



## ASIA MALL OPENING

November 9, 2022

The Asia Mall in Eden Prairie had a soft opening on Wednesday, Nov. 9, and many MCGFS members helped with the event and sampled the food. In Paul Chen's photo, you see Linda Lim Hugh on the elegant stairwell leading from the grocery area up to the balcony ring of restaurants.

*The Asia Mall is at: 12160 Technology Dr, Eden Prairie, MN 55344*

*You can visit their website for information on upcoming events, leasing information, and a list of vendors: [ASIAMALLMN.COM](http://ASIAMALLMN.COM)*

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## LIU MING YUAN END OF YEAR APPEAL!

Please consider a donation of any amount to help make the Garden happen. We are now formally starting the fundraising campaign for the PHASE II of the garden, "Building Bridges". The Campaign will continue until the phase is complete. If you want to be a "Bridge Builder" on the donor wall your accumulated donations will need to meet the a threshold of \$2000.

# MY STORY

By Gaoly Yang

*Gaoly Yang joined our Board in 2022. She grew up during the war in Laos. Despite frequent displacements, she was enriched by diverse cultures, language and religions encountered along the way. She led and co-founded a women's organization after 2 years of being resettled in Minnesota to address issues facing Hmong refugee families such as domestic violence, truancies, mental health and other health concerns; starting her lifelong career in human services. She learned the importance of community engagement and support for a successful transformation and acceptance of new elements in the environment, confirming that good outcomes can be born out of conflict.*

My name is Gaoly (my name meaning the youngest girl) and my clan (tribe) is Vang. I'm married to Phong Yang and have since take on his clan name. My legal full name is Gaoly Yang; however, I'm known in my community as Niam Yaj Phooj (Mrs. Phong Yang). As a byproduct of war and a long history of racial discrimination, I've learned to not take peace and freedom for granted. I've also learned to cherish the present and do my part to ensure that the sacrifice and effort made by my forebearers did not go in vain. I live each day with a reminder that we are here temporarily to take care of this place we call our home, and we have an obligation to preserve and improve it for the next generation as intended by God, our Creator.

As a new board member of MCFGs, my goal and hope is to be a part of something that will promote harmony and community. I believe that the friendship garden is one of the many ways

we can achieve that goal. As human beings become more vicious towards each other and more destructive towards mother earth, we, the temporary dwellers of this earth need to do our part to fulfill our obligation to her.

I would like to share my family story from my mother's side as a way to show my respect and appreciation of my elders' life experience and our connection to the indigenous Hmong people in our motherland, now known as China.

I wish to credit my cousin Dr.Touxa Lyfoung who translated his father, Touby Lyfoung's, journal into a book. whose accounts and timelines I've used. I'm also recounting history as told by my mother and recorded in the hundreds of cassette tapes she left me after passing. Since she was not literate, I cannot confirm any dates in her story.

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#### FOUNG LY FAMILY PICTURE

Back row: Nao Chao Ly, Tong Xeng Yang, Pa Ge Lyfoung, Nao Chao first wife (Thao clan), Va Yang (Foung Ly first wife), Choua Kue (Foung Ly 3rd wife) holding Lysao Lyfoung, and Zoua Lyfoung.

Front row: Touby Lyfoung, TouGeu Lyfoung, TouLia Lyfoung, Foung Ly, Maonao Lyfoung, Maosong Lyfoung.

*(Continued from Page 2)*

### **PART I: From Yunnan, a Great Grandfather Adopted and Raised by Chinese Parents**

My mother is Maosong Lyfoung (Ly Xia Foung). She was given 1920 as her birth year by one of her brothers who prepared her official documents and passport for her first trip to Japan in 1957. Maosong was the younger sister of Touby Lyfoung and daughter Mai Lo Bliayao, the second wife of Ly Xia Foung. Mai Lo had 3 children when she died of suicide. The 3rd and youngest child died six months later from illness.

My grandfather, Xia Foung Ly or Ly Foung, was the son of Ly Dra Pao (Lis Nraj Pos) who immigrated

from China to Laos in the 1800s. Ly Dra Pao was born in Paj Tawm Lag village of the Ly clan, located in Yunnan province and became an orphan when he was about five years old so he was raised by his uncles. Due to poverty caused by the high taxes and increased land confiscation by the Chinese authorities, the uncles gave him up to a Chinese couple who had no children of their own. He was adopted and well cared for and well educated by his Chinese parents.

When he turned 20, his parents urged him to start a family. Desiring to keep his Hmong connection, he traveled back to his hometown in Paj Tawm Lag to visit his relatives and look for a Hmong wife.

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# MY STORY

By Gaoly Yang

*(Continued from Page 3)*

Upon arrival, he observed that the Hmong people had become even more poor. Most rice fields belong to the Chinese people and Hmong people barely had enough land to raise crops to feed their own families.

One of his uncles, Ly Tong Kia, along with many other Hmong, had moved further south following rumors of a place with plenty of space to raise crops. His uncle urged him to go south to search for Ly Tong Kia and start a new life there. Ly Dra Pao sent his adopted parents a farewell letter and traveled south with a group of Chinese merchants. He walked 12 days to reach the Red River then passed through North Vietnam into northern Laos.

After many harvest seasons laboring along the roads in search for his uncle, he was adopted by a Ly clan near Ha Khua Lai and Nong Kheo (Green River) in near northern Laos. After having some conflicts with the Ly clan there over cultural practices, he moved to Nam Phis.

He eventually found his cousins many years later after the uncle had already passed away and convinced them to join him in Nam Phis. Ly Dra Pao had two wives, one from the Yang clan and one from the Thao clan.

After he passed away, his cousins moved back to northern Laos, closer to the border of Vietnam while his widows chose to remain in Nam Phis. He had 14 children. *(To be continued...)*



GAOLY FAMILY PICTURE

Back: Chong Neng Vang (Charles Vannier), Maoying Vang Lyfoung  
 Middle: Gaoyou Vang Ly  
 Front: Gaosong Vang, Gaoly Vang Yang, Maosong Lyfoung Vang,  
 Gaoyoua Vang Lyfoung, Gaosay Vang Vu  
 Fong Ly, Maonao Lyfoung, Maosong Lyfoung.

# MOON FESTIVAL BROUGHT CHINESE GARDEN IN PHALEN PARK TO LIFE

By Romi Slowiak



People enjoyed the stage on Picnic Island so much there is a budding movement to have a permanent one built!

If Mid-Autumn Festival is the penultimate family event in China, we here in Minnesota showed the world we also know how to build community *guangxi* under the full moon!

On Sept. 10, more than 2,000 people delighted in 42 different performances on Picnic Island at St. Paul's Lake Phalen Park, over 20 organizations and individuals participated at our cultural booth portion, and moon cakes were featured and sampled.

The day began with a 5K run, a four-language poetry award ceremony and reading with \$100 prizes and a tour of MIA with Asian Art Curator Liu Yang for winners. There also was a display/demonstration of Chinese brush painting by Shen Yudong and his students. Fun activities ended with a world dance premiere at the Xiang Jiang Pavilion as the moon rose.



Annie Yang hosts the Mooncake booth.



Romi Slowiak, Board Member, greeted visitors to the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society booth, one of over 20.



The Hmong fashion show took place on the walking path, with models appearing one by one from behind a colorful standing screen.

In between those events, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong and Dakota artists drummed, sang, performed in musical and dance ensembles, soloed Chinese Opera arias, and showcased Chinese fashion.



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## VOLUNTEER FOR MCFGs PROJECTS OR EVENTS

If you would like more information on how to volunteer for future projects or events, please visit our website at: [mnchinagarden.org](http://mnchinagarden.org) or contact William Zajicek at: [mcfgs@mnchinagarden.org](mailto:mcfgs@mnchinagarden.org)

# MOON FESTIVAL BROUGHT CHINESE GARDEN IN PHALEN PARK TO LIFE

By Romi Slowiak

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At 2 p.m., Bill Zajicek, president of the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society and Christina Deng Morrison, president of ASANE (Association of Sino-American Neocultural Exchange) welcomed everyone. The mayor's proclamation of the day as Changsha Sister-City Day was read, followed by letters of praise from the Chinese Consulate, Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Rep. Betty McCollum.

Zajicek introduced Sen. Fong Hawj who spoke of the sacred origins of the park and its native people, and how all those that followed should also be honored and respected. Andy Rodriguez, director of Parks and Rec, followed and noted that the beautiful layout of the park attracted the most diverse visitors in the city. Finally, Zajicek recognized the crucial support Hawj and Rodriguez offered and the special partnership the MCFGs has with Parks & Rec that makes this China Friendship Garden possible.



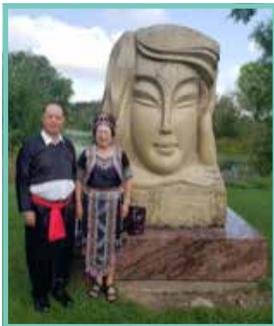
Hmong Qeej Performance Group



Children were delighted with the inflatable playground



Event emcee Chen Zhou, World Premiere Dance Project Manager Linda Mealey-Lohmann, event co-sponsor and organizer Christina Deng-Morrison of ASANE, and Yan Huss.



Hmong Advisory Committee Chair Ying Chu-Yang-heu and his wife Yang by Master Lei Yixin's sculpture "Meditation"



Chinese qipao models.



Bill Zajicek, president of the Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society and Christina Deng Morrison, president of ASANE (Association of Sino-American Neocultural Exchange)



MCFGs Hmong Advisory Committee member Dona Yang & Chinese opera star.

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# MCFGS NEWS

By Bill Zajicek

## PHASE II OF "LIU MING YUAN"

Design and Community Engagement for Phase II of Liu Ming Yuan is drawing to a close. A good deal will happen in the next 2 months. The Parks & Recreation Design Advisory Committee will complete their work on the design of features for Phase II and they will be presented to the larger Community as well as the Parks Planning Board. Construction Drawings will be developed, estimates obtained, and Bid Packages will be let for construction of the Hmong Plaza in the Spring of 2023. Construction drawings and estimates for the other Phase II features, which include a Chinese Moon Bridge, extension of the Xiang Jiang Pavilion Garden, lake side Moon Gate Wall, Donor Wall, & Chinese Chess Table, will be obtained in the Spring of 2023. State funding for the Hmong Plaza expires in June of 2023 making that feature the priority for construction at this time.

## REVIEW OF THE ROLES AND AUTHORITY OF MCFGS ADVISORY COMMITTEES:

An Ad Hoc Committee of the MCFGS was convened at on 7/25/22 to review the roles and authority of the Garden Society's Advisory Committees. A later Board motion was made and carried stating "that MCFGS establish an Ad Hoc committee composed of MCFGS Directors and Advisors to look at our Advisory Committees' missions, responsibilities, and operations, and to prepare a roadmap for moving forward in the future". The Ad Hoc Committee has met several times to review value and purpose of our two Advisory Committees: The Chinese Advisory Committee and the Hmong Advisory Committee. These committees have served the MCFGS well in a variety of ways and members of the committees have offered hundreds of volunteer hours to the garden project over past 7 years, but there have been situations where both the board and the committees have been disappointed with certain outcomes. A healthy review was in order and is ongoing with a goal of refining roles, responsibilities, & authority yet this year.

## DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER

The deadline for the Winter 2023 Newsletter submissions is February 28, 2023. Please email any articles, stories, or event information to Tiffany Tieche at: [tifmcgfs@gmail.com](mailto:tifmcgfs@gmail.com).

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# MCFGS NEWS

By Bill Zajicek

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## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Activities in 2021 were heavily affected by COVID and resulted in difficulties in fundraising to pay off a City of St. Paul Promissory Note for completion of Phase I of "Liu Ming Yuan". The promissory note was necessitated by greater than anticipated costs involving the finishing of the Xiang Jiang Pavilion in 2018. To facilitate the completion of the garden gate, other features, and the planting of the Xiang Jiang Ting garden, MCFGS took on a \$ 250,000 promissory note in 2019. Much of that construction was completed in 2019 and the garden was dedicated. In 2020 the garden society stopped construction of other features and the planting due to the growing difficulty to obtain funding support as a result of the pandemic. The Society returned \$ 75,000 of the unused funds to the City and proceeded to develop a fund raising appeal to our supports to pay off the rest of the promissory note. This was a tough decision, but in hind sight the correct decision. The New Year Matching Gift Challenge fundraising appeal more than met its goal in 2021 and allowed the closing of the debt with the City. Closing the debt allowed Parks and Recreation to begin the design process for Phase II of the garden. A first planting of the Xiang Jiang Pavilion occurred with volunteer efforts. Thanks to a grant from the MN Humanity's Center, Nine Art Stones were added to the garden (really the first step in Phase II) in the fall of 2021, a day which culminated in a Site Dedication of the Hmong Plaza Site and an Asian Fashion Show. All in all a very successful year.

Final results of the New Year Matching Gift Challenge appeal Nov 2020 to Dec 2021: Goal to raise \$ 160,000, Actually raised \$ 197,000. A total of 143 donors made that possible. This generosity puts the Garden Society in a strong position to support the beginning of Phase II of Liu Ming Yuan.

## A HUGE THANKS TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS & DONORS!

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Jan - Dec 21</b>		<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>Balance - 31 Dec 21</b>	
	Grants	\$ 22,800		Current Assets	
	donations	\$ 164,045		Checking/Savings	\$ 231,274
	Misc.	\$ 29	<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		\$ 231,274
<b>Total</b>		\$ 186,875			
<b>EXPENSES</b>			<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		
	MCFGS Operations	\$ 4,722	Equity		
	Events	\$ 2,400		30000 · Opening Balance Equity	\$ 102,708
	Planting & Consultants			32000 · Retained Earnings	\$ 78,563
	P&R promissory & Constr	\$ 114,937		Net Income	\$ 50,002
<b>Total</b>		\$ 136,872	<b>Total Equity **</b>		\$ 231,274
<b>NET INCOME</b>		\$ 50,002	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		\$ 231,274
				<b>** Restricted or Cmit'd for Constr</b>	\$ 170,000
				Net unrestricted	\$ 61,274

# LIU MING YUAN - PLANTING FALL 2022

By Bill Zajicek

Planted 90 Sky Wing Siberian Irises and 5 additional Peonies.

Amended planting beds with over 2 cubic yards of Gerten's Best Compost & Donor Stanchion Repaired.

Over 30 Volunteers were involved over two weekends



# POETRY, GARDENS, AND CHINESE CULTURE

By Romi Slowiak

Witter Bynner, famed American poet and co-translator with Kiang Kang-Hu of the T'ang Dynasty poetry classic *The Jade Mountain*, tells us in the preface,

*“Centuries ago, cultivated Chinese had reached the intellectual saturation which has tired the mind of modern Europeans. The Chinese gentleman knew the ancient folk songs, compiled by Confucius. He also knew, all around him, a profoundly rich civilization, a more poised and particular a sophistication than we Westerners have yet attained. Through the Asian centuries everyone has written verse. In fact, from the early imperial days down to these even worse days disordered days of the republic (this was written in 1929), the sense of poetry as a natural and solacing part of life has lasted among the Chinese people.”*

Those of you who have traveled to China will see evidence of this everywhere: inscriptions on rocks as you climb a mountain, the cries of street peddlers, tea house names, casual but reverent jottings on hilltops, lakesides and private homes, and in gardens.

The Minnesota China Friendship Garden Society is working to honor that tradition and poetry as a guiding principle of China garden design. We have explanations of the couplets on columns, adopted poems

that inform the garden's design, are creating landscape that brings to life imagery from those poems, and are encouraging the creation of poetry itself.



The Chinese language adult winner, Sophia Deng, a Professor at the College of St. Benedict/St. Johns University, discovered she had met the judge, Professor Zhen Zou, 15 years ago at school.

Bynner continues in his preface, “Whitman said: ‘to have great poets there must be great audiences, too,’ he must have had in the back of his mind rich generations like the Elizabethan in England or like almost any generation in China. In those great audiences each person, to the limit of their capacity and with a natural ease, was a poet.”

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# POETRY, GARDENS, AND CHINESE CULTURE

By Romi Slowiak

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To that end, we are encouraging writers on all levels through no-fee-for-entry contests, most recently “Longing for Full Moon,” part of the Mid Autumn Festival. judges (Prof. Zhen Zou, Chinese; Diane Jarvenpa, English; Carol Charging Thunder, Dakota/Lakota/Nakota; and Nancy Xiong, Hmong), advisors (artist Ali Van and Professor Carol Brash) and \$100 prizes in two age groups in 4 languages, were all made possible by a grant from the State Arts Board.

Perhaps the most valuable prize was, however, is a tour of the Asian art collection from a poet’s point of view led by Liu Yang, chair of Asian Art

and curator of Chinese Art and a poet himself! There were more than 65 entries and over 70 people attended the award ceremony at the Xiang Jiang Pavilion at noon on Sept 10. The themes of the contest were friendship and resilience.

Liu Yang began the event reading his poem “The Eagle” in English and in Chinese. Romi Slowiak, contest curator, introduced the judges who then welcomed winners to receive their awards. The judges set a gracious and relaxed tone that made the event feel like an intimate literati gathering that offered many unexpected connections and revelations.

## THE WINNERS:

Category	Name	From	Poem
Chinese: 18 and over	Sophia Geng	St. Michael, MN	Friendship
Chinese: 18 and under	Ryan Hocksletter	St. Michael, MN	朋友们.Friends
Hmong: 18 and over	Coob Vaj/Chong Vang	Borikhamsay, Lao People’s Democratic Republic	Lub Dej Teev Lub Lwg: Mist Gathered Into Morning Dew (Read by Txianeeb Vaj, his nephew)
Hmong: 18 and under	Tilly Kue	St. Michael, MN	When We Were Young (Read by Cecielean Nkauj Zoo Lis, his mother)
Dakota: 18 and over	Lisa Yankton (Lisa is a Dakota, whose mother is Chinese)	Minneapolis	Sacred Taboo Warning
Dakota: 18 and under	No entries		
English: 18 and over	Torey Erin	Minneapolis	Salix
English: 18 and under	Hypatia Hollins	East Side of St. Paul	Peace is My Friend

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# POETRY, GARDENS, AND CHINESE CULTURE

By Romi Slowiak

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Prof. Zhen Zou | Chinese Poetry Judge



Judge Nancy Xiong announced that the Hmong adult winner lives in Laos. The poem was read by the winner's nephew. The organizers later received a video of the uncle receiving the award, which appeared to be a fortune in Laotian bills. US\$1= 10,000 Kips. So, he won one million Kips.



The Chinese language youth winner arrived early and worriedly confessed that her schoolteacher had accidentally changed some characters and that she should perhaps be disqualified. The characters were clerical errors in repeated paragraphs. She was exonerated by Judge Zhen.



Hypatia Hollins, winner aged 9, English, read her poem, Peace is My Friend. Hypatia lives in the neighborhood of Lake Phalen and her mother was president of the District 5 Planning Council, which was instrumental in holding a meeting in 2014 that led to legislative funding to hire the Changsha architects for the China garden.



The Dakota winner, Lisa Yankton, left, was only able to come because the judge Carol Charging Thunder to her right, got up at 6am to take over the winner's job of making fry bread for ceremony that day. Also pictured farther right: contest curator, Romi Slowiak, and farthest right: English judge Diane Jarvenpa.