

The Cherry Blossom Giving Circle Launches in Washington, DC

The Cherry Blossom Giving Circle (CBGC), the first Asian American giving circle in Washington, DC, launched with an event on Tuesday, November 3, 2009. Over 40 people attended the gathering at Current restaurant and lounge to learn more about the giving circle, DC's Asian American community, and philanthropy. Three guest speakers – Peggy Saika, Jimmy Lynn and Sunitha Malepati – shared their perspectives on philanthropy and the joys of being part of a giving circle.

Peggy Saika, executive director of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), delivered a national perspective on how CBGC is joining a network of 11 other giving circles dedicated to focusing philanthropic resources towards Asian American communities across the United States. Just in the past 5 years, these giving circles have collectively provided over \$500,000 in project and general operation support to Asian American community organizations.

Jimmy Lynn, sports marketing consultant, former AOL head of diversity shared his personal experiences with philanthropy and giving back through board involvement and his endeavors to ensure inner city kids get a college education. Jimmy demonstrated the personal nature of philanthropy and its power to touch individuals.

Sunitha Malepati of Living Cities started the *Gather and Give, Let's Eat* (GAGLE) giving circle in DC earlier this year. She talked about how the circle was a vehicle for getting people to come together to give about \$2,000 to a local nonprofit that helps homeless people with mental health issues, the tremendous gratitude the nonprofit showed for the gift, and the benefits to members participating in this process.

And Ho of the Council on Foundations and a CBGC founder spoke more specifically about the giving circle. The minimum contribution to join the giving circle is \$250 per year. Giving circle members will have the opportunity to learn about issues in the community, network, and participate in a hands-on process to strategically leverage resources to fulfill growing need. To spur contributions and involvement in the giving circle, AAPIP is offering a 25% match for any contributions made to the CBGC.

The general timeline for the work of the giving circle includes the following:

- January 2010: Kickoff meeting of giving circle members
- February/March 2010: Educational program about philanthropy and the Asian American community
- May 2010: Development and issue of request for proposals to community organizations
- June/July 2010: Proposal review, site visits, and interviews of applicants
- September 2010: Grant decisions made
- October 2010: Planning for giving circle party
- November 2010: Announcement of giving circle grantees at social gathering

Please consider being a part of the inaugural Cherry Blossom Giving Circle and becoming a member. To learn more about the Cherry Blossom Giving Circle, see pictures of the launch party, and join, visit dsgivingcircle.wordpress.com or email dsgivingcircle@gmail.com.