May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. We are so pleased to be collaborating with the Asian Business Association San Diego to share stories of Asian and Pacific Islander businesses in San Diego County. These businesses have a rich heritage and have significantly shaped the history of our region and nation. For the entire month of May, the San Diego Business Journal is dedicating a special section in each issue to share and tell their inspiring stories.

Business owners will also be recognized on Thursday May 20th, 2021. The San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association San Diego will present the 2021 Asian Pacific Islander Businesses of the Year Awards, as well as a panel discussion on celebrating, uniting, and creating change in the San Diego region.

We hope these stories and virtual event will not only inform but build an increasing awareness of Asian Pacific Islander Business community.

Barb Chodos
President and Publisher
San Diego Business Journal

Jason Paguio
President & CEO
Asian Business Association San Diego

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Dumpling Inn & Shanghai Saloon ............... P. 18
It was during a trip to Seoul, Korea, in the early 2010s that Tommy Nguyen and his wife Grace Chi became inspired to introduce a Korean fried chicken concept to San Diego. But in order to set themselves apart from the local competition, especially once settling on a 2,000 square foot space in the Asian food enclave of Kearny Mesa, the two knew they had to get innovative with their offerings.

Along with business partner Wilson To, Nguyen and Chi decided to fuse Korean fried chicken with the commonly embraced comfort of Southern food culture, an approach never before taken in San Diego's gastronomic scene, said Nguyen. Lastly, inspired by the craft beer industry of San Diego, the final concept included adding a hefty selection of brew on tap to pair with the tasty food.

In 2017, Cross Street Chicken and Beer, a fusion between Korean flavors and classic Southern cooking, was birthed. It offers 20 beers on tap, according to Nguyen, and over 10 chicken flavors and options, including the uber-popular Hot Chick Sandwich and the top-selling Spicy Wings. Today, the company, with a second, 300 square foot location in Carlsbad's Windmill Food Hall that opened late 2019, garners over $5 million in revenue and has roughly 45 employees and counting. Thanks to a planned expansion next year, the company, self-funded by the husband-and-wife duo, is projected to double its revenue by 2022, according to Nguyen.

Fried Chicken Lover
"I'm a huge fried chicken lover so after our trip to Seoul we wanted to bring some concepts we loved from there back to SD," said Nguyen, 32, who received his degree in management information systems from San Diego State University. "My wife’s family owns 10-11 restaurants on Convoy Street (in Kearny Mesa) and her mom was one of the first to own a food place on the strip, Friend’s House, maybe 15 years ago. So, we knew we wanted to follow in her family’s footsteps. My wife and Wilson perfected all the recipes and I handle the finances and the marketing part of the business. We did a grand opening in December of 2017 and the support from the community was just insane. Now we are looking at expanding nationwide.

Other than experiencing a 40% drop in sales at the beginning of COVID-19, Cross Street Chicken and Beer has been on a nearly-constant upward climb, says Nguyen. By the end of last summer, the company had reached pre-pandemic sales numbers, thanks in large part to the addition of curbside pick-up and third-party delivery services. These days, revenue is up almost 15% from 2019, said Nguyen, even with the addition of national Korean fried chicken food chain Bonchon Chicken to Kearny Mesa in 2018.

For To, the success of Cross Street Chicken and Beer is a result of the culture that Nguyen and the team have built. "We’re so proud of what we’ve built together as a team, creating a safe and warm environment for both our team to work and guests to enjoy a great glass of beer and, of course, some fried chicken," he said. "For us, it all begins with ingredients, starting by marinating overnight our fresh never-frozen chicken...

Our technique to double fry our chicken to create the perfect crispy batter pays homage to traditional Korean fried chicken. Our inspiration for flavors incorporates the east and west cultures to build our multiple flavor offerings.”

New Locations
Moving forward, Nguyen hopes to expand the Cross Street Chicken and Beer footprint and, hopefully, down the line, enter new markets.

For now, a new location at the Del Mar Highlands Town Center, is scheduled to open early 2022, said Nguyen, followed by the company’s third location in Horton Plaza. The latter is set to launch toward the end of next year, he said. A fifth Cross Street Chicken and Beer, to be situated in Petco Park, is currently in discussions.

This year, Cross Street Chicken and Beer is scheduled to double revenue over $2M, projected to double revenue in 2022.

LOCAL EMPLOYEES: roughly 45
WEBSITE: www.crossstreetcnb.com
NOTABLE: partner Wilson To was previously GM from Crab Hut Seafood Restaurant.
CONTACT: (858) 430-6001

Printing Co. Exceeds Customers Expectations
MARKETING: Firm Has Served Over 45,000 Customers Worldwide

San Diego-based Printivity, an online printing company continues to find success after more than a decade in the business. Founded in 2010, Printivity was started by founder and CEO Lawrence Chou and was built from the ground up.

Today, Printivity has grown into a multimillion dollar company. A big part of the firm’s success is due to its fast turnaround times and easy ordering, said Chou.

"Printivity started after I went to the local print shop and had the worst experience ever—I didn’t understand the terminology, the technical stuff, or when the order was going to be complete,” said Lawrence Chou, founder and CEO of Printivity. “Knowing we could provide a much better experience, we started printing in San Diego and before we knew it, we began serving customers across the country.

Helping Small Businesses
Helping small business owners, it sells a wide range of marketing products including booklet printing to magazine printing to postcard printing, among other custom business solutions.

Orders can be delivered anywhere in the U.S. within 24 hours, and 95 percent of its orders are shipped all across the country. If a delivery is late or the customer doesn’t like the finished product, there’s no charge.

Printivity dedicated itself to providing the best experience for their customers. Not only were they known for price matching quotes offered up by other competitors, but they also stood behind their satisfaction guarantee of “We’ll fix it, replace it, or refund it.”

Printivity has an average 5-star rating on platforms like Yelp with more than 10,000 reviews.

We have the nation’s highest satisfaction rating of any printing company in the United States our size or larger. We also has 5-star average on Yelp, Facebook, and Google reviews have us at a 5-star average, which is unheard of," said Chou. "We have some of the fastest turnaround times in the country. Since we’ve opened our doors we have served over 45,000 customers worldwide."

Building in San Diego
Since inception, the company has been awarded numerous accolades including being named 17th fastest growing company in San Diego and made the coveted Inc. 5000 list of the fastest growing U.S. private companies three times in a row.

Chou started Printivity with less than $500 and setting up shop in his parent’s garage. Today, the company has two San Diego facilities and a third location in New Jersey.

It offers free health insurance, paid time off, volunteer hours, and free college offered to all employees. In addition, all employees are encouraged to volunteer at least 20 hours for a cause that they are passionate about, said Chou, noting that over 90% of employees hit that goal each year. The company has about 60 staffers in total.

Chou said he plans to continue growing and building its team in San Diego.

"San Diego is one of the best places in the United States to start a business because of our communities and culture. San Diegans are open-minded and willing to try new things, which really helps if you’ve got a new idea or a new way of doing things,” said Chou. “We came into the printing industry knowing that we wanted to do things differently and do things better. And San Diego has welcomed us with open arms.”
While the pandemic may have shuttered large gatherings and celebrations, it didn’t stop Lauren Balcita Garces from starting her own event production company in 2020. In fact, as an experienced marketing professional and event planner, Garces thought what better time to launch her company Social Artistry, a business focused on empowering diverse communities through events. You know what better time to really show to the community like these are the types of events, these are the types of programming, this is the type of way I want to serve in our community,” Garces said. “I really wanted to leap into...what I felt my purpose was with my company, which was to serve our diverse communities, give them more access to opportunities and get more resources.”

Over the past year, Social Artistry adapted to serve San Diego’s multicultural and hardest hit communities through project collaborations with the city, local ethnic chambers of commerce and more than 20 community-based organizations across the San Diego region.

Connecting Communities
Growing up in Kapolei, Hawaii on the big island of Oahu, Garces said she didn’t dream of being an event producer. However, she did dream of owning her own company.

She came to San Diego State University to pursue a degree in marketing because she said it seemed like the most creative path in business and it allowed her to use both her creative and strategic mindset. To stave off homesickness and find community, she got involved in clubs such as the Asian Pacific Student Alliance and the American Marketing Association. Garces found event production through her first internship at Silk Road Productions, and eventually rose to become a vice president at the company. Then in May of last year, she felt that it was finally time to live her childhood dream of owning a business. The name “social artistry” reflects her company’s vision of “creating sustainable economic and cultural impact with community leaders and organizations through creative events.”

Working Together
For Garces, making that vision a reality means using her business to bring attention to the Asian and Pacific Islander communities and key decision makers so they can work together toward equity.

“A really big thing for me is, I see a lot of the groups that I work with a lot of the people that I work with are different like puzzle pieces,” Garces said. “Everyone has their own talents and skills and things that they’re amazing at, but the way that we actually make like...a beautiful picture together is by connecting more and more of those pieces.”

Garces is also well connected in the San Diego community as president of the National Association of Asian American Professionals - San Diego and with the San Diego Asian Pacific Islander (API) Coalition he helped reach out in solidarity and to support Asian and Pacific Islander-owned small businesses experiencing not only financial challenges but discrimination due to the pandemic.

“It’s important that we support them because, you know ... discriminating against our hard-working Asian and Pacific Islander business owners, is a misguided way to put your emotions,” Garces said.

He Went from Parking Cars to Owning a Law Firm

Harsh treatment was behind Peter D. Chu’s decision to become a lawyer specializing in immigration cases.

Chu emigrated from Hong Kong to Hawaii in 1980 when he was 11-years-old with his parents, two brothers and a sister.

As part of the naturalization process, Chu said he had to be fingerprinted.

“When I got my citizenship, I remember the officer treated me very rudely. He slammed my hand down to get the fingerprints,” Chu said. “I decided to become an immigration lawyer so I could help other people going through the system so they wouldn’t get treated the same way. I can understand them better than other attorneys.”

Coming to America
Like many other immigrant families, Chu said his “came to United States for better life and never left.”

His father worked in hotels, eventually becoming the manager of a Hilton hotel. His mother ran a restaurant.

“My dad came to America with $300 and very little English. When he retired, he ran one of the best hotels in Hawaii and he had lunch with the governor and he knew the senator from Hawaii,” Chu said. “Despite when other people say bad things about America, I tell people I’ve seen it with my own eyes. People have come here with nothing and built a million-dollar business.”

As a child, Chu said school was a challenge because school officials didn’t know what to do with an English learner. He had lunch with the governor and he knew the senator from Hawaii.”

To teach him English, “they stuck me in third grade even though I was in the sixth grade,” Chu said. “I had to sit in little chairs with the third graders.”

Opening a Practice
Chu’s earlier decision to become a lawyer was cemented when he worked as a valet at a Honolulu hotel while in college, parking the cars of lawyers and other professionals.

“I wanted to be one of them rather than the guy that was parking cars,” Chu said. “I could have parked cars for the rest of my life. It was a great job really. It paid really well.”

After earning a bachelor’s degree from the University of Hawaii, Chu went to California Western School of Law in San Diego, earning his law degree in 1981.

“I wanted a place that was warm, like Hawaii. I didn’t want to go to a big city like L.A. or San Francisco. California Western had a lot of students from Hawaii at the time,” Chu said.

Chu opened his practice in 1982 in a Keary Mesa office building on Convoy Street and never left.

“I’ve been in the same shopping center for the last 40 years,” Chu said. “People know where I am. It’s easy to get to.”

The supervising attorney in his law firm is Hai Huynh, whose family fled Viet Nam among the so-called boat people.

“We all have a similar background. We all came as immigrants, except my daughter, who was born here. She’s a fortunate one,” Chu said.

Daughter Lillian is a lawyer in Chu’s office. Chu said his two other daughters also worked as lawyers in his office for a time but left to raise families.

Understanding to Come
Chu is president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of San Diego, which owns a downtown clubhouse and a 44-unit affordable apartment complex for seniors. He said that the recent attacks on Asian-Americans as some blame China for the COVID-19 pandemic are devastating but temporary.

He also is a former director of the San Diego Opera and a former director of the Asian American Repertory Theater.

“Soon or later, people understand, China had nothing to do with it,” Chu said. “I tell everyone, just put your heads down and America is the land of opportunity. I came across so many people in my office that came to America with nothing and because they were smart enough to work hard, they made something of themselves.”

Lauren Balcita Garces
CEO
Social Artistry

Lauren Balcita Garces
Founder and Owner, Lillian Chu and Hai G. Huynh specialize in immigration law with the Law Offices of Peter D. Chu.

Founder Lauren Balcita Garces was named one of the 2021 Women of Distinction for Civic Engagement by Mayor Todd Gloria during Women’s History Month. The supervising attorney in his law firm is Hai Huynh, whose family fled Viet Nam among the so-called boat people. We all have a similar background. We all came as immigrants, except my daughter, who was born here. She’s a fortunate one,” Chu said.

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 Martial arts are a great way to get in shape and improve your mental health. They also have a number of practical applications, such as self-defense and improving your overall athleticism. If you’re interested in learning more about martial arts, there are many options available. You can find local martial art schools by searching online or asking for recommendations from friends or family members who practice martial arts.

There are many different styles of martial arts, including karate, taekwondo, and jiu-jitsu. Each style has its own unique techniques and philosophy. It’s important to choose a school and instructor who you feel comfortable with and who can help you achieve your goals. You should also consider the time commitment required for the different styles and the cost of tuition and equipment. Don’t be afraid to try out a few different styles before deciding on one. Find a school that offers classes at times that work for you and that fits your budget.

It’s also important to make sure that the school you choose is reputable and has experienced instructors. Look for schools that have been in business for many years and have a good track record of teaching students. You can also read reviews online to get an idea of what other students think of the school.

Finally, make sure that the school you choose is convenient for you. It’s important to be able to get to the school easily and have enough time to practice after your class is over. If you can’t find a school that meets all of these criteria, you may want to consider taking classes at home through online resources. There are many online platforms that offer martial arts classes, and they can be a great way to learn at your own pace and in the comfort of your own home.

In summary, martial arts are a great way to get in shape and improve your mental health. They also have many practical applications, such as self-defense and improving your overall athleticism. By choosing the right school and taking the time to learn from experienced instructors, you can reap the many benefits of practicing martial arts. Whether you’re looking for a way to stay fit or just want to learn something new, martial arts can be a great addition to your life. So why not give it a try today?
Using Creativity and Code to Amplify Stories

**TECH:** Catherine Eng Designs Programs for People to Learn and Connect

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As a kid, Catherine Eng dreamed of being an artist. Her creative curiosity drove her to teach herself coding and inspired her to share this skill with students through her educational STEM program, Design Code Build.

Her latest venture is an app called OurWorlds, which seeks to share stories ofNative American tribal leaders through an augmented and virtual reality platform.

Looking back on her career thus far, Eng has managed to blend her creative and technical skills to empower others to design platforms and share stories that enable people to connect.

**Design Code Build**

Eng studied film and fine arts at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York, and shortly thereafter she worked on some of the very first websites on the internet.

Throughout her career she has designed and developed popular apps and websites for entertainment brands such as HBO, Nickelodeon, Disney Channel, Sony Music, Mattel, Tiger Beat Magazine and Next Model Management to name a few.

Along the way, Eng realized that coding was just an extension of her craft as a designer — she read manuals and Googled everything to better understand her design limitations and tools.

"Really the way I learned inspired me to open Design Code Build because I realized it was possible that really anyone can learn," Eng said. "If you have something that you're really passionate about making...you'll find a way."

Originally from New York, Eng came to San Diego to be closer to her husband's family and in 2015 she co-founded Design Code Build. Part of her mission is to expand opportunities for girls to get involved in computer science.

"It bothered me that like there was this whole game culture around boys, you know like gaming culture and the girls felt excluded from programming," Eng said.

Over the years, she has partnered with local organizations such as Girl Scouts of San Diego to provide STEM programs, summer camps and hackathons for K-12 students.

**OurWorlds**

It was through her work with Design Code Build that Eng connected with OurWorlds co-founder, Kilima S. Lattin, whose son was participating in a coding summer camp. Together, Eng and Lattin, who is an active member of the Pala Band of Mission Indians, started working on the idea in 2017, as a way of amplifying the voices of Native American stories.

Interviews with tribal leaders were filmed using volumetric video that captures three-dimensional space and will translate to an immersive viewing experience. For example, people can learn the history of the Kumeyaay people who originally stewarded the coastal land we now call La Jolla.

"We want to see that the design respectfully illustrates the aesthetic of these visual stories and connects with the audience. The app launched its beta testing in April and currently features stories from seven locations across the globe from California to France, with plans to expand.

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The Vision Endures at Convoy Street’s Dumpling Inn

**RESTAURANTS:** Vietnam, China, Kentucky, O.C. All Make Their Mark on Eatery

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"When I look at them, it keeps me going," Vuong Tobin recalled the day her father took. "That was my first restaurant. I was 16 years old."

Vuong Tobin studied psychology and human behavior at the University of California, Irvine with a minor in management. Restaurants had always been a family business, but Vuong Tobin said she had a "comfortable career" doing marketing for a dental corporation in Orange County.

It was a different road from the one her father took. Phat Vuong emigrated from Vietnam in 1980 and then worked his way up from dishwasher to head chef at a restaurant in the then-new Horton Plaza shopping center. Today he runs his own small restaurant on El Cajon Boulevard.

Vuong Tobin recalled the day her father asked if she wanted to go into business for herself. "I was not always doing this."

Buying Into the Vision

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There are 18 Native American Tribes in San Diego County — more than in any other county in the United States, according to the University of San Diego. Eng said one of the key elements of the OurWorlds platform is to illustrate how the land informs the story of each unique tribe.

"One very important thing to me is to be able to empower Native American...stakeholders to be able to tell their own stories and tell their own histories," Eng said of the integral nature of oral tradition in Native American narratives.

Interviews with tribal leaders were filmed using volumetric video that captures three-dimensional space and will translate to an immersive viewing experience. For example, people can learn the history of the Kumeyaay people who originally stewarded the coastal land we now call La Jolla.

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Design Code Build

**FOUNDED:** 2015
**FOUNDER:** Catherine Eng
**HEADQUARTERS:** Downtown San Diego

**BUSINESS:** Coding academy for K-12 students that teaches digital media and STEM skills from a project-based perspective.

**EMPLOYEES:** Seasonal, between 5-10

**WEBSITE:** designcodebuild.com
**NOTABLE:** Overall, DesignCodeBuild has impacted over 1,000 students, through work with San Diego Unified, UCSD, San Diego French American School and Girl Scouts San Diego.

**CONTACT:** catherine.eng@designcodebuild.com
In honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, The San Diego Business Journal and Asian Business Association San Diego is proud to present Asian Pacific Islander Businesses of the Year Awards and a panel discussion on celebrating, uniting and creating change in the Asian community.

Virtual event
This event is generously brought to you by our sponsors

Thursday May 20, 2021
2pm - 3:30 pm

Register@bizevents