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New Chinese Center opens

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■ The facility will provide many programs, services

By CAROL HOPKINS
Of The Oakland Press

After nearly three decades of planning, the Association of Chinese Americans has opened a new Chinese Community Center in a former restaurant in Madison Heights.

"Our people are ecstatic," said Marie Weng, president of the association, who noted the building officially opened Aug. 9.

Having a home of its own means the 800-member association can abandon its old methods of meeting in homes and rented spaces. Formed in 1972, the association had wanted a center since it began.

Early fund-raising efforts included egg roll and bake sales.

"It's been a challenge,"



The Oakland Press/DOUG BAUMAN

Marie Weng, president of the Association of Chinese Americans Inc., sits in one of the newly renovated rooms at the Chinese Community Center.

according to the association's campaign literature.

In 1997, on the association's 25th anniversary, a major donor pledged \$1 million for a building purchase.

That money, along with

corporate and individual gifts, helped the association purchase a 10,000-square-foot former Chi-Chi's restaurant on Concord Drive in 2003.

"We attempted to reno-

For more information

The Chinese Community Center is located at 32585 Concord Drive in Madison Heights. Call (248) 585-9343. Activities available at the center include: Tai-chi classes 7:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesdays; English classes 10 a.m.-noon Wednesdays; Chinese language classes 6-8 p.m. Thursdays; and basic computer classes 2-4 p.m. Sundays. To learn more about the Association of Chinese Americans, owners of the center, visit www.acadetroit.org.

vate it with volunteers," said Weng.

Late in 2004, members realized they could not do the work themselves, and hired professional contractors who finished the renovation in six months.

Changes include a new roof, wiring, heating and cooling system and floors.

"We removed and discarded all the furniture and took out the kitchen," said Weng.

About 2,000 square feet is not yet finished as the association works to raise additional money.

The center, which will eventually have space available to rent, will provide educational and charitable services, programs such as exercise classes, a soup kitchen for the needy and group activities for senior citizens.

It will also house a library, art and archives.

Weng adds, "We want it to be a gathering spot for Asian Americans and for the entire Madison Heights population."

"This building belongs to the whole community."