

APALI Students 'Graduate' With Knowledge of Community, Leadership Skills

By BILLIE LEE

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CUPERTINO — Graduating from the Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute summer program at DeAnza College was quite an occasion. Almost 60 students were recognized at a banquet dinner held at Joy Luck Restaurant in Cupertino and in attendance were distinguished elected officials, community leaders and educators.

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger did not attend, but he sent a representative with a certificate of congratulations to the graduates of the seventh Youth Leadership Academy. In the certificate, he noted that "California's strength endures through young people like you who exemplify the promise of effective leadership. You have demonstrated a commitment to civic awareness and personal development and I commend you for assuming the responsibilities of this program."

The keynote speaker for the evening was Brian Murphy, Ph.D., president of DeAnza College, who was introduced by Martha Kanter, Ph.D., chancellor of Foothill-DeAnza Colleges.

Murphy spoke on the topic "Preparing for Leadership in a Multicultural Democracy" and in his speech he emphasized the need for leaders to speak up in a complex democratic and multicultural society.

At the same time, Murphy noted that it is also important for leaders to learn how to listen to what others are saying.

The APALI Program trains students to explore their identity and history, helps them to discover the local Asian American community, helps them to learn how to empower themselves and the Asian American community, and how to assume leadership.

Annie Kim Tomita Noguchi, a youth columnist for the *Nichi Bei Times*, was asked to relate her APALI experience at the banquet dinner.



EMPOWERED WITH NEW KNOWLEDGE — (Above): Graduates of the 2005 Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute summer program at DeAnza College

PROUD FAMILY — APALI graduate Annie Kim Tomita Noguchi (second from left) with grandmother Kikue Tomita of San Jose and parents Andy Noguchi and Twila Tomita of Sacramento.

photos by Billie Lee/Nichi Bei Times

"As part of the APALI program, I have learned to love myself, my background, my family, and my place in the community," said Noguchi, 16, who is of Korean descent with Japanese American parents. "I have learned that I am somebody, I can take action and I could change things."

Before entering the program, Noguchi said that she could hardly say "it" before an audience. Now she could speak before 300.

"APALI has empowered me," she said. "It has given me courage and a voice."

Many of the students had little prior knowledge of the different Asian American communities. The APALI program took the students on

local history field trips, such as visiting the Ng Sing Gung Temple and Japantown in San Jose. They also visited the Northside Community Center, Indian Community Center and the Korean Community Center.

Many of the students said that they really enjoyed the discussions which took place in the classroom.

They talked about local government, civil rights and immigrants and many other subjects.

To get a feel for what it means to carry on civic duties, students participated in a mock Cupertino City Council meeting. Pearl Cheng, who is the former president of the Cupertino School Board, said that she and other community leaders took part in this exercise.

Cheng said that she was quite impressed with the different proposals the students had drafted.

They came up with a proposal to the Cupertino City Council that a memorial be built at Memorial Park in memory of all Asian Americans killed in recent wars. They had also proposed that the city set up a counseling and tutoring program plus a hot-line for times of crisis in the city. Another suggestion by the students was that Cupertino should have a brochure written about the city.

After four weeks of intense study, many APALI students went onto internships established by Vision New America at the offices of elected officials so they can learn what goes on in government.

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