



Opening the Conversation on Immigration and Discrimination

Chamber hosted a panel of local professionals who shared insights from their experiences

On May 18, the Chamber hosted a timely conversation on American Identity and Immigration: Developing a More Perfect Union. Preceding by two days President Biden's signing of the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, the event offered an honest and often raw emotional conversation on the experience of immigrants and racism in America.

"Witnessing the aggression and discrimination toward Asian Americans as they navigated the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement heightened by George Floyd's murder and our former president's remarks and discrimination toward immigrants in America perpetuated the need to formalize an event addressing the racism in our community," said Tony Sheridan, opening the virtual discussion. "Progress toward a more just and equitable world will only happen with continued and consistent open conversation and learning—learning from and about one another and learning about ourselves."

Proud to open the conversation among local professionals, the Chamber is committed

to continuing programs that expand our community's understanding.

The U.S. is home to 45 million citizens who immigrated from another country. With their children who are first generation Americans, this group constitutes 23% of the population—demographics that demonstrate the need for this conversation, noted panel facilitator Dr. Sunil Bhatia, Professor and Chair of Human Development and Interim Chair of the Education Department at Connecticut College, who immigrated from India.

Panelists were Mrs. Ornet Hines, Assistant VP & Branch Manager, Liberty Bank, who immigrated from Jamaica; Dr. Shengquan Duan, Pharmaceuticals Team Leader, Pfizer, who immigrated from China; and Mr. Liam Sampson, Director of Internal Programs for the Black Engagement Council, Electric Boat, who immigrated from South Africa.

After 23 years in the U.S., Shen shared recent experiences of being called out for speaking Chinese in public or being denied access to accommodations because of assumptions

around his name. He explained why he chose to be part of the conversation, "For Asian Americans, I think it's very typical for us to let it go," said Shen about a cultural mind set to not complain. "But I feel with what I am currently experiencing, we probably need to change that. We need to stand up and hopefully do something about it."

Speaking up when ill-intentioned comments or actions arise comes at a cost. Invoking Winston Churchill's aphorism, you will never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks, Ornet explained, "I can't stop to educate everyone who's going to have a misconception."

"Addressed or not, ill-intentioned microaggressions I know can lead to something more than that. So when we do have the opportunity to address it, I will try to do that and educate, because sometimes it's the lack of awareness and the habit of making assumptions as opposed to the habit of asking questions to get to understanding that led to

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The nominations were tallied and the top 5 nomination getters in each category have advanced to the voting round.

Top 5 Voting: **June 13 - 27**

Winners will be announced at a special invitation-only event and in the Best of the Best Magazine publishing in The Day on September 12.

For full contest details and to cast your votes each day, visit **theday.com/bestof**

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MEMBER NEWS

Fridays Are for Music

Free Summer Concerts Return to Hilton Mystic

At long last, The IRONS at Hilton Mystic proudly welcomes back the free Friday night summer concert series to our summer courtyard.

June 25: Christine Ohlman, Rebel Montez and Sin Sisters

July 2: Jake Kulak & the Lowdown

July 9: Eight to the Bar

July 16: Magic of Motown

July 23: Adam Ezra Group

July 30: Bobby T and The Name Droppers

August 6: Wicked Peach

August 13: Professor Louie & the Crowmatix

August 20: Another Tequila Sunrise

August 27: Savage Pianos

Enjoy food and beverage offerings from The IRONS.

For more information, visit theironsmystic.com.

City of Groton Concerts in the Park 2021 Schedule

All shows are at Washington Park in the City of Groton, starting at 6:30 pm. We have a wide variety of food trucks for each show as well as media Q105.

June 18: The Cartells

June 25: The Pop Rocks

July 2: Wild Nights

July 9: Coyote River Band

July 16: Wicked Peach

July 23: Andre and Friends

July 30: Latin Essence Group

Co-sponsored and co-produced by Groton Utilities and City of Groton Parks and Rec. Concert hotline for info and cancellations: 860-446-4129.

Find more events and concerts at ChamberECT.com/news



Chelsea Groton Foundation Assists The Arc Eastern CT's Future Bakery Location

The Chelsea Groton Foundation has awarded The Arc Eastern Connecticut \$1,952.99 to create counter and display space for its cookie production micro-enterprise, which provides on-the-job vocational training to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

"In 2016 we set out to prove that a business can pay people with IDD minimum wage and realize a profit," notes Kathleen Stauffer, CEO of The Arc Eastern CT. "Our chocolate chip cookies, made by the people we support, are not only in over 20 stores throughout the region, they've also given people with IDD the opportunity to go on to secure permanent employment with area businesses." With the expansion of the bakery into a larger space at The Arc's facility in Woodstock, which also houses The Emporium Thrift Store and bottle/can redemption center, the micro-business allows for increased production, employment and training opportunities. "We are so grateful to community partners like the Chelsea Groton Foundation," said Stauffer. "Their belief in our mission and their commitment to access, equity and inclusion is crucial to the career success of people with IDD in Eastern Connecticut."

To learn more please visit TheArcECT.org or contact Denise Tift at (860) 889-4435, ext. 116.

Opening the Conversation on Immigration and Discrimination

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some of these microaggressions," said Ornet.

Liam, who grew up in the U.S. after immigrating with his parents from South Africa at the age of 2, feels a stronger connection to American culture, but still finds times when he questions his sense of belonging here. "A lot of times when I don't feel like I belong here—and it's not just hatred against black people but Asian Americans and all types of other races—it's when they get discriminated against, when you open up the T.V. or the computer and you see someone who looks like you getting shot for no reason at all...It hurts and sometimes you're just like, maybe here is not the best place to be for people like me," said Liam.

Proud to call America his home and having worked hard to contribute through his scientific research and volunteer work, Shen is feeling uneasy in recent years as he sees anti-immigrant groups utilize social media to demonize immigrants. "Their ideologies have been brought into the mainstream media and the rhetoric has been adopted by the policy makers. The people in power have started implementing some harsh anti-immigrant laws nationwide," said Shen. "Of course, the recent anti-Asian hate crimes make the experience even worse."

Violence against Asians, largely targeting the elderly and vulnerable, has increased recently, with 6,600 incidents in the year since the pandemic began last March. "Asian Americans are Americans. We need your help," said Shen. "To combat racism, it requires collective effort and community solidarity. We have to find allies, not just in words but also in actions," said Shen.

Panelists urged people to intervene and when they see something wrong to say something.

Liam encouraged everyone to expand their experience of the world by interacting with people from different cultures and develop their character by gaining understanding of others.

Sunil helped frame some of the questions that must be asked to address these issues with meaningful policy, "What's equal citizenship or what does equal liberty mean under our constitution?" Naming the problem and carrying through the emotional work of confronting the issues open further conversations on how to move forward.

The Chamber will continue these conversations and join in solidarity with those who face discrimination. We encourage you to share the recording of this event with employees, colleagues, friends, and family. Join us in addressing these difficult conversations with the same bravery, generosity, and honesty as our panelists.

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BENEFACITOR NEWS

Ørsted and Eversource Partner with Mystic Aquarium to Support Research and Drive Career and Educational Opportunities

Mission-Aligned Grant Will Support Internships and Programs for Local Youth, Animal Rescue Clinic Work, and a New Ocean Wind Energy Exhibit



Photo courtesy of Mystic Aquarium

Joint-venture partners Ørsted and Eversource announced a \$1,250,000 grant in support of Mystic Aquarium, one of Connecticut's premier cultural and research institutions. The grant will support innovative research that will improve the understanding of marine mammals and their habitats throughout New England, bring hands-on educational and career opportunities to students in the region, bolster the life-saving work of the aquarium's Animal Rescue Program, and create a brand new, state-of-the-art exhibit centered around the potential of ocean wind energy.

This new partnership reflects Ørsted and Eversource's commitment to delivering clean, renewable energy to Connecticut, while

also working to support local communities throughout the state – bringing together the joint-venture's commitment to shrinking our carbon footprint while delivering jobs and economic investment, with Mystic's goal of protecting the environment through research, knowledge sharing, and animal rehabilitation.

Ørsted and Eversource are developers of Connecticut's first offshore wind farm, Revolution Wind. The project will deliver 304 megawatts of clean energy to the state and 400 megawatts to Rhode Island, generating enough electricity to power more than 350,000 homes across both states.

ConnectiCare Celebrates 40 years of Service to Connecticut Residents

Forty years ago, ConnectiCare began offering health plans to Connecticut residents. The health plan was founded in 1981 by a group of local doctors who were committed to bringing their patients the best care possible. Today, ConnectiCare is one of the state's leading health plans, and our mission remains to create healthier futures for our customers and communities.

ConnectiCare will celebrate the milestone anniversary by honoring that tradition and giving back to the community. The company is focusing on food security and mental health, two areas of continued need as we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to providing financial support to organizations working in these areas, ConnectiCare employees will be volunteering across the state to help Connecticut residents. Some of the organizations the company is supporting include CT Food Bank/FoodShare, Healing Meals, Mental Health CT, United Way, Habitat for Humanity, American Red Cross, and Special Olympics Connecticut Unified Sports.

While the world of health care has changed dramatically since 1981, nothing has changed in ConnectiCare's commitment to the people of Connecticut. "Connecticut is more than just a state to us. It's our home. We live and work in the communities we serve. Our team is present in communities across the state, helping neighbors obtain and use health insurance to get the care they need. As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, we're optimistic about the future of ConnectiCare and our state," said Eric Galvin, President, ConnectiCare.

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A Story of Success and Continued Perseverance in the Face of COVID

Pfizer leadership shares vaccine development and lessons they will carry forward



Pfizer, who forged a partnership with BioNTech two years prior, was well positioned to be the hero of 2020. BioNTech pioneered the mRNA platform as a technology for vaccines, and Pfizer had the capabilities to move the vaccine through research, clinical trials, regulatory approval, and manufacturing and distribution in record time.

They discovered more than a life-saving vaccine; they discovered new ways of managing research, trials, and data that can be applied in the future.

Pfizer's story was recounted at a virtual Chamber Business Breakfast on May 19 by John Burkhardt, Senior Vice President, Head of Global Drug Safety Research and Development (DSRD), Head of Comparative Medicine and Groton Site Head for Pfizer Laboratories, and Jean Lee, Vice President and Head of Portfolio and Project Management.

Urgency drove the singular focus that reduced the traditional seven-year timeline for a new vaccine to seven months from first dosing to Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA.

Burkhardt broke down the science and described the in-house, end-to-end capabilities and expertise Pfizer has in place that enabled this innovative vaccine to be tested, manufactured, and distributed quickly.

Lee cited collaboration, solid science, expert teams and 24/7 commitment as essential to executing at that speed: "Meetings that we normally wait months for... we got in hours. We had conversations with the health

authorities daily."

Constantly optimizing for time and for everyone in the system, every process was examined. "If there was something that got in the way of progressing to the next step, they put together their great brains and we found a way to move on, find a solution, and innovate around those problems," said Lee.

Lessons learned that are repeatable, scalable, and sustainable over time are processes that will be adapted and adopted for future programs.

Pfizer's ability to mobilize from research to manufacture is now projected to result in 2.5 billion doses worldwide by the end of 2021, a significant increase from the 1.3 billion doses initially projected. Pfizer is on track to deliver 300 million doses to the U.S. government by the middle of July, ahead of schedule. Increased production of the Pfizer BioNTech is important as it is currently the only vaccine approved for children 12 and over, with trials already underway for those younger.

"It's the mindset we've gotten into that it's not good enough. Continuous improvement on every step of every process along the entire supply chain," said Lee.

Connecticut's Pfizer team contributed throughout the vaccine development process and led or supported: safety, design, formulation, supply and procurement, clinical trial operations, and lipid manufacturing.

"People just really stepped up. They knew they had the chance to be the hero and they did it," said Burkhardt.

Preparations to keep the Groton site safe and functioning included enhanced tech and data transfer, limited chances for contamination, expanded dining services, and even anticipated onsite accommodation, if that became necessary. Adaptations and ways of working permeated the whole process locally and globally.

"People had the confidence, and

our leaders at the organization supported it as well, to take the risk because there was no alternative," said Lee, as clinical trials needed to adapt to remote work. "We've come out of it stronger and more confident in changing some of those ways of working."

Pfizer continues its research to combat COVID-19 with a treatment option for those who contract the virus. An orally-administered COVID-19 protease inhibitor is in clinical trials in New Haven. The medication works by blocking an enzyme the virus depends upon to replicate and proliferate. Protease inhibitors have been effective in treated other viral pathogens such as HIV and hepatitis C virus. This solution can benefit those unable to receive the vaccine.

Pfizer continues to study the vaccine in regard to its cold storage requirements, collecting temperature data on every shipment using GPS trackers. This new data will help Pfizer refine the process and determine if it can be stored at higher temperatures.

Studies in the original clinical trial continue and will determine if booster shots may be needed for those vaccinated.

Chamber President and CEO Tony Sheridan opened the program by expressing the appreciation our region and global community feel for Pfizer's work, "I speak for all of us when I express our sincerest gratitude to you and the entire Pfizer team for your tireless efforts throughout the pandemic and your success with the vaccine."

His sentiments were mirrored as the presentation wrapped up in the pride Burkhardt expressed regarding the work of the Pfizer team. "I tell people at work you'll be telling your grandchildren about these times and about what you did to help bring those tragedies to an end," said Burkhardt. "It's been very humbling for us to be involved."

Read the article and access the recording on ChamberECT.com/chamber-blog.

ON THE BLOG

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Get the story on events, connect with resources, gain insights from a guest blog, and see holiday promotions, all on the Chamber blog.

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