

Donor Corner: Meet Kelly Knott



This month's Donor Corner spotlight is on **Kelly Wong Knott**, Senior Vice President/Wealth Advisor at [Wells Fargo Bank](#), who is currently Vice Chair of APCF's Board of Directors:

Born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, Kelly was raised by entrepreneurial Chinese immigrant parents who arrived in the 1970s in search of the "American Dream." Even as young as five years old, she would serve as translator for them and join them in waking up at 5am to sell hand woven baskets with her father at the local swap meet. Although she would feel envious about missing out on sleeping in on the weekends like her younger brothers and friends, she credits her work ethic and perseverance to this experience and the example set by her parents.

Despite growing up poor, Kelly remembers her parents' charity in always donating to their local temple for people in need, especially around special missions such as natural disasters and projects to help the homeless. "You have two hands and two feet, you can walk and you can talk," Kelly recalls her mother teaching her. "Even if you have a little, you should always give back because there are people who may need it more than us."

Kelly continued this family tradition of giving back with her own volunteering with different nonprofits as a youth and into adulthood. As she embarked on her own career at Wells Fargo, she was approached by two of her colleagues about APCF. Encouraged by Susan Choo, the company's Community Relations Consultant, Kelly considered taking over Vivian Wu's position as board member of APCF as Vivian was completing her term.

As it was her first opportunity to join a nonprofit board, Kelly was determined that it would be with an organization that aligned with her goals and values. After speaking with Vivian and meeting with then APCF Executive Director, Debra Fong, she soon realized that APCF is a good fit for what she wanted to accomplish with her community service in promoting the importance of giving back in the Asian American community. She was impressed with APCF's impact on 250,000 people in need every year with 26 different API languages by increasing Asian American philanthropy to support the API nonprofit sector.

"The stereotypes of 'all Asians are wealthy' or 'all Asians are smart' do not help and are not true," Kelly explains. "As I grew up very poor and my parents did not speak English well, my family had to rely on friends and local cultural centers who spoke Chinese to access basic services, such as health insurance and completing school documents."

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Kelly credits her company as setting an example for her own philanthropy and community leadership. “Wells Fargo is committed to community outreach, grants, and philanthropy to give back to the communities they serve,” she says. “Not only is Wells Fargo one of the largest corporate donors in Greater Los Angeles, they are also a long-time supporter of the API community and nonprofits, including APCF.”

Since joining APCF’s board in 2014, Kelly quickly became immersed in the organization’s mission to increase Asian American philanthropy. She served as one of the first co-chairs of APCF’s annual fundraising gala in 2015 and 2016, proving to be a fearless fundraiser who increased the organization’s support in sponsorships, program ads, and silent auction donations through her networks. Kelly is thankful to her family, friends, and clients for seeing her passion about giving back to her community and supporting her involvement with APCF.

“Frankly it was a lot of pressure but also a lot of fun,” Kelly remembers of her experience as gala co-chair. “While I was planning and raising money for APCF’s gala, I was also planning my own wedding which was a month after the gala!”

Professionally and personally driven for success, Kelly continues to be one of the top fundraisers on APCF’s board, as she is constantly motivated by the work ethic as well as philanthropic example set by her parents. Despite the demands of her multiple roles as a corporate executive, wife and mother to a young daughter, and board officer at APCF, Kelly feels that it’s important to always give back no matter how busy life can get. Her advice on how to be an effective fundraiser includes taking the time and opportunity ask. “Whether they choose to give or not, you can learn so much about a person, what they are passionate about, and how they contribute to causes they care about,” she shares.

(This article was featured in APCF’s April 2018 Newsletter – [click here](#) for the full issue.)