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## 20'S AND 30'S ASIAN GOING OUT GROUP LARGEST MEETUP GROUP IN THE AREA

Posted by: Jenny Chen on June 2

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## By Jenny Chen

With over 4,517 members, the DC area 20s and 30's Asian Going Out Group is one of the largest groups in the DC area. The man behind it is J.T. Yaung who started the group when he first moved to the area and, like all new implants to the DC area, was looking for some new friends. He first joined the general 20s and 30s Going Out Group before the original organizer stepped down and J.T. took over. Yaung has grown the original 20s and 30s Going Out Group to be the 2nd largest Meetup group in the world with over 20,000 members.

Meetup.com is an online platform that allows people to organize by creating local groups and allows others to find existing groups. Groups are organized based on interests or activities. There are currently 142,319 Meetup groups in the world.

Vania Cao, a recent Ph.D graduate was on Meetup.com because after moving to the area for school and feeling both bored and lonely outside the lab, and she decided to try being more aggressive about being social.

"I figured a great way to meet people (and single guys) was to check out some local social events, and when I first joined the 20s and 30s Asian Going Out Meetup group, I attended their Lunar New Year bar event alone. It was a crowded and popular event and landed me some girl friends, but wasn't my style of gathering."



The 20s and 30s Asian Going Out Group at their annual Lunar New Year celebration

Cao's fiance had also attended the same event with his friends, but they didn't meet there. Cao still stayed in the group to see if any other events came up that interested me, and when I saw a call for Assistant Organizers, I emailed J.T. to volunteer.

Cao was among those who were instrumental in diversifying the events hosted by the 20s and 30s Asian Going Out group. She organized food outings and board game potlucks, and events that weren't as heavy on the nightlife.

The biggest draw of Meetup groups is that it diversifies your social group. "My social philosophy is that while attending an event is always better for your chances of making friends than not attending," said Cao.

Kerry Cheung, an occasional participant in the 20s and 30s Asian Going Out Group agreed.

Cheung had moved to the DC area from Boston and was looking for a group with a large membership. "It's great for meeting a lot of people in a short amount of time," Cheung said. "It might not be for you if you're trying to learn a new hobby or really get to know someone."





The 20s and 30s Going Out Group with their dragon boating group.

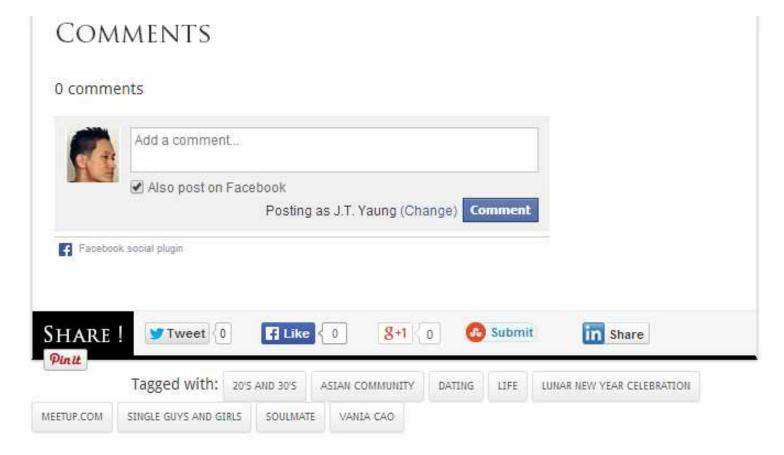
Jeff Ho, also a frequent participant in 20s and 30s Asian Going Out Group events said that the Asian group offers a different experience from other social groups. "No matter what people are wearing, what their ethnic makeup or career they have on them, everyone there shares some common familiarity or at least an interest for the Asian community." That common ground is important to Ho because it allows him to feel comfortable in the group. It's the small things, like sharing similar childhood experiences to rocking out in a karaoke bar with a panda sticker slapped on the base of the microphone, said Ho. "I like to relate to those who respect both themselves and where they come from culturally, because they'll treat others the same without inhibition. J.T.'s Asian socials are a good way to help especially younger people reaffirm a part of who they are, and connect with each other by doing so."

Yaung himself only embraced his own Asian cultural heritage after his former girlfriend, who had a Native American heritage, encouraged him to embrace it.

"It was always something I had ignored for a long time," Yaung said. Now, however, Yaung designs his own t-shirts with Chinese characters on them.

With several events every month for several different Meetup groups, Yaung keeps busy. In fact, he's outsourced a lot of the organizing to a virtual staff and his volunteer assistant organizers. But the busyness doesn't faze him. He started his own fraternity in high school and he even launched the largest 30s and 40s Going Out Group in the world. The reasoning? "I'm getting older," Yaung said, laughing.

Asian Fortune is an English language newspaper for Asian American professionals in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Visit fb.com/asianfortune to stay up to date with our news and what's going on in the Asian American community.



## ABOUT JENNY CHEN



Journalist, On-line Strategy and Marketing Coordinator A writer who has worked with Reader's Digest, Washington Post, Huffington Post, and various local news media, is passionate about drawing attention to Asian American issues. In 2006, Jenny co-founded JJ Express Magazine, a nonprofit children's magazine that uses comics to teach kids about social issues. She has received awards and honors from the Best Buy @15 Foundation,

Kohl's Cares for Kids, the Scholastic Foundation, and more. She is a two time recipient of the Davis Projects for Peace award and the Elijah P. Lovejoy Journalism Award.