

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

ASIAN  
PACIFIC ISLANDER  
BUSINESSES  
of the year AWARDS 2021



Welcome to our post-event section showcasing those honored at the **San Diego Business Journal** and **Asian Business Association San Diego** 2021 Asian and Pacific Islander Businesses of the Year Awards. The inaugural virtual event was held May 20, 2021 in honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses have a proud tradition in San Diego. They have helped define who we are as a community and inspire us all in their achievements.

We would like to thank our sponsors: US Bank, Wells Fargo, California Coast Credit Union, AT&T, Sharp Health Plan, Union Bank, COX and Proven Recruiting. Enjoy reading about these honorees and congratulations to all.



**Barb Chodos**  
President and Publisher  
San Diego Business Journal



**Jason Paguio**  
President and CEO  
Asian Business Association San Diego

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# Dumpling Inn & Shanghai Saloon Wins Best Restaurant

Owner Sandy Vuong Tobin Speaks to How Community Has Helped Them During Pandemic



■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

During the past year of the pandemic, **Dumpling Inn & Shanghai Saloon** has leaned into community organizations and relied on San Diegans to help support their business and in return, they have continued to give back to their neighbors.

For instance, back in September they partnered with **Frontline Foods SD** to provide dinner to four local fire stations as a thank you to first responders.

Dumpling Inn was honored by the San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association of San Diego with the 2021 Small Business of the Year award for Best Restaurant at the Asian Pacific Islander Business of the Year Awards.

“Thank you to ABA for always supporting us at Dumpling Inn and of course, the Convoy community for being such amazing customers,” said **Sandy Vuong Tobin**, co-owner of Dumpling Inn during the May 20 virtual awards ceremony.



**Sandy Vuong Tobin**  
Co-Owner  
Dumpling Inn &  
Shanghai Saloon



In partnership with Frontline Foods, Sandy Vuong Tobin delivered food to San Diego firefighters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Photo Courtesy of Dumpling Inn



“Thank you to ABA for always supporting us at Dumpling Inn and of course, the Convoy community for being such amazing customers.”

SANDY VUONG TOBIN

## Making It Work

Since 1994, Dumpling Inn and Shanghai Saloon has been serving up Chinese comfort cuisine and five years ago, Vuong Tobin's

family bought the business from the original owners.

As its name would suggest, the restaurant serves hand-filled dumplings, and its popular

Xiao Long Bao, which is made fresh daily.

Vuong Tobin co-owns the restaurant with her sister **Pricilla Vuong** and while the past year has been challenging for the restaurant industry, they adapted and found ways to make it work with the support of the Asian Business Association and Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

“When COVID first started, we were scrambling to get infrastructure to do outdoor dining,” Vuong Tobin said. “Everywhere I went to get canopies they were sold out, they were absolutely outrageously priced. The Asian Business Association (ABA) and SBDC, they were the first to lend us some umbrellas and canopies that we set up on the fly just to get something going so we could have tables outside.”

Vuong Tobin also spoke to how the ABA has helped them with marketing to drum up business in these hard times and how these organizations have made a difference in helping them get access to resources. ■

## Dumpling Inn & Shanghai Saloon



**FOUNDED:** 1994

**OWNER:** Sandy Vuong Tobin

**LOCATION:** 4625 Convoy St.

**BUSINESS:** Restaurant and bar

**EMPLOYEES:** 47 pre-COVID, 40 today

**WEBSITE:** dumplinginn.com

**NOTABLE:** Sandy Vuong Tobin's father, Phat Vuong, runs the 10-table Minh Ky restaurant on El Cajon Boulevard

**CONTACT:** 858-268-9638

# Microtek Recognized for Innovation

**MANUFACTURING:** Co. Sees Remarkable Growth in Last Year



■ By JAY HARN

**Microtek**, a Rancho Bernardo based microelectronics manufacturing company specializing in medical devices, was recognized as the Most Innovative at the San Diego Business Journal and Asian Business Association 2021 Asian/Pacific Islander Businesses of the Year Awards.

“Receiving this award is both an honor and inspiration to all of us,” said **Tri Le**, president and founder of the company.

The company was founded by Le in 2015 and has grown from 8 to 27 employees in the past year – a remarkable growth achievement during a year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Microtek states on its website that its



**Tri Le**  
President/Founder  
Microtek



Photo courtesy of Microtek

Microtek grew from 8 to 27 employees this past year.

mission “is to accelerate the integration of engineering and life sciences to improve human health.”

“We were impressed with their intelligence and intentionality with doing good for the community,” said Louis Nguyen, chief investment officer of Mission Drive Finance. The company received an investment of \$350,000 from the firm.

“We provide capital to small businesses and nonprofits who are solving social pain points in the community,” he said.

“We secured a \$350,000 loan which enabled us to more than double the size

of our team and grow our manufacturing capabilities. This allowed us to provide greater product development to our customers,” Le said.

From early R&D designs to prototyping and manufacturing, Microtek specializes in developing microelectronic technologies that integrates engineering with chemistry and biology.

“We will continue to pursue our dreams and our goals and look forward to working with the ABASD in changing and creating and providing a more inclusive business community,” Le said. ■

## Microtek



**FOUNDED:** 2015

**HEADQUARTERS:** Rancho Bernardo

**PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER:** Tri Le

**BUSINESS:** Microelectronics manufacturing company.

**EMPLOYEES:** 27

**WEBSITE:** www.microtekinnovations.com

**NOTABLE:** The company grew from 8 employees to 27 during COVID-19.

**CONTACT:** info@microtekinnovations.com





## Small business, big impact.



U.S. Bank supports the small businesses and business development programs that build and sustain our community. We value the role small businesses play in providing jobs, contributing to local charities, and shaping the identity of our community. Local businesses are proof that with vision and determination, we can create our own possibilities. [usbank.com/communitypossible](https://www.usbank.com/communitypossible)

U.S. Bank is proud to support the 2021 Asian Pacific Islander Businesses of the Year Awards.

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with the U.S. Bank Mobile App.



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## Passion Planner Impacts Local Community

Founder Angelia Trinidad Makes Her Mark on San Diego



■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

During a year where the idea of planning for the future seems unthinkable, the team at **Passion Planner** have made it happen by inspiring individuals to work toward their goals.

This past year, Passion Planner donated 25,000 planners to essential workers across San Diego County said CEO and founder, **Angelia “Angel” Trinidad**.

Passion Planner was honored by the San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association of San Diego with the 2021 Community Changemaker award at the Asian Pacific Islander Business of the Year Awards.

“We were lucky enough to give away 25,000 passion planners to essential workers all around San Diego and we are so grateful to be able to serve such a diverse and game-changing community,” Trinidad said during the May 20 virtual awards ceremony. “That’s \$750,000 worth of planners, but most importantly, these planners hopefully gave people the space to think about their needs during a very uncertain time.”



**Angelia “Angel” Trinidad**  
CEO & Founder  
Passion Planner



Photo Courtesy of Passion Planner

Passion Planner donated 25,000 planners to essential workers across San Diego County.



**“We believe you can’t be what you can’t see so as a queer, first-generation, Filipina, millennial, entrepreneur I hope that this award inspires more people that relate to me, to be entrepreneurs themselves.”**

ANGELIA TRINIDAD

### Entrepreneurship

Trinidad founded Passion Planner after graduating from college and feeling anxiety about what the future held. What started as a small business in her parents’ garage has grown to a team of 30 employees.

The San Diego-native graduated from Otay Mesa High School and earned her degree in arts and education from the

University of California, Los Angeles. Trinidad leveraged her creative skills to create a paper planner that gave her a place to etch out her hopes and goals.

The daily planner is broken down into 30-minute increments with an intentional design of personal and work to-do lists each week, pages for notes and inspirational prompts to reflect on.

In October 2013, the first Passion Planner was launched on Kickstarter and within a month it raised \$48,000 with the help of 2,000 backers. Just a year later, Passion Planner raised a total of \$650,000 in funding.

### Giving Back

In a matter of a seven years, Passion Planner has gone from an idea to a multi-million dollar company and a worldwide community of more than 1,500,000 members, dubbed the #PashFam.

Through the company’s Get One, Give One program, they’ve donated over 500,000 planners to empower underprivileged communities, nonprofits and other positively impactful organizations.

“We believe you can’t be what you can’t see so as a queer, first-generation, Filipina, millennial, entrepreneur I hope that this award inspires more people that relate to me, to be entrepreneurs themselves. So, thank you again for this award,” Trinidad said. ■

### Passion Planner



**FOUNDED:** 2013

**FOUNDER:** Angelia “Angel” Trinidad

**HEADQUARTERS:** National City

**BUSINESS:** Maker of a goal-based planner and journal

**EMPLOYEES:** 30

**WEBSITE:** passionplanner.com

**NOTABLE:** Passion Planner donated 25,000 planners to San Diego County essential workers

**CONTACT:** support@passionplanner.com

## Wells Fargo Helps Local API Businesses

Offering Financial Support For Communities In Need



■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

**Wells Fargo** is working in the San Diego region to connect with organizations that can help provide equitable resources and financial assistance to the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

Wells Fargo was honored by the San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association of San Diego with the 2021 Corporate Partner of the Year award at the Asian Pacific Islander Business of the Year Awards.

“As we humbly accept this recognition, we’d like to recognize the efforts of our community and organizations like the Asian Business Association, Small Business Development Center that have weathered the storm of the pandemic themselves and stood by our small businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic and most importantly, used their voice for good,” said



**Xiomara Arroyo**  
Vice President  
– Corporate  
Philanthropy &  
Community Relations  
Wells Fargo



Photo Courtesy Asian Business Association, Facebook

Wells Fargo and the Asian Business Association San Diego celebrate the Lunar New Year in February 2020.

**Xiomara Arroyo**, Vice President of Wells Fargo Social Impact and Sustainability.

### Commitment to API Community

Amplifying the voices of community-based organizations has been a key strategy for the national financial institution to have a meaningful impact on San Diego.

“The Asian Business Association, Small Business Development Center used their voice to stand up against attacks on Asian American and Pacific Islanders in our community,” said Arroyo during the May 20 virtual award ceremony. “We applaud them for their courage and perseverance. Because of

the attacks on the AAPI community, this year’s Asian and Pacific Islander American Heritage month takes on additional significance for Wells Fargo’s customers, employees and our company.”

Wells Fargo has a long history of supporting the AAPI communities through its decades-long tradition of providing red envelopes to join customers and employees in celebrating Lunar New Year to standing with Asian American and Pacific Islander communities during difficult times.

“The rise in discrimination and violence is unacceptable and must stop,” Arroyo said. “Wells Fargo will continue to stand in

solidarity with the AAPI community during this challenging time and will continue to use our voice both locally and nationally to advance equity and inclusion across all communities, especially diverse communities of color. We are proud to stand together with our communities and look forward to supporting and collaborating with our many long-standing community partners to create meaningful change.”

Arroyo added that Wells Fargo actively supports the Asian community through financial education, college scholarships, small business loans, in-language services and support of local Asian-focused non-profit organizations, like the ABA and UPAC, that are working in the community to create meaningful change through economic empowerment. ■

### Wells Fargo



**FOUNDED:** 1852

**CEO:** Charles W. Scharf

**HEADQUARTERS:** San Francisco

**BUSINESS:** Multinational financial services company

**STOCK:** WFC (NYSE)

**WEBSITE:** wells Fargo.com

**NOTABLE:** This year, Wells Fargo is awarding nearly \$2 million to foster an inclusive recovery for Asian American and Pacific Islander-owned businesses in Southern California.

**CONTACT:** (619) 702-6949



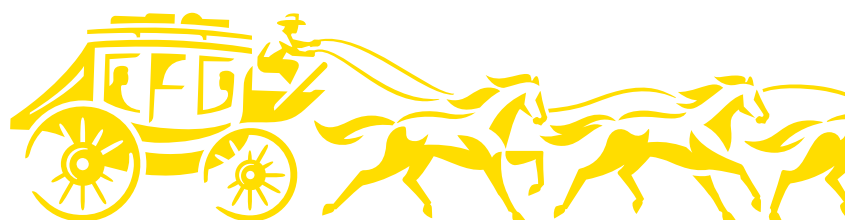


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## Recognizing extraordinary efforts

Achieving great things in any community takes courage, vision, and tremendous effort. What each of us does can make life better for everyone.

**We proudly celebrate the great achievements of all the Asian Pacific Islander Business Award nominees.**





## Sycuan Honored for Its Community Leadership

Committed to the Success and Longevity of Asian Businesses in San Diego



■ By JAY HARN

The Sycuan Casino Resort received the Asian/Pacific Islander Community Leadership Award.

### Community Support

Sycuan has supported San Diego's Asian Business Association for more than 20 years according to Cody Martinez, chairman of the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation.

"The ABASD is near to our hearts as many of our team members, guests and friends are a part of this wonderful community and it is very important to us to honor their and acknowledge their proud heritage," he said.

The 235 member Sycuan Band runs the Sycuan Casino Resort operating businesses that employ more than 2,300 people.



**Cody Martinez**  
Chairman  
Sycuan Band of the  
Kumeyaay Nation



Photo courtesy of Sycuan Casino Resort

The Sycuan Casino Resort completed a \$260 million expansion project in 2019.

After being closed for several months because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sycuan Casino Resort has been gradually re-opening and working hard to make sure its employees are back at work and its

customers are safe.

Sycuan is an avid supporter of the San Diego community and has worked hard to support local businesses by constantly giving back to the community, according to the ABASD.

### Committed to Success

"We would like to thank the ABASD for the tremendous advancement they continue to make in the advancement of the API community. Together we are committed to the success and longevity of all Asian and Pacific Islander businesses in San Diego," Martinez said.

Sycuan completed a \$260 million expansion project in 2019 that features a 12-story luxury hotel with more than 300 guest rooms and 57 suites.

They are also home to 15 bars and restaurants ranging from casual to upscale. ■

### Sycuan Casino Resort



**FOUNDED:** 1983

**CHAIRMAN:** Cody Martinez

**GENERAL MANAGER:** Robert Cinelli

**HEADQUARTERS:** Dehesa Valley

**BUSINESS:** Casino and Resort

**EMPLOYEES:** 2,300

**WEBSITE:** Sycuan.com

**NOTABLE:** Completed a \$260 million expansion project in 2019.

**CONTACT:** (619) 445-6002

## SDG&E Spotlights AAPI Community

Company's Partnerships Share the Stories of AAPI Community Members



■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) has continued its commitment to serving San Diegans by partnering in projects that celebrate and support the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

SDG&E was honored by the San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association of San Diego with the 2021 Corporate Partner of the Year award at the Asian Pacific Islander Business of the Year Awards.

"It was such a surprise to be so publicly recognized for doing what we strive to do every day and that's to honor the diversity and common threads that reflect the communities we so proudly serve," said **Caroline Winn**, CEO of SDG&E, during the May 20 virtual awards ceremony.

### Projects with a Purpose

Most recently, SDG&E announced a collaboration with the Asian Business



**Caroline Winn**  
CEO  
SDG&E



Photo Courtesy of SDG&E

SDG&E celebrates with the Japanese American Citizens League and Japanese-American actor, George Takei, at a gala event.

“

**“It was such a surprise to be so publicly recognized for doing what we strive to do every day and that's to honor the diversity and common threads that reflect the communities we so proudly serve.”**

CAROLINE WINN

Association of San Diego to beautify SDG&E and Cox utility boxes in the Convoy District. They are calling out for local API artists to contribute their painting skills and inspiration to San Diego's Pan Asian district.

"Now this utility box mural program is designed to encourage community pride and to beautify the region through the artwork of local API artists," Winn said. "We hope that these messages of unity and community will bring pride to our friends in the Convoy area who have experienced discrimination or even violence in the wake of anti-Asian hate over this past year."

Winn also highlighted a collaboration with Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) filmmaker, Lane Nishikawa, to create an

educational documentary about the Japanese Internment Camps during WWII.

"And there are so many other stories to be told and we want to be part of these efforts," Winn said. "It is in SDG&E's DNA to promote diversity, equity and inclusion as seen by the numerous API nonprofits that we've supported, some for over a decade."

### Serving San Diegans

Winn also underscored how SDG&E's service to all San Diegans, no matter what background, extends beyond the gas and electricity they deliver to people.

"And while we're being lauded for our support of individuals of the Asian Pacific Islander heritage, it's my hope that we're known as a champion of every person who resides in our community," Winn said. "Every person who is already part of our family and every person who desires to be and this truly is our everyday goal." ■

### San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E)



**FOUNDED:** 1881

**CEO:** Caroline Winn

**HEADQUARTERS:** San Diego

**BUSINESS:** Provides natural gas and electricity to San Diego County

**EMPLOYEES:** More than 4,000

**WEBSITE:** sdge.com

**NOTABLE:** SDG&E has partnered with the Asian Business Association to paint electrical boxes in the Convoy District and is calling on local API artists to contribute to this project.

**CONTACT:** 877-866-2066



# 2021 CHARITY GOLF EVENT



*Supporting educator grants and student scholarships  
including a special scholarship program for foster students*

**Fairbanks Ranch Country Club  
Monday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**

**9 am Shotgun start  
Boxed lunch and virtual silent auction to follow**

*For the health and safety of all participants, COVID protocols will be followed.*

## **Partnership and Player Opportunities Available!**

*To register or become a partner, please contact [cccfoundation@calcoastcu.org](mailto:cccfoundation@calcoastcu.org)*

Presenting Partner \$7,500  
Foundation Partner \$5,000  
Lunch Partner \$2,500  
Breakfast Partner \$2,500  
Cart Partner \$2,500  
Super Ticket Partner \$1,500  
Foursome with Hole Partner  
\$1,500

Hole Partner \$1,000  
Hole in One Contest \$1,000  
Closest to the Pin Contest \$1,000  
Longest Drive Contest \$1,000  
Putting Contest \$1,000  
Leaderboard Partner \$750

Foursome \$925  
Twosome \$500

### ***Cal Coast Members***

Foursome \$750  
Twosome \$375



# San Diego Asian Pacific Islander Coalition Comes Together in 2020

## New Organization Unites San Diego in Support of the API Community



■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

The **San Diego Asian Pacific Islander (API) Coalition** was founded in 2020 and together, co-chairs **Kent Lee** and **Alex C. Villafuerte** have helped lead this group to amplify Asian voices in the community.

The API Coalition was honored by the San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association of San Diego with the 2021 Bridge Builder of the Year award at the Asian Pacific Islander Business of the Year Awards.

“The San Diego API Coalition was created in 2020 as a response to the rising xenophobia and anti-API violence,” said Villafuerte, who is also the marketing and communications manager for San Diego Pride. “The organization’s goal is to act as a hub for API-serving organization to foster conversation and collaboration between over 30 organizations throughout the region.”



**Kent Lee**  
Co-Chair  
SD API Coalition



Photo Courtesy of County of San Diego  
Co-chairs **Kent Lee** and **Alex C. Villafuerte** accept a proclamation from Supervisor **Nathan Fletcher** declaring May 18 as **AAPI Day Against Bullying and Hate**.

### Coming Together

The API Coalition is a group of San Diego API organizations that operate under the fiscal sponsorship of **Pacific Arts Movement**, a non-profit and one of the largest media arts organizations in North America that focuses on Asian American and Asian international cinema.

Its members include not-for-profit organizations, student groups, or actively meeting community organizations like the Alliance of Chinese Americans, San Diego and the Japanese Friendship Garden Society of San Diego to name a few.

The mission statement of the organization is to “to facilitate conversations with API communities and advocate for representation of voices by: Amplifying and cultivating leadership; Acting as a hub for API organizations to collaborate; Building a more inclusive and equitable San Diego.”

### Making A Statement

The pandemic has fueled a slew of anti-Asian hate crimes and discrimination against API-owned businesses, so the API Coalition released a statement denouncing

xenophobia, racism and increasing acts of violence against the API community.

“In the face of increased anti-Asian hate across the country, the San Diego API Coalition brings together a broad and diverse group of organizations from across San Diego County by providing them a rare platform through which they can share a collective voice,” said Lee, who also serves as executive director of the Pacific Arts Movement. ■



**Alex C. Villafuerte**  
Co-Chair  
SD API Coalition

### San Diego Asian Pacific Islander Coalition



**FOUNDED:** 2020

**CO-CHAIRS:** Kent Lee, Alex C. Villafuerte

**HEADQUARTERS:** San Diego

**BUSINESS:** Nonprofit that facilitates conversations with API communities and advocate for representation

**MEMBERS:** 30 Member Organizations

**WEBSITE:** [www.sdapicoalition.org](http://www.sdapicoalition.org)

**NOTABLE:** Released a signed letter denouncing Asian hate signed by over 70 Asian Pacific Islander organizations

**CONTACT:** [info@sdapicoalition.org](mailto:info@sdapicoalition.org)

# The San Diego Foundation Makes More Equitable Grants for Community

## Foundation Focuses on Intentional Service to AAPI Organizations



■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

The **San Diego Foundation** stepped up to serve San Diego in a year where the pandemic took a huge toll on businesses, especially in the Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities.

For example, at the start of the pandemic, the community foundation designated \$20,000 in grant funding to the Union of Pan Asian Communities to develop multilingual resources of information and to provide food assistance for individuals disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

The San Diego Foundation was honored by the San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association of San Diego with the 2021 Philanthropic Leadership award at the Asian Pacific Islander Business of the Year Awards.

“In our region, we are fortunate to have strong, steady leadership from our AAPI nonprofit partners,” said foundation



**Mark Stuart**  
President & CEO  
The San Diego Foundation



Photo Courtesy of The San Diego Foundation  
Mark Stuart at the **Community Response Fund** press conference.

President and CEO, **Mark Stuart**. “The San Diego Foundation turned to the Asian Business Association and the Union of Pan Asian Communities to aid in the pandemic response and recovery efforts. Both organizations steadfastly served their communities by providing flexible resources to struggling Asian-owned businesses food for hungry families and education and advocacy to combat hate crimes and discrimination.”

### Legacy of Service

Founded in 1975, The San Diego Foundation has a long history of using philanthropy as a catalyst for community solutions to improve the quality of life in the region.

Across its 45-year history, the foundation has granted more than \$1.3 billion to support nonprofit organizations. The organization works to advance racial and social justice as well as equity of opportunity and this past year, the San Diego COVID-19 Community Response Fund has raised \$66 million to support San Diegans in need.

### Funding AAPI Resources

A key to The San Diego Foundation’s impact this past year was the intentional designation of funds for the AAPI community, whose businesses were disproportionately impacted and its people experienced a spike in Asian hate crimes as a result of the pandemic.

For instance, the organization raised \$25,000 for the Asian Business Association of San Diego to provide emergency assistance and support to local small businesses. Most recently, the COVID-19 Community Response Fund raised a total of \$300,000 for Black, Latinx and Asian businesses, with a third of it going to the Asian Business Association.

“Our lives are enriched by the diversity that our AAPI communities bring to our neighborhoods, schools and businesses,” Stuart said during the May 20 virtual awards ceremony. “We encourage all San Diegans to recognize the commitment of AAPI partners to seek education and understanding of Asian American history and to support these trusted community-based organizations with the gift of time, talent, treasure and testimony.” ■

### The San Diego Foundation



**FOUNDED:** 1975

**CEO:** Mark Stuart

**HEADQUARTERS:** Liberty Station

**BUSINESS:** A community foundation

**EMPLOYEES:** 60

**WEBSITE:** [sdfoundation.org](http://sdfoundation.org)

**NOTABLE:** In Jan. 2021, the foundation designated \$100,000 in grant funding to the Asian Business Association of San Diego

**CONTACT:** [info@sdfoundation.org](mailto:info@sdfoundation.org)





# We're proud to celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

Congratulations to the Asian Business Association San Diego and the San Diego Business Journal, as they recognize the Asian and Pacific Islander businesses in San Diego County that inspire our region.

Sharp Health Plan is committed to serving the vibrant and diverse communities of San Diego. As a local not-for-profit health plan, we have been providing health insurance to the people of San Diego for almost 30 years.

[sharphealthplan.com](http://sharphealthplan.com)





# Catalyst of San Diego & Imperial Counties Invests in Equity

## CEO Megan Thomas Leads Organization In Partnerships And Collaborative Funding



■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

Catalyst of San Diego & Imperial Counties has been helping small businesses and underserved San Diegans gain access to financial resources since 1976.

Formerly known as San Diego Grant-makers, the organization has continued to connect small businesses to needed resources especially during the pandemic.

Catalyst was honored by the San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association of San Diego with the 2021 Non-Profit Partner of the Year award at the Asian Pacific Islander Business of the Year Awards.

“What a year it’s been,” said Megan Thomas, president and CEO of Catalyst. “Between the health and economic impacts of COVID-19 and the unconscionable rhetoric and violence against the



**Megan Thomas**  
President & CEO  
Catalyst of San Diego  
& Imperial Counties



Photo Courtesy of Catalyst

Participants at Catalyst’s annual conference in 2019 explored how funders are leveraging the full power of their roles and organizations for equity and justice.

AAPI community, it has been not only our mission but our responsibility to come together to do this important work with you.”

### Investing in San Diego

For more than four decades, Catalyst has used its network of partners to make a difference in the lives of San Diegans through impact investing.

“Our members work alongside community-based organizations, public agencies, corporations and more towards a vision of an equitable, impactful, collaborative social change ecosystem that improves the lives of all San Diego and Imperial County residents,” Thomas said.

They have more than 100 programs annually and as of last year, grantmaking from its collaborations total more

than \$1.5 million annually.

“In the past year, we’ve brought funding to census outreach efforts with the API Initiative to make sure no one goes uncoun-” Thomas said. “We’ve called for racial justice alongside the Asian Solidarity Collective and with the Asian Business Association, we brought a million dollars in grant funding to the community for economic stability and small business success.”

She added that the core work of the organization is focused on equity, impact and a future focus on bold leadership. ■

### Catalyst of San Diego & Imperial Counties



**FOUNDED:** 1976 (Originally called San Diego Grantmakers)

**CEO:** Megan Thomas

**HEADQUARTERS:** University City

**BUSINESS:** Connects and activates funders to learn, lead, and invest in our communities.

**EMPLOYEES:** 8

**WEBSITE:** catalystsd.org

**NOTABLE:** Catalyst has multiple impact investment funds that support women empowerment, underserved communities and the affordable housing crisis.

**CONTACT:** info@catalystsd.org

# Leorenz Carpio Gives Back to His Hometown

## Dedicating Time to Explore Businesses and Impact the AAPI Community



■ By NATALLIE ROCHA

Leorenz Carpio is part of the team at the Asian Business Association of San Diego (ABASD) who bring the organization to life through multimedia communication.

As a marketing team associate for ABASD, Carpio has volunteered his time and talents to amplify the voices of local businesses and connect them with crucial information from the organization.

This year, he was honored by the San Diego Business Journal and the Asian Business Association of San Diego with the 2021 Volunteer of the Year award at the Asian Pacific Islander Business of the Year Awards.

### Hometown Volunteer

Carpio is a native San Diegan who grew up in Mira Mesa and his volunteer work has allowed him to impact his hometown. After graduating from California State University of San Marcos, with a Bachelors of



**Leorenz Carpio**  
Marketing Team  
Associate  
Asian Business  
Association of  
San Diego



Photo Courtesy of Leorenz Carpio

Leorenz Carpio helps the Asian Business Association pick up and deliver Personal Protective Equipment to local businesses.



**“The biggest takeaway I’ve learned from volunteering for the Asian Business Association is that San Diego is a melting pot of cultures and communities.”**

LEORENZ CARPIO

Sociology in 2019, he started interning with ABASD.

He credits Lauren Garces, ABASD’s Marketing, Outreach and Events Manager for getting him involved in the organization as he was fresh out of college and looking for a career path. As a social media intern, he would help with events, community outreach and social media marketing.

“ABASD is very big on bringing our

community together and helping each other out,” Carpio said in an email. “Especially during these times, we would pass out PPE to businesses and connect to other chambers in San Diego County and the API community. Also, I helped with social media posts for information on grants and shoutouts for local businesses.”

In addition to his volunteer work, Carpio currently works for NeoGenesis Inc., a skin

care company, doing social media marketing. This past year, he also started his own digital marketing company with a friend called, Epicentre Media Co. which aims to provide affordable Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for small to midsize businesses.

“Definitely being surrounded by business minded people due to ABASD / SBDC got me thinking of trying out my own business,” Carpio said.

“The biggest takeaway I’ve learned from volunteering for the Asian Business Association is that San Diego is a melting pot of cultures and communities,” Carpio said. “When you actually explore the county, you get to experience and see each one. Lastly, the Asian Business Association is like family to me. People can feel that kind of aura when you’re with them being inclusive and helping with the community.” ■

### Asian Business Association of San Diego



**FOUNDED:** 1990

**CEO:** Jason Paguio

**HEADQUARTERS:** San Diego

**BUSINESS:** Represents the interests of over 30,000 Asian Pacific Islander (API) owned businesses throughout San Diego County.

**EMPLOYEES:** 17

**WEBSITE:** abasd.org

**NOTABLE:** The ABA delivered pop-up tents and set up outdoor dining for local restaurants when the pandemic restricted indoor dining operations.

**CONTACT:** (858) 277-2822





## What's important to you is important to us

Union Bank® understands the importance of community. We are deeply grateful for the personal and professional ties we have developed throughout the years. And with our proven history of solid financial performance, we will continue to put our strength to work for you. Together with you, we look forward to building a successful future for generations to come.

**Union Bank is proud to sponsor the Asian Pacific Islander Businesses of the Year Awards 2021.**

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