

PASA PAGE

MISS CHINATOWN

From page 1

inal record in or outside of the United States. She must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

- She must have a residence in the Greater Houston area.

There is no entry fee to participate.

Scholarships and awards

- Miss Chinatown Houston: \$1500 cash, sponsorship to Miss Chinatown USA Pageant (\$1000 value), tiara, trophy, and Alvin Gee Portrait (\$560 value)

- Miss Chinese New Year: \$1000 cash, tiara, trophy and Alvin Gee Portrait (\$560 value)

- Miss Talent: \$500 cash, tiara, trophy, and Alvin Gee Portrait (\$560 value)

- Miss Congeniality: \$100 cash, in addition to her other prizes

- All other contestants: \$250 cash, trophy, and Alvin Gee Portrait (\$560 value)

Priority application deadline is April 15, 2005. Application deadline is May 15, 2005.

For more information visit www.cacahouston.org, or www.cacayc.com. Or call Linda Wu at 281-870-8882.

WEAPONS LIMITS

From page 4

The reasonable American fear is that if China gains access to state-of-the-art technology, the balance of power with Taiwan, and more broadly across Asia, would be dangerously altered. Beijing continues to look on Taiwan solely as a wayward province to be taken back as soon as it is possible to do so.

The dispute over the embargo has the potential for creating a new trans-Atlantic rift, as serious as the one created by the invasion of Iraq.

AIDS WARRIOR

From page 1

al of Ranbaxy and Cipla generic drugs from the global market, the local production of generic antiretrovirals is at a critical point. With now 95 percent of people with HIV living in developing countries, efforts for ensuring access to essential drugs is likewise threatened through the WTO's Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement used by pharmaceutical giants for their legal arguments to enforce patent protection laws. Drawing from her experience in Thailand and current work in Africa, Dr. Kraisintu will address the challenges ahead for the international community to provide access to affordable



DR. Krisana Kraisintu continues her work in Africa to produce affordable HIV/AIDS generic drugs for the poor.

HIV/AIDS drugs as well as the larger and more compelling issue of responding to hu-

man, social and development needs. She will argue for making public health a priority globally.

These programs are funded in part by grants from the ExxonMobil Corporation; the City of Houston, the Texas Commission of the Arts through the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County; and the generous support of our corporate and individual members.

The charge is \$10 for members of collaborating organizations, \$15 for non-members, free for students & teachers (with ID). Reservations are requested. Send the form below to: Asia Society Texas 4605 Post Oak Place, Ste. 205, Houston, TX 77027. Tel: 713.439.0265, Fax: 713.439.1107; email: txcenter@asiasoc.org



A LOCAL team paddles to the finish line during the Gulf Coast International Regatta on Oct. 23, 2004, on the beautiful waters of Pasadena Lake. More than 40 teams competed during the two-day event. —Photo by Ave Basha

DRAGON BOAT

From page 1

Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The Texas Dragon Boat Association is a Texas non-profit corporation established to promote the tradition and sport of dragon boating, to enhance awareness of Asian and Asian American culture, and enhance cross-cultural understanding.

The May 2004 Festival welcomed 27 teams with estimated 3000 participants and spectators from myriad cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The appeal of dragon boat racing has spread well beyond its origins in China. From Canada to Germany to South Africa, more than 30 countries hold internationally recognized races.

The Texas Dragon Boat

Association is currently seeking sponsors, teams, and volunteers for the May 7, 2005 Houston Dragon Boat Festival and the Oct. 22-23, 2005 Gulf Coast International Regatta and Midwest Regional Championship.

For information, please contact TDBA Executive Director Dr. Caroline Long at 832-687-7208; or visit the TDBA website at www.texasdragonboat.com.

AVIAN FLU

From page 4

result in further threats to public health." In China, where the deaths of farmed animals from various diseases cause a loss of \$2.8 billion a year, the Ministry of Agriculture is trying to do this. The ministry is working to establish disease-free zones in five of China's provinces, largely by teaching farmers how to improve sanitation and living conditions for animals.

But, as they say in America, this is a little like closing the barn door after the horse has escaped. When health and agriculture officials around the world have known for so long how influ-



VIETNAMESE men gather ducks to slaughter at a duck processing factory in Ho Chi Minh City, Feb. 6, 2005. Cramming thousands of ducks and chickens into unsanitary pens is not only cruel, it provides the perfect breeding ground for deadly viruses.

enza spreads, why has it taken so long for this issue even to be discussed?

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals advocates a vegetarian diet, for both health and ethical reasons. But the least we can do for ducks, geese, chickens and pigs here in Asia is to provide them with decent, sanitary places to live. Doing right by these animals could have saved many human lives and stopped the fear and death that now permeates the air in so many Asian countries.

PNS contributor and Hong Kong resident Rochelle Regodon, a native of the Philippines, is a campaign coordinator for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

TELLTALE SINGS

From page 4

"to deem certain service in the organized military forces of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines and the Philippine Scouts to have been active service for purposes of benefits under programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs." The bill was referred to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Rep. Juanita Millender-MacDonald (D- Los Angeles), together with Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Los Angeles) also introduced H.R.170 ("Filipino Fairness Act") which seeks to improve benefits for Filipino veterans of World War II. The MacDonald-Issa bill was also referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The difference between the two bills is about \$137 million. The Cunningham-Filner bill (HR 302) seeks to award \$800 a month in non-war related disability benefits to all 25,000 surviving Filipino WW II veterans—the 7,000 in the U.S. and the 18,000 in the

SOCIAL SECURITY

From page 4

example, women can expect to live another 19.2 years, compared to 16.3 years for men.

Because the private market can consider gender when calculating annuities, the same accumulation of savings in individual accounts would purchase lower monthly benefits for women than for men, even though payments over a lifetime may be the same.

Social Security's spousal and survivor benefits are especially important to women. Sixty-two percent of female beneficiaries age 62 and older receive Social Security benefits as spouses or surviving widows based on the earnings records of their husbands (34 percent) or as dually entitled beneficiaries (28 percent). Dually entitled beneficiaries qualify for their own retired worker benefit but can opt instead for benefits based on the earning history of their spouse—they are entitled to receive the higher of the two benefits.

Wives as well as divorced women who had been married to their ex-husbands for at least ten years are entitled to spousal benefits amounting to 50 percent of the benefits of their husbands or ex-husbands. Upon widowhood, they are automatically eligible for a benefit amounting to 100 percent of their current or former husband's benefit.

Social Security provides inflation-protected, lifetime benefits with no market risk. Annual cost-of-living adjustments ensure that Social Security benefits retain their purchasing power. The value of most other sources of retirement income, such as private pensions and annuities, erodes over time.

In addition, Social Security is guaranteed for life. Women do not have to worry about outliving their Social Security benefits. They do not

have to worry about market fluctuations when it comes to their Social Security benefits. Individual accounts would not provide the same protections.

The current Social Security system needs to be strengthened. As the boomer generation begins to retire, more people will be getting benefits relative to the number of people paying into the system. In addition, people are living longer. These are reasons why we need to make changes.

Social Security is in no immediate danger of going "broke," as we have been led to believe. Without any changes, the Social Security actuaries report that the program can pay 100 percent of benefits through 2042 and over 70 percent of promised benefits after that. However, paying only 70 percent of promised benefits is not acceptable.

Some steps can be taken to begin making a down payment on that future Social Security shortfall. AARP supports:

- Investing part of the Social Security surplus so that it earns higher returns than those offered by U.S. Treasury bonds. That way we strengthen Social Security while sharing the risks of investing. We should not create a system where some people win and others lose when it comes to Social Security.

- Raising the cap on the amount of wages taxed to support Social Security to cover the same share of wages as in the past. That would gradually raise today's cap of \$88,000 to approximately \$140,000.

- Making Social Security a truly universal system by including all newly hired state and local government workers in Social Security. These steps alone won't fill the entire future gap, but they are substantial steps toward solving the problem.

Philippines. The MacDonald-Issa bill, on the other hand, seeks to provide \$800 per month to the 7,000 Filivets in the U.S. but only \$100 per month to the 18,000 Filivets in the Philippines.

According to the U.S. Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report released in November of 2004, the Cunningham-Filner Bill will cost \$159 million, while the MacDonald-Issa bill will cost \$22 million.

Backers of the Cunningham-Filner bill argue that it is important to support the "principle" of the issue and those veterans in the Philippines and those in the U.S. In the controversy, this side has been described as the "all or nothing" position.

Supporters of the MacDonald-Issa bill contend that it is unrealistic to expect the White House and the Republican-dominated Congress to pass a \$159-million bill in the face a trillion-dollar deficit and wholesale cuts to veterans programs. Their side has been labeled the "take what you can get" position.

When I met with representatives of the Philippine government in Manila last month to discuss this issue, I was told that the position of the Philippine government is "all or nothing but we'll take what we can get."

In Washington D.C. last week, a representative of the "all or nothing" position told me that it's important for the entire Filipino community to back the Cunningham-Filner bill so that the Republicans who come to the table can see that the Filipino community is united on this issue. "After we're united," he said, "we can then talk about making compromises."

A supporter of the "let's take what we can get" position said the Republicans won't even come to the table if they see that our demand is unrealistic. "To the Republicans," he said, "the bottom line is the bottom line."

So where do we go from here?

Quickly now. Another veteran just died.

Send your comments to Rodel50@aol.com.

HUTCHISON

From page 4

over recent decades by tagging the turtles. When nests are found along the Texas coast, the eggs go through a phase called Head Starting. Here the eggs are incubated and released to their natural habitat after hatching.

This procedure was proven successful just this past April as two turtles that were Head Started back in the late 1980's were located in Galveston laying eggs. Scientists and Environmentalists were delighted over these findings, as it proves their hard work and determination are leading to the increase in *kemp* population. Since it takes approximately 15 years

for a Kemp's ridley sea turtle to mature and lay eggs, scientists are hopeful that they will see similar discoveries in the near future.

At present, nestling aggregations number in the hundreds, not the thousands necessary for the species to survive without man's intervention. With the Project's gradual success, it is clear that our marine biologists need the necessary and most up to date technology to help protect these endangered sea turtles, which is why I have supported continued funding.

The desire to protect our wildlife is a value rooted deep in the hearts of Texans. Biodiversity is critical to the health of the ecosystems that support life on our planet,

and we all share the responsibility of preserving the world's endangered species. I believe our natural heritage should be preserved for the enjoyment and education of future generations. And we must continue to maintain a careful balance between the integrity of our natural resources and encouraging economic growth, which will shape America's future.

Kemp's Ridley sea turtles are just one of the many endangered species that roam our lands here in Texas and just one of the great wonders that make our state unique. To learn more on this extensive restoration program and how you can help, visit www.seaturtles.org.

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