

Parol Lantern Festival: Shining Success Thanks to LISC AmeriCorps Members

If you go to San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood this December 10th, you'll be treated to a dazzling parade of brightly colored traditional holiday lanterns. During the annual "Parol Lantern Festival" hosted by the Filipino American Development Foundation (FADF), hundreds of lanterns called parols will be paraded down Mission Street for a lighting ceremony at Yerba Buena Gardens. The hand-made parols are five-pointed lanterns representing the Star of Bethlehem and are a Filipino Christmas tradition.

The Festival is a shining example of Filipino culture in San Francisco - and it is in its third year in no small part due to the efforts of Bay Area LISC AmeriCorps members. Three LISC AmeriCorps members working at the Filipino American Development Foundation have been at the heart of organizing and growing these neighborhood cultural celebrations since 2003. This year the Festival promises to be bigger and better than ever, and will even have floats!



Photo: Lantern making for Parol Festival

Bay Area LISC AmeriCorps members have worked annually at FADF for the past three years, and their work has had a great impact on the community and the organization. Whether organizing the Festival of Parols, working with parents to save an after-school program, helping residents get involved in neighborhood development plans, or developing a one-stop services and community center (FADF's Bayanihan Community Center), LISC AmeriCorps have built a stronger South of Market community.

Each year, Bay Area LISC places approximately 10 AmeriCorps in local community organizations. 2005 marks our 11th year of supporting our communities and AmeriCorps members through the program.

National LISC Honors Local Heros

In 1977, after a long and bitter battle to stay open, the International Hotel in San Francisco's Chinatown closed and the mostly elderly Asian tenants were evicted. The area that had been known as "Manilatown", was a huge empty pit for decades. But no more. In August, the 104-unit International Hotel Senior Housing re-opened with great fanfare and cheers from dignitaries. Seeing the project through its completion was Gordon Chin, Executive Director of Chinatown Community Development Center. Gordon has spent over 30 years as a community activist/planner/developer/consensus-builder and champion of community development in San Francisco's Chinatown. His vision and tenacious work to promote the neighborhood's economic, social, and cultural well-being have made him a local as well as, a national hero.

The Fruitvale Village in Oakland is a model of far-sighted transit-oriented, community-oriented development: how else can you characterize a beautiful plaza surrounded by housing, a library, health clinic, child care center, retail and office space -- all beautifully designed and sitting right next to a rapid transit stop? The development was conceived when community members said "no" to a public agency seeking to build a parking garage in their neighborhood. Today, the Fruitvale Village is just the jewel in the crown of many, inter-connected community programs and services that Arabella Martinez, long-time visionary and executive director of the community development corporation The Unity Council, has brought to reality. Arabella's achievements are heralded around the country as a model of community revitalization.

In late September a crowd of eight hundred gathered in Washington, D.C. for national LISC's 25th anniversary gala. Gordon and Arabella were among just 25 community development leaders from across the country honored with LISC's Mike Sviridoff Leadership Awards, named after LISC's first president. Our local heroes and their fellow awardees represent the spirit, commitment, and outstanding accomplishments that change lives, change neighborhoods, and change all of our sense of what is possible. Congratulations Gordon & Arabella!

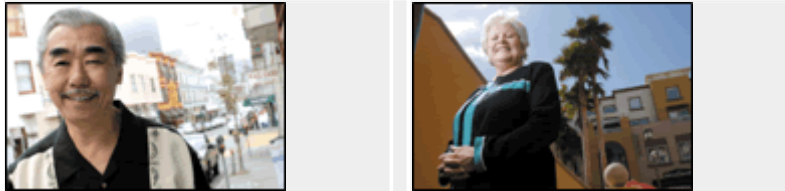


Photo: [Left to Right] Gordon Chin, Executive Director of Chinatown Community Development Center; and Arabella Martinez, Executive Director of The Unity Council

Washington Mutual - Partners in Building our Neighborhoods

As Bay Area LISC looks forward to its 25th Anniversary in 2006, we want to thank our strongest supporters who have made the past 24 years possible. Washington Mutual (WAMU) has been one of those supporters. Since 1998 WAMU has funded over six million dollars in grants and loans to LISC programs and activities across the country. In the Bay Area alone WAMU has granted us \$660,000. With partners like this, we are able to change neighborhoods.



A very special thanks to Antonio Manning, WAMU Vice President, who has been part of our local Bay Area LISC board for many years.

Can Wishes Come True? Put Us on Your List!

It is not too late to think about your end of the year giving and to put Bay Area LISC on your list! All donations are tax deductible and go towards programs that build healthy vibrant communities. If you would like more information about giving opportunities, please contact Margaret Gee at 415-397-7322 ext. 25 or e-mail at mgee@lisc.org.

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