

The New Generasian Coming Out Of APALI

BY **SAMSON WONG**

SAN JOSE — The Asian Pacific American Leadership Institute has churned out nearly 400 graduates since its formation in 1997 by then-Cupertino Mayor Michael Chang, who directs what is described as the “public-interest incubator of civic leadership and education in Silicon Valley.”

For the first time, the 10-year-old program had a reunion with over 40 alumni returning to reconnect and network with former classmates and new members.

“All of them are activists. They need to know each other,” said Chang, now a DeAnza College professor. “We built this network, and its main purpose is to support them.”

The institute explores communi-

ty, Asian American identity, leadership and civic participation, training leaders ranging from youth and emerging standouts to elected officials.

In 2006, three college-level programs served nearly 100 students and interns: an intensive summer youth program, a training for interns to lead that summer program, and public service training in partnership with Vision New America.

Out of the college-level programs came recently elected Campbell Councilmember Evan Low, 23, and numerous aides to South Bay federal and state elected officials, including APALI alumni coordinator Mike Hoa Nguyen, who recently

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An icebreaker moment as APALI alum and Campbell City Councilmember Evan Low, Jason Chan of San Francisco, Mayor Gavin Newsom and an APALI alum tie and untie themselves as a ‘human knot.’

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joined San Jose Congressman Mike Honda’s office instead of staying at a more lucrative private sector job.

“He’s showing real dedication, taking a half pay cut. But that’s what the public sector is all about,” said Chang.

APALI students also go through a discovery about their own identities.

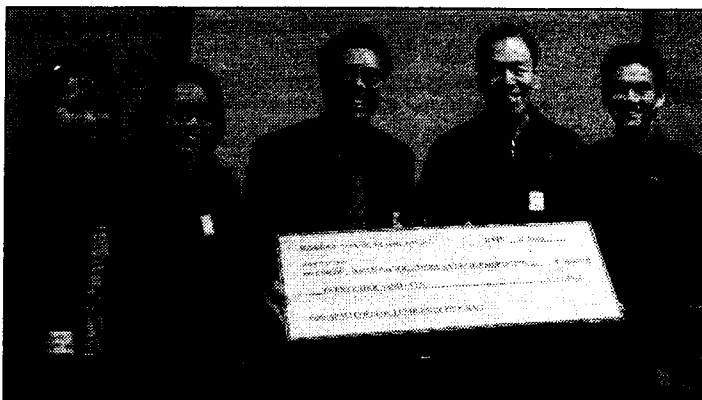
Bariah Khalid, born in the U.S. and a stranger to her Pakistani roots, language and culture, said, “Being South Asian, you’re not really considered Asian American.”

However, after going through

the program in 2003 and then interning in 2005-06, she “felt like a stronger person ... APALI has given us something very important to realize how we find our place in this society.”

Khalid starts at UC Berkeley this month and plans to focus on issues of women’s literacy and domestic violence in Pakistan. Today, she’s overseeing DeAnza College’s student anthology submissions on Asian Pacific American identity and multiculturalism.

“It’s our history,” she said. “If we don’t save it, somebody else is going to write it for us. So we need to take that stand and write it for ourselves.”



From left: Allan Liu of the Robert Chang Foundation (2nd to right) presents a \$25,000 grant to APALI alum Nicole Sato, Dr. Mae Lee (APALI associate director), Michael Chang (APALI executive director) and APALI alum Evan Low. The Chang Foundation has awarded a total of \$50,000 to APALI for the past two years.

Lily Duong, 1998 Alumnus

PHILOSOPHY: “I wake up every morning thinking I’m a bad ass. ... If you’re that passionate and you want it bad enough, you can do it.”

PASSION: Lily is initiating her own nonprofit serving underprivileged youth with leadership development and job development.

“[My parents] don’t share this idea of working in nonprofits with me. It’s taken me five years to convince them that I don’t want to do computers. I want to do nonprofit work. I just want to inspire, empower and motivate youth who feel that there’s nothing better in life.”