

AAPI Pride at Clark



Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle read a special proclamation recognizing AAPI Heritage Month in the City of Vancouver followed by a photo on stage with the student organizers. *Photo: Clark College/Malina Goerl*

Clark College made history on May 30 with its first-ever Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month Celebration, an evening of food, dance, and storytelling hosted by the Korean Culture Club.

Held at the Student Center, the space was transformed into a vibrant celebration of Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, and Pacific Islander cultures. Local AAPI-owned vendors lined the room, offering handcrafted goods, boba tea, and banh mi sandwiches while students, staff, and community members browsed, ate, and connected.

The energy was electric, with speakers and performers taking center stage throughout the evening. Clark College President Dr. Edwards welcomed guests with a video message, followed by

opening remarks from Vice President of Instruction, Dr. Brown. Mayor Anne McEnerny-Ogle read a special proclamation recognizing AAPI Heritage Month in the City of Vancouver.

Guests also had the opportunity to join Leslie Lew, one of the evening's keynote speakers known globally as the "Warrior, for a free self-defense seminar. Leslie gave participants the tools they needed to protect themselves and reminded them of the strength they should always carry.

"Stand in your power," she told onlookers as she demonstrated how to escape a chokehold. "You don't have to be the strongest person in the room to be powerful."



Michael Tuncap places a necklace on Dr. Terry Brown.

The event also featured speeches by community leaders, including Michael Tuncap, former director of the Pacific Islander Student Commission at UW Seattle, and a high-energy performance by PacifikWest, a Portland-based K-pop performance and cover dance group.



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“Celebrating AAPI Heritage Month at Clark is so important because it gives voice and visibility to students who often feel unseen,” Melina said. “This event meant everything to us. For so long, AAPI students haven’t seen themselves reflected or celebrated on campus. To finally have a space where our cultures, languages, dances, and stories could shine – it was powerful. It wasn’t just a celebration; it was a moment of visibility, pride, and community.”

The evening was the result of months of planning and collaboration between student clubs, local organizations and small businesses, and dedicated volunteers, truly spotlighting the strength, creativity, and resiliency of the AAPI community.

“For so long, I have wanted an event for AAPI students to

speak their truths at Clark College, like other cultures here. After not seeing it happen year after year, I decided enough is enough,” Melina said. “The event was my whole network, and it was only made possible by students who volunteer their time.”

Melina called out a special thanks to Zion Brown from the Korean Culture Club, James Simina from the Clark Japanese Club, Mac Manuel and Ria Antonio from the Pacific Islander Club, and the Pacific Islander clubs at Hudson’s Bay, Fort Vancouver, and Heritage high schools.

Next year, the Korean Culture Club will become the Asian Culture Club, and it will continue its mission to uplift AAPI voices and share traditions with the Clark community.

“Family is like branches on a tree, they grow in different directions, yet our roots remain as one,” Ria Antonio from the Pacific Islander Club shared. “Although we may not be able to speak the language or know the exact tradition, it flows within our blood and in our hearts forever.”











Photos courtesy of: Zion Brown