking-related diseases and second-hand smoke exposure. The newest Tips ads share personal smoking-related illnesses — as well as the devastating impact on their families.

“The participants in these new ads give a voice to the millions of people suffering from smoking-related chronic diseases each and every day,” said Corinne Graffunder, director of CDC’s Office on Smoking and Health.

CDC estimates during 2012-2015, more than 9 million Americans tried to quit smoking cigarettes because of the more than $156 billion in lost productivity from smoking-related diseases and second-hand smoke exposure.

Besides the harm it does to peoples’ lives, cigarette smoking also has a significant impact on the U.S. economy. Smoking costs more than $300 billion a year — including nearly $170 billion in direct medical care for adults and more than $156 billion in lost productivity. The Tips campaign is an important counter to the $8.6 billion spent on advertising and promotion of cigarettes in 2017, which makes these products more attractive and more affordable.

Smoking kills about 480,000 Americans each year. Nearly 50 percent of smokers say they want to quit. This campaign encourages smokers to call ASQ Chinese Quitline at 1-800-838-8917 opens Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to midnight Eastern Time. Smokers can also enroll themselves online at www.asq-chinese.org.

For more information or reasonable accommodation, call 1-800-838-8917. ASQ Chinese Quitline in response to previous quit smoking cigarettes because of the first annual malnutrition awareness week, to raise malnutrition awareness through presentations and malnutrition screening. As part of this collective effort, the Greater Boston Chinese Golden Age Center (GBCGAC) hosted three events from May 13 to May 17 at all of its dining sites: Quincy Tower, Hong Lok House and Brighton House.

GBCGAC dietitian Sophia Ding and dietetic intern Shuhan Zhan from Tufts Medical Center explained malnutrition, how to recognize symptoms and prevention. Nutrition counselor Amy Chang and Yang He, a Tufts University public health graduate student, conducted malnutrition screenings for attendees at the events. The attendees screened at high risk for malnutrition were referred to appropriate follow-up services, such as nutrition counseling with a dietitian, meal services and home care services.

The attendees were eager to learn. Esposito said they learned more about malnutrition and welcomed more screening events for their friends, neighbors and family.

May was Older Americans Month. This month, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) hosted the first annual malnutrition awareness week, to raise malnutrition awareness through presentations and malnutrition screening.

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Asian American acts enliven Boston Calling lineup

BY SZECHUN LEUNG

Mitski played Boston Calling on May 25. (Image courtesy of Taylor Hill/Geary Images for Boston Calling.)

Boston Calling has become a tradition since its debut May 2013. It started as a semi-annual event at Boston City Hall Plaza from 2013 to 2015, then moved to the Harvard Athletic Complex in 2016 on an annual basis. Asians and Asian Americans find some representation, even if Hong Kong pop icon Jacky Cheung won’t be part of the Boston Calling lineup anytime soon.

One may not identify Anderson .Paak as Asian American by his appearance, but it is the Boston Calling lineup anytime soon.

The whimsical giddiness translates to the be synchronized yet insightfully wacky. and the rest is history. Their songs can to attend a U.S. university. She crossed and the rest is history. Their songs can to weave punk rock with more melodic compositions.

Superorganism is a band with lead singer Orono Noguchi. Noguchi moved to Maine when she was 14, intending to attend a U.S. university. She crossed paths with several members of the band and the rest is history. Their songs can be synchronized yet insightfully wacky.

The whimsical giddiness translates to the live stage.

BY LIVIAN YEH

The first Taiwan Film Festival of Boston took place from May 26 to 27 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The festival featured six full-length documentaries and two short films directed by Taiwanese and Taiwanese-American filmmakers, as well as a stand-up comedy performance by Taiwanese You-tuber celebrity Brian Tseng.

Conceived and organized by a group of volunteers, the festival focused on the themes of dreams, youth and compassion. “Late Life: The Chien-Ming Wang Story” and “Father” document how a major league baseball pitcher and a master puppeteer pursue excellence, and the sacrifices they made to achieve their goals. “The Lost Black Cats of the 35th Squadron” and “Our Youth in Taiwan” explore the intersection of the personal and the political in young people’s lives, and “The Silent Teacher” and “A Journey with Invisible Friends” examine the spiritual side of Taiwanese culture.

Taiwan’s relationship with the United States and mainland China was a prevalent theme. The festival opened with “The Lost Black Cats,” which tells the story of a secret mission in the 1950s, when the U.S. trained aviators from the Republic of China to conduct surveillance on Mainland China using U-2 aircrafts. “Late Life” illustrates the struggle of a Taiwanese in America through the story of former Yankees starting pitcher Chien-Ming Wang. “Our Youth in Taiwan,” the festival’s closing film, follows a Taiwanese student activist and a Chinese student who loves Taiwan, and the aftermath of their participation in social movements. The filmmakers spoke positively about their experience in Boston.
It’s commencement season! Sampan gives a special shout-out to graduates from colleges in New England actively involved in storytelling. This includes stories about the Asian American experience— as authors, filmmakers, journalists, creative and performing artists— fields not known for job security and financial stability.

Know other super seniors in the arts? Please let us know at editor@sampan.org.

Skyler Chin, Yale University. (Image courtesy of Chin.)

Skyler Chin

School, major: Yale University, environmental studies and energy studies

Proudest college moment: My proudest college moment was in April, performing three sold-out shows of “Illegal: A New Musical” that I spent a good part of my senior year writing, composing and producing.

Plans: I’m seeking entertainment, business or environmental jobs while continuing creative projects - writing music, musicals, comedy and martial arts stories, developing and workshop ping “Illegal.”

Xingyu Gu, Massachusetts College of Art and Design. (Image courtesy of Gu.)

Xingyu Gu
Hometown: Nanjing, China

School, major: Massachusetts College of Art and Design, animation

Proudest college moment: My proudest college moment was my thesis film “Roots” got selected as a 2019 Boston Asian American Film Festival Short Waves finalista.

Plans: I will be pursuing a master’s of fine arts degree at the University of Southern California and aim to become an independent filmmaker. I would like to tell stories in the form of documentary animation so people of all ethnicities can understand and appreciate the beauty of Asian culture.

BY LINDA CHIN

Artist-scholars emerge from class of 2019

Skyler Chin, Yale University. (Image courtesy of Chin.)

Sarah Shin, Boston University. (Image courtesy of Shin.)

Theatre Artists of Boston. And I directed and performed in a new musical, which I co-created with three classmates.

Plans: In June I’m performing in “The Three Musketeers” at Greater Boston Stage Company. In July, I’ll be assistant directing Diana Oh in “My Hate Letter to the Great American Theatre” at New York City’s Public Theater.

BY YIYAN ZHENG

The 2019 International Tour of Taiwan Gourmet Cuisines arrived in Boston June 1 and June 2, organized by the Overseas Community Affairs Council of Taiwan and the Taiwan Chamber of Commerce of New England. The second event features Taiwanese fine vegetarian cuisines, held at Tzu Chi Boston. (Image courtesy of Tzu Chi Boston.)

The 2019 International Tour of Taiwanese Gourmet Cuisines arrived in Boston June 1 and June 2, organized by the Overseas Community Affairs Council of Taiwan and the Taiwan Chamber of Commerce of New England. Featuring Taiwanese vegetarian food this year, Pan Mengren, executive chef at Du Hsiao Yueh Restaurant in Taiwan, and its manager Wu Zhenzhang taught two hands-on culinary classes: Taiwanese vegetarian and vegan cuisine at Tzu Chi Boston.

BY DORA CHI

Documentary “Surviving Bokator” captures rebirth of lost sport

“Surviving Bokator” screened at the Emerson Paramount on May 17. (Image courtesy of Cineboxx Film and TV.)

I devoured a fair share of martial arts movies during summers spent in Asia, but I had never heard of bokator, a Khmer martial art that nearly vanished in the 1970s. Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, who considered it a threat, sought to execute anyone who practiced the sport in the 1970s. Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, who considered it a threat, sought to execute anyone who practiced the sport over the course of his bloody regime.

These days bokator is making a comeback, thanks to San Kim Sean. The aging genocide survivor also known as the Grandmaster stars in the 2018 documentary “Surviving Bokator,” which follows his efforts to revive the lost sport across Cambodia.

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