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# ACA Newsletter

## 2011 Texas Business Symposium and Gala, Pinnacle of Asian Celebration in Central Texas

Austin, TX— The 2011 Texas Business Symposium and Gala was held on September 10 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in picturesque downtown Austin. The event was organized by the Network of Asian American Organizations and co-chaired by Austin City Mayor Leffingwell and San Antonio Mayor Pro Tem Elisa Chan.

The all day symposium featured Texas policy and decision makers and a number of key players in the business and academic sectors. Yunsoo Cho, Korean Consul General, was the keynote speaker. Other distinguished guests included Julian Castro, Mayor of San Antonio; Kevin Johns, Director of Economic Growth and Redevelopment Office of City of Austin; Linda Watson, President of the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Tuan Pham, President of PowerFin Partners; and Dr. Anitesh Barua, Director of MBA Information Management Program of McCombs School of Business of UT Austin.

Emceed by Dan Warth, Vice President of URS Corporation, the symposium centered its topics on three panel discussions of renewable energy, public transportation, and technology — the present, the future, and plans to make them sustainable, reliable, and affordable in a globalized economy.

The panel discussions were refreshingly punctuated by network sessions to allow meet and greet time for the panelists and other delegates of the symposium from cities around the lone star state.

As the afternoon sessions came to an end, delegates and guests hurried back to their hotel rooms to don themselves in fashion and style, traditional or chic, for the highly anticipated grand gala.

When evening fell, close to 400 guests in sleek tuxedos, colorful traditional costumes, and glittering night gowns blithely swarmed into the second-floor ball room at the Hyatt Regence Hotel for a sparkling and glistening multi-cultural soiree.

A preprandial silent auction was held to raise funds for the Asian American Resources Center (AARC) with auction items ranging from

a dinner for 8 with Austin City Manager Marc Ott and a football weekend to a \$500 two-night stay with a dinner at the downtown Hyatt Regency and a \$6000 vacation package to Cambodia. City Councilman Bill Spelman visited one of the auction displays as AARC President Schiller Liao presented the item. (top left photo)

In the ball room, bright, vivid tropical flowers and green foliage skirted the center piece of a five-foot tall bamboo umbrella on each dinning table accentuating the evening's celebration. (bottom photos)

The event also honored several individuals for their achievements and dedication to the Asian community. Jamie Amelia received the Humanitarian Award for her work in Cambodia; Mark Strama, Texas State Representative, received the Community Leadership Award for his involvement and support for Asians in Texas; Encotech received the Asian American Business of the Year Award, accepted by its president, Ali Kataw; Jennifer Kim received the Community Pillar Award for her vital role in securing significant funds for the initial planning, designing phases and ongoing construction cost of AARC. Austin City Mayor Lee Leffingwell was the presenter of the awards. (top right photo from left to right)

Photographs (pp. 1&2) provided by Sultan Ahmed









# Asian Contractors Corner



Mr. Sung Cho, a native Korean born and raised in Seoul, is the president of SC Construction he founded in Austin in 1995. He also concurrently serves as the president of the Korean American Chamber of Commerce in Austin, the vice president of The Korean American Chamber of Commerce, USA, and a board member of the Asian Contractor Association.

Below is a Q&A session with Mr. Cho.

1. What brought you here to Austin?

I came to Austin to study at the University of Texas in Austin in 1989.

2. Under what circumstances and motivations did you decide to start your own company?

I had always been interested in starting my own business. While enrolled in the graduate school of the Math Department studying statistics at UT, I came across a book about starting one's own business.

It said that the best time to start a business was as soon as one decided to do so. So, I started my own business after reading the book.

3. Could you list projects, private or public, you've done over the years?

- ◆ The Communication Building and a few other projects at the Austin International Bergstrom Airport
- ◆ Student apartments including the clubhouse at the Saint Edward University
- ◆ Women's dormitory building at The University of Texas at Austin
- ◆ The World Martial Arts Center, W By AZWELL at Memphis, TN
- ◆ Travis High School at Austin

- ◆ Samsung Austin Semiconductor
- ◆ Sam Technology Building (36,000 sq. ft)



4. What contributed to your success building your own company?

Passion & Curiosity

5. What are the challenges and triumphs you have experienced as a business owner and also as an Asian businessman in the USA?

I had a few very expensive lessons for not managing well my employees and building materials. I remember one incident that taught me the importance of personnel and cost management.

About 10 years ago, one major project left me completely out of materials for one building after finishing seven others. After firing the project manager, I took over the managing role and supervised the project directly. Even though I lost a huge sum of capital estimated in the 6 figures in order to finish that project, I felt good about not giving up.

6. Any advice for those in the Asian community in pursuit of business opportunities with the City of Austin?

Knock on doors and they will be opened to you. I bet somebody is waiting for you on the other side.

7. Your outlook on the US economy and the overall construction industry in Austin and TX.

It might be possible for the US economy to experience another double-digit unemployment rate next year. But, I believe and hope it will be on the road of recovery soon. Also, I think we are very lucky to be doing business in Texas, especially in Austin, as the economists say that the overall construction industry in Austin and Texas is pretty sound compared to other areas and will continue to see growth for at least another decade.

8. Anything else you want to add?

Let's empower the Asian community !!!