



Happy Lunar New Year of Tiger



East Meets *West*
Of Arkansas

2022

Brought to you by the Arkansas Association of Asian Businesses (AAAB)



EVENT SPONSORS

Organizations Founded by Immigrants from Asia and Beyond



DIKAAN
PROPERTIES

Organizations Founded by Non-Immigrant Arkansans



NATURAL
STATE
LAW PLLC



a Tyson Foods Business Resource Group

Global Business Leaders

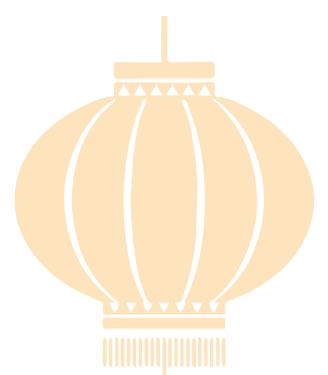


Michael Mourot



ArkAsianBiz.com

ABOUT THE AAAB



The Arkansas Association of Asian Businesses (AAAB) was founded in July 2017 as a 501(c)(6) organization. It is the only professional organization in the Natural State that focuses on assisting the cross-cultural business community between Arkansas and Asia. Its mission includes: To support the professional growth of those Arkansans of Asian descent and to promote Asian-owned businesses in Arkansas; To provide assistance to Arkansas companies looking to explore Asian markets; To provide resources for companies and professionals from Asian countries looking to explore business opportunities with Arkansas; Overall, to be an advocate for entrepreneurship that is related to Arkansas and Asia.

The AAAB Team

Board of Directors

Part-time Staff Member

Intern



Katie Thompson
Dir. of Science Venture
Studio, Startup Junkie



Mark Young
President and CEO,
Jonesboro Regional
Chamber of Commerce



Mimi San Pedro
Chief Strategy Officer,
The Venture Center



Rahul "Andy" Kumar
Owner, Diamond
Liquor Store
Serial Entrepreneur



William "Goose"
Changose, J.D.
Partner and Attorney,
Natural State Law Firm



Yang Luo-Branch, PhD
Sr. Analyst, Tyson Foods
Artist, Yillustrations.com



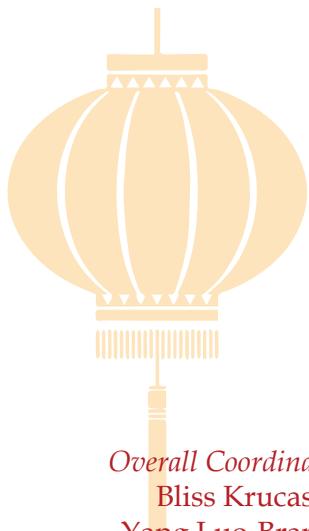
Young Chun
Commercial Real Estate
Agent, Michele Phillips &
Company Realtors



Richard Liu
Incoming Student at The Wharton School of UPenn



Juliette Robinson
Student at Little Rock Central High School



EVENT TEAM

Event Volunteers & Their Organizations

Overall Coordination
Bliss Krucas
Yang Luo-Branch
Mimi San Pedro

Check-in
Penny Nagel
Jennifer Garner

Photographer
Josh Nguyen

Interior Decoration
Vivian Stuber
Audrey Stuber

Live Performances
Indranil "Neil"
Chakraborty

Diya Chakraborty
Miguel Pereira
Amy He
Levana Xu
Linda Hsu
Tina McCord

Monitoring on Zoom
Davis McEntire
Chung Tan

Speakers
Governor Hutchinson
Mervin Jebaraj
Bliss Krucas
David Krucas
Jessica Suen
Brad Suen
Jeremy Dean



UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

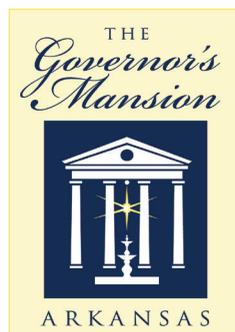


Event Partners

Audio & Video



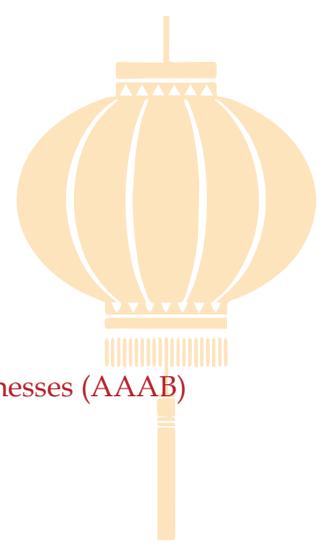
Event Venue



Asian-Themed Decor



EVENT PROGRAM



MC: Yang Luo-Branch, Founder & President of the Arkansas Association of Asian businesses (AAAB)

-- The 1st Half: AR Governor's Mansion & Zoom --

11-11:10

Opening

11:10-11:18

Speaker 1: Mervin Jebaraj, Director of Center for Business and Economic Research at University of Arkansas

11:18-11:38

Live Interview: "East Meets West Couples" with Mr. & Mrs. Krucas and Mr. & Mrs. Suen

11:38-11:45

Acknowledgment of Distinguished Guests, Cultural Ambassadors and Sponsors

11:45-11:55

Speaker 2: Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson

11:58

Close Zoom

(Transition to Lunch & Networking)

-- The 2nd Half: AR Governor's Mansion Only --

12:00

Open Asian Fusion Buffet (Menu on Next Page)

12:00-12: 55

Lunch and Networking

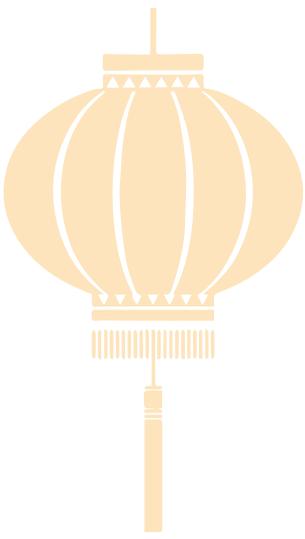
12:35-12:55

Live performances:

Indo-Western Singing, by Dr. Indranil Chakraborty and daughter Diya
Chinese String Quartet, by UCA professor Linda Hsu and students

12:58

Closing Remarks



LUNCHEON MENU

Asian Fusion Buffet, Prepared by Arkansas Governor's Mansion Chef Team

Vietnamese Spring Rolls

Salmon Sushi Roll

Tempura Vegetables

Noodle Dish

Seared Baby Bok Choy

Chinese Steamed Fish with Scallions & Ginger

Pan Fried Pork Dumpling with Dipping Sauce

Lemongrass Pork

Thai Beef Salad

Palak Paneer

Garlic Naan

Chinese Custard Tart

Fresh Fruit

Vegetarian Friendly; Utensils Options: Chopsticks, Fork & Knife

ABOUT “EAST MEETS WEST”



To celebrate the Lunar New Year with the Arkansas-Asian business community, the AAAB created the “East Meets West” of Arkansas luncheon event in 2018 and have been hosting it in the Capital city of Arkansas each year. 2021’s event was canceled due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. In 2022, the event is hosted in-person and online for the first time.





2021 “AAAB Member Spotlight”

Dr. Yue Zhao

AAAB Membership Type: Individual Member

Dr. Yue Zhao is an Assistant Professor of Management, teaching Strategic Management and International Business Management at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). As part of her job, she researches cross-border foreign-direct investing (FDI) while also teaching international business management to her students.

Dr. Zhao’s research grows increasingly more relevant every day. “As the global economy is increasingly structured around global value chains that link firms, workers and consumers around the world, knowing how to do business with people or firms with distinct cultural backgrounds becomes a vitally important skill and aptitude for today’s managers”, she says.

Apart from her research, Dr. Zhao is eager to explore new ways to engage the Asian American business community. She was born and raised in China and Mandarin Chinese is her mother tongue.



Uday Akkaraju

AAAB Membership Type: Individual Member

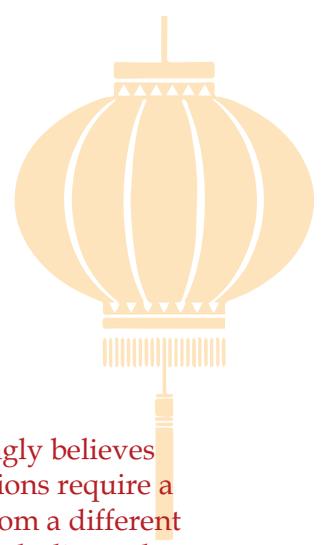
Uday Akkaraju is an entrepreneur and the CEO of BOND.AI, a financial tech company with a focus in AI. Born and raised in India, Uday has a strong connection to the Asia-Pacific region and has a business presence in India and Singapore.

As CEO of BOND.AI, Uday works to provide an AI platform for financial institutions to help their consumers and small businesses stay financially healthy, by creating powerful and human-centered AI to remove financial uncertainty for consumers. “Humanity is being shaped by how AI and society interact with each other. Our focus is to make the eco-system empathetic. As Charles Darwin said, it’s survival of the fittest, but for our future, I think we may need to rephrase it to ‘survival of the empathetic,’” he explains.

Outside of his work as CEO, Uday works with organizations & schools both in the US & in Asia to facilitate the exchange of talent/knowledge to benefit underrepresented communities. He also serves as an advisor to a few technology startup companies in the Arkansan-Asian business community.

2021 “AAAB Member Spotlight”

(Continued)



Michael Mourot

AAAB Membership Type: Individual Member

Michael Mourot is an consultant for Sinclair Group, a management consulting company that advances decision-driven organizations. Michael has previously managed numerous projects in Japan, Singapore and China, and has personally traveled to over 55(!) cities in China since 2010.



As a consultant for Sinclair Group, Michael guides and works with many companies with headquarters in Asia, Europe, and the USA. His work focuses on fostering strong relations and smooth communication between the headquarters and the local plants and sites in

Asia. Michael strongly believes that “All true solutions require a view of the issue from a different ‘sides of a tower’ including culture, language and geography.” His work embodies this philosophy through his dedicated commitment to improving the Arkansas-Asia business connection.

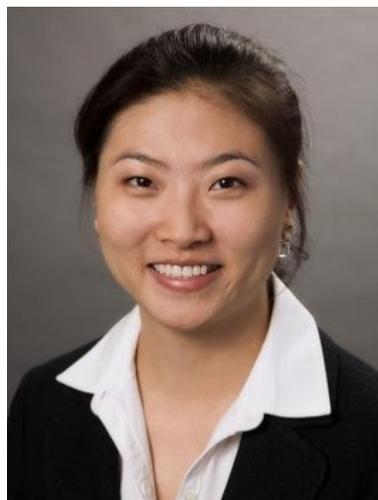
Outside of his work, Michael has participated in many local charity events including Chinese festivals. He volunteered in an English class at a local University in Beijing and provided lessons in language and

customs. “Appreciate different points of view. Welcome different views from people that do not think or look like you, because change is the only way you will grow”, Michael says.

Cecile Chen

AAAB Membership Type: Individual Member

Cecile Chen is a market researcher for Licensing Matters Global, a company specialized in corporate brand licensing & strategic extension. Cecile was born and raised in Xinjiang Province in Northwest China. Before coming to the U.S., she studied and worked in Beijing for about 5 years, and has always worked directly with companies in China and other Asian countries, from various industries.

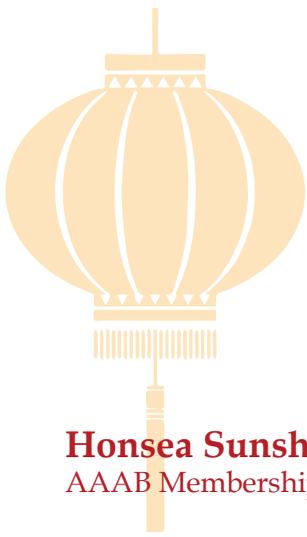


Cecile’s role is mainly focused on market research, licensee prospecting, and project management. Due to the nature of the licensing business, she gets to work with dozens of manufacturers and brand owners with various backgrounds and in a wide range of industries while bridging the brand owners and manufacturers to create and execute win-win

programs. While a lot of the licensees need to market their products in the U.S., Asian-American relations are critical to her licensees.

Cecile has worked on multiple projects with local businesses, Asian businesses, and organizations through connections with the World Trade Center Arkansas in past years, and also provided consulting services to manufacturers seeking business opportunities with American retailers. In a book she’s been very “addicted” to recently, *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, one line sticks out

to her: in the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity. “With COVID, with regional military stress, with the tension between China and the U.S., etc, we should always find ways to stay positive, to create opportunities, and to make efforts towards our long-term goals,” she says.



2021 “AAAB Member Spotlight” (Continued)

Honsea Sunshine Inc.

AAAB Membership Type: Small Enterprise

Honsea Sunshine Inc. is a manufacturer and supplier of herbal extracts for food, dietary supplement, and cosmetic industries. Honsea was founded in 1996 and is located in Little Rock, AR with a manufacturing facility based in China.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Honsea Sunshine is focused on heightening environmental awareness and healthy lifestyles. “COVID stimulated the trend of shift from synthetic products towards more natural and organic products as growing number of consumers seek products that are safe and effective.” The rapidly increasing demand on clean label products and natural products to enhance immunity, improve sleeping and reduce stress provide Honsea Sunshine and their customers strong opportunities for



business.

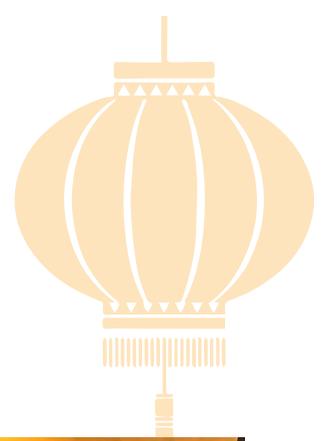
In 2021, Honsea will expand their USDA organic

certified product lines to help their customers provide natural, healthy, organic, environment-friendly products to the consumers. You can connect with Honsea on their website, or Little Rock-based Sales Manager and Partner, Ms. Monica Shao.



2021 “AAAB Member Spotlight”

(Continued)



Mary Zunick

AAAB Membership Type: Individual Member

Hot Springs has had a Sister City relationship with Hanamaki, Japan since 1993, as the Sister City Program Director for Hot Springs, Mary Zunick coordinates all facets of the sister city exchange program which includes educational, cultural, tourism, and business exchange, as well as community outreach to share information about Japanese culture. Mary is also the Cultural Affairs Manager for Visit Hot Springs.

“The world we live in shrinks each day thanks to technology and in daily life more and more people interact with people in other countries in business as well as personally. This, paired with immigration and our increasingly diverse population, is why it is vital for us to understand and encourage appreciation



of other cultures,” Mary says. Mary was appointed Honorary Consul of Japan for Arkansas by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018.



Rahul “Andy” Kumar

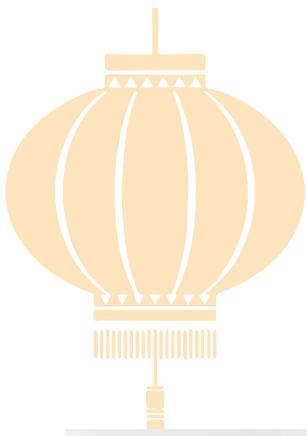
AAAB
Membership
Type: Small
Enterprise

Andy Kumar is the former president of the Arkansas Business Alliance, and our newest AAAB

board member! Andy owns a variety of businesses in Arkansas, including 17 gas stations and multiple liquor stores such as Diamond Liquor in North Little Rock. Achieving this success requires “a lot of sacrifices, from less family time to new unknown challenges such as employment problems”, but Andy stays on top of his endeavors by “being ready for everything and staying focused”.

An Indian-American entrepreneur, Andy moved from Florida to Arkansas with his wife and three children in 2008 and regards it as one of the best decisions in his life. Upon arrival, Andy set out to create an organization that allowed him to give back to his new community. Andy was a founding member of Arkansas Business Alliance, a buying group that focuses on the Ismaili community in Arkansas, which he helped grow from 50 to over 300 stores, generating massive savings for member businesses. By 2021, he had served as the president of the alliance for seven years, guiding their association to fulfill their mission to “strive for the best for our members in our community.”

In general, Andy emphasized that he and his fellow Ismaili community members strive to search for knowledge for the betterment of society, building bridges of peace and understanding, and sharing material resources and talent to improve the quality of life of the community. “When we’re together, we’re better off, rather than tackling challenges on our own,” Andy says.



2021 “AAAB Member Spotlight” (Continued)



open houses during the next few months while encouraging safe distancing and wearing masks.

The Venue NWA is a wonderful example of a cross-cultural business in Arkansas. During its construction, the Venue bought all of their signs, furniture, light fixtures, and many other items directly from manufacturers in China contacted through the Ali Baba platform. “I encourage all Asian immigrants to get involved and start new businesses regardless of their academic and financial situation. In the USA, we have

opportunities for all,” says the owner, an immigrant from Bangladesh, who wanted to give back to the Arkansan community.

When asked about the purpose of the business, the owner stated that “After such a long time so enmeshed in this community, I wanted to create a totally new business focused entirely on creating joy for the people around me. Wedding venues are places where lifelong dreams are fulfilled and happy memories are made, and I was (and am!) really excited to stay active in my community by helping bring those experiences to life for the people of Northwest Arkansas.”

Member: The Venue NWA

AAAB Membership Type: Small Enterprise

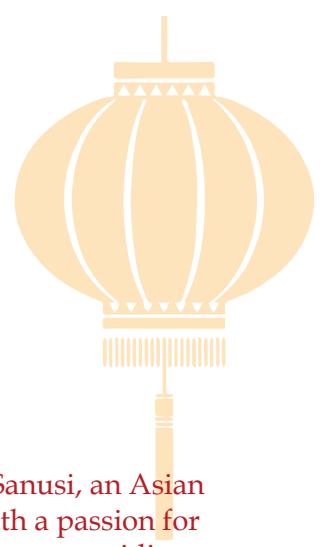
The Venue LLC operates an upscale event center in Bentonville, AR. Located on 404 SW Regional Airport Blvd, it is at the heart of the rapidly growing part of Northwest Arkansas. Its excellent location, easy access to highways, plenty of parking space and two different sized ballrooms to choose from makes it a very attractive choice for weddings, meetings and all kind of gatherings.

The Venue NWA opened its doors in the middle of the pandemic, June 2020. Despite that, they have had a significant number of events over the past year. To continue the momentum, they are planning several



2021 “AAAB Member Spotlight”

(Continued)



Chicot Hibachi Express

AAAB Membership Type: Small Enterprise

“Chicot Hibachi Express” is a local Asian restaurant brand with multiple locations, one in Fayetteville, two in Little Rock, and one in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

With a goal of connecting Asian food to America, Chicot strives to provide affordable hibachi while keeping the same high quality that customers love.



The business is owned by Hendry Sanusi, an Asian business owner from Indonesia. With a passion for providing food and beverage to the Arkansan community, Hendry believes that “food is an excellent bridge to learn about Asian culture”, and he demonstrates this belief with his



successful restaurant business. Outside of his work, Hendry contributes to the community through church activities and volunteering.

With a goal of connecting Asian food to America, Chicot strives to provide affordable hibachi while keeping the same high quality that customers love.



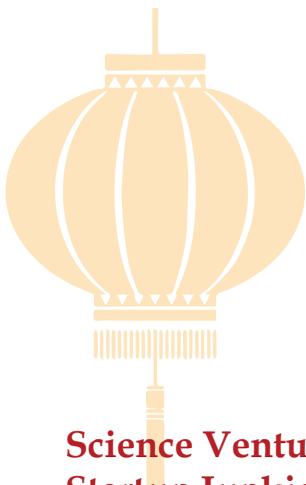
Chung Tan

AAAB Membership Type: Individual Member

Chung Tan is the Deputy Director of Economic Vitality at City of Fayetteville, Arkansas. As an economic developer for the City of Fayetteville, her responsibilities include business attraction from national and international, local business retention and expansion, entrepreneur development and infrastructure development.

The city of Fayetteville has extensive business interactions with Asia. “Many businesses in Fayetteville either import or export their raw materials or end products from Asia,” Tan says, and she dedicates herself to promoting and supporting cultural understanding between different races.

As 2021 comes to an end, Tan is focused on helping the city of Fayetteville recover from the pandemic and be more resilient against disasters in the future.



2021 “AAAB Member Spotlight” (Continued)

Science Venture Studio (SVS) at Startup Junkie

AAAB Member type: Small enterprise

The Science Venture Studio works with early-stage science and technology companies in Arkansas to prepare and apply for non-dilutive federal funding. The SVS team of experts is comprised of Katie Thompson, director and also AAAB board member, a grant specialist, a small business advisor, commercialization fellows, and technology mentors who support companies at their riskiest stage of technology development so that they can successfully commercialize their technology into the market.

The Science Venture Studio has worked with many Asian clients in recent years. Some of those clients include SIEV Technologies, a developer of patented catalytic membrane technology to convert biomass waster into valuable bio-products; AMBOTS, which is developing its swarm 3D printing for autonomous manufacturing; and Fr8Relay, which is developing a more profitable, equitable, and sustainable trucking logistics platform. The Science Venture Studio recognizes the importance and growth that occurs as companies as they collaborate with others across the globe.

When interviewed about the SVS, director Katie Thompson emphasized the mission of the organization as having “always been about supporting companies that are in their most vulnerable and riskiest stage of the company. We know that it takes the right partnerships, connections, resources, and overall efforts to successfully develop technology and grow a company. We want to be that support for each company. No matter how big or small the issue - or better yet - the opportunity may be, we want companies to know that we are here for them.”

The SVS is incredibly grateful for the support from the Walton Family Foundation. Launched as a 2 year pilot in 2020, the SVS has been able to help companies bring in more than \$3.1M in federal funding to Arkansas.



Join the AAAB Membership



2021 “Arkansas-Asia Briefing”



1st Quarter Topics on March 25, 2021

Startup Junkie Executive Director
Taylor Hasley
on
“Arkansas Korea Alliance”

Bentonville City Council Woman
Gayatri Agnew
on
“The 1st Asian-American Woman
on a city council in AR”

Arkansas Economic Development
Commission Director of Digital
Marketing
Clark Cogbill
on
“Pitching Arkansas to Asia”

2nd Quarter Topics on June 17, 2021

Aim High Corporation General Manager
Al Baker
on
“Perspective on the Disrupted US-China Supply
Chain”

President, One Stop Solution Accounting & My Flag
Insurance
Ameen Pabani
on
“Helping Asian-owned Small Businesses In Arkansas
During the Pandemic”

3rd Quarter Topics on September 16, 2021

Tyson Foods VP International
Brock White
on
“Tyson Foods’ Business Strategy in
Asia and Other Parts of the Globe”

CCPIT US Office General Rep
Zhenge Zhao
on
“Explore US-China Business
Prospect with China Council for
the Promotion of International
Trade (CCPIT)”

Owner of Josh Nguyen
Photography
Josh Nguyen
on
“Josh Nguyen’s Wedding Shoot”

4th Quarter Topics on December 9, 2021

President of the AAAB
Yang Luo-Branch
on
“Review: The Arkansas-Asian
Business Community in 2021”

Honorary Consul of Japan for
Arkansas, Cultural Affairs
Manager at Visit Hot Springs
Mary Zunick
on
“Arkansas’ Cultural and Economic
Exchange with Japan”

Owner of Diamond Liquor Store
Rahul “Andy” Kumar
on
“Leading the Indian Business
Community in Arkansas and
Beyond”

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