

Helping others celebrate the gift of life

Kristina Kwan opens adult day care, event center in Lakeville

by Tad Johnson

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A series of harrowing events when Kristina Kwan was 8 years old have led to where she is today both physically and spiritually.

Born to Chinese parents, the family escaped persecution while living in Vietnam not long after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

Her father saved enough money as a jewelry maker from gold he borrowed from his mother to pay passage on a 30-foot refuge boat whose goal was to be among the less than half of refugees who avoided death and found one of the United Nations refuge outposts around the South China Sea.

The boat and its 149 passengers were rejected by three different nations, as it drifted for more than 10 days with dwindling supplies of food and water.

When Malaysia refused to take them in, the boat was tethered to a government ship and was nearly sunk as it took on water due to the speed it was being dragged.

"I still remember my parents accepting the fact that we would all die," Kwan said. "My dad started to put sweaters on for me and my brothers, he said he wanted us to be warm when we all die together. My mom said she started to pray to all the gods to save us."

Before sinking the refugees cut the tether, bailed water out of the boat, and drifted along until it was spotted by a U.N.



Photo submitted

Phoenix Hall Event Center had a Lunar New Year 2022 Celebration and Open House on Feb. 3 at the business' new location at 20732 Holt Ave., in the former Rosehenge Hall. The event included a ribbon cutting, Lion Dance, games, and music.



ship and taken to Indonesia.

Food was scarce for about six months until a Catholic priest sneaked onto the island, discovered the desperate situation they were in, and arranged for food and supplies to be delivered.

"To this day, I still remember the sweet smell of an apple because that was the day I didn't go hungry anymore," Kwan said.

It was another six months before the family was sponsored by Nativity Church in St. Paul through a connection made possible by Kwan's aunt who was living in St. Paul.

"We arrived in St. Paul on Nov. 2, 1979, with only the clothes on our backs," Kwan said. "Our sponsors said they wept when they first met us because our clothes were ripped and our sandals had holes in them. Ever since we've arrived in the U.S., my parents have

always taught us to work hard, appreciate what we have, love each other and help others."

Kwan has found a perfect day and night fit to serve others after she purchased the Rosehenge Event Center in downtown Lakeville.

The building is an adult day care center (Phoenix Cove) by day and hosts social gatherings at night (Phoenix Hall Event Center).

Phoenix is not only Kwan's middle name, but it also reflects the way in which her family rose from the ashes as did the mythical bird in ancient culture.

The adult day care side of her business was launched in 2015 when the nonprofit center she managed was slated to close.

Kwan decided this wouldn't be the end as she found a space in St. Paul and took over ownership of the business. It later moved to Richfield.

"I set out to look for a building for my adult daycare business as we were re-locating every two to three years, we needed a place of our own so we don't have to move anymore," she said.

Kwan, who has decades of combined experience in insurance, restaurant ownership and event planning, purchased Rosehenge Hall from George Maverick of Fab Weddings. Phoenix Cove opened in Lakeville in September 2021, and the event center started operations this year.

Since purchasing the building, Phoenix has added a commercial kitchen and some interior and exterior upgrades. She said they will be adding solar panels and landscaping in the spring.

The adult day care runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday.

The event venue is for weddings, birthday parties, retirement parties, graduation, and other special occasions.

"I love my job, I help elders stay independent and in their homes with my adult day care program. They come to our center to socialize, exercise, do activities, go on field trips, etc.," she said. "I've worked hard my whole life to take care of people, one way or another."

She said Phoenix Hall is the culmination of years of hard work and dedication to helping others.

"I am looking forward to helping people plan their special events through my event center," she said. "It gives me great joy to bring people together and make them happy."

More information is at 612-987-0101 or facebook.com/PhoenixCoveAdultDayCenter.

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