

Families With Children from China Fall Newsletter 2011 Austin, Texas

Letter from the Prez...

Yin yang, balance, ebb and flow. Hopefully you're feeling it, because we sure are! I don't think we've ever had this many events in one year, and it's not even over. With 2011 winding down, we are beginning to prepare for our 2012 Chinese New Year Celebration. So far this year, we've been able to offer a bevy of events for you to choose from. And they run the gamut between light and fluffy Braiding/Hair Techniques Workshops to weightier subject matter, such as Jane Brown Adoption Workshops.

To offer something for parents *and* children, to include fun-loving events *and* more serious fare—well, it takes a bit of work. But done the right way, it can happen. And it can happen while keeping the fatigue and burnout factor manageable for board members (I'm learning that this is tricky, though). I'm happy to say that the current board has achieved this because of its flexibility; the willingness on the part of some (including non-board members over the summer) to step forward and allow others a bit of a respite, which was key to our success this year. We truly are a team. The lines and definitions of our various roles blur at times, and that's okay.

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Mark Your Calendars

Lion Dance Classes Sundays (tentatively) beginning November 6, 2011

> Jane Brown Workshops November 11—13, 2011

Chinese New Year Saturday, February 4, 2012

So please, enjoy! And many thanks to board members: Denise, Deanne, Becky, Stacey, Alan, Kathie, and our new Secretary, Jena, as well as non-board members: Cheryl Bonfils-Rasmussen, Rowena Fong, Ed.D., Dianne Harwood, Kellena Page, Pat Morgan, Linda Nenno Breining, and Abby Turner—you are simply fabulous!

Sincerely, Kim L. Goodman President, FCC-Austin With additional support from Adoption Knowledge Affiliates and the UT-Austin School of Social Work, Families with Children from China—Austin, Texas Presents:

JANE BROWN WORKSHOPS November 11–13, 2011

Don't miss this rare Austin appearance of internationally renowned adoption expert Jane Brown.

Jane Brown, MSW, the adoption specialist who created and currently directs Adoption Playshops around the world, will run her workshops for adults and children in Austin November 11—13, 2011. For adoptive parents, their children, and anyone interested in the impact adoption has on families, these workshops provide the opportunity to get valuable information and insight on handling the delicate topics of adoption, abandonment, birth parents, and much more.

Alan Greenburg, adoptive father and FCC board member, writes,

" ...(Adoptive parents) are only PART of the story and so is the fact and reality of (our children's) adoption. Just as we take the lead on all difficult parenting topics... we will find that they will ask about some things (make-up, sex), but they may or may not ask about adoption. Yet if not aired and processed, the topic can contribute to a climate of shame later in life as they encounter individuals who don't understand the issues surrounding adoption."

Jane Brown's last Austin visit four years ago produced rave reviews from parents and children alike, who were able to process their adoption, abandonment issues, questions about birth parents, etc. in a relaxed and safe setting.

The Friday night adults-only session is also open to educators, health care professionals, and anyone interested in adoption issues. Saturday and Sunday Play and Adopt Shops are open to adoptees and their parents. <u>Register at the Events section</u> of the FCC website and get additional information about Jane and her philosophy in the <u>FAQ section</u>.

Save the Date: Chinese New Year, 2012 Saturday, February 4, 2012

While the venues and general framework of this event will remain familiar, we board members are brainstorming some new ideas to freshen up this event. Details are forthcoming, and we hope to see you there! In addition, if you have a suggestion that you'd like to share with us, please contact <u>Denise Davolt</u> or <u>Deanne Brown</u>.

If you wish to donate items for the auction, please contact <u>Dianne</u> <u>Harwood</u>. Any proceeds from the auction will go toward a few selected charities. If you have a charity in mind that you would like for us to consider, please contact <u>Alan Greenberg</u> or <u>Denise Davolt</u>.



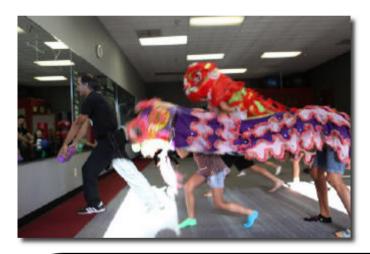


By Kim Goodman

The Lion Dance Workshops were a great success, thanks to Sifu Santanu Rahman and Instructor Rick Galione of Austin Kung Fu Academy! Approximately two dozen kids attended each of the workshops, both of which sold out quite rapidly.

The workshops were taught in a very structured manner, beginning with an extensive, rigorous warm-up to build stamina, followed by choreography broken down and compartmentalized in a very logical manner, and repeated several times so that everyone could learn and retain the steps. The importance of synchronized movements between the paired lion dancers was emphasized and reinforced throughout the entire choreography section of the workshop. Those in the lead position switched to the back halfway through, so that everyone could learn both positions.

While learning the choreography, all the kids in the lead positions used props to simulate holding up a lion head. The last 15—20 minutes of the workshops were spent allowing two teams at a time to use two authentic Chinese lion dance heads and cloth bodies to get a sense of what it would be like to perform a real Chinese Lion Dance. Proud parents snapped several pictures as their beaming child took the lead position full of happiness and excitement; it was lovely!



The lion dance class was cool! The best part was dancing with the lion heads and blinking the eyes to make them alive and seeing my friends' happy faces! ~ Kayli, age 8

Lion Dance School Enrollment

It is official: FCC Austin's own Lion Dance School will commence tentatively on Sunday, November 6, 2011, through Austin Kung Fu Academy. We are still working on the timeframe, but we will have this final piece of

information soon. We intend to offer two classes every Sunday. These classes will each be 90 minutes long, and will include a short break for a snack provided by their parent. The classes will cost \$15, and there will be a one-time Registration Fee of \$15 (this will include a t-shirt and sash). All payments go directly to Austin Kung Fu Academy.



HELP WANTED: SENIOR THESIS PROJECT

In my first year at the University of Texas, my roommate introduced me to an organization called China Care, which I promptly joined because I love kids. The different aspects of China Care, from our involvement in the Austin community to the fundraising we do for orphans in China with physical and mental disabilities, kept me motivated and active in our chapter. (Not to brag too much about our amazing group, but we fundraised over \$9,000 last year to sponsor six surgeries for orphans in the China Care orphanage.)

I also have been involved in FCC's Chinese Culture Camp for the past two years as a counselor, which made me much more aware of and interested in the developmental and social issues surrounding adoption. Now in my last year at UT, preparing to write my senior honors thesis in Psychology, I chose a topic that was both familiar and interesting to me. With Dr. Rowena Fong as my thesis supervisor, we are designing a study to look at cultural socialization and overall well-being in Chinese adoptees.

For parents that have adopted children from China who are now between the ages of 12 to 15, I would greatly appreciate your participation in the study. It will not take place until the beginning of 2012, but please let me know as soon as possible if this would be a project you might be interested in. It would take roughly ten minutes on the part of the parents, and around fifteen minutes from the child, all conducted electronically.

If interested, please leave your contact information <u>on this linked spreadsheet</u> or send an email to me at <u>lucyliu2k@hotmail.com</u>. Please feel free to email me any questions you may have regarding the study.

Thank you so much in advance for all of your help.

Lucy Liu President • China Care 2011-2012 The University of Texas at Austin Psychology • English

What is a senior thesis? Many colleges have a senior thesis project listed as a graduation requirement. It is an independent research project that can span one or two semesters near the end of students' studies. Students are required to explore a theory or singular topic of study and apply the skills they have accumulated across the course of their studies. Under the direction of a mentor and/or faculty member, the students research, document and present their project.

Magic of the Moon Festival

by Stacey Cone

More and more people tell me that FCC-Austin's Moon Festival is their favorite FCC event every year. Maybe it is Moon Lady magic making Moon Fest seem so special. It's possible. But it's for sure that FCC members make Moon Festival an annually great event. This year, like last year (and the year before), more than 200 people turned out. To sit together. Eat together. Celebrate the season together. And revel in the multicultural mingling that is Moon Fest's real attraction.

But more than even this aspect of the festival, members are appreciating a tradition that has begun. And it's one worth keeping. Every year at Moon Fest, the children make wishes on tea lights, set the tea lights on a bamboo raft, and carry it down to a pond. They launch the raft in the pond and let the currents carry the raft out to deeper water, where the bevy of tea lights float and flicker with the hopes of all our FCC kids.

And the raft ritual is accompanied by another developing tradition. Lion dancers. Each year, lion dancers entertain everybody who comes and a few innocent bystanders—all equally fascinated by the crowds, the cheering children, the beat of the drums, the clashing of cymbals, and the wild, shining, fluorescent flow of the lions' ballet on the lawn. And each year, the lions conclude their dance by leading the parade of children with their raft down to the pond. It might not be precisely how the Chinese across the globe celebrate



The kids made tea light wishes, and the Chinese lion dancers led the kids with their raft to the water's edge.



Allison McAlister of Austin Face Painting worked Moon Festival magic, painting fantastic dragons on the arms of our FCC kids.

Moon Festival. But it's festive! And fun! And the food is wonderful. Ask any kid who goes.

The food is good because Moon Festival happens at Central Market on North Lamar. So everybody can get whatever they like to eat in the store or its restaurant and then sit inside or out. Outside the kids play on the fabulous playscape that makes Central Market at this location such a great site. And outside this year, too, was where an expert face painting artist,

Allison McAlister, sat patiently and plied her craft. If you didn't meet her or see her but were at Moon Fest, then you knew she was around. Because nearly every child had a fabulous, fantastical dragon

painted magnificently up at least one arm. These dragons were exquisite, that rare kind of body art that parents actually hate to wash off later that night in the tub.

If you haven't been to Moon Festival ever or recently, you're missing out. It's a great time. It's a favorite event. It's music and dancing and food. It's laughter, community, tradition and ritual. It's FCC members having fun. And maybe some Moon Lady magic as well. Come find out for yourself next year.



Former FCC-Austin presidents celebrated Moon Festival this year (from L to R): Abby Turner, Sandi Ross, Linda Nenno Breining, Tyla Gilchrist, Holly Brooke, Becky Harding, and current president, Kim Goodman.

Where Was He Born?

By Jena Goodridge

I am a Caucasian woman. My son is a Chinese boy. Together we turn heads.

A couple of weeks ago, we were in San Antonio at a lovely hotel for a much-deserved weekend away from real life. We wanted to spend the weekend playing in the pool and enjoying our family. My son and I left our hotel room to find the ice machine. He was intrigued by how the machine worked and wanted to give the big red button a push.

As we walked down the long carpeted hallway, a rather large, burly, tattooed man walking the opposite way said to me out of the blue, "Where was he born?" referring to my son, whose hand was attached to mine.

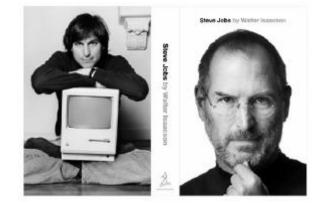
Not a, "Hello, how are you?" Nor a, "Nice to meet you, may I please engage you in conversation about the origins of your son?" But a blunt query that, in my mind, was clearly questioning the difference in my race and my son's. This is a topic that I am particularly sensitive about.

I was not in the mood to discuss this with a stranger, so I flippantly said, "United States," and kept walking without giving him a glance. He wouldn't let it rest and said, "Really?" And I said, "No!" obnoxiously and added, "China." Well, it turns out this gentleman has three kids, one born in China with a special need, one born in Ethiopia, and a two-week-old just placed with his family from Texas.

After my apology for my behavior and explanation that I guard my child's privacy very strongly, we went on to have a lovely conversation about our children.

As I've relayed this story to other adoptive parents, I've heard the following: we all have been asked this type of question before. What I was surprised by was what parents told me: most of the time, there are good intentions behind the query, as I learned in San Antonio.

What I took away from this interaction and from talking with other parents about it is that I shouldn't look at this question as an invasion of our privacy, but as an opportunity to discuss adoption and perhaps make a friend. These types of interactions are really a gift to connect with other adoptive parents as well as an opportunity for me to be more open about the way people approach us about adoption.



Steve Jobs

By Kim Goodman

As most of you may know by now, Steve Jobs was actually placed for adoption soon after birth. Born February 24, 1955 to an unwed grad student, he was ultimately adopted by an Armenian couple who was unable to have their own children. A more in-depth account is provided in <u>this article</u>.

A biography depicting his life entitled, *Steve Jobs*, by Walter Isaacson arrived in bookstores on October 24, 2011, and it looks to be a great read.

Also worth mentioning is his <u>2005 Commencement</u> <u>Speech</u> at Stanford University. It was incredible. It is under 15 minutes in length and definitely worth seeing. Below is one of my favorite quotes from him:

> Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.

> > —Steve Jobs Stanford University Commencement Speech June 12, 2005

He was arguably one of the greatest innovators of our time, and my family will certainly miss him. Two words: Think Different.



Give Me That Water Bottle!

A father told me a story recently of a family outing that had a rough ending. Loading up in the car after a fun bike ride, the dad asked his older daughter to share her water bottle with her baby sister who was crying and asking for water. Older daughter refused, several times, with rudeness, defiance, and turning away. It quickly became a power struggle, and this dad told me later that he was so mad that he came "this" close to just yanking the water bottle out of her hand.

I think we've all been there (I know I have). Especially when we ourselves are tired, hungry, emotionally drained, or stressed—our children's negative behaviors can really push us to—or past—our limits. Yanking, yelling, whatever your version of "not parenting the way I want to" is.... everyone has had that moment.

When this father and I talked about this incident later, he was still full of self-doubt. What was he "supposed" to do? His daughter was being uncooperative, unkind, defiant, and disrespectful—all traits that we parents believe that we are supposed to teach our kids NOT to be. He wondered if he had done the wrong thing by letting her "get away with" those bad behaviors. He worried that he was teaching her that she doesn't have to respect him, or his limits, or his authority.

My take on this scene is that the immediate need was a moment's pause, a deep breath to help everyone regain their inner balance, even just a little. In that moment, here are a few items our higher selves might be able to remember:

- Right now, we are ALL tired and thirsty and hungry, so no one is at their best... these behaviors are definitely related to our physical states.
- When a person is stressed (tired/thirsty...) they CANNOT learn.
- This child of mine is, usually, pretty darn cool and cooperative and kind. The behavior in front of me now is NOT the norm. (refer back to #1.)
- I need to calm my own anxieties about raising a 'good' kid here and remember that taking the 'long view' is essential to parenting.
- When my brain is peaceful, I can see solutions or options that would otherwise be overlooked. In this situation, there were other water bottles available, so that the immediate need (baby's thirst) could be handled.
- The non-immediate issues (defiance, etc.) can be handled later! When we have all returned to our normal selves (rested, watered, fed, etc.), I can bring this incident back up for discussion with my child. Her ability and likelihood to listen, discuss and absorb will be 1000% improved.

When we are peaceful, we have better perspective, more creativity, and are more effective in whatever we do. So when you find yourself in those moments of high conflict and parenting stress—just try to remember to take a breath. Then take another... and very soon your own inner best self will show you what comes after that.

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About Katie:

Katie Malinski, LCSW, is a licensed child & family therapist and parenting coach. In addition to her one-on-one work with families and children, she presents dynamic parenting workshops on a variety of topics, including: Beyond Birds and Bees, Parenting Through Divorce, Mother-Daughter Puberty & Communication, Your Parenting Toolkit, and more. Katie blogs about parenting and therapy at <u>www.katiemalinski.com/blog</u>, and about Teaching Healthy Sexuality to Children at: <u>www.BeyondBirdsandBees.com</u>. You can sign up for her free parenting newsletter at <u>www.KatieMalinski.com</u>.



The gymnasium at the Northwest Hills United Methodist Church was filled to nearly overflowing on Friday, August 12th, as camp families celebrated a week of community. The 100 children, ages 5—13, had participated all week in five levels of age-appropriate curricula assisted by Asian-American high school and college counselors and taught by area Asian-American teachers and adoption experts. In addition, the camp had guest speakers Lane Allison, co-founder of the China's Children International website, Sarah Han, a Korean-American adult adoptee, Kevin Wang, guzheng player, and Heidi Zhou Castro, YNN anchor/reporter.

Camp co-directors Rowena Fong, Ed.D., and Becky Harding designed five different camp experiences—one for each of the age clusters. At the dinner, each of these classes presented their weeklong project with the five-year-olds singing Chinese songs, the 1st and 2nd graders performing an intricate ribbon dance, the 3rd and 4th graders demonstrating their Kung Fu skills as lead by Sifu Santanu Rahman, the 7th and 8th graders

showing off the videography learned from Stacey Cone, Ph.D., and Yvonne Lim Wilson, editor of *Asian Austin*. The evening ended with our own lion dancers comprised of 5th and 6th graders as taught by Linda Cao

"I loved the lion dancing. I liked the dumplings. I liked everything."

and Todd Morton of the Summitt Lion Dance Team.

"We so appreciate the love and enormous energy that has gone into this camp! Sepia tone photographs of each child, a camp tradition, adorned the hallways, and brightlycolored kites and scrolls hung everywhere in the gym that night. "Star of the Week" posters and life books went home as well as books to revisit all year long. Many name tags now hang on door

knobs and the stained glass coloring pages are posted in windows to remind and root us in the extraordinary event that binds our community together each August.



A favorite activity was learning the lion dancing techniques and routines.



Crafted items, photos, and stories adorned the camp walls.



Beautiful handcrafted pillows were created for the week's service project.



Camp leadership: Rowena Fong, Lane Allison and Becky Harding.

Create Your Own Chinese Dumplings

Campers in the forest get burned marshmallows and s'mores, but at Chinese Culture Camp, yummy dumplings were the hit. Below is the recipe dished up by Joyce Wu and Wendy Kuo. Also, check out this short video illustrating how to stuff and fold a dumpling.

Dumpling Ingredients

- 1 lb ground pork
- 1/3 to 1/2 lb garlic chives
- Dried glass noodle (made by mung bean)
- 1 to 2 teaspoon minced ginger
- 1 tablespoon veggie broth or water
- 1 teaspoon Soy sauce
- A splash of sesame oil
- 80–100 dumpling wrappers

Dipping Sauce

3 oz. (6 Tbs.) soy sauce 1 oz. (2 Tbs.) rice vinegar A splash of sesame oil

- 1 Soak some dry glass noodle in lukewarm water for 5—10 minutes until it becomes soft and untwined. Chop it finely.
- 2 Place the ground pork in a large mixing bowl and add minced ginger. Add veggie broth or water gradually a little at a time and stir the ground pork until it produces a moist and somewhat sticky mixture. Add finely chopped garlic chives and glass noodle, soy sauce, and a splash of sesame oil into the bowl and mix it well.
- 3 Place a dumpling wrapper in your hand and dollop about a teaspoon or so of the mixture onto the center. Do not overfill or it will be difficult to adequately seal the dumplings, and/or they can burst open during cooking.
- 4 Wet the edge of the wrapper with some water, fold it over, and then crimp the edge to seal it. Arrange the dumplings on a tray sprinkled with a thin layer of flour to keep the dumplings from sticking to the tray and each other. You can freeze them at this point for later use.
- 5 To cook, bring a pot of water to a boil and "slide" the dumplings in. Add some room-temperature water into the pot to bring down the boil. Repeat this action for 1 to 2 times until the dumplings float. This trick can prevent the wrappers separating from the filling.



Braiding/Hair Techniques II Recap

By Kim Goodman

Needless to say, having a team of four stellar individuals from a professional salon gave this event a very polished and well-rounded feel. Salon Director Celeste Contreras from Toni & Guy set us up with Claudia, Lara, Erica, and Clayton. I couldn't believe how generous she was to provide us with four of their team members during a tax-free shopping weekend for this two-hour event—a very busy weekend for any Texas mall, including Lakeline Mall, where this particular salon resides.

It was Clayton, my colorist, who initially urged me to contact Celeste in the first place to get Toni & Guy involved. I had casually mentioned our success with the first Braiding/Hair Techniques gathering, and its popularity with FCC members while he was transforming my hair, and he insisted on being involved in the second event. It was delightful!

We set up four mini workstations in front of the mirrors at Austin Kung Fu Academy, as Sifu Santanu Rahman kindly offered his space to us for this event. Claudia handled how to do simple, quick up dos. Lara taught us how to do fishtail braids and French braids. Erica brought all kinds of eye shadows, lip glosses, and blushes (she was a BIG hit with the girls). And Clayton discussed the importance of hair care, lice prevention, and selecting the right products. He answered questions about the latest trends and fun colors for the school season. He also handed out

several packets of various samples to try. My kindergartner thought she hit the lottery with all of those packets!

We both came away with a new favorite hairstyle for her: the fishtail braid. To be honest, I didn't even know what a fishtail braid was prior to this event, although I did recognize it once I saw the finished look. It reminds me of a v-shaped, herringbone weave. It is simpler to do than a French



braid, but seems to take me just as long because the pieces I use tend to be small for a tighter, more even weave.

This event was fun, informative, and worth doing again in the future if we have enough interest for a threepeat!



Book Review: *Mao's Last Dancer* By Li Cunxin

This inspirational autobiography was hard to put down. Born into abject poverty in 1961, the sixth son of a peasant family of nine becomes one of only 15 students from Shandong Province chosen in 1972 to

finish his education in the Beijing Dance Academy by Madam Mao's cultural advisors. The odds of being chosen were staggering because there were more than 70 million people residing in Shandong at the time. And it almost didn't happen. Just as the advisors were leaving his classroom, Li Cunxin's teacher tapped one of them on the shoulder and asked, "What about that one?"

After years of training at the Academy, Li is one of only two dance students ultimately permitted to attend a summer school in the United States, where he later defects to the West and becomes a principal dancer for many years with the Houston Ballet.

He reconnects with his parents whose extended visit to Houston includes the very first performance by their son they'd ever witnessed, and his life's work is revealed to them in the form of their son's flawless performance in the Nutcracker as a principal dancer, effortlessly soaring and gliding through the air on sheer energy, euphoria, and love.

Such a tumultuous and exhilarating life! But of course, it doesn't end there. His story takes on the characteristics of a fine wine as it mellows down a bit when he ultimately falls in love with the future mother of his children and wife to this day, retiring to her native Australia. Against all odds, he is finally allowed to return to China and visit the rest of his family to become whole again.

Needless to say, I highly recommend this book!

-Kim Goodman

For more information about the book, the movie, or the man himself visit <u>the official website</u>.



Treasurer's Report

After spending a year being the treasurer of this fine local organization, I've now got my sea legs. All that means is that I'll go into 2012 with a greater sense of humility at the hard work all the OTHER board members put into this, and how easy is my job: collect funds, deposit funds, work events and ride herd on my fellow board members to ensure that we stay in the black financially. Fortunately the value of our events is appreciated by our members, who trust us through dues and event fees and volunteering, and that value is equaled by the ability of the board to work within budgets (mostly).

So: what does a treasurer tell you? We netted some extra money from both Chinese New Year in January and Culture Camp in August (whew, one never wants to go over budget!); we were slightly in the red on a few events in the spring and fall. And the bottom line: we have a budget surplus that we will use judiciously in coming months on events, on scholarships, and on donations that our members care a lot about. Chinese New Year costs and Culture Camp expenses and some of the smaller events often stretch our budgets. And the board very much endorses making scholarships available annually to families who need help sending their kids to camp. Our cushion this year can help with all these things. And in the past, when we have found extra money in the budget, the board unanimously votes to pass on the love to several adoption—or social welfare—related groups here in the U.S. and in China, such as Adoption Knowledge Affiliates. We try to keep our members up to date about these donations.

Speaking of sponsorships, remember to support (and mention FCC-Austin to) the organizations that support us through their *financial* contributions, such as Lotus Travel, UT School of Social Work, Lily Pad, Texas Asian Foundation, and many of the organizations mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter or on the back of the Culture Camp tees. As we approach 2012 (yikes!) I want to remind everyone that we'll start the new Gregorian year with more events, more educational and entertaining activities for the kids, and your opportunity to continue to support FCC-Austin through your *amazingly reasonable* dues and your event attendance. Thanks for a great first year as your treasurer.

Alan Greenberg Dad of Claire-Lily, 9 Treasurer, FCC-Austin



Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference. Robert Frost

It is late and I am putting my final edition of the FCC newsletter to bed. I have always liked to work in the late hours of the night. It is when I feel the most creative, the most inspired. The world is quiet, but it still has an "edge" to it that speaks of the possibilities. I guess it is that crossover between letting go the best of the what was that day and the anticipation of what tomorrow may bring.

Similarly, when we close out one chapter of our life and move on to the next, it is always bittersweet. I have loved crafting the layouts of the newsletter, getting a sneak peek into what was coming up, working with the different folks honing, shaping words—hoping that we get it "just right". At the same time, I've felt pulled in a new direction and it is time to put away my layouts and editing tools. It's time for a new editor to breathe some fresh air into the FCC newsletters and bring their heart and soul to you in the quiet, subtle way that editors do.

Wishing you all the very best on your journey... ~ Angela Meek

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