

# Event to fete Asian-Americans

## Pioneering Congress member to speak during celebration

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The first Chinese-American woman ever elected to the U.S. Congress will speak in Toledo Friday at an event celebrating the accomplishments of people of Asian and Pacific Islander descent.

Congressman Judy Chu (D., Calif.) is to speak at 7:30 p.m. in the Toledo Museum of Art's Little Theater lecture hall. She is expected to talk about ways to empower the Asian-American

community, the achievements of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, and policy issues that affect them.

The event is free and open to the public.

Ms. Chu was sworn in on July 16, 2009. Her district stretches from East Los Angeles through the southern San Gabriel Valley. Before congress, Ms. Chu was on the California State Board of Equalization and the California State



Chu

Assembly and was mayor of the City of Monterey Park east of Los Angeles. She also was a community college professor of psychology for 20 years.

The talk, organized by a local group of Asian-Americans, marks Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, which is celebrat-

ed in May.  
Begun in 1990 under President

See **EVENT**, Page 2

## Event

Continued from Page 1

George H. W. Bush, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is generally less well recognized than other month-specific designations such as Black History Month in February and Women's History Month in March.

That's true even among Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders themselves, said Yueh-Ting Lee, president of the 80-20 Northwest Ohio Chapter of Asian-Americans, the group behind Friday's event.

"Not many American citizens, including Asian-Pacific-Americans, are aware or well informed of this due to lack of public education and cultural promotion," Mr. Lee said. "If Asian-Pacific-Americans do not promote or celebrate this month in May, why should others?"

People of Asian and Pacific Island origins have a long history in the United States, and have much to be proud of, Mr. Lee said. Chinese immigrants laid most of the tracks for the transcontinental railroad, completed in 1869, and Asian-Americans have fought on behalf of the United States since the War of 1812.

Notable Asian-Americans include Nobel Prize-winning physicists Chen Ning Yang and Steven Chu, now U.S. Secretary of Energy; and Chinese-American cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

Locally, Asian-American scientists and business people play significant roles in the field of

solar energy, such as Xunming Deng, who heads Xunlight Solar Corp. in Toledo.

Despite their achievements, Asian-Pacific-Americans still face problems of discrimination and unfair treatment in the workplace, and they are not well represented in the upper echelons of companies, courts, and government, Mr. Lee said.

"Asian-Americans face severe glass-ceiling bias," Mr. Lee said. "Many of them do not speak out or fight back."

Larry Chan, associate general counsel at Bowling Green State University and a Chinese-American who grew up in Ohio, said Asian-Americans are often regarded as outsiders by Americans of other ethnicities.

"There may be at times a tendency on the part of other individuals to regard Asian-Americans as not really being American," Mr. Chan said. "I think it's important to promote consciousness among the community ... that many of us have been here for many generations."

Ms. Chu exemplifies the ability of Asian-Americans to participate in American political life, Mr. Chan said.

Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders make up close to 5 percent of the U.S. population, but only about 1.6 percent of people living in Ohio, Census figures show.

More than 8,000 people of Asian origin or decent are living in Lucas and Wood counties.

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