



2026
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

CHARLIE ZHANG

Philanthropist & Founder,
Pick Up Stix & Zion Enterprises

Charlie Zhang's inspirational life story began with humble beginnings in his native Shanghai. Charlie came to America in 1980 with twenty dollars in his pocket. With hard work, determination, and belief in the American dream, he transcended many obstacles to achieve his goals in and outside of business.

From his early jobs as a dishwasher and gas station attendant to founding the successful Pick Up Stix, a popular take-out chain, Aseptic Solutions USA, the top beverage manufacturer, and Zion Enterprises, a real estate company dedicated to revitalizing communities, he has gone on to be named Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young and is the recipient of the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor. In addition, he has been honored with Orange County's Outstanding Philanthropist award and named Distinguished Leader Honoree by Segerstrom Center for the Arts, OC Arts Award Visionary Arts Patrons, and in 2024 he was inducted into the Orange County Hall of Fame. Charlie also participated in a TEDx Talk show.

Outside of his work life, Charlie dedicates his full time to giving back to the community, providing others with the opportunity to strive and create new success stories. Charlie has received an honorary doctorate degree from Concordia University and executive in residence at the business school University Cal State Fullerton. He is a supporter of many local and international communities, such as the Pacific Symphony, Pacific Chorale, multiple universities and is the board director of Nixon library and Bower Museum.

Charlie's latest community contribution is the OC Music & Dance located in Irvine, CA. This center will provide the community with a world-class facility in which people of all ages, experience levels, and cultures can come and participate in dance and music classes.

Charlie aims to help communities gain a better understanding of hope and to improve and develop the relationship as our society continuously becomes increasingly diverse on a daily basis.