

Inspiration Awards 2010 in Retrospect: Charity Event Gathers Oakland Community on a Historic Night

Oakland, CA — Wednesday, November 10th, 2010 — It was a night of culmination for Oakland Digital Arts & Literacy Center (ODALC). After more than a year of striving to establish itself in a time of economic downturn, the local technology nonprofit succeeded in hosting its first annual Inspiration Awards, which celebrated the City of Oakland and honored three influential people for their significant contributions to the community: Andreas Weigend (world-renowned data expert), Joe Kennedy (CEO of Pandora Radio), and Donald Tamaki (known for successfully reopening the landmark Supreme Court cases of Fred Korematsu, Gordon Hirabayashi and Minoru Yasui).

Held in Oakland's historic Preservation Park, the event sold out to approximately 130 guests: some came representing prominent tech companies (Cisco Systems, Pandora Radio, Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Amazon.com); others came from reputed financial institutions (Cathay Pacific Bank, Morgan Stanley); others still came from Oakland's rich assortment of local businesses and organizations (Uptown Body and Fender, Rosewood House, Gente Bella Salon Spa, OneCalifornia, It's a Grind Coffee House).

ODALC made a point of thanking its key partners at the event, namely East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation and Oakland Unwrapped. Executive Director Shaun Tai also announced plans to work closely with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs of Cisco Systems.

In addition to celebrating the Oakland community and all its assets, the event and its honorees looked to the city's future, impressing the urgency of ODALC's mission to make computer education more accessible to underserved communities.

"ODALC is teaching people to embrace, not fear technology," said Norman Weekes, Strategic Advisor at ODALC. "To be a user of technology and not one of the used. To be a producer and not a consumer. To take your life experience and combine it with the infinite possibilities technology offers and to better yourself, your business and maybe even society."

As ODALC celebrated a year of hard-earned accomplishment and looked ahead to 2011, so did Oakland's recent Mayor-Elect Jean Quan. Within thirty minutes of announcing her victory at Oakland City Hall, Quan made her way to Preservation Park in support of ODALC and Inspiration Awards 2010.

"I'm particularly honored to be here because [ODALC] has had this vision of inspiring Oakland and looking at Oakland in new way," said Quan. "[ODALC] is part of the new Oakland, the next generation. Let's support them!"

When she takes office on January 3rd, 2011, Quan will be the first Asian American woman mayor of a major U.S. city. ODALC considers her an invaluable ally in the effort to promote greater prosperity for Oakland and the Bay Area. After a year of struggle and hardship, Oakland hopefully awaits a new era of leadership and social change. Inspiration Awards 2010 exceeded its original scope and served as a platform for that change.

For 2011, ODALC plans to recruit more board members and raise \$80,000 to support its program "Digital Equity for Local Commerce," which helps struggling small business owners in Oakland compete with the rest of the market via online advertising. If Wednesday night was any indication, the Oakland community has the passion and the drive to make ODALC's vision a reality.

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