



18TH ANNUAL ASIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL REPORT

SILK & SPICE | OCTOBER 1-2, 2021

Experience the sights, sounds and tastes of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) food, culture, and entertainment right here in Central Iowa!



PURPOSE



Increase public awareness and appreciation for the cultural and economic contributions Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities have made to the State of Iowa.



Provide an opportunity for AAPI communities to preserve and cultivate knowledge and pride in their own customs and traditions.



Serve as a vehicle for businesses and organizations to connect to the most diverse and fastest growing minority group in Iowa.

“It was such an amazing experience. I love CelebrAsian because it gives me the opportunity to share Thai culture with others. It is very important to create opportunities for others to experience a culture outside their own and to see how our differences actually bring us together. Every chance to make the world a little smaller and make meaningful connections, the better!”
– Thai Village



Featured Village
Tai Dam

Returning Villages
Cambodia
Chinese
Filipino
Hmong
Indonesian
Japanese
Korean
Laotian
Nepalese
Thai
Vietnamese

New Villages
Pacific Islander
Myanmar

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

Over the past eighteen years, CelebrAsian has been the largest and fastest growing Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) event in the state of Iowa. Organized and executed almost completely by volunteers, CelebrAsian is made possible through the generous support of individuals, businesses, non-profits, and corporations. Organized around distinct AAPI Villages, the festival provides an authentic journey through an eclectic array of food, entertainment, demonstrations, competitions and hands-on activities representing 14 AAPI communities in Iowa.

Each Village showcased indigenous foods, culture, history, sports, arts, and crafts. Driven by a sense of pride in their culture and heritage, these Villages are the heart and soul of the event. The Iowa Asian Alliance and its sponsors also showcased other aspects of AAPI culture by presenting educational opportunities, music, visual and performing arts for a spectacular family friendly event.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

This year's theme was Silk and Spice. Central to AAPI cultures and cuisines, the Villages took this theme to heart and came up with creative interactive activities to educate and engage festival visitors. From building their own spinning wheel for silk to demonstrating hands on the authentic spices critical to their most iconic food dishes. Each Village worked hard to create a memorable experience for festival attendees and to wow the judges. It was truly a fierce but friendly competition to win the coveted title of Judges' Choice as Best Village! Bragging rights and \$1000 first place cash award went to Thai Village for the 2nd year in a row – congratulations to Thai Village and their community!



Judges' Choice for Top Villages

- 1st Thai Village
- 2nd Tai Dam Village
- 3rd Korean Village

Festival Awards & Recognition

- Best Food: Thai Village
- Best Cultural Connection: Hmong Village
- Best Spirit Award: Myanmar Village

People's Choice for Top Villages

- Best Food: Thai & Laos Villages
- Best Cultural Connection: Hmong Village
- Best Overall Village: Hmong Village

A variety of live music from local and national performers entertained and engaged the musical palate of an eclectic crowd.

"This was by far the **BEST SHOW** we've had! Not only that but the trip and visit to Iowa as a whole. We'd love to come back!"
– Music Band



CelebrAsian 2021 Scholars

3 AAPI college-bound students were awarded \$1000 each and named CelebrAsian 2021 Scholars in recognition of their community service, education and cultural pride.

Sponsored By
Lucky Lotus



Martin Phuc Nguyen
DMACC



Jaelyn Luong
Iowa State University



Ethan William Ung
University of Iowa

MEDIA COVERAGE & PUBLICITY

Media appearance and advertisement about CelebrAsian included online, print, TV, and radio.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS AND APPEARANCES INCLUDED:

Catch Des Moines Farmers Market
Community Events
Facebook
YouTube
Local Businesses
Schools
Live TV Interviews
Radio Broadcasts
And More!

59%  **204,000+**
SOCIAL MEDIA REACH PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH FACEBOOK

25,000+ ATTENDEES

GLOBAL AUDIENCE ACROSS THE UNITED STATES, VIETNAM, THAILAND, AND NEPAL WERE ENGAGED IN OUR FESTIVAL SOCIAL MEDIA

TESTIMONIALS

Each year, the festival comes alive with a blend of returning staples and new features to satisfy both loyal attendees who come every year and attract a broader and more diverse audience. We continue to enhance the experience for all by galvanizing diverse constituents towards common goals and encouraging a deeper, more meaningful connection with our sponsors, communities and volunteers. We believe in the positive impact the festival has on individual lives and the ripple effect it has on our greater society by making a unique contribution to the cultural life of Central Iowa.

“During the 3 months of planning, it was exciting but also exhausting. It was hard to not give up at times due to limited help, but we kept on going and we did it! I got emotional when I was given a handmade gift from a sweet girl who came back with her parents to visit our Hmong Village again. We felt the **LOVE** and **SUPPORT** during the fashion show and especially when we won the three awards- and we were hoping for just one!”

– Hmong Village

“It was so much fun to walk around and talk with all the Villages, trying food and hearing their stories. Truly one of the **HIGHLIGHTS** of **MY YEAR!**”

– Village Judge

“Hands down our **FAVORITE EVENT!** The people, the diversity, the food, the volunteers and everything it has to offer is a no-brainer when it comes to this event’s return on our investment and more!

– Festival Sponsor

“It was our first time as a food vendor and **WE SOLD OUT**- we had so much fun and are ready for next year!”

– Local Business

“We just relocated from Florida with no connections other than through work. IAA and CelebrAsian quickly made us feel **WELCOMED** and **CONNECTED** with new friends of similar backgrounds. This was important as we build our network to make Des Moines a great place to call home!

– New Iowans

“Everything was just **BEAUTIFUL** and **AMAZING** to watch!”

– Festival Attendee

“I love volunteering with my friends, husband, and kids- it’s an **ANNUAL TRADITION** for us. We are ready for 2022!”

– Volunteer



SUPPORTERS & COLLABORATORS

CelebrAsian provided an opportunity for government, corporate and nonprofit organizations to align with Iowa's largest Asian American Pacific Islander event as sponsors and vendors. Together with volunteers and performers, we all share a passion to foster understanding and appreciation for the contributions of AAPI communities to the economic, social and cultural vitality in Iowa. The Iowa Asian Alliance Board of Directors and the CelebrAsian leadership team are committed to ensure that quality, continuous improvement and free admission remain the hallmarks of this event. The ardent support and collaboration with sponsors, vendors and performers as well as the dedication of time and talent of enthusiastic and loyal volunteers is crucial to our ability to fulfill this promise. We are most grateful for the passion, generosity and commitment of donors and volunteers.

“Korean Cultural Connection of IA had a wonderful time at CelebrAsian 2021 | Silk & Spice- shout out to Iowa Asian Alliance, their amazing team, and all the volunteers who spent 18+ months planning the festival. Please know how wonderful and appreciated you are for your continued leadership and support of Asians in our communities.”
– Korean Village



2021 FESTIVAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

And over 400 VOLUNTEERS to make the festival happen!

Festival Chair
Prem Chandrasekaran

Festival Vice Chair
Jade Song

Festival Advisors
Sashank Ganti
Raghu Mundru
Liat Kinard

Operations Chair
Aradhya Agarwal

Operations Co-Chair
Abhishek Pandey

Entertainment Chair
Himanshu Pathak

Entertainment Co-Chair
Laurel Howell

Marketing Chair
Lisa Thai

Creative Director
Keo Pierron

Creative Designer
Jenny Thai

Social Media Director
Alex Duong

Village Director
Khong Lovan

Volunteer Chair
Tim Greene

Volunteer Co-Chair
Sandy Yang

Volunteer Advisor
Lisa Ung

VIP Director & Festival Advisor
San Wong

Health & Wellness Directors
Jane Machota
Nichole Hotzler

Table Tennis Director
Kevin Nabity

Martial Arts Director
Himanshu Pathak

Culinary Director
Bill Lu

Culinary Advisor
Smita Volz

Activities Director
Andrew Machota

Beverage Directors
Denver Ritz
Michelle Yoshimura

Website Director
Jason Calhoon

Website Coordinator
Thao Pham

Photographers
Kelly Chamberlain
MAVZ Photography
Rocco



SPONSORS

PRESENTING



GREATER DES MOINES



TITLE

CHAMPION



LEADER

Bankers Trust

Greater Des Moines Community Foundation

Meredith

Bridgestone Firestone

Harbinger

John Deere

Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath

AMBASSADOR

Veridian Credit Union

Harrah's/Horseshoe Council Bluffs

Federal Home Loan Bank

Heineken

EMC Insurance

Richtman Printing

DZÔ Creole Korean Eatery

Athene

NCMIC

DMACC

Lucky Lotus

FRIEND

Animelowa

Des Moines University

UnitedHealthcare

Ung Financial Services

SUPPORTER

Broadlawns

Davis Brown Law Firm

Jacobi-Houlihan

Abbey-Chelsa-Rebekah

REFLECTION

We survived 2020, without CelebrAsian, thanks to our core sponsors and supporters. We survived anti-Asian hate at its ugliest. But it was more important than ever to showcase our resilience, our strength and pride in our heritage and culture this past year. YOU made it possible to host CelebrAsian 2021. Our communities were eager and excited to bring CelebrAsian back to life. The record number of two new Villages in 2021 proved that. Even one of our Village leaders, who almost lost her life to COVID, was more determined than ever to ensure her Village was represented to help fight anti-Asian hate, promote awareness, understanding and meaningful connections. No surprise her leadership and determination secured Thai Village as 2021 Best Village! This was the year for new and old Villages to come back and emerge stronger than ever to achieve great awards and recognition – congrats to all the Villages! It was an exhausting year, but truly rewarding for our festival leadership team and Village leaders. And yes, we are turning around and doing it again this coming Spring. The festival will finally return to May in honor of AAPI Heritage Month. Our attendees and vendors are patiently waiting. We can't wait to CelebrAsian with you on Memorial Weekend, May 27 & 28!

NU HUYNH

Executive Director, Iowa Asian Alliance

IAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Directors

Chen Huang

Rod Suhr

Sharon Fife

Secretary

Emily Feldmann

Governance

David Yoshimura

Treasurer

Mindy CaVan

Recognition

Denver Ritz

Chair

Mark Theis





Iowa Asian Alliance

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