

## FHAA partners with Queens Memory Project, library to preserve local histories

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Sandy Liu, left, Gene Chu, right, and their two children, Aidan and Alexa, attended the photo digitization at the Queens Library in Forest Hills.

by Jennifer Khedaroo

While kicking off the Lunar New Year celebrations with treats and gifts, the Forest Hills Asian Association (FHAA) organized an event with Queens Library at Forest Hills and the Queens Memory Project to have residents digitize their assorted documents and preserve their family histories.

Queens Memory Project is a collaborative program between Queens Library and Queens College that aims to document the lives and history of those who live and work in the borough.

While they have traveled across the borough to places such as Ridgewood, Flushing and Hollis, the Forest Hills branch had the highest turnout, largely in part because of the Lunar New Year celebration. The FHAA provided the Lunar New Year decorations and food as well as influenced businesses First

American International Bank, MK Vision Center and Ridgewood Savings Bank to provide red envelopes, calendars and giveaways for guests.

Members of Queens Memory Project manned a digitization station, equipped with a scanner and camera, to help residents to digitize old family photos. In the past, the group has also been able to digitize business cards, company t-shirts and baby clothes, among other items.

After residents' items were digitized, the group was able to store the files onto a hard drive in order to be saved within the Queens Memory Project website and uploaded onto the Digital Public Library of America. Residents kept their original items and also received their own digital copies on a flash drive.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 changed the way families immigrated to the United States. Today, there is a large Asian population in the city, especially in places such as Forest Hills, where the Asian population is 25 percent. The FHAA invited Queens Library board member and immigration attorney Eve Cho Guillergan to speak to attendees about her experiences, and she noted that it was important to document the stories of immigrants from the rush of immigrants occurring after 1965.

"And as you know, as Asian Americans, we love to take pictures and we're the first ones out there with our selfie sticks," Guillergan added. "This is a wonderful project if you want to take part in New York City history."

"We have a significant Asian community right here in this library so we are delighted to kick off the Chinese New Year," said branch librarian Carol Goldman. "New Year is all about the past and honoring the loved ones who have come before us and to bring those esteemed ancestors to the attention of the present-day generations."

Forest Hills resident Sandy Liu attended the event with her husband Gene Chu and their two children, Alexa and Aidan. She heard about the event on the Forest Hills Asian Association's social media account and decided to preserve some of her family's memories.

"Growing up, I always felt like there was a lack of representation of Asian Americans, but now it's so nice to see that the Asian American community is growing, becoming more a part of the community and voicing their voices," Liu said.

Liu brought a number of vintage photographs of her family to be digitalized, from photos of her young grandparents to her Taiwanese cousin who recently became a grandmother and her parent's first day in the United States.

Her father, who worked at Alexander's in Rego Park, was also in the Taiwanese military. Liu brought his

military headshot to be scanned, as well as her mother's bridal photo.

Many photos in her collection have already started to deteriorate, and her kids haven't had the opportunity to view the various photos because of their delicate nature, so Liu hopes to surprise her entire family with the preserved digital images.

Sam Lee, a member following the FHAA, said the event not only brought families together through the images, but it also promoted the borough's history.

"It's a very warm feeling when you walk into this event and get to meet people and learn about what's going on in the neighborhood," Lee said.