

EVENTS

Sandia National Laboratories at AAEOY

Prestigious Asian American event comes to Albuquerque

By Nancy Salem

A few years ago, Al Romig, then executive VP at Sandia Labs, took note of the annual Asian American Engineer of the Year award ceremony, a major event that draws hundreds of people to cities around the country. He asked a question: Why can't we bring it to Albuquerque?

Al left Sandia for a VP position at Lockheed Martin's famed Skunk Works, but his question remained and has now been answered. The 2012 Asian American Engineer of the Year (AAEOY) celebration was held in Albuquerque March 2-3 at the Marriott Uptown.

"It is a great honor to host this event," says Eliot Fang (1524), the Sandia engineer who chairs the AAEOY 2012 Executive Committee. "This is a national award ceremony with technical seminars, career information, and a formal banquet. It's usually held in larger cities."



Al Romig

Sandia and Lockheed Martin Corp. are Title Sponsors of AAEOY 2012. The program recognizes outstanding Asian American professionals in science and engineering for their technical achievement and public service. It was launched in 2002 and is organized by the Chinese Institute of Engineers-USA (CIE-USA), founded in 1917.

In the past 10 years, 181 people have received the AAEOY Award and 27 the special Distinguished Award. Honorees include eight Nobel laureates, academics, key corporate executives, and an astronaut. Nine Sandians have received the award since 2002.

"We are excited about the opportunity to help host this year's Asian American Engineer of the Year event," says Kim Sawyer, Sandia executive VP and deputy Laboratories director. "Sandia's Asian Leadership and Outreach Committee [ALOC], which represents 288 Asian Americans at the New Mexico lab, is planning an exceptional event that will reach out to a national audience."

Kimberly Admire, VP of Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Programs at Lockheed Martin Corp., says AAEOY "provides an opportunity to recognize talented Asian American men and women for their contributions in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and leadership."



Kimberly Admire



Sandia National Laboratories.

"Lockheed Martin is honored to support the AAEOY awards organized by the Chinese

Institute of Engineers-USA,” she says. “We are delighted this year’s event is being held in Albuquerque, and we look forward to hosting some of the activities for AAEOY 2012.”

CIE-USA has seven chapters — Dallas, New York, New Mexico, Overseas Chinese Environmental Engineers and Scientists Association, San Francisco, Seattle, and Southern California — and is governed by a national council made up of rotating delegates. The current chair is Yung Sung Cheng of the Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute in Albuquerque.



Seventeen people from across the US will be recognized at this year’s awards banquet. About 450 attendees are expected. Three Sandians are on the list of honorees: Hongyou Fan (1815), Ming Lau (8230), and Rekha Rao (1514). There will also be a Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award and a Distinguished Science & Technology Award. Nominations come from corporations, academics, government, and scientific institutions. A review committee from the CIE-USA New Mexico Chapter selected the winners based on specific criteria

The New Mexico chapter put in its application to host the AAEOY several years ago. The request came up at the 2010 CIE-USA National Council meeting in New York. Council members had to decide whether Albuquerque had the resources to be the host city.

“There was some debate,” says Chui Fan Chen Cheng (2661), who had been asked by AI to explore the possibility of Albuquerque being a host. “We are a small chapter. We had never hosted a major event. Some people questioned whether we could do it.”

When Albuquerque got the nod, the local chapter formed the 2012 AAEOY Executive Committee headed by Eliot, an AAEOY honoree

in 2006. Chui had polled chapter members on their interest, and knew there was enough manpower. Eight subcommittees worked on tasks ranging from fundraising and publicity to logistics and information technology. In all, about 75 people have been involved in planning the event, which has numerous industry partners and sponsors.

The subcommittees are staffed by Sandians as well as engineers from Intel, the Lovelace institute, the University of New Mexico, and other organizations.

“This has been a great experience,” Eliot says of heading up the planning. “We have two DOE national labs in New Mexico. We have an Air Force Research Lab. We have Intel. We have Emcore. We have research parks. We have universities. People don’t realize New Mexico plays a critical role in advancing the future of science and technology due to the institutions we have here and the work we do.”



Tammy Strickland (9512), Sandia executive liaison for AAEOY 2012, chair of the event’s hospitality subcommittee, and head of the ALOC, says Asian Americans are not numerous in Albuquerque, so an event of this stature brings visibility to that community. “And it shows that Sandia has diversity and inclusion, and that the executives support that,” she says.

Chui, who chairs the fundraising subcommittee, says the planning and hard work have paid off. She says the two-day event will feature a technical tour of Sandia for the award event participants; a pre-award dinner at the Albuquerque International Balloon Museum; a cultural tour of Old Town, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, and the Atomic Museum; a seminar; a VIP reception sponsored by Sandia and Lockheed Martin; and the award ceremony and banquet at the Marriott Uptown. Sandia President and Labs Director Paul Hommert is the keynote speaker.

“The technical tour of Sandia, hosted by Sandia and Lockheed Martin Corp., will showcase some of Sandia’s exciting national security work,” Kim Sawyer says.

Eliot says hosting AAEOY helps promote Sandia’s image in science and technology leadership.

“It’s a big deal, and we feel we have a lot to offer in this event,” Chui says. “We can introduce people to the Southwest. And it’s a showcase opportunity for Sandia. We have a lot of technology to showcase.”