

On Lok House Lunar New Year Greeting Card Project Proposal

On Lok House is a non-profit organization located at 219 N 10th Street in Philadelphia Chinatown which operates a Section 8, independent living facility with 54 units, as well as On Lok Senior Services, which provides programming and services to 2,300 low-income, LEP (Limited English Proficient) and Asian senior members across the Philadelphia region. Established in 1985, On Lok House remains the only affordable housing dedicated to seniors in the Chinatown community. Philadelphia Chinatown serves as a hub of culture, commerce and services for Asian Americans across the Delaware Valley region.

On Lok has served as a refuge for this population, providing bilingual, culturally-competent recreational and educational programs, daily lunch programs, and assistance to access public benefits and resources. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, cultural and language barriers prevented many On Lok members from accessing many programs and services offered in their own neighborhoods. Some of their members lacked access to a complete education in their home countries and have some level of illiteracy.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has stretched on, On Lok seniors have been especially affected by mental and physical health challenges from continuing isolation due to cultural, language and technological barriers to accessing virtual programming and socialization opportunities. Most individuals lack access to or ability to use smart phones or laptops, which have been a lifeline for others to access social networks and opportunities for mental and physical recreation. Since the beginning of the pandemic, On Lok's regular programming has not been able to transition to a virtual platform. Instead, it has been replaced by distributions of food and resources such as blankets, and limited telephone outreach.

The Asian Lunar New Year, which in 2021 begins on February 12, is a traditional holiday period which is marked by homecoming and gatherings of family and friends, during which cultural traditions and customs are observed. Supported by a group of community partners, On Lok has identified the holiday as an opportunity to outreach to its members and provide some substitution to the warm gatherings and exchanges of good wishes and prosperity which would traditionally take place around this time of year. On Lok proposes to prepare 2,300 holiday cards with traditional new year messages and red envelopes containing small coins symbolizing luck and prosperity in the new year to its members, which include about 300 residents of other nearby affordable senior housing facilities as well as individuals across the region. This effort will include recruiting and coordination of Chinese language writers, securing materials and the logistics of preparing and mailing the cards and in-person distribution to local facilities.

Local community partners, including the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, Asian Arts Initiative, Franklin Square Park, Historic Philadelphia, Chinese Christian Church and Center, and the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival, will support recruitment and coordination of a network of Chinese language letter writers.

On Lok House requests an estimated contribution of \$1,565 for postage and lucky envelopes. The remainder of the materials budget will be covered by the senior center. Coordination and distribution will be supported by in-kind services by On Lok House staff and the group of community organizations.

The proposed project budget is as follows, with Friends Foundation for the Aging requests underlined:

- 2300 Lucky envelopes (\$300)
- 2000 Stamps (\$1,265)
- 2300 Envelope tokens (\$230)
- 2300 Envelopes and cards (\$575)
- Coordination and distribution - In-kind services
- Total budget - \$2,370