

January 2025

NEWSLETTER

FLORIDA ASIAN AMERICAN
RESTAURANT ALLIANCE

TOGETHER WE PROMOTE, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE & GROW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Fang Shu, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

Thanks to the trust of the board of directors, this year I have been appointed as the CEO to lead the execution of FLAARA's strategy. My goal is to empower the Asian American community in South Florida, with a strong focus on the restaurant and food service industries. This is no small task, but together, we can make a real impact!

About FLAARA

The Florida Asian American Restaurant Alliance (FLAARA) is a registered non-profit organization dedicated to empowering Asian American restaurant and business owners across Florida. Our mission is to provide professional leadership, essential resources, and industry guidance to help businesses thrive in the competitive food service industry. Through advocacy, education, and collaboration, FLAARA strengthens the voice of Asian American entrepreneurs, driving policies that support sustainable growth, financial stability, and a positive public image.

FLAARA also champions Asian American businesses through its political committee, Florida Asian American Business PC, advocating for policies that address their unique challenges and unlock opportunities for success. Together, we create a unified platform for progress, leadership, and excellence.

A BLAST FROM THE PAST



IT'S TIME TO

Do Business with Miami-Dade County

Friday, August 30
11:00am-1:00pm

Marjorie & William
McDonald Center
17051 NE 10th Ave
North Miami, FL 33162



FLORIDA ASIAN AMERICAN RESTAURANT ALLIANCE

TOGETHER WE PROMOTE, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE & GROW

YOU'RE INVITED!

CREATING COMMUNITY

Join FLAARA's first official community event that will launch the organization's presence in South Florida and foster unity, strengthen bonds, and create a space for meaningful connections.

MONDAY
DECEMBER 18, 2023
6:00-9:00 PM

FUNKY BUDDHA
1201 NE 38TH ST, OAKLAND PARK,
FL 33334

CONTACT Lin Luo | Lin.Luo@luowaters.com



RECEIVE FREE ADMISSION
WITH DISCOUNT CODE:
MEMBER2023

LUNCH PROVIDED!

AAPI SMALL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

The National ACE small business roundtable series gives local Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) business owners an opportunity to share the biggest barriers to starting, retaining, and scaling their businesses with government officials and private stakeholders.

OCT 16 | 11:00-1:30PM

KOVENS CONFERENCE CENTER



REGISTER



Bridging Cultures: A Webinar on Asian Heritage and Business in Miami

January 29, 2025

By Shilat Jayo-Acuna,
Leadership Intern, FLAARA

In an effort to foster cultural understanding and promote economic collaboration, the Florida Asian American Restaurant Alliance (FLAARA) recently hosted a compelling webinar introducing Miami locals to the rich and diverse cultures of Asia. Led by Fang Shu, an executive representative of FLAARA, the discussion featured a panel of distinguished speakers who shared their experiences, cultural insights, and perspectives on the Lunar New Year and Asian-American representation in business and civic engagement.

The panelists included Tai Vas, Chairwoman for the Miami-Dade Asian American Advisory Board; Dr. Jinlin Zhao, a professor at Florida International University (FIU) and an expert in hospitality management; and Darren Mendoza, a software engineer turned restaurateur and the President of the South Florida Filipino American Chamber of Commerce. Each panelist brought a unique perspective to the conversation, highlighting their personal journeys and contributions to Miami's vibrant Asian-American community.

Celebrating Culture and Community Engagement

Dr. Fang Shu opened the discussion by emphasizing the webinar's core mission: to build respect and understanding for Asian cultures while fostering connections between the local community and Asian businesses. "Maybe one day, you can do business with the Asian communities," Shu remarked, underscoring the importance of cultural appreciation in establishing long-term professional relationships.

Tai Vas, a dedicated advocate for Asian heritage and civic engagement, discussed her extensive work in promoting cultural awareness through events such as the annual Asian Culture Festival, set to take place at Tropical Park. As Chairwoman of the Miami-Dade Asian American Advisory Board and a leader in multiple cultural initiatives, Vas has been instrumental in providing a platform for the Asian-American community to showcase its traditions and contributions. She also highlighted her involvement in charitable initiatives, including the Kamakanda Ready Foundation, which supports literacy and community development.

Dr. Jinlin Zhao provided a wealth of academic and industry knowledge, sharing his background as a professor both in China and the United States. Having been in academia for decades, Zhao detailed his experience working on three Olympic Games—Atlanta (1996), Athens (2004), and Beijing (2008)—as well as two Asian Games. His role in large-scale international events gave him a unique perspective on the intersection of culture, hospitality, and business, making his insights particularly valuable to attendees interested in global commerce.

LUNAR NEW YEAR
A BRIDGE BETWEEN CULTURES & COMMUNITIES

Fang Shu, Ph.D. CEO, FLAARA
Tai Vas Chairwoman, AAAB, Miami-Dade County
Jinlin Zhao, Ph.D. Professor, FIU
Darren Mendoza Owner, Lutong Pinoy

JANUARY 29, 2025 | 12:00 - 1:00 PM EST
AN ONLINE DISCUSSION

Join us for an engaging webinar exploring the rich traditions of the Lunar New Year and celebrating Asian culture. Learn how South Florida can connect with the Asian community through meaningful and educational insights that foster relationships and unlock business opportunities.

REGISTER NOW

FLORIDA ASIAN AMERICAN RESTAURANT ALLIANCE
TOGETHER WE PROMOTE, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE & GROW

▶ WATCH NOW

Darren Mendoza, a Filipino entrepreneur and board member of multiple cultural organizations, discussed his transition from IT professional to restaurateur. As the owner of Luton Pinoy and Canto restaurants, he has made it his mission to represent Filipino culture through food and hospitality. Mendoza also serves as a director of FLAARA, where he advocates for the success and visibility of Asian-American restaurant owners in Florida. His work with the Philippine Cultural Foundation further exemplifies his dedication to preserving and sharing his heritage.

Building Business and Cultural Connections

The webinar underscored a key theme: the importance of cultural exchange in strengthening business relationships. Shu encouraged Miami locals to use this opportunity to not only learn about Asian traditions, highlighting the Lunar New Year, but also to recognize the economic and social contributions of the Asian-American community.

“Culture is a bridge,” Shu noted. “If you take the time to learn and respect traditions, it opens doors to meaningful partnerships—both in business and in everyday life.”

Throughout the discussion, panelists highlighted the role of small businesses in promoting cultural awareness. Vas spoke about the impact of cultural festivals in driving tourism and economic growth, while Mendoza emphasized how restaurants serve as an entry point for people to experience different cultures firsthand. Dr. Zhao tied these insights together by reflecting on how hospitality and global events can shape public perception of cultural identity.



Looking Ahead

As Miami continues to grow as a hub for international business and cultural diversity, events like this webinar serve as essential platforms for education and dialogue. The panelists’ shared experiences illustrated the interconnectedness of culture, community, and commerce, encouraging attendees to engage with and support local Asian-American initiatives. The raffle was an exciting opportunity to not only engage with the audience, but to provide promotions for partnering Asian restaurants & businesses.

With ongoing efforts from organizations like FLAARA, Miami’s Asian-American community is poised to expand its influence, not only in cultural representation but also in business development and civic engagement. Whether through festivals, restaurants, or academic research, the message was clear: understanding and respecting Asian heritage is not just about celebration—it’s about building lasting connections that benefit everyone.

Member Spotlight



Harley Cennter
孫浩宇

Harley Centner (孫浩宇) is a multilingual commercial real estate (CRE) advisor specializing in helping global clients grow their restaurant and retail businesses. With expertise in site selection, lease negotiation, and investment property transactions, Harley delivers personalized strategies to support expansion and maximize returns.

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Why Join FLAARA

FLAARA is more than a non-profit; we are the driving force behind the success of Asian American restaurant and business owners in Florida. From advocating for favorable policies and fostering government relations to providing workshops and sustainability initiatives, we empower entrepreneurs to navigate challenges and seize opportunities.

With a focus on leadership, education, and collaboration, FLAARA is shaping a brighter future for the food service industry while amplifying the voices of Asian American business owners. Join us in building a stronger, more inclusive business community in Florida.



MEMBERSHIP - \$200 / YEAR.

Networking Opportunities

Connect with restaurant owners, industry leaders, government officials and business professionals through exclusive events. Free to members.

Educational Workshops

Participate in seminars, industry roundtables, and specialized workshops to enhance your knowledge and skills. Free to members.

Resource Sharing and Support

Tap into a community that values collaboration, offering shared resources and guidance. Free to members.

Restaurant Promotion

Highlight your business on the FLAARA website and social media platforms, amplifying your reach within the community.

Grant Support

Resources will be provided to assist you in applying for grants tailored to your business needs. Fees may apply, depending on the level of service.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOUR CAN HELP



Let's Collaborate



Attend our Events



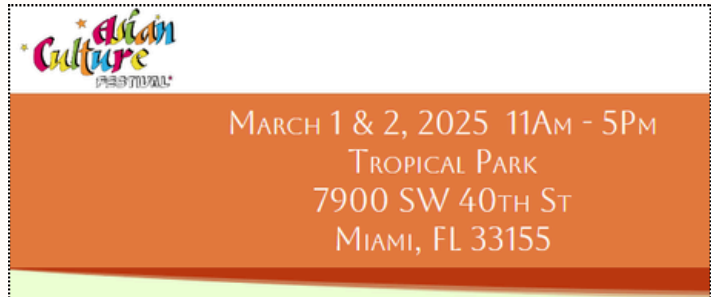
Time, Talent, & Treasure

CONNECT WITH US!



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Fang Shu, Ph.D.

Editor-in-Chief



Dr. Fang Shu, a Notable Global Learning Faculty at FIU, teaches Accounting & Finance at the Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management and Philanthropy at the Honors College. With 10+ years in global education, Dr. Shu has developed various study abroad and training programs. Previously, he managed FIU's China Programs, overseeing admissions, career development, and industry relations.

An active leader, Dr. Shu currently serves as the Marketing Director of SECSA-CHRIE, Faculty Advisor of Eta Sigma Delta (ESD) FIU Chapter, and Executive Vice President of the Florida Asian American Restaurant Alliance (FLAARA). He also sits on the Honors College Dean's Advisory Board (DAB), leads the Honors Alumni Community(ACB), and is part of the 2024 Leadership Miami® Program focused on community impact and leadership.

Shilat Jayo-Acuna is a first-year English major and aspiring attorney with a diverse skill set that includes public speaking, community engagement, professional writing, management, and presentations. As a student in the FIU Honors College, Shilat balances a demanding academic schedule while actively contributing to several campus organizations. She serves as a senator in the FIU Student Government Association, participates in the Pre-Law Advocates for Community Engagement and Service, and works with the Biscayne Bay Legislative Council. A recipient of the prestigious Silver Knight Award in English & Literature and an FIU Presidential Scholar, Shilat is committed to further developing her skills through collaboration with FLAARA.

Shilat Jayo-Acuna

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