

Group provides legal help for Asians

Lawyers: Community is underrepresented

By **Bill Rankin**
STAFF WRITER

As the state's Asian-American population continues to skyrocket, a diverse group of lawyers is attempting to address the legal needs and help break down the cultural barriers that confront Asian immigrants.

This summer, the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association opened a Georgia chapter, the first of its kind in this state.

So far, the chapter has 20 dues-paying members and another 16 Asian-American lawyers have expressed an interest in joining, said Natsu Jenga of Atlanta, president of the new chapter.

Countries represented include Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea and the Philippines, but all nationalities and races are welcome to join, Ms. Jenga said.

Ms. Jenga, 38, was born in Michigan and raised in Kobe, Japan. A graduate of Yale



JOHN SPINK / Staff

Helping a community: Alvin Wong (left) and Natsu Jenga helped establish a chapter of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association in Atlanta.

Law School, she handles airplane finance and international corporate legal work for the Atlanta firm of Troutman Sanders.

She helped found the new chapter with Atlanta lawyer Alvin Wong by searching

through the 25,000-member list of the State Bar Association and finding Asian names.

"They've put a lot of energy into this new chapter," said John Sammon, president of the State Bar of Georgia, expressing support for the Asian-American chapter. "As our bar is becoming more diverse, it is imperative to have a voice from every sector of our membership."

Mr. Wong, 41, is a native of Hong Kong and may have been the city's first Asian-American lawyer when he opened his Downtown practice in 1976.

He lauds the fact that Georgia has long provided indigent defense services and legal aid to African-American defendants but says the courts "have not typically looked at the Asian community, especially those members with limited English-speaking ability. It's a problem we believe needs to be addressed."

In 1990, Atlanta's total Asian-American population ranked 19th nationally, according to a study prepared for the Asian-American Bar by Georgia State sociology professor William S. White. Of the top 20 cities, Atlanta's Asian population increased the most since 1980 — by 330 percent, he said.