



August 2009 E-Newsletter

New York Asian Women's Center, 39 Bowery, PMB 375, New York, NY 10002
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1. Greetings from New Board Chair Jessica Lee
2. Digital Art Therapy Career Day
3. Summer Mixer Recap
4. Spotlight on a Volunteer: Shilpy Chatterjee
5. Upcoming Events
6. Fordham Student Performances Benefit NYAWC

1. Greetings from New Board Chair Jessica Lee

My introduction to the New York Asian Women's Center came 14 years ago, when I was a graduate student in North Carolina researching domestic violence services for Asian American women. As one might imagine, there were few to be found. Facing multiple barriers—including culture, language, and immigration status—these women had few places to turn to when trying to escape brutality.

At the time, one of the few Asian American domestic violence agencies in the nation was NYAWC. I was excited to simply interview a staff member for my research; little could I have imagined that, years later, I would be stepping up to chair the board of directors. But that research paper opened my eyes to how the needs of Asian Americans are overlooked on a daily basis. That lesson continued to inform my career, and to this day, I believe that those of us who can should advocate on behalf of those who cannot. As Asian American women, this work honors our mothers and grandmothers, who struggled to build lives for us in a new country, and it honors our daughters and granddaughters, who deserve to live in a world that rejects violence against women in all its forms.

In these times of growing needs and diminishing resources, our work is even more urgent. I look forward to working with all of NYAWC's friends and staff to help women overcome violence and govern their own lives, free of abuse.

Sincerely,
Jessica S. Lee

2. Digital Art Therapy Career Day

You might ask what a rapper, a chemistry teacher, a fashion designer, a software engineer, and two graphic designers have in common. Hearts of gold, in this case. These professionals volunteered to spend Saturday, June 20, inspiring NYAWC youth at the first Digital Art Therapy (DAT) program Career Day. DAT, which also stands for "drawings and truth," is an NYAWC program that gives teenage clients a safe space to share their thoughts and problems, and an opportunity to develop computer literacy skills.

Thanks to the enthusiastic career day speakers, these teens learned about a range of potential careers centered on some of the skills they are acquiring. Annie demonstrated how she and other fashion designers develop patterns for clothes, while Vida described the perks of working as a software engineer for Google. The teens also witnessed a pickle light up in a science demonstration by Kristine, a high school chemistry teacher. Graphic designers Jimmy and Lizzie showed the teens how they design wrist watches and magazine layouts. Last but not least, song writer and performance artist Knewdles rapped for the teens. She also spoke about how she overcame obstacles to achieve her dreams, and encouraged the young clients to work hard to reach their own goals.



The clients then paired up with the professionals for special one-on-one meetings, opportunities to speak intimately about each respective career. The event also inspired the professionals, who said they were excited to have the opportunity to meet and empower some of DAT's bright teens.

3. Summer Mixer Recap

On Thursday, June 25, NYAWC's Summer Mixer offered the community a powerful evening of entertainment and inspiration. Over 170 people turned out for the event, hosted by Ed Bennett, the founder and former CEO of VH1, at his beautiful Bennett Media Studios. Food and drinks were generously provided by Brotherhood Winery, Bun Soho, D'Agostinos, and Whole Foods. The event featured a musical performance by singer May Ling and the launch of "Someday," a music video created by May Ling and director Scott Gabriel. Also at the festivities were the cast and crew of the video, as well as NYAWC staff and volunteers, including NYAWC Executive Director Larry Lee and Audrey Lee, NYAWC board member and event organizer.

Guests of honor also delivered speeches about the importance of raising awareness about violence against women. May Ling called attention to the power that abusers retain when society refrains from an open dialogue about such violence. Scott said he felt privileged to be able to use art to engage in the conversation about domestic violence. The guests then launched their collaboration, the music video for "Someday," which was filmed, in part, at NYAWC's Peace House shelter. The video portrays a woman checking into a shelter after she and her children endure domestic abuse. It "brings tears to my eyes," Ed said. Ryan Halasz, the video's assistant director, said he hopes such videos will help stop the cycle of abuse.



The theme of the song and the event—security, hope, and commitment to change—moved some attendees to sign up to volunteer at and donate to NYAWC. The Mixer raised \$3,000 for the organization. NYAWC is grateful to all who attended the event, and to the sponsors, contributors, and volunteers who made it possible. Pictures are available [online](#). The music video is currently in its final edit, and upon completion, will be distributed on the Internet and at world film festivals. Other generous contributions were made by photographer [Ha Kin](#) and graphic designer Natasha McEachron.

4. Spotlight on a Volunteer: Shilpy Chatterjee



Shilpy Chatterjee has spent only three months volunteering with NYAWC, but her impact on the organization and its clients has been tremendous. In that time, Shilpy—who has a law degree and speaks Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, and English—has marshaled her considerable legal and linguistic skills in the service of immigrant women in need. She works as an advocate, guiding clients through the complex legal procedures required to obtain housing and other vital services, and she serves as an interpreter and counselor to non-English-speaking clients.

"I was moved by the work that the organization does," she said. "Nothing could more directly and positively change the life of an individual than this work... I am astounded by how NYAWC's support and services inspire clients to recover their lost faith in themselves and in the world at large."

Shilpy sees the need for organizations like NYAWC as a symptom of larger social concerns. "Asian immigrant women are often not well versed with English, and their legal understanding is also limited. Abusers take advantage of the situation. Important legal and general information should be available in many more languages."

Though she has touched the lives of many NYAWC clients, she feels they have touched hers in return. "Every time a client calls the hotline to seek information, every time a client leaves the house of an abuser and moves into the shelter, it inspires me to believe in the strength of women and their drive to protect their children."

5. Upcoming Events

Peace House Community Dinner
Thursday, August 27, 2009, 6:30 pm
LaGuardia Sheraton, Queens

This festive dinner will give residents, especially those from Queens, the opportunity to socialize while supporting NYAWC's efforts to ensure fairness and justice for women. NYAWC has a close relationship with the Queens community; their 24/7 hotline for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking receives thousands of calls from Queens residents every year, and Flushing, Queens, is a major hub for human trafficking. The community event will include dinner, a silent auction and raffle, testimonial speakers, a DJ, live music, and District 20 guest speakers.

Tickets are \$100 per person (10% off on tickets purchased by August 13)

RSVP by August 20 to ensure seating.

Visit www.nyawc.org/events/upcoming.html#nqcd for the ticket order form or email NYAWC.peace-house@gmail.com for more information.

Special thanks to our sponsors:

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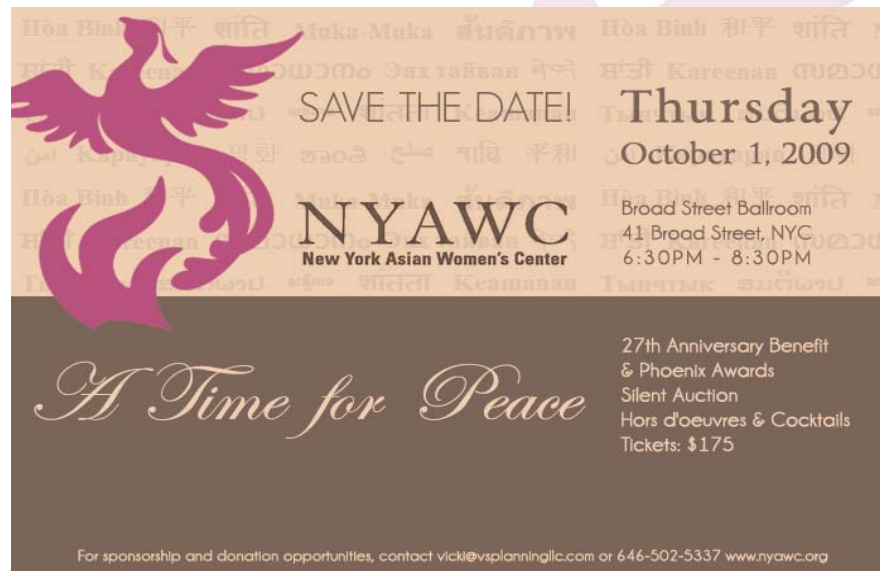
Mid-County Mechanical 718-847-1800

Cathay Bank

Rotary Club of Flushing, Anthony J Civitano, President
Stevenson Printing 516-676-1233

A Time for Peace: 27th Anniversary Benefit & Phoenix Awards
Thursday, October 1, 2009, 6:30 to 8:30 pm
Broad Street Ballroom, 41 Broad Street, New York

Join us to celebrate NYAWC's 27th year of helping women and children live safe and healthy lives! The event will include hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, and a silent auction. Tickets are \$175 per person.



For more information about this uplifting event, or about sponsorship and silent-auction opportunities, email vicki@vsplanningllc.com or call 646-502-5337.

6. Fordham Student Performances Benefit NYAWC

A Fordham University student group has produced a duet of Eve Ensler plays to benefit NYAWC. In *Strength I Stand*, or **ISIS**, a student organization, conducted two performances each of Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* and *A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer*. The events were part of V-Day, an international campaign to stop violence against women and girls. "This year, we were extremely fortunate in that attendance exceeded our own expectations. All four of our events sold out," said ISIS member Maggie Eckl. The plays raised nearly \$1,500 for NYAWC.

ISIS chose to donate the proceeds to NYAWC because "of the unique attention [NYAWC] pays to a group of women who are sometimes overlooked. Asserting sovereignty over one's own life can be extremely overwhelming, especially when dealing with different laws in a new place," said Maggie. NYAWC's work is "invaluable," she said, because it offers women "the opportunity to break free from a cycle of violence."

NYAWC thanks ISIS for its generous contribution.

How can you help?

Volunteer! NYAWC's volunteers find fulfillment and enjoyment by enriching the lives of women and children.

Donate! Your tax-deductible donation will help to provide emergency shelter, counseling, advocacy, and other crucial services to battered women and their children.

For more information on how you can get involved, visit www.nyawc.org, or contact xzhen@nyawc.org to volunteer your services or fmui@nyawc.org to make a donation.

