Encore up to the challenge of operating casino during a pandemic

By Ken Smith

How does a casino operate during a pandemic given that the very existence of the business depends on the interaction of gamblers and staff? Whether craps, baccarat, blackjack or poker, there’s an inherent need for personal engagement at the table. So when the Encore Boston Harbor casino in Everett reopened on July 12, the challenge to meet the six-foot social distancing requirement, shield players from each other at the table, as well as other Covid-19 safety measures, was a daunting task.

This reporter embarked on a recent visit to see how the casino was doing, and the methods it implemented to meet Covid guidelines. The trip began with a free bus ride from Chinatown, just outside the gate. Before boarding the spacious brown bus, the driver conducted a sanitizing wipe down of the seats and doors. Satisfied with the results, he called for us to board. Joining me was my escort from the Encore media relations department, Bethany Gibbons, along with five Chinatown locals.

The Encore website states that the bus ride can take up to 45 minutes, but with no traffic, we cruised over the Zakim Bridge and arrived in 15 minutes. All entrances to the casino have been closed except for one to more easily maintain social distancing of customers entering the hotel and casino. We got off the bus and entered in a single-file line to the main entry point of the casino.

Before entering, we passed by an employee at a podium with a thermal imaging camera positioned on a tripod next to her that immediately read our temperatures and flashed it on a computer monitor. We all passed the temperature reading test (anyone with a temperature over 100.4 Fahrenheit is not allowed in) and quickly entered the main floor of the casino. Of course, we were all wearing face masks, which are mandatory, and if you don’t have one, Encore will provide complimentary coverings.

It was evident that a lot of time and work had gone into making it a safe gambling haven. Every table game had plexiglass dividers between fellow players and the dealers, and only three players are allowed at each table, half the normal amount. Plexiglass was ubiquitous: on all the slot machines, on food carts, and in cafés. With plexiglass dividers screwed into the soft, green felt of the card tables, one can imagine the pain the work crew felt as they cut holes into the meticulously fabricated tables only a year old, which they likely will have to refurbish when the plexiglass is removed.

During the pandemic, the only card games allowed are baccarat and blackjack. There are 2,500 table games in the two-floor casino and 3,100 slot machines, but for the reopening, table games have been reduced to 560 and the slot machines were cut back to 1,900.

Encore shutdown March 14 and the operations of each game that can be played. Rules: no poker, craps or roulettes, entertainment but that will remain scarce. The entertainment that was going on, Gibbons mentioned that during the closure spent the entire time preparing for the reopening. “As you can imagine, things were changing daily,” Gibbons said. “We were closed for almost four months, and we were working throughout to obtain the plexiglass, figure out where it was going, all of that. We were always behind the scenes working on getting this up. The gaming commission was changing their regulations; the state was changing their regulations so we had to work with everybody throughout that. Throughout the closure, we were updating everything and getting everything ready!”

Statewide, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission laid down the rules: no poker, craps or roulettes, she said, but they do have video versions of each game that can be played. Some slot machines are turned off to keep the seating distance as six feet, but where that is not possible, they have installed plexiglass between the seating areas. They also regularly clean the machines with sanitizer, and hand sanitation stations are located throughout the casino.

The horses on the carousel at the Encore are also wearing protective masks.

The Encore Boston Harbor casino in Everett reopened July 12 after closing for four months due to the coronavirus shutdown. During that time, it was closed for four months due to the coronavirus shutdown. During that time, it was a daunting task.

A baccarat dealer sits behind a plexiglass shield at the Encore Boston Harbor casino to provide social distancing as part of coronavirus safety guidelines.
Lanterns represent light and symbolize a brighter future. It is the significance and meaning behind the tradition of hanging lanterns in Chinese culture that inspired artist Yu-Wen Wu to propose a public art piece, responding to The Rose Kennedy Greenway’s call for project ideas. When Wu’s concept was chosen, she began designing a work called “Lantern Stories” that would be installed in Chinatown’s Chin Park.

“The concept proposed by the Greenway was for a light based artwork at Chin Park working with the community,” said Wu, who was born in Taipei, Taiwan and now lives and works in Boston. “Over many months, when I spoke with community organizers, residents, businesses, or even passers-by, as I sketched ideas in the park, I thought it was really important to honor the tradition of lanterns but in a contemporary way. This artwork is designed for the daytime, as well as the nighttime. I hope at first, one experiences beauty and hope in these difficult times. And as you draw closer, it makes this community extraordinary.”

On July 21, the Greenway Conservancy hosted a listening session at the Pao Arts Center to gather community input through a public call. Wu posed questions to the attendees, who wrote responses on post-it notes.

“I asked questions such as, ‘What does light mean to you?’ ‘In what ways does Chinatown interest you?’ ‘What does Chinatown mean to you?’ ‘What are your hopes for Boston’s Chinatown?’” said Wu. “A participant wrote, ‘Chinatown is such a wonderful neighborhood, in its community and culture. A lot of the community stems from the collective stories of immigration. It has built a sense of belonging that has lasted through history until now.’”

Based on the stories and histories that Wu collected, she began to conceptualize a work of art. She designed over 30 lanterns with a variety of shapes and forms to illuminate the culture and resiliency of the Chinatown community, creating most of her designs in her own studio. The images on the lanterns convey the accounts and messages she found, telling tales of endurance, particularly in the face of anti-Asian sentiment and racial inequities.

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On July 21, the Greenway Conservancy held a webinar on “Lantern Stories,” discussing the project and highlighting the importance of public art. The talk was moderated by Greenway Conservancy public art project manager Sheila Novak and featured speakers Wu, Jeena Hah, of the Asian Community Development Corporation, and Courtney Ho, City of Boston engagement specialist. The discussion followed Wu’s creative process and explored the importance of preserving Asian culture in a gentrifying Chinatown.

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Wu worked with Jaywalk Studio, which has been participating in the actual fabrication of the lanterns. While imagining the models, the creators had to consider how the lanterns would withhold weather conditions, such as wind and rain, and have thought of using compressed wood for the frames. Wu said that the collaboration has been very fruitful. Panelists spoke about what they would like people to experience when they see the lanterns, which will be installed around early September. Wu said that she hopes spectators will acknowledge their beauty, while Ho said that she hopes more people will want to visit Chinatown. Viewers may also see a reflection of themselves through the artwork, said Hah.

“I think my personal hope is that they’ll just really see themselves in the art,” said Hah. “Feeling safe in a public space is what will lend itself to more healing and joy, coming out of this season.”

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Encore Encore

BOSTON HARBOR A WYNN RESORT
From left to right, the author enjoys moist cha shu don, Takoyaki, and Cold Tan Tan Noodles.

By Anna Ing

Since last year, in the former Yo-kohama Japanese Restaurant space in the heart of Brookline Village, Migaku Noodle House has been serving up the uncommon Japanese Nagasaki style Champon Noodles. It is a cute space with limited tables and now has clear dividers between each table. The space has exposed brick walls with simple décor. Service was attentive and efficient.

We started with a small order of the moist cha shu (grilled or fried pork) don (small) $4.50 but in ramen places, it is usually braised pork made with soy based marinade. It was moist and mild in flavor compared to the red and sweet Cantonese style Char Siu I am used to, served with some greens and scallions topping. Great to whet the appetite over a roast pork rice bowl.

Next came the Osaka favorite street food Takoyaki (octopus balls) $6.50 with five small balls on a plate topped with mayo, Takoyaki sauce, and scallions. Not going to lie, I was missing the traditional Katsuo bushi (dried bonito shavings) and Aomori (dried green seaweed), still, they were moist, doughy and had a bit of octopus in each bite.

Since it was a hot summer night, we did not get any ramen. Instead, we got the Yakiniku Don (grilled pork) $11.50, which came with a generous portion of marinated sweet soy sauce made with onions topped with scallions and a luscious onsen (hot spring) egg. The onsen egg (hot spring egg) is a delightful poached egg in dashi (Japanese soup stock) broth that has the egg white with a soft and smooth texture leaving the yolk to be creamy.

Yakiniku has heavy influences from Korean style BBQ, but here it uses a sweet and savory marinade. It is key to mix the broken onsen egg with the pork and rice. Every bite with the velvety and rich egg yolk pairs with the sweet and savory pork over rice – and delicious.

Finally, the Cold Tan Tan Noodles $12.50 came out. Tan Tan is the Japanese take on the Chinese favorite Dan Dan or Sesame Noodles. This dish was inventive and different. Instead of finding spicy ground pork, I got four jumbo shrimp with some blanched, mild, chicken breast meat over delightful cold and chewy noodles in a very small amount of sesame broth topped with toasted sesame seeds. It was a very refreshing and inviting combo, being light and not heavy, it was perfect for a hot summer night. We need to go back to try their Champon Noodles when the weather gets warmer.

Ask Dr. Hang

Mother struggles with son’s gay sexuality

My son just told me that he is gay, and we have been fighting about this. I think that he is young and confused, but he said that he’s known that he is gay for many years and that he is 20 years old, so he thinks he knows who he is. Did I do something wrong to make my son gay? How can I change him so he is not gay anymore? I would feel embarrassed if other people find out that my son is gay. Maybe if we didn’t immigrate to the United States and stayed in China, he would not be gay?

First of all, it is not your fault that your son is gay, because being gay is not a fault to begin with. Being gay, bisexual, heterosexual, and all the other possible sexualities are just reflections of normal human diversity.

You might ask, if being gay is normal human diversity, then why are there so few gay people, especially in China? Rarity does not mean abnormal. Also, being gay, bisexual, or queer, is not that rare at all. Many people choose not to come out because they are concerned about safety and acceptance. Many people are scared of what they don’t understand, so people are quick to attack what they think of as “abnormal.” It can feel terrifying for gay, bisexual, and queer people to come out because of these reasons.

The fact that your son told you that he is gay indicates that he wants you to know this important part of him so you can learn from his journey. This may mean that you talk to other parents with gay and queer children so you can learn from their journeys of accepting their children. This may look like you learning how to re-spectfully ask your son about his feelings and experiences of being gay, and how you can be supportive.

Remember that saving and nurturing relationships with the most important people in your life, like your son, is more important than saving face.

For more resources on how to support your gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or transgender child, you can download an informational booklet through the Family Acceptance Project, available in Chinese, English, and Spanish: https://familyproject.org/publications. There are also videos in Mandarin and Cantonese available here: https://pflag.org/blog/resourcesapidning. You can also reach out to local support groups for parents of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth.

Mother struggles with son’s gay sexuality

Dr. Hang Ngo

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About the author: Dr. Hang Ngo is a licensed Clinical Psychologist. She speaks English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. Dr. Ngo provides therapy, psychological assessment services, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultation in Davis Square, Somerville.

Her website is: https://hangngopsyd.com.

To submit your questions to the Ask Dr. Hang column, please email editor@sampan.org.

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One of the more difficult assignments in my English classes comes near the end of each semester. Sometimes I call it a “transformative” essay, other times “reflective,” and other times a standard “autobiography.” In three pages, students write the simple story of their lives. Who were they yesterday? Who are they now? Who do they plan to be tomorrow? In my ESOL classes, the assignment takes a different variation. What was their relationship with written English as a child? What is it now? What will it be in the future now that they are leaving my class? For those learning English as a second language, my question is always the same: are you closer to the English language now than when you first came to my class?

Most people outside the boundaries of academia don’t think about their relationship with English. They just live their lives and go about their business. Those of us born speaking and writing English just choose to teach writing and reading tend to think about our connection with the language. We nurtured them carefully, taught them how we speak and write because we know it makes an impression on the rest of the world. Students brave enough to take that plunge and make life changes for themselves in this country understand that working with the English language is not about mastery but accommodation. Written English is a comfortable pair of shoes inherited from somebody else. It won’t wrap around our feet like a second layer of skin, but if we learn how to tell our story, there’s a chance many people might understand. If we can all come to an understanding about the importance of written English, for native speakers and everybody else, there’s still the question of our autobiographies. Why are they so difficult to write? Are my instructions poorly spelled out? They seem simple enough for the ESOL classes. In three pages, approximately 750 words, tell me about your connection with English. Did you learn the language through stories or music? Which came first, speaking or writing? When you came here, how did you adjust to an all-English environment? How much English did you use in your daily life? Were you able to find parts of your culture in the books, music, and films of your new American life? Now that you’ve finished class, how will you apply what you’ve learned about the writing process to your future plans? Writing is about process and structure. We brainstorm, outline, write drafts, finish assignments, and submit final versions. A writing assignment may be finished, but it’s never over.

The Spring 2020 semester was cathartic for all of us, but for some reason the autobiography assignment was smoother than ever. We learned how to adjust. For six weeks we were in the classroom, looking at each other, sharing the same physical space, and then we were gone. Students from China, Haiti, The Dominican Republic, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine, and more wrote about their first experiences with English. They studied in school. They listened to American pop music and watched American sitcoms. They came to this country to study, to offer more opportunity for their children, to escape political persecution, and to embrace this elusive dream of infinite possibilities. Most of them don’t write much about their future, and that’s understandable. The future is unclear for any of us. If a student can effectively write in simple past tense form, present tense, and future, they’ve met the needs of the assignment. Perhaps the autobiography was smooth this semester because at least a quarantine offers something definitive. We know where we are now. We know that if we’re able to attend English classes online, our families can surround us, and we can retain some sense of security; the words will come easily from our minds to the page. For some students, it was hard to turn off the faucet once the flow of words came pouring out. Some students wrote half a dozen pages just about their lives in their home countries. They revealed personal stories, perhaps too private, and I had to gently remind them that this writing assignment was not meant to be therapeutic. Keep the private stories for yourself. Good writing does not have to be confessional and cathartic to make a difference.

As the summer semester starts, so too does our first full term of involuntary distance learning. I will be at several schools this summer teaching different populations with a wide spectrum of objectives that need to be reached. The one common factor will be me and my autobiography assignment at the end of the semester. English classes of any sort are always a thrill for me. The experience of connecting with students and giving them the chance to tell their stories will never get old. If my ESOL student is looking to attain competency in survival English or my Freshman college Comp 101 student is reflecting on wasted time in school and opportunities now with them with this class and this chance to tell their story, the least I can do is help them commit it to paper.

Christopher John Stephens is a veteran educator in the Boston area with over 20 years experience teaching English at most of the city’s major colleges and universities. He earned his M.A. in English in 1993 and M.F.A in Creative Writing Non Fiction from the University of New Orleans in 2009. He writes regular book reviews and cultural criticism for the website popmatters.com and his other writing has appeared in (among other places) WBJR 90.9 FM’s COGNOSCENTI and the “On Point” radio program.
Learning English online during a pandemic poses challenges for students and programs

Equity and effectiveness of online learning is the greatest challenge during Covid-19

The coronavirus is reshaping every level of education as online learning has largely replaced tradition- al classrooms from day-care to universities. With back-to-school quickly coming, some students are not returning, and school employees are debating what a return will look like with physical distancing and safety guidelines.

Many are also questioning the sustainability, equity, and effectiveness of online learning. Prior to the pandemic, online classes were largely replaced traditional classes, and nonprofits have been vacant due to barriers and limitations, but we steel have social media and other tools that allow us to communicate with others.

The school has made sure that students that are living on campus in dorms are either in singles or doubles to limit interactions and being more vulnerable. I hope that I can limit interactions due to the virus. In terms of connecting with other students it would certainly be harder to meet them but with social media it is still possible to interact with friends. The school has taken plenty of measures to allow students to be able to study at home as well as on campus safely. They are currently developing a delivery system in order to limit interactions and are being strict on testing for the virus. Although the decision to open campus during the outbreak is not necessarily the most ideal solution, I believe that the actions they have taken since then have made it more appealing and safe.

I will be living on campus even though most of my classes are virtual due to being far away from campus usually. I still look forward to the school year as I believe that it is possible to properly isolate myself on campus and remain as safe as possible. If there would be any worry for me it would be the higher chance of contracting the virus due to being on campus. I do not feel cheated at all as it is understandable why colleges would limit interactions and are being strict on testing for the virus. The sudden shift online and uncertainty about the future often eclipse and becomes more apparent. The school's taking a lot of measures to ensure that students have the best possible experience under these circumstances.

This reporter interviewed several incoming freshmen and asked them questions about the upcoming school year: Will you be in-class on campus? How do you feel about the virus and what concerns do you have? How are you looking forward to the new academic year? Do you feel cheated from the overall college experience because of the limited interaction on campus? How has your school addressed Covid-19 concerns?

Tyler Williams, 17 (Lives in Roxbury, graduated from Boston Latin School and will attend Wentworth Institute of Technology)

I’ll be at home for the semester, and all my classes are online. I’m a bit worried about students that have classes that are on campus as a necessity (depends on major/courses).

I’m not looking forward too much to the year as I had hoped to make friends in my classes and only being able to talk to each other online is a huge barrier. I don’t feel cheated at all. It is caused by college’s fault, it’s just a bad time for the pandemic to be happening.

The school’s taking a lot of measures to ensure that students and campus living in dorms, and students that are having classes on campus will re- main safe, but still have to make it so that all services that are now online will be able to replicate the experience they should have on campus as best as they can.

Ki Hough Li, 17 (Lives in Allston, graduated from Boston Latin School and will attend Boston University)

I will be staying at home since most of my classes will be virtual, but I may go on campus for some classes that will have in-person sessions. I’m still very much looking forward to the new school year because my classes really appealed to me, but there are concerns about contacting Covid-19 especially since some members in my family are more vulnerable. I hope that I can limit how often I have to go on campus to ensure my family and my own safety.

I don’t feel cheated at all. The virus has certainly limited the amount of actions that we can take, but our college experience is what we do with our time. We can’t easily make friends in person due to barriers and limitations, but we still have social media and other tools that allow us to communicate with others.

The school has made sure that students that are living on campus in dorms are either in singles or doubles to limit interactions and to keep social distancing protocols in place. They have also given special guidance to those moving into dorms and emphasized the impor- tance of wearing a mask and remaining 6 feet away, requiring that those exposed to Covid-19 are quarantined. Their main focus is to keep students safe and as such, they have implemented online class attendance, but also allowed smaller classes to meet in person to still have some part of the college experience.

Jeffrey K Zhao, 18 (Lives in East Boston, graduated from Boston Latin School and will attend U-Mass Amherst)

I was looking forward to the new school year (mainly because my classes really appealed to me), but there are concerns about contacting Covid-19 especially since some members in my family are more vulnerable. I hope that I can limit how often I have to go on campus to ensure my family and my own safety. If there would be any worry for me it would be the higher chance of contracting the virus due to being on campus.

I do not feel cheated at all as it is understandable why colleges would limit interactions and are being strict on testing for the virus. In terms of connecting with other students it would certainly be harder to meet them but with social media it is still possible to interact with friends. The school has taken plenty of measures to allow students to be able to study at home as well as on campus safely. They are currently developing a delivery system in order to limit interactions and are being strict on testing for the virus. Although the decision to open campus during the outbreak is not necessarily the most ideal solution, I believe that the actions they have taken since then have made it more appeal- ing and safe.

from out of state and even from outside the US. Others see online learning as safer and more convenient as they reduce transportation costs. However, definitive answers are sparse for those who miss the familiarity and relative ease of in-person interaction.

Many underlying social issues are now at the surface as the pandemic forces many industries to a crossroad. It is clear that ESOL programs need to remain so for the foreseeable future. The program is well-equipped with many of the real-world hurdles that new arrivals face and has taken further measures such as offering discounts, personalized assistance, and loaning tablets to students in light of the pandem- ic.

Students are also now able to join by Aden Makris, an ESOL instructor at the Asian American Civic Association (AAC). He has been working in the field for several years and completed graduate coursework at U-Mass Boston in Applied Linguistics. You can contact him at esol@aaca-boston.org.

Learning English online during a pandemic poses challenges for students and programs

Equity and effectiveness of online learning is the greatest challenge during Covid-19
Chinatown Master Plan 2020 covers a broad spectrum of future development and community needs

By Lydia Love

Chinatown has a history of neighborhood planning, dating back to the first Chinatown Community Plan of 1990, which was published by the Boston Development Authority in partnership with community leaders. The Chinatown Master Plan Committee decided to publish Master Plan 2020 in order to run parallel to and supplement the City of Boston’s PLAN: Downtown process with greater detail about Chinatown’s needs and priorities. For instance, the plan calls for a Row House Protection Area and other zoning reforms to protect Chinatown against speculation-driven displacement. PLAN: Downtown will culminate in zoning amendments for the entire downtown area, including Chinatown.

The committee hopes that the City of Boston will acknowledge Chinatown Master Plan 2020 as the general plan for Chinatown, in the same way that the Chinatown Community Plan of 1990 was recognized as the neighborhood plan in the Boston zoning code. The plan focuses on four topics explored by PLAN: Downtown and recommends strategies for Chinatown. Community residents and organizations will be holding followup discussions on each of these topics with relevant City departments.

HOUSING
1. Preserve existing subsidized housing.
2. Advance current proposals for affordable housing on Parcel 12, Tai Tung Village Parking Lot, and 50 Herald Street.
3. Prioritize public properties such as Parcel R-1, Parcel A, and 152 Arlington Street.
4. Seek opportunities for privately owned properties to be redeveloped for affordable housing.
5. Enact policies and zoning amendments that support the housing strategies.

PUBLIC REALM
1. Collaborate to make privately owned public spaces open and accessible to Chinatown residents.
2. Seek opportunities to ensure community control and access to public spaces.
3. Continue advocacy to connect Chinatown to the Greenway.
4. Create green pathways through Chinatown, especially on pedestrian thoroughfares.
5. Improve walkability and connectiv- ity between distinct areas of Chinatown.
6. Seek opportunities and partnerships to increase permeable surfaces and neighborhood tree canopy coverage.
7. Build community involvement in programming and urban design for existing public spaces.

HISTORIC & CULTURAL PRESER- VATION
1. Move quickly on opportunities to preserve historic row houses as affordable housing.
2. Build support around public art and placemaking projects that celebrate Chinatown’s history.
3. Explore changes to the Chinatown Zoning Code to create a Row House Overlay Sub-District.
4. Explore pros and cons of Historic Cultural District and Historic District options.
5. Continue community-wide discussion about possible guidelines for development within the district.
6. Explore programs or policies that stabilize small businesses and nonprofits that serve Chinatown.

Lydia Love is the Director of the Chinatown Community Land Trust.
The Sampan mural in Chinatown has remained covered for 10 years. There is an effort underway to restore it.

Ken Smith/Sampan

The Sampan mural in 1970.
Mary Yick – a Chinatown pioneer who fought discrimination

From restaurant owner to black-jack dealer, Mary Yick, like two other Chinatown restaurateurs, Ruby Foo and Anita Chue, was another pioneering woman in the Chinatown’s restaurant industry, owning the Tiki Hut restaurant on Tyler Street. Mary Yick was born around 1934 and made her first appearance on the local newspaper, the Boston Herald, in November 1939. At age 5, she and two other young Chinese girls were photographed walking in a parade in Chinatown, part of the first race bowl party for war relief work in China.

In October 1943, Mary, and three other Chinese children, were photographed as they distributed pedestrian safety booklets on the Traffic Day of Boston’s Smash the Crash drive. Mary Yick was later shown in a photograph in a local newspaper, the Boston Traveler.

In October 1951, she was once again shown in a photograph in a local newspaper, the Boston Traveler. Mary and eight other young Chinese women were pictured in their costumes as hostesses for the dedication ceremonies for the new headquarters and community building of the Chinese Merchants Association. In her first known food connection, in the Boston Globe in April 1956, Mary was mentioned in an article discussing Otto Mann meme who owned the Polynesian Village at Hotel Somerset. Otto stated, “Our Polynesian and Cantonese food suits the Boston palate.” In addition, the article published two recipes from the restaurant, including Lobster Pina and Flaming Polynesian Steak. In the accompanying photograph, Otto was shown teaching Mary Yick how to handle a lobster.

In July 1961, Lanai, Inc. was established and managed by Jean A. DiNapoli; it took over the location at 10 Tyler Street and established a restaurant later, in November 1961, Mary Yick had become the manager of Lanai, Inc. and sought a liquor license for the new Tiki Hut at 10 Tyler Street.

One of the first major newspaper references to the Tiki Hut wasn’t until the Boston Traveler, Sept. 13, 1963, noting that the Tiki Hut was a cocktail lounge, specializing in creative Cantonese cuisine. It was also mentioned that Hostess Mary Yick was “one of Boston’s nicest people.” Another article, in the Boston Herald, March 2, 1965, reported that you order a Tiki Tornado at the Tiki Hut.

An article in the Boston Globe, Feb. 13, 1970, noted how “The Tiki Hut is a favorite after-show stop for many theatrical people when they’re in town.” Mary Yick also celebrated the theater and some of those regulars included David Merrick, Angela Lansbury, and Shakespearean actor Nicol Williamson. On the theatrical circuit, Mary Yick was affectionately known as “The Dragon Lady.” Unfortunately, Mary and the Tiki Hut ran into a serious problem in mid-1971. The Boston Globe, June 2, 1971, noted that “Mary is the only remaining off-site female entrepreneur of a restaurant-lounge in Chinatown.” Mary was facing a possible ouster from her 10-year street location. The owner of the premises, the Lee On Dong Association, attempted to conduct an “auction in the Chinese tradition of her lease.” Fortunately, Mary was able to secure an injunction to halt the auction until the owners could come forward and justify themselves to the court.

In her petition, Mary stated there had been an “alleged violation of her civil rights on the basis of discrimination because of her sex.” She was “Alleging a concerted course of action against women business functionaries in the restaurant field.” Her petition also claimed that Anita Chue had been previously removed from her own restaurant by persons common to the group attempting to oust her. Finally, the petition noted that, “Traditionally, Chinese mores dictate that Chinese females are inferior to Chinese males, and that Chinese females should not be entrepreneurs or occupy any position other than that which calls for menial or household work.” Mary and the Tiki Hut lasted only another year, though at least it seemed the lease ouster had been prevented, when in November 1972, she transferred the liquor license to Mai Lai Co., Inc., managed by Kwok Man Yu, who would operate a restaurant at the same address.

The Boston Globe, Dec. 1, 1972, noted this loss in and referred to Mary Yick “of the lyrical voice and quick quips that (gently but plainly) put down amorous customers.” The article also stated, “Her departure ends, at least for the time, a tradition begun by the legendary Ruby Foo and later Anita Chue.” After taking several trips to various parts of the world, Mary moved to Las Vegas and became a blackjack dealer at Caesar’s Palace.

Once again, we have a Chinese woman who left a strong legacy in Chinatown. Like Ruby Foo and Anita Chue, Mary Yick was an intelligent, charming, and savvy business woman who became a success in the restaurant industry and introduced many people to the wonders of Chinese cuisine, especially Cantonese. Her restaurant career ended too shortly, potentially due to discrimination because she was a woman. A tragedy in its own right.
Reggie Wong Park brings local sports teams together during August Moon Tournament

The park will be the site of 2024 North American Chinese 9-man Volleyball Tournament

By Lydia Love

September 2019, before the Covid pandemic shut the world down, was the 75th annual North American Chinese Invitational Volleyball Tournament, involving 162 teams from across the continent who gathered to compete in the traditional Chinese American sport of 9-man volleyball. Last year’s tournament was held in Toronto, but in 2024, the tournament will come home to Boston’s Chinatown.

9-man Volleyball History

9-man volleyball is a sport team utilizing nine players per side and a slightly larger (10 x 20 meter) court that originated in Taishan, China, the homeland of the majority of Chinese working class immigrants who settled Boston and other Chinatowns in North America.

While originating in Taishan, 9-man evolved with a set of rules unique to Chinese Americans, rooted in Chinese tradition and isolated by discrimination and racial violence, restaurant workers and laundrymen found community together with nine-man volleyball as their only healthy social outlet. The rules of 9-man were consciously designed to preserve Chinese cultural traditions, including a rule that 66 percent of team players must be Chinese.

9-man is a gritty game played in the alleys and parking lots of Chinatown, and the home of 9-man volleyball is Reggie Wong Park at the corner of Kneeland and Lincoln Streets. Teams from Boston and Providence organized the first inter-city nine-man tournament in 1938. Since then, it has grown into a popular tournament that travels between cities and brings together thousands of players and spectators every Labor Day weekend.

Reggie Wong Park, a gathering place for local sports teams

Every August, the August Moon Tournament at Reggie Wong Park brings together local teams such as the Boston Chinese Freemasons, the Boston Knights Hurricane, Women’s Volleyball Freemasons, and the Boston Knights Athletic Club, founded by the late Reggie Wong in 1961. Volleyball and basketball teams practice regularly during the warm weather months.

Reggie Wong, born and raised in Chinatown, was a small business consultant, proprietor of Reggie’s Pub in the Leather District, and a community leader who was known and loved not only in Boston, but in Chinatowns throughout the continent, for his work to grow the international nine-man volleyball tournament. Reggie was key to the advocacy and negotiations that led to the creation of Pagoda Park in the 1970s. Chinatown, at the time, had the least amount of open space per capita of any neighborhood in the city. Even now, spaces tend to be passive parks and paved plazas with sparse greenery. Chinatown has 6.2 trees per acre, compared to 10.2 trees in Bay Village or 11.1 in the South End.

“When we were kids, there was an open field there, before the Wang building was built,” said Russell Eng, Reggie’s nephew and now president of Friends of Reggie Wong Park. “We would play football, baseball, and other sports. Then the park was built in the 70s, and Reggie wanted to name it Pagoda Park, to make a note of how the area was part of Chinatown.”

After Reggie Wong passed away, Chinatown and the Leather District came together to rename the park in his memory.

“I can’t think of a better way to honor him than to name this park for him,” said Chris Bekele of the Leather District Neighborhood Association. “We put up an online petition, and, with the help of then-mayor Thomas Menino, state representative Aaron Michlewitz, and then-DOT representative Aaron Michlewitz, we renamed it Pagoda Park. We put up an online petition, and, within a day or two, we had a thousand signatures.”

Following his uncle’s footsteps, Russell and the Knights Athletic Club have been bringing teenagers to the park to teach them about nine-man volleyball, the history of the park, and the importance of Chinatown as both a neighborhood and cultural center. Chinatown restaurant workers, some living in the neighborhood and others commuting in from outlying communities, have their own teams of nine-man players.

Securing the park’s future

Reggie Wong Park was born out of the residents’ advocacy and creative search for active recreational space. Wang Electronics came and went, the Central Artery went underground, but, by hook or by crook, the park has remained for nearly fifty years. Today, the park is entering a new phase of community governance and stewardship by both local neighbors and volleyball teams committed to protecting this shared resource.

Owned by the state Department of Transportation, the park spent a number of years under City of Boston jurisdiction, but that relationship was terminated in 2009. After the renaming as Reggie Wong Park, an ad-hoc license agreement to the North American Chinese Volleyball Association allowed for its year-to-year use as a recreational area. When the Department of Transportation began soliciting bids for the land in 2016, the community worried about the future of Reggie Wong Park.

From 2016 to 2018, Tufts University researchers and Olin College of Engineering students worked with the community on studies to monitor the air quality around the park and to consider the potential for designs to improve the health, safety, and usability of the park.

In 2018, the Chinatown Community Land Trust began convening local residents and other park users to talk about ways to protect the park and reassociate an effort to raise funds for park improvements. The City of Boston’s Community Preservation program pledged a grant of $100,000, and Leather District-based developer Hudson Group pledged a $25,000 contribution. The committee met with Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack and other DOT representatives over the past year and successfully negotiated for a 15-year renewable lease to implement improvements and govern park programming.

Reopening, improving, and collectively governing the park

The Chinatown Community Land Trust worked with Russell Eng and a committee of Chinatown residents, Leather District neighbors, and nine-man volleyball enthusiasts to find Friends of Reggie Wong Park (FRWP). FRWP is dedicated to the preservation, improvement, and stewardship of the park. Chinatown CLT’s involvement grew from its focus on community ownership and control of the land, and its commitment to building local structures for democratic governance of shared resources for the community.

The past few months have made it clear: The status quo isn’t working. We need change. And we won’t get that change with the politicians and policies of the past.

Joe Kennedy shows up in our communities to listen and learn. Politicians as usual are not working for us or our families.

Let’s fight to protect our immigrant families, ensure economic justice, and bring health care and housing to all.

Let’s build a better future for Massachusetts— together.

Vote by mail, vote early, vote Tuesday, September 1st.

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857-348-VOTE (8683)

See page 11, Reggie Wong Park
Amid pressure to reopen, Quincy and Malden school administrators balance government and community guidance

By Christina Tuttle

While school administrators heed government and public health reopening guidelines, they have some flexibility in deciding between in-person, hybrid, or remote learning.

Fall school instruction plans vary by district. Boston Public Schools have yet to announce reopening plans, postponing the first day of school to Sept. 21. Malden Public Schools plan a fully-remote start on Sept. 16. The Quincy Public Schools district will allow administrators at each school to decide instruction plans.

These district-based decisions come as the state government imposes restrictions on remote learning. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issued guidelines for reopening schools, limiting the use of online learning within districts based on the coronavirus risk. Governor Baker also rejected an overarching remote instruction model for the state.

As government and school districts respond to fluctuating public health considerations, administrators are tasked with making reopening decisions within these broader guidelines. In making this decision, Richard Chang, Head of School for Josiah Quincy Upper School, a part of the Quincy Public Schools district, sought to understand public opinion for the school.

In making this decision, Richard Chang, Head of School for Josiah Quincy Upper School, a part of the Quincy Public Schools district, sought to understand public opinion for the school.

Josiah Quincy Upper School, a part of the Quincy Public Schools district, is a part of the Boston Public Schools system.

“Administrators cannot unilaterally make decisions for the whole community. It has to be a very wide, transparent process.”

To solicit this public opinion, Chang created a task force of parents, students, and staff members. The task force created a school-wide survey for parents to rank the importance of values such as safety, social needs, instruction quality, and child supervision. Nearly all students and parents ranked safety as their number 1 concern.

The task force reached a consensus to offer a fully remote start to school. Depending on public health directives, sixth- and seventh-grade students may be invited back on campus after the first quarter. Students would be spread between the middle and high school buildings to provide an adequate buffer for social distancing.

This priority for younger students in future in-person learning hopes to salvage the non-academic offerings of schools, such as social and emotional development.

“The importance of belonging is much more important for sixth- and seventh-graders,” Chang said. “From a developmental and academic standpoint, older students are better able to manage online learning. Their self-identity is stronger. They don’t need to be a part of a pack to form their identity.”

Shaue-Fung Peng also voiced concern for students’ social-emotional needs in a fully-remote model. Peng is a guidance counselor at North Quincy High School, a part of the Quincy Public Schools system.

“We are losing students,” Peng said. “The connection is not there. Kids close their cameras. They do not want to see you. If I have students that don’t respond for a day or two, I contact the parents right away. That kind of communication is a key thing to make sure students are still connected with us, with someone.”

Preparing for a virtual semester, Chang plans to incorporate technological and pedagogical shifts to support remote learning. This includes providing Chromebook computers and internet hotspots for students who need them.

In a letter from Superintendent John Oteri, Malden Public Schools pledged a similar commitment to technological infrastructure. Every student K-12 is ensured a Chromebook or other device to access remote learning.

Josiah Quincy Upper School is also partnering with Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital to identify students with social-emotional challenges and help teachers address these needs.

The school also hired an additional social worker to conduct in-home visits and assessments.

“All students will be monitored, and we will constantly make adjustments for students that need it,” Chang said. “We are grateful for our partners in helping students and families get mental health support they need. This would be remote instruction 2.0. This time we’ll be much more prepared.”

Reggie Wong Park

Continued from page 10

common good.

Chinatown CLT will continue to partner with FRWP to implement improvements to the park. While FRWP will be the leaseholder and govern park programming, Chinatown CLT will be represented on the board and retain the right to override a decision to relocate or make substantial changes to the park.

With the park shut down for several months during the pandemic, Massachusetts DOT is preparing for the reopening of Reggie Wong Park in the coming weeks. As FRWP prepares to take over the park, the committee also will share proposals for park improvements and involve the community in planning for the future.

Reggie Wong Park is a precious resource in the heart of the city, for Chinatown as a historic immigrant working class neighborhood and regional hub for the New England Chinese community, for the neighbors in the Leather District loft apartments and Chinatown high rise buildings, and for the 9-man volleyball teams and others who have been core users of the park. With the reopening of Reggie Wong Park, there is an opportunity to preserve it as a historic and cultural anchor for Chinatown and 9-man volleyball, while improving the park as a welcoming space for a diverse spectrum of residents of all ages.

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A Happy August Moon!

祝波士頓華人社區中秋快樂！
TECO appoints new Director-General to Boston office

Sun began his career in 1998 working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Taiwan. During his first three years, he worked in the Department of North American Affairs. Then, he was sent to New York for six years where he served as the assistant to the Director-General of TECO in New York. During his time there he worked on the campaign for Taiwan’s participation in the United Nations in New York. Returning to Taiwan, he worked in the Department of International Organizations as the UN Section Chief, focusing on international participation and outreach. After three-and-a-half years, he was sent to Washington D.C. He worked in the Political Division for a total of six years. “I worked with a lot of think tanks and federal government officials and talked about different issues,” Sun said. “We have many people working in critical divisions covering different aspects of the issues. I was covering the international participation as well as the defense and security issues.”

Returning to Taipei again after his time in D.C., Sun worked in three different departments where he spent a total of four years until he left for Boston. “Some would argue that the United States is Taiwan’s most important foreign relation,” Sun said. “However, we have good relations with several other countries and up to 100 different locations.”

Sun explained that the important thing is finding “likeminded partners,” a term from the West that has been emphasized in recent speeches and interviews by President of Taiwan, Tsai-Ing Wen herself. “As a democratic country, Taiwan faces aggressive pressures from the neighboring authoritarian regime of China,” said Sun. “Through like-minded democracy conferences, we hope to create more support for Taiwan. I think the most important thing is we need more friends and allies to face the pressures from China. We need to find ways to garner more support, not only moral, but more concrete support to assist Taiwan.” For this reason, he said, TECO’s goal is to find ways to let more people learn about and appreciate Taiwan.

“Though small, Taiwan is a force to be reckoned with,” said Sun. “Taiwan is a force of good. We greatly appreciate all the longtime support for our embassy and our government. We’re here. The door is open. We welcome anyone who wishes to understand Taiwan, or has any comments or concerns to contact us. We wish to hear your voices. “If we can answer you, we will. If we cannot, we are willing to discuss it with Taipei. We wish to develop good relations and hope that all those who support Taiwan continue to do so in the future.”

By Carey Lin

Jonathan Sun is the new Director-General of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Boston. He arrived in Boston on July 28 after spending the past four years in Taiwan. Prior to that, Sun had spent six years in New York and another six in Washington D.C. As the new Director-General of TECO Boston, Sun hopes to continue the work of his predecessors to strengthen the ties between Taiwan and New England.

“I believe my predecessors have done whatever they can to expand the relationship between Taiwan and New England,” Sun told Sampan in an interview at his office. “What I can do is to help build upon the solid foundation they have built and continue to strengthen the friendship.”

Flowers are in full bloom along the serpentine path on The Greenway.
I thought I was in control, but I wasn’t. The gripping schizophrenia and the intermittent psychosis were front and center in my experiences with everyday life. They were consuming the way I experienced reality, and they were calling the shots. I thought my life was going along perfectly fine in my early 20’s when I realized that I had mental illness. In the years after graduating from college, it was PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder that prevailed in my young experiences of early adulthood. I would get flashbacks of a cold, emotionally distant, sometimes physically violent father figure berating me, or I would get panic attacks so badly that I did not know how to cope or press on. The mental illness was draining because that was all I experienced of life. The PTSD gradually faded until the flashbacks resolved by themselves, but it took about five years for that to happen. I thought I was in the clear of mental illness, but I wasn’t. That was just the beginning. It was the year 2017 and I found myself just at the start of my 30’s. I was in a new place in life, in the middle of a graduate pharmacy degree program near my home that I was excited about and eager to finish. I was living with my parents to save money on rent. I thought my days of mental illness were behind me, having lived through PTSD and the horrible flashbacks that protruded themselves on my consciousness. But I was about to experience something even more terrifying. It was early summer when I started to experience the onset of schizophrenia and psychosis. The ordeal was so bad that I made the decision to take a year off from school to focus on my recovery.

At my worst, I thought the government was spying on me and out to get me. I thought planes that were flying overhead of my house were shooting X-rays and beams of energy down that were damaging my body and weakening my organs. I thought that a minor alteration with a roommate I had in Florida two years ago was still alive and fresh and that she was stalking me, angry and wanting revenge. I thought everything was stalking me. Conspiracies were everywhere. I thought I had a secret half-brother that my mother didn’t tell me about, and that this secret was just beginning to be revealed. I was hearing voices that I thought were from God, telling me to do certain things or avoid certain people. It was all very confusing, scary, and upsetting. It was devastating to my parents, too, when they saw how sick I was and how my mind wasn’t functioning properly. They told me to seek professional medical help right away.

They brought me to the hospital, where I was admitted to the emergency room and then transferred to the psych ward. There, doctors calibrated my medicine until they found the right one for me to take that would calm my symptoms of psychosis and schizophrenia. It took two rounds of hospitalization that year for me to get the adequate care and help that I needed and for me to be on the right medications. 

During my course of schizophrenia, doctors have commented that I was “gravely ill” and that it was “a serious illness.” Finally, though, I met one doctor who took a chance and prescribed me a monthly injection of an antipsychotic that allayed the schizophrenia and kept the menacing symptoms of out-of-control thoughts at bay. I have my life to thank for that doctor.

Today, my life is much better controlled now that I am on the monthly injection of medication. I returned to school and am about to graduate from my program with a doctorate degree. Some people might cringe at the thought of getting a monthly injection, but it is not that bad. The nurse comes right to my house and the injection is usually quick and not too painful. It was over with very quickly. Some people, especially from an Asian background, might also think of my situation with stigma. To me, getting well was the most important part of the process, and one with such great impetus that getting over the stigma of having mental illness was overcome rather quickly.

I am fortunate to have supportive parents who want to see me at my best and overcome mental illness. They never said I was weak or made me feel ashamed of my schizophrenia and psychosis. They just wanted me to get the best, proper care so that I could recover. I could not have recovered without their guidance, or without the doctors I met at the hospitals who would not give up until they found the right medication for me. Therapy, too, was a cornerstone in my recovery. At school and in the clinic, I met with therapists and counselors who were sympathetic to my situation and guided me to the right mindset with the ultimate goal of recovering from schizophrenia. So why am I sharing my story? I want to inspire others who might be in a similar situation to seek help and give them hope that recovery is possible. You have to surround yourself with the right people and be brave enough to ask for help. These people should be patient, caring, loving, and supportive. Having mental illness is hard enough in and of itself, suffering in silence and being alone makes it that much harder. I also want to reduce the stigma associated with having mental illness.

I know in the Asian culture, mental illness is not really talked about and people suffering with it can feel like they are isolated. I want you to know that there are good support systems out there, starting with your doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, and other mental health workers. They are specially trained for this sort of hardship and will guide you to a better life. They will encourage you to have an open dialogue about mental illness, one that is honest and truly reflective of where you stand right now. If you believe in yourself, you will find that you have the courage to speak out about your mental health condition today and get help if you need it!

This story is part of a series for HARMONIOUS, a Chinese mental health initiative, overseen by Dr. Xiaoduo Fan for the UMass Chinese Mental Health Program. To share your story, please use the anonymous submission form found at https://projectharmonious.org/share/
Quincy Asian Resource Inc. hosts 33rd annual August Moon Festival – but this time it was virtual

By Mandy Sun

The August Moon Festival is a global tradition in Asian communities for families to reunite and celebrate with the ones they love. What better time to celebrate such an event with your family than during quarantine. Quincy Asian Resources Inc. (QARI) hosted its 33rd annual August Moon Festival on Aug. 15 through Facebook live and QATV. This is the first time in the past decades that this event was moved to a virtual setting. Despite the hardships during Covid-19, the planning committee and its community volunteers worked hard, coordinating all of the performances and sponsors through email, to create this wonderful event. Even though many other organizations and communities have postponed or canceled their August Moon event, QARI decided to move forward by holding it online. In fact, QARI believes this celebration is vital in such a difficult time. Rocky Chan, QARI’s youth program manager, co-host, and lead organizer for this event, believes that this event shows that even with the Covid-19 people can still celebrate together. “We can still be a community by watching this event,” he said. And for a first time virtual event, he believes that the event could not have run any better. Additionally, this virtual setting has allowed for QARI to partner with plenty of organizations that it would not have in a different setting, including QATV. Philip Chong, QARI’s President & CEO reiterated this same belief. “This special is important for the Asian and immigrant community,” he said, “and it is the event that celebrates the cultural diversity and spirit of Quincy.” This Festival is one of the biggest celebrations in Massachusetts, having gained huge popularity in the past few years. The event also has the backing of many sponsors and officials who have been to the festival in prior years, and they hold fond memories of their experiences.

Congressman Stephen Lynch has been participating in the festival for many years. In his message to the community, he shared some of his fondest memories of the event, including the time he got to feed an orange to a dragon. Lynch believes that this festival is “a wonderful representation of the asian community.” This year’s program included a lion dance by New York’s Asian-American Culture Club, as well as performances of traditional Chinese instruments, such as the erhu and the dulcimer. Vivian Lou, also known as the Violinviv, is the headline performer. She is a classically trained violinist who plays contemporary music throughout Boston.

For the past few years, volunteers have held a phenomenal role in creative and running the festival. Because of its location near Quincy High School, many of these volunteers are high-school students, and every year these students worked at booths or fundraised for QARI. The students also took part in this year’s festival, despite the lack of booths and bouncy houses to run. They helped with their artistic and technical skills by creating the advertisement poster, editing through the pre-recorded videos, and creating a video about the legend of Chang spreading cultural awareness.

HOW TO STAY CONNECTED

“Even though we may be alone in our own space, that doesn’t mean we can’t be connected. It is important that we remember that help is not just physical, but it’s emotional, it’s spiritual. We need to focus on what allows us to flourish… and how can we continue to thrive even if we are just in our own space.”

“Even though we may be alone in our own space, that doesn’t mean we can’t be connected. It is important that we remember that help is not just physical, but it’s emotional, it’s spiritual. We need to focus on what allows us to flourish… and how can we continue to thrive even if we are just in our own space.”

HOW TO FIGHT THE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF CORONAVIRUS

Travel bans and recommendations to avoid nonessential air travel may mean that distant family members may not be able to connect in person while the COVID-19 outbreak is still ongoing.

Here are some things to keep in mind to reduce the threat of social isolation and loneliness as the pandemic continues:

1. Social isolation and loneliness are serious health issues
2. Plan and connect
3. Make a list of organizations that can help
4. Remember pets (their value and their needs)
5. Know who’s most at risk for social isolation and loneliness

COVID-19 DEMANDS ATTENTION TO MENTAL HEALTH

It’s completely normal to feel sadness, anxiety, and stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Common signs of distress include feelings of hopelessness or fear, changes in eating and/or sleeping patterns, difficulty concentrating, and physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach problems.

Taking care of your emotional health during the COVID-19 pandemic will help you plan clearly and protect yourself and your family. Here are some actions that can help ease depressive symptoms during this stressful time:

• Limit news consumption and stick with trusted information
• Connect across distance
• Exercise regularly
• Practice mindfulness and meditation
• Consider telehealth

AARP has been working to promote the health and well-being of older Americans for more than sixty years. During this pandemic, AARP is providing information and resources to help the AAPI community and those caring for them to protect themselves from the virus and prevent it from spreading to others.

For more information and resources about COVID-19, please visit aarp.org/coronavirus or simply scan the QR code below to follow AARP’s AAPI Facebook page.