



Photo by Illumina

Illumina employees in the US celebrate AANHPI Heritage Month

At the San Diego headquarters, participants took a break from work to connect and create art

THE CLOUDS THREATENED RAIN but held out during an alfresco painting event last week at Illumina's campus amphitheater in San Diego, where employees gathered to connect and celebrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

Attendees enjoyed drinks and snacks together while receiving guidance from a professional artist. Each employee sat before a canvas to create their own interpretation of a coastal mountain with blossoms in the foreground. "We chose this painting for tonight because flowers are a universal language across cultures, symbolizing love, appreciation, and peace," said Joanna Ang, an R&D program manager at Illumina and chair of SHADES, the employee resource group that planned the event. "Plum and cherry blossoms are popular motifs in China, Korea, and Japan. Of the many spring flowers, the cherry blossom, sometimes called the Japanese cherry or sakura, is one of the most beloved, particularly because it blooms only about a week each year."

"It's very cool that our campus is celebrating AANHPI Heritage Month with this art event and special meals at the cafeteria," said Cherylyn Saracho, a senior staff

software test engineer who attended the event. "The recognition feels nice."

Her friend and colleague in software, Sam Noah, agreed: "Being Asian American and having Asian-related activities makes me feel a little more at home. You feel included and seen."

"I really like that Illumina, even in times that are tough, will prioritize having these events and supporting these groups," said Layla Qasim, a program manager and lead for Illumina's on-market library preparation portfolio. "This event seemed like a good opportunity to meet people that you probably have a lot in common with. And I think it's important to find community at work, right? My sister and I are first-generation American and we have a lot of conversations about the importance of finding people who understand your unique experiences. I feel that in the culture here. Illumina is a place that is appreciative and acknowledging of the unique attributes each person brings to the table."

Every Wednesday in the month of May, the Illumina cafeteria will prepare meals highlighting different Asian cuisines. ♦