



**Maryland-Anhui Agricultural Community Showcase:
Lantern Festival -- Seneca Valley High School,
Germantown, MD, February 4, 2023:**

**A Report on Enhanced Understanding of
Maryland and Anhui's Mutual Contributions**

March, 2023

Submitted by:

Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee

Mark Xu, Chair

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Program Summary

The Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee, a member of Sister States of Maryland, Inc., organized and carried out on February 4, 2023 at Seneca Valley High School in Germantown, MD (Montgomery County, MD) the “Maryland-Anhui Agricultural Community Showcase, as part of the “Lantern Festival Fair” – an annual celebration on the 15th day of the lunar new year, organized by the Coordinating Council of Chinese American Associations (CCCAA).

The Committee organized and staffed an in-person, interactive display and presentation of Maryland and Anhui (China) Province’s most notable agricultural products and attractions, which the two jurisdictions are actively marketing to one another. More than **3,000 Asian-American residents of the DC-VA-MD region attended** the Lantern Festival event, with an estimated **2,500 visiting the “Maryland-Anhui Agricultural Community Showcase.”**

The balance of this document details the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee’s partners in the effort, the overall outcomes of the project, the Committee’s many visitors (including some regional VIPs) to the display, and the Committee’s thoughts on the effectiveness of the effort.

Project Partners/Contributors

The Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee acknowledges and thanks the following organizations and leaders for their contributions of time, talent and resources to the success of our Maryland-Anhui Agricultural Community Showcase:

- **Maryland Horse Industry Board and EquestrAsian Sports Association of Maryland (EquestrAsian)** – The Committee’s thanks go out to Maryland Horse Industry Board Executive Director Ross Peddicord, the president of EquestrAsian Sports Association of Maryland (EASA) Bob Zhang, and their volunteer staff of six committed Board members/staffers, who brought “the Maryland Horse,” and staffed and distributed information throughout the afternoon.





- **Maryland Department of Agriculture** – The Committee thanks Maryland Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Steve Connelly, who led a veritable culinary “delegation” to the Lantern Festival and program. Among the delegates:
 - Director of Seafood Marketing, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Stone Slade
 - Chief, Agriculture and Seafood Marketing, Maryland Department of Agriculture Mark S. Powell
 - Chef Ricky Rice of Chesapeake Chef Service (serving portions of Maryland blue catfish and mushroom risotto)
 - The Garden International CEO Elizabeth Robinson (displaying Maryland-grown mushrooms and promoting her Beltsville, MD-based mushroom operation)

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- **Anhui Provincial Foreign Affairs Office/Anhui Friendship Association** – The Committee says “thank you” to our good friends in Anhui for supplying information and products endemic to Anhui province and available to Marylanders – including teas, ready-to-eat nuts, rice noodles, and Chinese medicine. The Committee also thanks the volunteers from Anhui Friendship Association for displaying the Anhui materials, welcoming guests, and answering their questions.





- **Maryland and Montgomery County VIP Visits** – The Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee’s display attracted a number of regional, Maryland and Montgomery County officials, including:
 - Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Steve Connelly
 - Former Maryland Deputy Secretary of State Luis Borunda,
 - Director of Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs Christina Poy
 - Director, International Affairs, Office of International Investment and Trade, Department of Commerce Mary Nitsch
 - Executive Director of Maryland Horse Industry Board, Maryland Department of Agriculture Ross Peddicord
 - Maryland State Senator Clarence Lam
 - Maryland State Delegate Lily Qi
 - Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich
 - President of Coordination Council of Chinese American Associations George Zhou
 - President of Anhui Friendship Association Frank Wang



- **Visits from 2,500+ “Lantern Festival” attendees** -- An estimated 2,500 or more attendees at the CCCAA’s “Lantern Festival” event visited the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee display:
 - More than 500+ prepared portions of Maryland blue catfish cakes and 500+ portions of Maryland mushroom ragout were prepared and served by the Maryland Department of Agriculture and its caterer, Chesapeake Chef Service.
 - The Garden International welcomed hundreds to its display of mushroom varieties grown in the organization’s Beltsville, MD facility.
 - Maryland Horse Industry Board hosted dozens of visits to and photographs of the “Maryland Horse” by adults and children of all ages.
 - EquestrAsian collected 18 signups and many more requests for the chance to qualify for one of 16 complimentary horse riding lessons for Asian-American residents later this year. The names of the recipients of the lessons (which will include lectures and practice at a horse barn) will be selected, and the lessons managed by EquestrAsian and the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee in late spring/early summer.
 - The Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee display of Anhui photos, foods and information received hundreds of visitors.

Program Evaluation

The overall objective of the program was to promote the awareness, significance, and opportunities surrounding agricultural cooperation between the State of Maryland and the Province of Anhui (China) to Maryland-based Chinese- and Asian-American communities, citizens and families.

We believe the Maryland-Anhui Agricultural Community Showcase supported Maryland Sister States initiatives, particularly in these areas:

1. **Promote trade and business:** Increase the business/trade opportunities for Maryland firms as well as for the businesses and trade groups of our sister states.
2. **Increase educational opportunities:** Expand the learning opportunities for members of the Maryland community as well as our Sister States communities in order to break down barriers and enhance the sharing of knowledge and experience.

We also believe we succeeded in meeting these key metrics:

- Number of Asian-American Marylanders who attended the Lantern Festival and visited the Maryland-Anhui Agricultural Community Showcase – **approximately 2,500**
- Number of Asian-American Marylanders who watched the 25 second Maryland Horse promotion video during the Lunar New Year Gala and the Lantern Festival Performance Show - **approximately 2,000**
- Number of Asian-American Marylanders who may have read the Maryland Horse promotion advertisement on the program pamphlets of the Lunar New Year Gala and the Lantern Festival Performance Show - **approximately 2,000**
- Number of attendees who during the Lantern Festival signed up for future communications, “experience Maryland’s horse industry” events, and other promotions – **approximately 30**

- Generation of potential international trade and business cooperation activities as a result of the Maryland-Anhui Agricultural Showcase - **we generated pledges of ongoing support and involvement from all of our program partners.**

Next Steps

The Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee plans to follow up our successful involvement in the CCCAA “Lantern Festival” event with ongoing outreach to Maryland’s Asian-American community and, more broadly, to all Maryland-based citizens. The Committee will utilize foundation-generated and other funds to undertake these activities.

Specific, planned activities include:

- Support to EquestrAsian on horse introduction sessions – Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee will follow up with, and help support with promotion and onsite assistance, EquestrAsian’s planned horse introduction sessions (to be held in May/June, 2023).
- Work with EquestrAsian to design more horse-related activities for Asian American community.
- Follow up with The Garden International and other mushroom farms for opportunities to further introduce Maryland mushroom to Asian American community.
- Reach out to potential merchants and customers for opportunities to further introduce blue catfish to Asian American community.
- More broadly, the Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee will continue to follow up with the Washington, DC-Maryland-Virginia Asian-American community to promote better understanding of Anhui (China) Province, as well as the long-history of Maryland-Anhui cooperation on agricultural-related projects and activities. Part of the effort will be to identify future dates and potential events to enhance Committee’s outreach.

Program Budget

The Maryland-Anhui Sister State Committee was able to achieve our program objectives and meet program metrics with the generous monetary and in-kind support of our program partners:

- Diana Davis Spencer Foundation grant of \$1,545.26 (pending receipt)
- In-kind sponsorship from Maryland Horse Industry Board in the amount of \$1,000 for space rental in the venue
- In-kind sponsorship from Maryland Department of Agriculture for preparation and serving of blue catfish and mushroom food samples, including plates, set-ups, napkins and the like, in an estimated amount of \$6,000
- In-kind sponsorship from EquestrAsian Sports Association of Maryland (EASA) in the amount of \$500 for horse introduction sessions
- In-kind sponsorship from Anhui Friendship Association (AFA) in an estimated amount of \$400 for planning and administrative expenses
- In-kind sponsorship from Anhui Provincial Foreign Affairs Office for supplying information and products endemic to Anhui province