

Families with Children from China

Austin, Texas Chapter

Spring Newsletter

April, 2012



President's Letter

Okay, let me just say that increasing our brood by one child felt like a four-fold increase, not a two-fold one! Yeeessshhh... but we have adjusted. And to be honest, at first I thought that perhaps this 2.5-year-old child was bipolar; I'm not kidding. Even at ~18 months, Theo's file described him in part as obstinate, willful, and tantrum-prone, but my gosh, nothing could have prepared me. However, in dealing with those ugly situations swiftly, consistently, and lovingly, as well as adhering to our adopted mantra: "You get what you tolerate (in general, when it comes to kids)," our hard work has paid off. The duration and frequency of his tantrums are much, much more manageable, and we now have a happy, impish, sweet little boy who wakes up with a wide smile and open arms just about every morning.

He bonded instantly with my husband, who claims he was just like Theo as a child and totally understood him. But honestly, Theo's antics hit me between the eyes, and I didn't know how to be an effective parent, especially because I was more concerned for his physical safety during these outbursts due to his medical condition (a blood disorder, something we will be managing and monitoring). And he initially treated me as a caregiver—the one to be handed his left-over banana peel, etc. Perhaps this was due to the role I was unwittingly playing, or his own perception of women as nannies, or both... I don't know.

But I feel like I finally "get him"... we have bonded. And after some expected setbacks, Maya has now embraced her role as big sister, and we finally found our groove as a family... and it's wonderful!

That being said, I'm back in the FCC saddle! We have some fun and interesting offerings for you, and we hope you'll enjoy them!

Cheers,
Kim Goodman
President, FCC-Austin

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Dragon Boat Festival

By Becky Harding



Saturday, April 28, 2012
10am–3pm, Festival Beach, Downtown Austin

In the triumvirate of Asian festivals we should probably celebrate, the spring Dragon Boat Festival is right up there behind The Moon Festival (aka Mid-Autumn Festival or Harvest Moon Festival) and the big Kahuna, Chinese New Year. We are fortunate to live in a city large enough to host actual dragon boat racing and the free celebration that Amy Wong Mok, CEO of the Asian American Cultural Center, throws each year at Festival Beach is a fabulous time. It's a great opportunity for us to assimilate into the Asian American community and I encourage you to make the effort to participate in this event, which usually boasts attendance of around 3,000 or so people. Here are a few reasons why.

Zongzi (pronounced dsong-dse in Mandarin) is this delightful tasting sticky rice dumpling-like food wrapped in bamboo leaves. Depending on the region in China, the rice can host a variety of toppings both sweet and savory. Our Austin festival's Zongzi usually has warm, soft peanuts nestled in the gooey rice. Yum doesn't even begin to cover this. Yes, a lot of cool performances happen on an outdoor stage and the actual dragon-headed boats are impressive but let's cut right to the chase about the food. These sticky rice creations are particularly associated with the Dragon Boat festival and the somewhat macabre legend goes something like this:

The poet Qu Yuan (340–278 BC) was a powerful voice in the Chu Kingdom but as these situations can sour, jealously prevailed and he was exiled when the kingdom was conquered. Despondent, Qu Yuan drowned himself in the Miluo River. Rumor has it that his sympathizers tossed

these rice bundles in the river to distract the fish from eating him in hopes of keeping his body intact, a way of showing respect for the dead. To commemorate him and possibly wake the protective water dragon living in the river, his supporters rowed boats on the anniversary of his death and the event gradually evolved into a racing event and national holiday mostly celebrated in southern China and Hong Kong. I am sure this is horribly simplified to those who were there, so please forgive me.

Of course, in addition to selling the Zongzi, Ms. Amy's crew will have hot and fresh Jian Dui or fried Chinese pastry made from glutinous rice flour and coated with sesame seeds. These are also known as matuan in northern China, mayuan in northeast China, sesame seed balls in the USA and "how-many-of-those-have-you-eaten?" at my house. These tasty little balls of joy probably originated in the Tang Dynasty and came along with the southward migration of people from central China. Usually, in Austin we are offered the ones filled with red bean paste. Don't let the idea of bean paste hold you back from sampling these nuggets of heaven as they are delicious.

Okay, in addition to lunch, the Dragon Boat Festival will run these boat races all day long. About 25 people per boat, mostly men, will row to the drumbeat. In Austin, many of these boats are sponsored and rowed by local Asian organizations within the technology businesses. It's easy to find a spot of shade and sit riverside and watch these boats go by all day.

The heart of the festival is this large temporary outdoor stage that will feature music, performances and demonstrations

almost all day. FCC families with children in Chinese dance programs will be performing, as well many other Asian dance and martial arts programs. Expect the lion and dragon dance teams to bring that energy to the event as well. Plenty of seating is available, and Ms. Amy provides a large dragon bounce house free to any children wishing to shed their shoes and jump themselves into a sweaty mess.

By the outdoor stage, a populated horse-shoe of vendors and community service tents are usually arranged to offer information and/or items for sale. FCC will have our booth there as we embrace the opportunity to engage with our kids and be a part of the Asian American community. We'll have face painting, temporary tattoos, and other small items for sale as well as water. Please come by and say "hello" to your hardworking team of FCC officers, especially president, Kim Goodman, whose ideas and planning will make this an awesome event for not only our children but all the children who stop by our booth.

A couple of tips when you go—water. In my seven years of coming to this event, it rained once and all the other days were hot... very hot. So bring water or buy some and you might want to wear light clothing and a hat in case we get high temperatures that afternoon. Parking is easy if you arrive early, but expect to walk a bit if you come at the height of the day. ❖

Becky Harding serves on the FCC board and is the parent of two daughters from China.

Sources: www.losaltos.patch.com, www.chinesefortunecalendar.com, and Wikipedia

Families with Children from China—Austin, Texas Chapter Presents:

A Series of Summer Gatherings

Once again, FCC-Austin is proud to offer this metaphorically appetizing pu pu platter of education and social assortments as a sampler to our members for the summer.

Questions may be directed to the leader of the respective session. ENJOY!

"For some of us, books are as important as almost anything else on earth. What a miracle it is that out of these small, flat, rigid squares of paper unfolds world after world after world, worlds that sing to you, comfort and quiet or excite you. Books help us understand who we are and how we are to behave. They show us what community and friendship mean; they show us how to live and die."

—Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*

Book Club

Abby Turner has been leading this book group of adoptive moms for over ten years and welcomes new members in reading *Widower's Tale* by Julia Glass for May and then participants come to a related theme dinner to chat about it.

When: The first Wednesday of every month (May 2, June 6 and August 1) starting at 6:30 pm

Where: TBD that week and emailed to participants

Cost: Free to anyone

Contact: Abby Turner abby814@austin.rr.com

Cameron Park Zoo Field Trip

Approximately an hour north of Austin, this well-shaded zoo has paved pathways for strolling or wagon pulling. Sporting a wonderful Asian area, this place is a sweet treasure. Check out the zoo at <http://www.cameronparkzoo.com/>.

When: Saturday, June 9 meeting at 10 am just inside the entrance by the Patio Cafe

Where: 1701 North 4th Street in Waco, Texas

Cost: \$9/adults (13 and up), \$6 ages 4–12, & under 3 is free. We would receive a discount rate for a group of 20 or more.

Contact: Host Bethany Morrison at bethany@cre8d.com

Katie Malinski's Mother-Daughter Puberty & More Workshop

The Mother-Daughter Puberty & Communication Workshop is a fun, experiential, non-threatening way for moms and daughters to get started (or go deeper) in their conversations about puberty. We play games, talk about and practice good communication, get a brief overview of the nuts and bolts of puberty, and play with tampons and pads. Most girls are initially hesitant about attending, but all are laughing and having fun by the end, and tell their moms on the ride home, "That was a lot better than I thought it would be!" Moms appreciate the reminders about good communication, the 'touchstone' experience of talking about body changes and menstruation, and especially the matter-of-fact and positive way that puberty is presented. Every mom is asked to read the detailed summary of the workshop [here](#) before registering.

When: Sunday, June 10 from 2 pm–4:45 pm

Where: 3906 North Lamar Blvd. (Katie's office)

Cost: \$75, registering online at <http://www.eventbrite.com/event/3316129633>

Contact: katie@katiemalinski.com, or by calling 512-940-4477

Note: This event caps at eight adopted daughters, ages 9–11

Continued on next page

Glass Blowing Demonstration & Day Outing in Wimberley

Glass blower and adoptive parent Tim de Jong will demonstrate a variety of glass blowing techniques. We will then eat lunch at Brewsters pizza. Families can then choose to shop and explore Wimberley or join some of us for swimming at Blue Hole: <http://www.blueholeregionalpark.com/>.

When: Saturday, June 23, 10:45 am at Wimberley Glassworks

Where: Wimberley Glassworks, 6469 Ranch Road 12, San Marcos 78666 (512-393-3316)

Cost: Free, members only

Contact: Alan Greenberg at ggroup@mindspring.com

Parent-Child Chinese Cooking with Dorothy Huang

With your child, learn to make several fabulous Chinese dishes taught by highly acclaimed Houston chef and cookbook author Dorothy Huang. This event is co-hosted by Steve and Sandi Ross in their home, and is limited to 12 people.

When: Saturday, July 14 from 5 pm–8 pm

Where: 3200 Aztec Fall Cove, Austin 78746

Cost: \$40/adult & \$20/per child due that evening (includes all materials and food)

Contact: Sandi Ross at rosyk@austin.rr.com

Rocking River Aquatic Center

This is a multi-ages water park that features a great place for each age level of kid to play and swim including a great lazy river attraction. Coolers are welcome. Come on out and try to beat the July heat with this water event (<http://www.roundrocktexas.gov/pools>).

When: Sunday, July 15 starting at 4 pm

Where: 3300 Palm Valley Blvd., Round Rock, located in Old Settler's Park

Cost: \$5.50/adult & \$4.50/child under 17

Contact: Becky Harding at bjh0902@aol.com

Waiting Child Parent-to-Parent Workshop

Dianne Harwood, Alison Gaylord, Amy Stephenson, and other parents of children adopted through the waiting child program will lead a discussion for parents interested in learning more about the process and the experience.

When: Saturday, July 21 from 3 pm–5 pm

Where: Howson Library meeting room, 2500 Exposition Blvd., Austin

Cost: Free to members and \$7 each for non-members

Contact: Dianne Harwood at di@austin.rr.com

Braiding/Hair Techniques + Makeup Workshop

Targeted for girls around the age of 10, this workshop will be conducted by a team of salon professionals from Toni&Guy, and can offer a plethora of hair and makeup ideas for our community.

When: Sunday, July 22 from 2 pm–4 pm

Where: Austin Kung Fu Academy, 7739 Northcross Dr., Suite G, Austin

Cost: \$3 for members & \$5 for non-members

Contact: Kim Goodman at weatage@gmail.com

Xi Shuang Ban Na Exchange Program Begins

Local Asian American community leader Amy Wong Mok's eyes sparkle when she talks about Xi Shuang Ban Na, the area in southern China known for its beautiful rainforests and wildlife. "It's often called Shangri-La," she adds. In a recent meeting to plan a possible cultural exchange program, FCC-UT camp co-directors Rowena Fong, Ed.D., and Becky Harding, together with Mok, began designing a project unlike anything FCC Austin has ever done.

Starting with a trip in July of 2013, an Austin delegation of FCC families would travel to Xi Shuang Ban Na in Yunnan province and spend a week as US ambassadors. "We are looking for young FCC people entering middle school and high school who would be excited to go to China and talk to other students like themselves about their lives here. In exchange, these young Chinese people would host them around their city and countryside," said Harding.

Xi Shuang Ban Na is known for its natural beauty and historical and cultural resources. Its tourist attractions include Menglun Tropical Botanical Gardens, Manfeilong Pagodas, Jingzhen Pavillion Wild Elephant Gully and the Dai People's village at Ganlanba.

The project is in the early stage, with introductions and initial planning happening in the next few months. The team plans to host a pre-application orientation/information evening where students and parents can come to learn more about the guidelines and time requirements of the program. FCC Austin will keep membership updated about that meeting and other details of the project. ❖

Chinese New Year Recap

On Saturday, February 4th, FCC Austin held a Year of the Dragon Chinese New Year Celebration at Covington Middle School. The Celebration was followed by a community dinner at the Buffet Palace Chinese restaurant. Although initially we feared rainy weather, good weather prevailed and allowed us to enjoy both indoor and outdoor activities. Over 250 people attended this year's Chinese New Year Celebration! As always we are fortunate to have Covington Middle School which provides a versatile venue, affordable price and helpful staff. Buffet Palace provided a delicious all-you-can eat Asian food buffet as well as a setting for us to gather as a community and get to know each other better.

The Celebration showcased a number of exciting activities:

- A silent auction which benefited FCC's sponsored charities
- A musical slideshow of "then and now" photos, featuring FCC children when they first joined their families as well as more recent photos
- A children's craft area staffed by University of Texas China Care volunteers
- Family portrait opportunity by award-winning amateur photographer Justin Lai

The highlight of the entertainment, of course, was the children! There were many lovely dance and musical numbers on stage: Summitt Elementary Dragon Dancers, Singer Selma Lan of Marvelous Mandarin Chinese School, Ehru Player Xiaowen Xiang, For the Love of China Dance School, and April Rain Chinese Dance School. The indoor performance was capped off with a Lantern Parade in the auditorium, which allowed all the children to be on stage for a great FCC photo opportunity!

The afternoon ended with a finale performance by the Texas Dragon Dance/Lion Dance Team in the courtyard accompanied by faux fireworks (also known as bubble wrap!) that the children and adults enjoyed jumping on to the beat of the drums.

Each year we are thankful for the opportunity to gather, spend time together and celebrate our children's heritage. The FCC Board would like to express our sincere appreciation to everyone who came to celebrate with us. ❖

Jena moved from Houston to Austin recently. She enjoys the opportunity to serve on the FCC board as secretary and all the joys parenthood brings.



Director Selma Lan of Marvelous Mandarin singing "Thinking of You."



From left to right: Love of China dancers Alisan Turner and Ariel Zeng performing a ribbon dance.



Katie Malinski
LCSW

If not Punishment, then What?

I don't spend much time advising parents on how to punish more effectively. In fact, I tend to tell parents that I am not a big fan of punishment at all. A parent rightfully asked me the other day: "Well then, if not punishment, what DO we do?"

What a good question! Most parents punish because they believe that's how to get kids to behave appropriately. So here are three things that help achieve the goal of cooperative, positive, appropriate behavior more effectively, while—bonus!—helping to maintain a positive and long-lasting parent-child relationship.

1. Show kids what you DO want them to do, and support them, encourage them, catch them doing it, praise them. Give them positive options!

2. Change the child's environment so that it supports positive behaviors. Simple example: don't keep the jar of cookies where your three-year-old can reach them. More complex example: figure out how long a play date your kid can handle before falling apart. Keep play dates within that time frame until you're both ready to experiment with incremental increases.

3. Figure out what's behind the unwanted/negative behaviors. Behavior is a communication, I like to say... what is your child's behavior saying to you? Hint: it's usually something along the lines of: "I'm tired and over stimulated" or "I can't handle this much freedom," or "I really need more time with you/attention from you," or "Something's not right with me," or "I am not getting enough opportunities to feel powerful and in charge of my

life." When parents understand what the child's behavior is communicating, they can better meet the underlying need... which generally has a positive effect on the unwanted behavior!

There are many, many more ways of shaping behavior, but these are some favorites, especially the last one. A little understanding goes a long way. ❖

© 2012 Katie Malinski, LCSW

Katie Malinski, LCSW is a licensed child & family therapist and parenting coach. In addition to her one-on-one work with families, she presents dynamic parenting workshops on a variety of topics, including: *Beyond Birds and Bees*, *Raising Media-Savvy Kids*, *The Mother-Daughter Puberty Workshop*, *Typical Parenting Conflicts*, and more.

She blogs at www.katiemalinski.com/blog. For more information, please visit: www.katiemalinski.com or www.BeyondBirdsandBees.com.

Treasurer's Report

Recently FCC Austin has made several donations based on the board's wonderful ability to put on events on budget. A lot of factors can determine how we do in terms of event proceeds: attendance, weather, donations from third-party organizations like some of our event sponsors, cost of space rental and goods necessary to put on the event. While most of our smaller events break even, we tend to have net proceeds after the bigger events most of the time, which tend to accumulate over

time. And our bylaws state that all proceeds from the Chinese New Year silent auction are to be donated to charity.

So we are in the fortunate position every year to look at our surplus and identify some good causes. This year we have stuck with several from the past: **The Philip Hayden Foundation**, **Love without Boundaries**, and **UT China Care**. Through Love Without Boundaries' Sunflower Education Program, we are now sponsoring a teenage girl in Hunan named Lucy, enabling her to attend

high school. FCC also is participating in Austin's new **Asian American Resource Center**, which only just broke ground in late March. We believe this center will be an invaluable asset to our entire community, and are participating in the "Paver Program" whereby we are sponsoring a spot on the limestone wall. Be sure to look for it when the center opens in 2013. ❖

Alan Greenberg is the father of Claire-Lily Greenberg and a member of FCC Austin's board.

Update: AISD Chinese Immersion Program at Doss Elementary

By Robin Davis

Recently, the Austin Independent School District chose Doss Elementary School to be the site of a future Mandarin Chinese language Immersion program. While the details of the model to be used are still unknown, the program will be planned over the 2012–2013 school year. AISD officials as well as Doss staff will be working together to plan and implement this program.

It is important to remember that Doss is closed to transfer students so the program is potentially available only to current Doss students and families residing in the Doss school neighborhood.

At the present time, the plan is that during the 2012–2013 school year all Kindergarten

and 1st grade students will receive Chinese Instruction using the FLES model (Foreign Language in Elementary Schools). However, this FLES model will likely not continue after the 2012–2013 school year because in 2013–2014, the Chinese Immersion program for grades K, 1st and 2nd will launch. This will include one Immersion class per grade level. Students must apply to the Immersion program. If there are more applicants than spots available, a lottery system will be implemented. The district is still in the process of developing the parameters for the lottery.

The plan is for a teacher to be hired before the end of the current school year. This teacher will instruct the FLES model for 2012–2013 and then teach the Immersion

program the following school year. The teacher will also be involved in planning the model for the Immersion program along with school and district personnel.

For those Doss families interested in the Mandarin immersion program, it is key to remember that this is a work in progress and details of the program are still under construction as the school examines resources and explores various immersion models with the support of the AISD central office. ❖

Robin Davis and her family are members of FCC-Austin.

Somewhere Between Documentary Update: Donation Campaign Succeeds!

By Kim Goodman

Director Linda Goldstein Knowlton expressed much gratitude recently to those who showed their support for her upcoming documentary, *Somewhere Between*. The interest surrounding this documentary is incredible, and they were able to raise over \$100,000 to fund distribution for the project.

This film intimately depicts the lives of four teenagers, all of whom are Chinese American adoptees, as they navigate through the

trials and tribulations of adolescence and wrestle with their identity as transracial adoptees.

Due to the success of the fundraising campaign, *Somewhere Between* is expected to arrive in theaters across the country this year, with DVD distribution in the fall!

Obviously, a documentary such as this is vital to our community, and the board intends to make a valiant effort to get it

screened here in Austin. We also hope to conduct a Q&A session with the director after the screening if possible.

We'll keep you posted as more details become available. For more information on this film and to view the trailer, please go to www.somewherebetweenmovie.com. ❖

Good Luck Life: The Essential Guide to Chinese American Celebrations and Culture

By Carrie van der Wal

As parents raising children from China, we all well know that racial identity is fundamental to who our children are. As their parents, it's our esteemed duty to help our children explore, nourish and celebrate their unique identities, a profound part of themselves. To help embrace and celebrate China, our family, like so many others, adopted Chinese celebrations when we adopted children from China. Unfortunately, I was clueless (read: Google-dependent) on just how to do that—and do it well—until a friend recommended the book *Good Luck Life: The Essential Guide to Chinese American Celebrations and Culture*, by Rosemary Gong. I'm now recommending it to you.

Part calendar, cookbook, memoir, “Miss Manners,” cultural roadmap, symbol dictionary, legend guide and history lesson, *Good Luck Life* should be part of your library. It's organized by Chinese holidays and by special occasions, including recipes, rituals, suggested timetables and checklists in almost every chapter. It's also filled with facts. For example, many of us have attended the Dragon Boat Races here in Austin, but did you know that they are part of the Double Fifth (fifth day of fifth lunar month), the second of the three Chinese festivals that are widely celebrated and designated for the living? (The others are Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival.) Did you know that dragon boat racing originated over 2,000 years ago when dragon boats raced out into the Miluo river to save the poet Qu Yuan or that the boat's drumming symbolizes the dragon's heartbeat? Maybe you did know all that. I didn't, before reading this book.

Before the Dragon Boat races were associated with Qu Yuan, the Double Fifth was originally an agrarian harvest festival, associated with the summer solstice. Gong writes, “Farmers welcomed the warm season of monsoons by paying homage to the river dragon, the ruler of rainwater and streams, to ensure a bountiful rice harvest in Southern China.” A few pages later, Gong explains dragons in more depth. “Li is the water dragon that rules the rivers, seas, rains, and directions of the compass.” Li is one of the most popular Chinese dragon types with the others being Long (fire-breathing symbol of the emperor), Jiao (earth dragon) and Mang (created by the imperial court to represent commoners, recognizable by three or four claws).



Before the next Dragon Boat races, we'll be re-reading chapter three of *Good Luck Life* together in our house—bringing heritage to life—just as we concentrated on *Good Luck Life* readings before and during the last Mid-Autumn Festival. Though our homemade mooncakes weren't exceptionally tasty this past year, it wasn't the mooncakes that made our feast so special. It was special by making the mooncakes, together, as a family. Making the mooncake memories. We didn't get the recipe from *Good Luck Life*, but we did read its story of Chang-E as we sat at our outside table, drinking tea, nibbling mooncakes, waiting on the moonrise.

Perusing my copy of *Good Luck Life* as I write this review, it deeply saddens me—as it often does—that our children are shadowed with such great loss; I realize that this book review's deadline is the same date as Qing Ming, the Chinese festival to honor lost ancestors. Gong writes, “Honoring the dead provided the living with a sense of peace and identity. Today, the festival of Qing Ming marks the devotion of the present generation to the generations of the past and provides a heightened sense of familial continuity for all future generations.” Though we can't leave offerings at nor tidy the graves of our children's biological ancestors, we can devote our families to keeping the cultural heritage alive in other ways, providing our children with a loving component—intimately celebrated—that contributes to their own sense of identity. While *Good Luck Life* won't tell you how to adapt the Chinese holidays for your own family, it's the best beginner's reference that I've found for our family's Chinese foundation. ♦

Carrie van der Wal shares her good luck life with her husband, Hans, and twin sons Odin & Torin van der Wal.



Author Rosemary Gong

UT China Care

By Shan He

China Care is a student-run organization at UT that fundraises to send money to China. Each year, we are able to sponsor many surgeries for children in China who have been abandoned due to their disabilities, so that they could get adopted and have a chance at a healthy life. This year alone, we raised over \$7,000.

Extensions of UT China Care that cater more to the Austin families with children from China include two programs: Playgroup and the Big Brother/Big Sister (BBBS) program.

Playgroup is a time when China Care members meet and interact with local Austin children who have been adopted from overseas and their siblings. Playgroup gathers every other Sunday from 2–4pm, and the last two playgroups of the semester are on April 15 and April 29. On April 15, it will take place on the Gullett Elementary playground, and we are planning to tie-dye shirts and have a water balloon fight! On days when we are indoors, like April 29 (at Jewish Community Center), we set up themed events during playgroup that teach kids about Asian culture and allow them to make friends with other children with similar experiences. Playgroup usually includes time for crafts, stories/skits, a snack break, and time out on the playground.

As for the BBBS program, we have many fun-loving student candidates who love kids and would like to mentor a “little sister/brother.” The purpose of the BBBS program is to match an adopted child with someone older whom they can look up to as a role model. If you have a preference for who you would like to be your child’s Big Brother/Sister, you can let us know, and we will try our best to find the perfect match. Once assigned, the parents and the students are free to arrange their own meetings outside of China Care events. It is quite flexible.

You can also visit our website at www.txchinacare.org to get more in-depth information and see some of the



Asian American Resource Center Groundbreaking Ceremony

By Kim Goodman

It is official: the groundbreaking ceremony for Austin’s first pan-Asian resource center took place on March 29th, and it truly looks like it will be a fabulous venue! This center is located near 183 and just east of I-35, at 8401 Cameron Road. It’s a great location because the center is centrally located, and a bit to the east of central Austin, which will help some people avoid the bulk of downtown and central Austin traffic.

The vision for this space began approximately 12 years ago, and will benefit the entire Austin Asian American community and those of us connected to that community. Phase I of the project encompasses the main building, which includes a 14,000 square foot exhibition hall that can be partitioned as needed, an event hall, conference rooms, nine classrooms, a resource/information center, warming kitchen, etc.

wonderful pictures that we’ve gathered over the years. The website also includes the contact information and profile of all of the 2011–2012 officers, announcements, and a list of BBBS candidates.

If you would like to be enrolled on the Playgroup mailing list, so that we can send you RSVPs as each individual date approaches, please email pg.utchinacare@gmail.com.

Phase II will be comprised of retail space, as well as Asian country consular offices, and Phase III will round out the site with a performance hall, cultural event center, senior activity recreational center, and conference center. The projected completion date for Phase I is one year from now.

The only downside: I have a feeling this venue will likely be booked every weekend, and therefore require planning for events months in advance, as there are many Asian and affiliated organizations in Austin. The architecture and grounds look so peaceful and beautiful, and it was very plain to see that much thought has been put into these plans. By all means, check it out when you get a chance: <http://www.austinaarc.org>. ❖

Kim Goodman is President of FCC Austin and mom to Maya and Theo.

I sincerely hope to see many new faces at playgroup soon! ❖

Shan He is a sophomore at UT, and this is her second year to be involved with China Care. She is the Playgroup Director, and her main roles include planning and organizing bimonthly playgroups, as well as participating in various fundraising events. She also was a counselor with FCC’s 2011 Chinese Culture Camp and will be returning in 2012 as well.

FCC-UT Chinese Culture Camp Sold Out in Five Days!

Peter Noone's "Something Tells Me I'm into Something Good" could be the theme song of our FCC-UT Chinese culture camp. The word is definitely out that we are offering an incredible week of adoption and Asian activities to our kids.

Co-Camp Directors Rowena Fong, Ed.D., and Becky Harding, with assistants Deanne Brown and Dianne Harwood, have been planning this third annual event for 100 children adopted from China and their siblings for several months. "We really read over all the evaluations and listen when people tell us what they like the most about camp.

"We try to keep the popular foundational activities and then add something different each year," said Harding. She added, "This year, we will tweak the Mandarin classes so that we intertwine the many types of Asian foods into the instructional curriculum. We want the campers to be able to go to a Chinese restaurant, recognize items on the menu in Mandarin, and

then order them by name. We want them to know which foods go with which festivals. We will have a team of volunteers helping the teachers provide samples of these foods so the kids can really get a feel for the major foods of China."

Adoption guides Em Hardy, Ph.D., and Pat Morgan, LPC, will return to lead the week-long adoption journey sessions for camp. All classes will be reading *Kids Like Me in China*. The book details an adoptee's experiences returning to The People's Republic of China and her orphanage as she shares her feelings about her own adoption journey. Each camper will be given a copy of the book to keep.

All campers will learn the Five Elements Tai Chi form taught by Amy Lam. "I have wanted to add this piece for a long time," added Harding. "The morning time will, hopefully, see the entire camp performing the five elements form each day," she said. The five elements and dragons will be

common themes running throughout the many camp activities.

The soul of the camp are the counselors that accompany the campers from the moment they arrive until they are picked up by their parents at the end of the day. We have a wonderful balance of both college, contracted counselors this year as well as high school volunteer counselors. Harding noted, "It's always such a joy to see the kids interacting with the counselors, who are some of the finest role models on the planet."

This year's service project will be lead by FCC parent and art major Carrie van der Wal. All campers will be creating artwork inspired by Chinese New Year celebrations and that will hang on the walls of the Dell Children's Medical Center. These framed festive pictures will be presented to the hospital representative at the traditional Friday night pot luck dinner. ♦



FCC Board Member Deanne Brown, assisting the Bunnies with their service project: making pillows for children at Dell Children's Hospital.



From left to right: Camp counselor Em Hardy, Ph.D., Linda Cao, instructor of Summitt Elementary Dragon Dance Team, and camp co-director Rowena Fong, Ed.D.

In the Beginning: A Texas Chinese Adoption Story

By David Norman

“The framed photograph is on my bedside table. It is an image of my parents sitting on a green plaid-upholstered couch holding a baby wearing split pants. My mother looks at me through tears of happiness as I stare back in confusion and curiosity. My father has a face of excitement like none other that I have ever seen. Now there I was 12 years later, sitting on the same couch in the Changzhou Children’s Welfare House with the orphanage officials who were present when I was adopted. Nothing had prepared me for the flood of emotions that came over me as they presented me with my original adoption documents.”

Those words are from the essay my daughter, Genevieve, wrote when she was applying for college three years ago. She was describing her reflections upon returning to the Chinese orphanage where she had been adopted 12 years earlier.

According to adoption officials, Genevieve was the first infant from China to be adopted through an accredited Texas adoption agency after the doors opened for American citizens to adopt Chinese orphans in 1992. Dottie and I had originally applied to adopt a baby from Taiwan. After several months of waiting, our adoption agency contacted us and asked if we would be willing to pilot a new adoption program in the People’s Republic of China. We jumped at the opportunity, and a few months later we were on our way, accompanied by a couple from Houston (Garth Cook and Shirley Kelly) who were adopting a three-year-old.

Our prospective daughters were among the many orphans in the Changzhou Children’s Welfare House. Prior to our arrival, we had received only confirmation that daughters had been selected for us,

but no background information, no medical records, and no pictures. We just took it all on faith that everything would work out for the best. When we arrived at the orphanage, we were ushered into a reception room with several sofas. After a preliminary conversation with the orphanage officials, two nurses arrived. They presented a toddler (Kelly) to our friends and deposited a seven-month-old baby girl (Genevieve) in my wife’s arms. That first encounter with our daughters is forever frozen in our memories.

Our translator, reflecting on the beauty of the tiny girls, told us that generations of Chinese emperors came to Changzhou to select their wives because girls from Changzhou were considered the most beautiful in China. Then he asked, “Are you satisfied?” Our unanimous “YES!” resonated throughout the hall.

We spent 26 days in China dealing with all the bureaucratic paperwork required of foreign adoptions. At that time, Chinese procedures for American adoptions were being revised, and documents had to be couriered back and forth to Beijing for approval. Despite our eagerness to return to Texas, this time was a special gift. It

afforded us a unique opportunity to bond with our daughters, enjoy the local culture, and visit historical sites in the region.

Flashing forward 20 years later, we have many treasured memories. We remain close friends with Garth, Shirley, and Kelly. They have become part of our extended family. In 2004, our families returned to China to visit the orphanage and tour the country. The vice mayor of Changzhou hosted a banquet in the girls’ honor. We also posed for family pictures in front of a statue honoring American families who have adopted children from the orphanage. Our family names are carved on the base of the statue. It was an emotional time for all of us. Genevieve experienced a metamorphosis. She embraced her Chinese heritage with enthusiasm.

Our daughters are now grown. They remain close friends and stay in touch regularly via Facebook and email. Kelly is an electrical engineer with IBM in South Carolina. Genevieve is a junior business major at Austin College. As of this article,

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Genevieve is spending her spring semester abroad at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and interning with a Chinese software company. She visited Changzhou recently and was treated like royalty by the municipal government.

Genevieve now has a little brother, Nicholas, who was adopted in Beijing in 2005. The adoption process the second time around was streamlined compared to our first experience. This time, we spent only two weeks in China. Since Nicholas was two years old, he was already speaking Mandarin, and orphanage officials had done a wonderful job of preparing him for the arrival of his new parents. He walked up to us with a smile on his face exclaiming, “Mama! Baba!” and presented each of us with a piece of candy. Any concerns we had harbored concerning his adjustment to a new environment were immediately dispelled. When we left the orphanage, he was grinning from ear to ear, and he never looked back. He reacted to all things new with delight. Everything was a big adventure.

Today Nicholas is a bright, happy, extroverted third-grader who keeps his parents on the go. He can’t wait for his sister to return from Shanghai, bearing gifts and stories from their shared homeland. And so our adventure continues... ❖

David and Dottie Norman’s story speaks for itself! Genevieve was a counselor at FCC Culture Camp in 2011 and is returning for the same in 2012. Nicholas of course will be a camper.

Austin Area Asian Culture Camps

Note: FCC Austin does not necessarily endorse these camps, but is offering them as a resource to our community.

Asian American Cultural Center

11713 Jollyville

June 4–August 24, 8 am–6 pm

\$260/week, includes lunch and two snacks

language, Chinese culture, calligraphy, origami, martial arts and more

Pre-K to 5th grade

<http://www.asianamericancc.com/>

The Lily Pad

The Quarries Church 11400 Mo Pac Expressway

June 11–July 13, 9 am–2 pm, with extended care options

\$210

cooking, singing, arts and crafts, storytelling, fitness and more

K to 5th grade

Brandy Chung, Director

http://www.lilypadschool.com/camp_registration

Marvelous Mandarin

14735 Bratton Lane, Suite 107 (Wells Branch area)

June 4–August 20, 4 sessions (each are 3 weeks long), 9 am–2:30

\$620/3-week session

with a different area of attention per session, covering: Chinese geography, history, crafts, legends, cuisine, poetry, nature, sports and customs

Ages 5 to 10

Selma Lan, Director

<http://www.marvelous-mandarin.com/index.php?summer-camp-2012>

“This summer, in addition to attending FCC Austin’s fabulous culture camp, our daughter probably will do a few weeks of camp at Austin Chinese Education Services (ACES) in northwest Austin. She goes to Chinese class after school there during the academic year, but their summer program puts aside textbooks and instead emphasizes songs, stories, and other informal ways to learn Chinese.”

—FCC Member Cheryl Dragel