

Families with Children from China

Austin, Texas Chapter

Fall Newsletter

November, 2013



President's Note

We say grateful prayers at dinner time at our house. We have had this tradition for years and it's always interesting to hear what is on my children's minds. When out-of-town guests sit at our table, especially those with children from China as well, the conversation usually turns to how lucky we are to live in such an incredible city. Sometimes in the throes of homework and grocery shopping, I forget we are so blessed to live here.

For starters, we have not one but two terrific Chinese dance schools where our children can learn ethnic traditions with other children from China. The availability of Mandarin schools or classes is almost embarrassing. Beyond these weekend or after school offerings, we have the new Mandarin immersion program that just started at Doss Elementary this fall. The Doss program will feed to the vertical team Chinese language programs of Murchison Middle School and Anderson High school and it is a gift for those who live in central Austin. Austin High offers The Academy for Global Studies with a Mandarin component, as well as a travel piece that looks awesome.

Our good fortune continues with the excellent UT China Care program, now in its eighth year, offering our little ones an awesome playgroup throughout the year, and our tween/teen group some older college kids to connect with—all while raising money for children in China who have significant medical needs. This is a great organization with some of the brightest students in the nation and we are so lucky to have them in our backyard! We are also grateful for our relationship with Rowena Fong, Ed.D., of The UT School of Social Work, whose endless hours of support for our culture camp help shape our children's view of their ethnic identity.

I haven't even touched on the new Asian American Resource Center, the amazing variety of Asian restaurants and markets, Chinese cooking classes at Central Market with Dorothy Huang, Amy Wong Mok and the Asian American Cultural Center, Adoption Knowledge Affiliates, our friendship with our sister city Xishuangbanna, Dragon and Lion dance schools, the plethora of martial arts programs and a healthy and active FCC chapter!

ATX. We're raising our children together in a pretty incredible city. I am so grateful.

Becky Harding
FCC Austin President

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AKA Annual Conference November 8–9 in Austin

By Robyn Gobbel

The 21st Annual Adoption Knowledge Affiliates conference will be held November 8 and 9, 2013 in Austin, TX. Adoption Knowledge Affiliates (AKA) is an adoption triad group that provides support and education to adoptive parents, adopted people, and birth families. This two-day conference has something for everyone! Keynoter Deb Wesselmann, LIMHP is a therapist and co-founder of the Attachment & Trauma Center of Nebraska. She is also the mother to an adult daughter born in Korea. On Friday, Deb will speak about the importance of preverbal experiences on adoptees and how we—as parents—can support our children and help them thrive. On Saturday, Deb will help the audience look at common behaviors in adopted children through a new lens, helping parents understand what is driving the behaviors and how we ‘calm the storms.’ Additionally, there are 14 different breakout sessions to choose from! Breakout sessions include: *Using DNA to Discover Genealogical Roots; Mindfulness and Attachment; The Importance of Being Truthful; Nutrition: Nurture, Health, and Behavior; Self-Regulation for Children and their Parents; Talking about the Hard Truths in Adoption; and “You’ve Given This”—Therapeutic Parenting.* This two-day conference is an opportunity to meet with new families on a similar journey, and reconnect with old friends.

AKA is honored to invite all members of Families with Children from China to join us in this weekend of friendship, support, and education. Childcare is available on Saturday! For more information and to register for the conference please visit: <http://adoptionknowledge.org/aka/conference/schedule/>. ❖

Dragon Boat Reminder

The April Dragon Boat Festival will be here before we know it and now is the chance you have been waiting for to sign up to be a paddler in our very own FCC boat! We also need a drummer and sweep (steerer). This Southern China event is rich with folklore and tradition. Coordinator Kellena Page is looking to put together a great team that will commit to practice approximately eight times and will have the muscle and athletic prowess to take on the heavy hitters in an always tight competitive day. Join us paddling by emailing Kellena at kellenapage@yahoo.com to add your name to the roll of FCC honor. ❖

FCC Parent Movie Night

Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

Sunday, November 10, 2013

3 pm at Kellena Page's home

RSVP to Kellena at

kellenapage@yahoo.com

Kellena Page will host the first in what we hope will be a quarterly, rotating social gathering center on watching an Asian-based movie. This is for parents who would like to watch a film and have a casual discussion about the themes and cinematic influences. Or not.

Bring your own snacks and beverages. The concept is that someone volunteers to host every three months and they get to vacuum and show a movie. The event will cap at around ten people, so first come, first served! ❖

Save the Dates

FCC Chinese New Year—
Year of the Horse

Sunday, January 26, 2014

2:30 pm–5 pm

Asian American Resource Center

5th Annual FCC-UT
Chinese Culture Camp

August 4–August 8, 2014

Summitt Elementary School

Registration forms online

March 1, 2014 ❖

FCC Austin Road Trip to the Chinese Lantern Festival in Dallas, January 2-3, 2014

By Carrie van der Wal

Located at Fair Park in Dallas, the Chinese Lantern Festival is a spectacular outdoor exhibition of brilliantly colored and illuminated figures—animals, mythic creatures and buildings. There are 24 unique lantern scenes, constructed in Sichuan, China by a team of over 100 artisans and technical staff. Seventeen scenes have been added since last year, thus most have never been seen before. Highlights include the Imperial Dragon boat, over 120 feet long, set in the middle of a lagoon, and the Porcelain Pagoda, over 50 feet high, comprised of plates, bowls, spoons, and cups—some 68,000 pieces tied together by hand. The festival includes daily acrobat shows, craft demonstrations, and food.



FCC Austin has put together a community road trip to go see the Chinese Lantern Festival, and we hope that you'll consider joining us. We've chartered a bus for the ride, with a limited number (56) of bus seats available for purchase (via Eventbrite)

beginning October 10. We've also reserved a block of hotel rooms for the night of January 2. If the bus tickets have sold out and/or you'd prefer to drive yourself, you are welcome to join us either at the hotel, the Lantern Festival, or both.

Please note that besides the travel arrangements—which FCC is facilitating through the chartered bus—each family is responsible for reserving/paying for their own hotel room and meals. This arrangement gives every family the greatest flexibility while still offering us a fantastic community-building event to share.

Currently, the festival is running in conjunction with the State Fair of Texas. After the State Fair, which runs from October 24–December 8, the festival will be open during the evenings Thursday–Sunday, from 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Then for the holi-

days (from December 12 until January 5, 2014), the festival will be open daily with those same hours. Tickets for the period following the Fair will be available through the Chinese Lantern Festival box office and online. Adult tickets are \$22, children ages 4–12, \$14; children under 4 years old are admitted without charge. Additionally, on Thursdays, either during or after the State Fair, tickets for adults over 60 years old are half price. What better way to end winter break than making memories with your family and with the FCC Austin community? Dallas, here we come!

Please feel free to contact board member and event planner Carrie van der Wal with any questions: carrielee@yahoo.com or (512) 809-3434. ❖



Doss Chinese Immersion Program

By Jena Heath

Back in 2011–12, during a Parent/Principal coffee hour in the school cafeteria, Doss Elementary School Principal Janna Griffin tested the Chinese immersion waters for the Austin Independent School District.

She asked if parents would like their children to learn Chinese. Most hands shot up. From that moment on, the journey to this year's debut of AISD's Chinese foreign language immersion program has been a study in frustration and reward. Today, three classes, one each in kinder, first and second grades, spend half the school day speaking and writing in Mandarin. Language Arts and Social studies are taught in English; Math and Science in Chinese. These classes will matriculate together through fifth grade. My daughter, Caroline, is in the second-grade class.

The story of how the Doss program went from concept to reality holds lessons for others who wonder: Why not our school? Should I move to Northwest Hills and try to get my child enrolled? The answers to those questions have much to do with the overall challenges facing public schools in Austin and throughout the state.

Why Not My School?

The Doss program was initiated by the school district, not the school. The School Board voted unanimously in December 2011 to place dual-language programs in four schools: Doss (Chinese), Blanton, Casey and Galindo Elementary Schools (Spanish) as part of Superintendent Meria Carstarphen's efforts to expand language instruction. The district chose Doss because Chinese was already established at Murchison Middle

School and Anderson High School and so there would be a clear vertical progression for students who started at the elementary level. Griffin, who started as Doss principal in 2011–12, was instructed to implement the program. It took intense advocacy, planning and education to build understanding and support on the ground. Some Doss faculty feared that hiring a Chinese teacher would mean firing an existing faculty member (it hasn't).

Others, both teachers and parents, wondered why the district was launching a Chinese program, as opposed to say, Spanish (there are Spanish-English dual-language immersion programs throughout AISD). Many in the Doss community knew little about Chinese language or culture, and some teachers and parents feared kids would be isolated in the immersion classes. In addition, Griffin had a plan of her own. She wanted to implement FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools), which exposes students in each grade to a different language for one hour each week.

Chinese immersion was originally slated to start in the 2012–13 school year with one kinder and one first-grade class. The program ground to a halt, however, after the Campus Advisory Council, making a late entry into the discussion, voted to delay implementation. Concerned parents contacted school board members and district officials. After days of intense discussion, we learned that the program would start, one year later than planned. We lobbied to add a second-grade class so that the parents who had been willing to make this leap of faith (my husband and I among them), despite all the unknowns, would not miss out on the chance to have their children included.

The delay was a hard pill to swallow, but Griffin used the time well. She hired Connie Soong, who introduced Chinese to Doss by teaching Mandarin in the FLES model in the kinder and first-grade classes. This phased-in approach allowed kids to embrace Mandarin (who were less fearful than their parents about new things)... and many did. Teachers and parents became familiar with the idea of Chinese on their campus. Critically, they got to know Soong, whose easy manner belies her highly organized and determined approach to teaching and planning.

Griffin and Soong also did their research. They met with parents, traveled to immersion language conferences, and talked with educators around the country. In all of this, they worked closely with Tina Dong, AISD's Instructional Coordinator for World Languages. The district settled on the 50/50 Utah Chinese dual immersion model. Nearly half of Utah's 41 school districts offer program in which children spend half their school day being taught in a foreign language. AISD officials decided that Utah's approach would be a good one to emulate here at home. They also hired Nancy Chiu, who is doing an amazing job teaching the second grade immersion class. Next year, she will teach the second-and third-grade classes.

This time for research and education has evolved into regular, fruitful communication with parents. Those of us enrolled in immersion have signed a contract, formalizing our commitment to help our kids succeed. That means managing early frustrations (Griffin brought a consultant in at the start of the school year to tell parents what to

Continued on next page

expect), balancing homework in two languages, and helping with everything from laminating flash cards to selling T-shirts (designed by Soong). As a bonus, Griffin was able to keep the FLES program. This year, each grade is being introduced to a different language one hour a week, so my daughter comes home speaking English, Mandarin and even some French. The Doss campus is also hosting after-school Mandarin classes taught by a private teacher (\$220 for 11 classes).

Should I Move to Northwest Hills?

The short answer is only if you like the schools and neighborhood because winning a slot in the immersion program is far from certain. It is a lottery after all. For this year's classes, parents filled out applications. The students' names were then entered into a computer lottery at AISD headquarters. Applications from native speakers and those with at least one year of documented Chinese instruction were weighted, giving them a slight edge. This was one way to try to achieve a balance in each class between students with no familiarity with Chinese and those with some proficiency. Even those of us heavily involved in getting the program off the ground bit our nails over winning slots. Next year, the district will enroll new students at the kinder level. New students will be added in first grade only if current enrollees drop out. In second grade and third grade, even if there is attrition (and I hope there isn't), no students will be added unless they can demonstrate on-level proficiency or are transferring from another immersion program, according to Dong. The current waiting list of 23 (five kinder, 11 first, seven second), which Griffin oversees at the campus level, expires after this year. Families

who were not in the lottery have been added to the bottom of the list on a first-come, first-served basis, Griffin said.

Assuming demand continues to exceed available slots, subsequent waiting lists will also expire the year after lotteries are held, Dong said.

All applicants must live in the Doss attendance zone, where housing prices have skyrocketed. According to information from Paul Reddam of Homesville Real Estate (he lives in NW Hills and knows the area well), the median list price in the 78731 zip code as of September was \$632,500 (translates to \$234/square foot). If we hadn't bought our home 10 years ago, I wouldn't be writing this article. The high prices aren't dissuading would-be homeowners, however. Doss is crowded, as the sea of portables on its campus and at adjoining Murchison Middle School, illustrate. With some 850 students enrolled, it is closed to transfers.

Looking Ahead

Getting the Chinese immersion program off the ground took a combination of vision, fierce parental support, and luck, and I believe it can only be accurately understood in the context of the challenges facing public schools. With \$4 billion dollars cut from the Texas public schools in 2011, it's not news that teachers are working in increasingly stressed circumstances with fewer resources. I have come to understand the concern some Doss teachers expressed early on. It's tough to innovate when you're worried about your job. Furthermore, the Doss program is a departure. The district's chief reason for launching immersion programs has been to help English Language Learners (students whose first languages are not English) get up to speed. This is the reason, for example, that Summitt

Elementary School is home to a Vietnamese immersion program, and why the district's primary focus is on Spanish-English dual language immersion programs.

While Doss has about a 12 percent Asian student body, not all of these students are Chinese and quite a number of those who are live here temporarily while their parents do graduate and post-doctoral work at the University of Texas-Austin. As a result, even with the weighting for applicants with some proficiency, most of the students in the three immersion classes have no familiarity with Mandarin.

For our family, the program has been an utterly unanticipated blessing. Caroline came home at age two. We began taking Mandarin classes together when she turned three. For three years, I dragged her to "Chinese school" on weekends, drilled flash cards and frustrated her with my total inability to master the tones. Hearing her speak the language and, as importantly, seeing Chinese language and culture become part of her everyday school life, has been wonderful. I fervently hope that AISD officials will have the will and, critically, the resources to try another experiment like the one launched at Doss. In the meantime, Austin has increasingly strong options for Chinese language instruction. I encourage anyone on the fence to check them out and I am happy to talk and share ideas and resources. ❖

Jena Heath is an assistant professor of Journalism at St. Edward's University. Jena has served as Doss PTA Chinese Immersion representative and on the Doss Xishuangbanna Sister Schools team. If you would like more information, email jenaheath@gmail.com.

Hello from Texas China Care!

By Isabella Kuo



We are a nonprofit service organization dedicated to funding lifesaving surgeries for medically fragile Chinese orphans, and making a positive contribution for those in our local Austin community. Aside from yearlong fundraising, we spread awareness through community outreach, and work closely with FCC to provide a support network between the local families as well as to provide families with the means to inspire children to safely explore their cultural identity. At the end of each academic year, our fundraising money is sent to Half the Sky Foundation to fund surgeries and post-operative nurturing for special-needs orphaned children. Currently we're funding baby Ping, a little girl born in Southwest China with a congenital heart defect. This defect obstructs the blood flow in the heart and the vessels around it. Upon further examination, doctors have observed that baby Ping's pulmonary vascular development is also not good. Baby Ping's condition is serious and warrants surgery.

Two of the programs we participate in specifically with FCC are the Playgroup and Big Brother Big Sister Programs. Playgroup is filled with fun activities, usually beginning with a scavenger hunt or game, and

encompassing a performance or activity led by a cultural organization from UT, as well as different arts and crafts, outdoor playtime, and snacks! It is a way for the children adopted from China (and their families) to build a social network, interact with great Asian-American mentors, and establish a sense of Chinese culture and identity for the children.

List of upcoming Playgroup dates for this semester:

November 10th, 2013 (11/10/2013)

November 24th, 2013 (11/24/2013)



Playgroups are held at the Dell Jewish Community Center (DJCC), and we will be in the ECP MPR (Early Childhood Multipurpose Room). JCC's address is 7300 Hart Lane, Austin, Texas, 78731.

Playgroup is free and open to everyone and has no religious affiliation. If you'd like to be added to the Playgroup mailing list, please email pg.utchinacare@gmail.com.

The Big Brother Big Sister Program is a cultural mentorship program that encourages close companionship between a UT student volunteer and an adopted Chinese child. Outside of China Care's playgroups, they meet one-on-one and form a close bond through games, activities, and spending quality time together. There is an application on the Texas China Care website (www.txchinacare.org) under Programs ➡ Big Brother Big Sister that you can fill out and send to pg.utchinacare@gmail.com. ❖

Isabella Kuo is a senior at UT majoring in Psychology, Biology, and English. She is Playgroup Director of UT China Care and is a native of Malaysia.

Contact Us

If you have any questions or concerns about the Playgroup or Big Brother Big Sister Programs, please do not hesitate to email the playgroup directors Isabella Kuo and Beth Hsieh at pg.utchinacare@gmail.com.

More information can be found at our www.txchinacare.org website. For updates and photos, please visit and like our facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/txchinacare>). Please feel free to email us at texaschinacare@gmail.com if you have any questions or suggestions. ❖

DNA Testing Options

By Abby Turner

Our adopted children lack very little in this world. We give them everything they need to thrive and be happy. We even try to connect them to their heritage by educating them about customs and foods. We cannot, however, give them their biological heritage. Of course, they don't have to have that. Many of us know little about our biological past beyond parents' and grandparents' memories. Some of us have even less than that. Even so, people find their pasts fascinating and often spend time and money exploring it. Imagine not even having your parents' names or faces, as our adopted children do not. Can anything be done to bring them closer to this lost history?

A few years ago, my kids all sent DNA swabs to National Geographic's Genographic Project. They received information about their deep ancestry from either their matrilineal or paternal (for my son) genes. The information supplied traced migration paths of their ancestors from thousands of years ago. The information was limited to deep ancestry and was basic confirmation of race. National Geographic now has a 2.0 version that will reveal genome affiliations with parts of the world and Neanderthal heritage. For \$199.95 they will test 150,000 DNA markers, revealing tons of ancestor-related history. They also are compiling information from participants to create databases of information. My kids all

enjoyed the knowledge of their ancestors but were disappointed in the limited information. Genographic 2.0 has addressed this issue pretty well and supplies lots of information that the original kit did not. I also enjoyed the DVD about the project.

Another option is 23andMe. For \$99, 23andMe will give you a plethora of DNA information on both ancestry and health. Sandi and Steve Ross have sent in DNA samples for both their girls. Sandi reports that the girls wanted information on their racial identity. They have received details and connections to distant cousins. One domestic adoptee friend actually located a birth mother through 23andMe. Not many Chinese nationals have participated at this time, but 23andMe continues to supply updates. In the future, Chinese adoptees could connect with biological relatives.

As a parent, Sandi wanted health information. "Of course, I had to think about if I really wanted to know. What if the information was scary? Also how much would I tell my child, if it was?" Sandi considered. Now she feels pleased with the results. 23andMe gives information on elevated risks or lowered risks on many conditions that are indicated by DNA markers. They reveal any percentages that differ from the average population's health risks. They give knowledge on inherited traits like baldness and lactose intolerance, as well

as information on drug responses and carrier status. Like the ancestry connections, they continue to update scientific information related to your genetic profile.

Of course, you might wonder if having information about frightening health risks would be helpful or just upsetting, or if there is much point in verifying that your child is 98% Asian. My children who know so little about their biological roots say, "Yes!" Any tidbit from their almost mystical genes is a welcome connection to their place in nature. This is a place in the scheme of things we take for granted and sometimes resent. (Who wants their mother's neck?) However, adoptees who do not have knowledge of their birth families feel that missing space and sometimes long for it to be filled. No trip to China or celebration of gotcha day can really connect one to ancestors like DNA.

If desired, here are the URLs for further insight: <https://www.23andme.com/> or <http://shop.nationalgeographic.com> genographic project kit. ❖

Abby Turner is a past President of FCC Austin and currently serves on the Board as co-chair of Events. She lives in Round Rock with her husband, Don, and three children.

We asked an FCC parent representative from both April Rain School of Chinese Dance and the Love of China School of Chinese Dance to share with us a little bit about their experiences with these dance schools. Debbi Keller and Debbie Hoch were kind enough to share their experiences.

April Rain School of Dance

By Debbi Keller

Our Austin journey began in 1993 as my husband Tony and I moved from Florida to Austin. At the time, we did not realize what a blessing this city would hold for us. In Acts 17:26b it says He determined the times set for them, and the exact places where they should live. We discovered that to be true over the last 20 years, first as newlyweds, and then in a greater way as parents. In 1999, we were blessed with our twin boys Aaron and Jacob. After coming up for air from being parents of twins, we longed to add to our family. Our hearts were stirred for China. In 2005 we adopted our first daughter, Aimee, from Hunan, and in 2012, our second daughter, Katie, from Anhui. After adopting Aimee, we quickly decided that we wanted all of our children to know the rich cultures that helped to make up our family. As we met others with children from China, we learned more about China. We were invited by an FCC family to the moon festival event at the AACCC (Asian American Culture Center). It was there that we saw the most beautiful little Chinese girls dancing with the April Rain School of Chinese Dance. What a beautiful way to show a part of Chinese culture. We could not wait for Aimee to be old enough to take dance from April Rain.

The first day of class was both exciting and intimidating. With Aimee adorned in

the fluffiest pink tutu possible, we stepped into the classroom. Little girls were everywhere giggling and dancing, and I immediately spotted another adoptive mom on the floor stretching with the girls (I would later come to know this wonderful mommy as our very own Becky Harding). We were then greeted with a warm hug and a “NI HAO” from Xiwei Chen of April Rain. From that moment forward, I began to see the loving heart of Xiwei Chen that I still see today. Xiwei has taught our girls the fundamentals of dance on their level in a way that allows them to love the art of dancing while learning skills they will use for a lifetime of dance.

Xiwei’s involvement goes beyond the dance floor. She has organized get-togethers, play dates, and picnics, so both adoptive and Chinese American families would join together as one family in our community. Over the last six years, we have learned the rich beauty and history of China through dance and love. Xiwei Chen loves and cares about these children as if they were her own. I am thankful that Xiwei has taught us so much.

Austin is truly blessed to have people in our Asian American community like Xiwei Chen, who welcomed us with open arms. We are living exactly where we are supposed to live in an amazing community.



We are looking forward to our youngest daughter beginning with April Rain next fall, but more importantly, we look forward to many more years of learning, laughing, and loving with Xiwei and the family at April Rain School of Chinese Dance. ❖

Debbi and Tony Keller have lived in the Austin area for 20 years with their 14-year-old twin sons, and two daughters nine and three, adopted from China. Through this article, they hope to share how they are blessed by the beauty and culture of Austin, and specifically Chinese dance.

The Love of China School of Dance

By Debbie Hoch

The Love of China School of Dance commits itself to teaching traditional Chinese dances to children from the ages of four to eighteen. Ms. Emily Dedear, teacher and owner of the studio, has taught Chinese dance in the Austin area for more than two decades. Ms. Emily grew up in Taiwan and studied numerous forms of dance, culminating with a degree in dance from the Chinese Culture University.

My 11-year-old daughter, Anna, has taken Chinese dance lessons from Ms. Emily since she was four years old. We have been extremely pleased with the instruction Anna has received from Love of China. Ms. Emily is truly a professional and is highly skilled in understanding children's abilities and bringing out the best in their talents. I vividly remember Anna's first class. There were 20 energetic four-year-old girls streaming into the studio. I couldn't help but notice there was only Ms. Emily and one young assistant who I learned was just 13 at that time. I thought to myself that she would have difficulty controlling all of the girls but I was quickly proven to be incorrect.

From the first class, Ms. Emily set expectations for the girls and she had total control of the class. The children were obviously having a lot of fun but they were willing to do exactly what Ms. Emily asked of them. Ms. Emily expects the girls to try to do their

best and they rise to her expectations. The girls learned the routines from the very beginning and their appreciation of dance was evident from the first class.

One of the greatest benefits for my daughter has been the opportunity to perform in so many places within our community. Not only has Anna performed at numerous Asian American cultural events she has also performed on local television, at several nursing homes, many schools in the area, and city-wide community events such as First Night, Formula One weekend celebrations, and at our Texas Capitol. Ms. Emily's students consistently are invited back for return performances because of their professional behavior, positive attitudes, and well-choreographed and expertly performed dances from various traditions and cultures within China. I know the performance opportunities have boosted Anna's confidence in other areas of her life. Since Anna started performing frequently when she was young, she developed tremendous confidence which has been extremely beneficial for her when performing on violin and piano.

Ms. Emily has not only shared the love of traditional Chinese dance with our community, but she has also helped the community by organizing workshops on college applications. Her former students who are currently attending or have attended prestigious

universities have held seminars with area high school students on how to prepare their applications so they have a better chance of being accepted into these prestigious universities. These seminars have been extremely well attended and provided attendees with concrete ideas on how to improve their college applications.

Another aspect of Ms. Emily's studio that has worked well for our family has been that Anna's class has always met on Thursdays for the past eight years. This has allowed us to easily schedule her other activities around Chinese dance and still given us the freedom to have our weekends free.

Ms. Emily takes an individual interest in each child and family. She takes the time to get to know the families and learn something about them and their personal lives. With her connections to professionals in many areas of Austin's fine arts community, Emily has proven to be a valuable resource to parents with recommendations for teachers and programs that will enrich their child's life.

Other parents have shared the same fondness for Love of China that I have. Marilyn Cole Brock's daughter, Nora, has danced at Love of China for seven years. Marilyn

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said, “The best thing about Love of China School of Dance is Emily Dedear. Emily is a talented dancer, an excellent business-woman, and a lovely role model. She teaches discipline and self-confidence while she teaches dance. She has high expectations of her students and they give her their best. Her strong positive influence over her students cannot be overstated. Under Emily’s guidance and supervision, young dancers strive to improve their strength and skills from the very first stretch of each class until the last bow of any performance. Classes often end with Emily declaring ‘Good job, Girls!’ as the young dancers head out the door. Love of China dance lessons are the highlight of our week!”

Kristin Walker expresses her admiration for The Love of China School of Dance with the following words of praise. “Our daughter began dancing at The Love of China shortly after her fourth birthday. She had the privilege of dancing with Miss Emily for five years until we moved out of town. If we lived within two hours of the studio, I would drive her there each week because Miss Emily and her dance program are superior to any program in our new city. Miss Emily was a fantastic role model for our daughter, and our daughter adored her. Emily is beautiful, graceful, patient, and kind. The girls in her dance classes imitate these qualities, and they are unbelievably well-behaved and happy for their hour with Miss Emily each week.”

“Miss Emily does everything with excellence, and she has high standards for her dancers, including details such as holding fingers a particular way. Our world is far too accepting of mediocrity, and we were grateful for our daughter to experience the challenges and rewards of working her hardest through her lessons at TLOC.”

“The structure of TLOC promotes lasting friendships. Once the girls are placed in a class, they stay with the same class until they graduate from high school. Many girls dance together for 15 years, and they become incredibly close friends. Additionally, the younger classes have a teacher’s assistant, who is one of Miss Emily’s older, experienced dancers. The assistant becomes a big sister figure to the younger dancers.”

The girls do indeed establish bonds throughout the years at Love of China. When Anna started middle school this year she was delighted to have so many of her friends from Chinese dance in her classes at school.

Ms. Emily’s standards of excellence are not only for her students but for herself as well. Her expertise and achievements were recognized in 2008 when she received the Flying Phoenix award from the National Dance Association in the Republic of China in Taipei.

In addition to traditional Chinese dance, Chinese Yo-Yo classes are also available on Saturday afternoons at the Love of China. Cheryl Bonfils-Rasmussen and her daughters all take Chinese yo-yo classes and both of

her daughters take dance. (Cheryl is just as talented as her daughters when it comes to yo-yo!). Cheryl said this about Ms. Emily’s classes: “What I like about Love of China is that the kids learn new dances every year and they get to see mentors—the older Chinese girls performing the dances they will learn in the future. At Love of China, they get to do so many free performances every year and they are able to attend many different cultural events and performances. You don’t spend \$65 for an outfit for just one performance. By performing throughout the year, they learn to improvise when the entire class can’t be there. Also, the students have an entire ballet workout each class and they learn classical ballet skills as well as Chinese cultural dancing.”

The price of the Love of China classes is very reasonable as well at only \$50 per month and every effort is made to keep down the cost of costumes for performances.

The Love of China School of Dance is conveniently located by Asia Market and Asia Café at 8650 Spicewood Springs Road #116. You may read more about the studio at <http://theloveofchina.com/>. You may also contact Ms. Emily directly via email at emily@theloveofchina.com. ❖

Debbie and her husband Paul live with their two daughters, Catherine and Anna in Austin. The family enjoys dancing as if no one is watching!

Spotlight: Lane Allison

By Alisan Turner

Lane Allison is exactly what you would expect the co-founder and co-president of China's Children International (CCI) to be: intelligent, friendly, sophisticated, and good-natured. At only seven months old, Lane was adopted from Ma'Anshan, China by a Caucasian single mother. Unlike here in Austin, the city of Dallas, where Lane grew up, lacked a sizable Chinese adoptee community and so it's only been within the last few years that she's fully embraced her Chinese heritage. Since then she's become much more involved with the adoptive community, co-creating CCI, connecting with other Chinese adoptees, and involving herself with FCC. Lane is currently attending college as a sophomore at George Washington University, studying Asian studies and Mandarin Chinese.

Three summers ago, Lane was invited to speak at the FCC Austin Culture Camp and share with us information about the newly founded CCI. She left an impression, to say the least, for she has been invited back each summer since to be a counselor for the Dragons. Because she lives in Dallas, Lane spends the week of camp with my family and, as a result, I've had the pleasure of getting to know her. What first struck me was how open and mature she is. Lane is very adult and does not shy away from discussing her adoption or her Chinese heritage. With this attitude, she soon won over all at culture camp. Her campers adored her, and the other counselors and adult workers at camp admired her work ethic and ever-present good attitude.

As she was staying at my house this past summer, I had the chance to speak with Lane about China's Children International, an online organization run by young adult Chinese adoptees whose mission is to "empower Chinese adoptees from all over the world by providing an inclusive and supportive community," as well as give back to the orphanages who took care of us at the start of our lives. Since CCI started, it has developed a Facebook group, seasonal newsletters, blogs, a pen pal program, and volunteer trips back to China. Lane feels that the trips she has taken to China to help at an orphanage for children getting surgeries have been a life changing experience.



When I asked Lane about future plans, she spoke of her hopes for an annual conference for Chinese adoptees to congregate and learn from one another, and partnering with other organizations. They're also working on ways to expand CCI to countries other than the United States, as it's meant to be for Chinese adoptees across the globe. I asked Lane what it is she's gotten out of CCI, and how she's benefited personally. Lane told me that reaching out to other adoptees and speaking with them about



being adopted and learning about their different stories has helped her come to terms with her adoption. She says that, "At this point I can share my experiences with others and hopefully help them sort out any unresolved feelings or answer any of their questions regarding being adopted." Lane's goal is to encourage adoptees to open up and share their experiences with being adopted, thereby creating a community that connects older Chinese adoptees with one another.

As I've spent time with Lane and have gotten to know her, I've come to realize that she is an empowering young woman. She inspires others with her wholehearted embrace of adoption and her Chinese heritage to look at being adopted as something special and unique. If anyone were to connect the world's Chinese adoptees, it would be Lane. ❖

Alisan Turner is a Chinese adoptee and high school senior at McNeil High School and loves being a counselor at FCC Culture Camp.

Family Focus: Two McCormicks and their Xishuangbanna Story

By Janet McCormick

“The lady said that with such a small town, she was certain someone would come forward with information. This was a very emotional moment for Katie. She did not plan to search for her birth family.”

—Janet McCormick

Our family always talked about returning to China and visiting the birth provinces for both our children. My husband and I never set a timeline but hoped it would be before our oldest daughter Katie's 12th birthday. So when the opportunity to travel to Xishuangbanna with the FCC Austin delegation presented itself when Katie was 11, we felt that this was Katie's time to return to China. For several reasons, the timing did not work out for Katie's nine-year-old sister, Kelsey, to return to China with us. Kelsey and her father would stay home while Katie and I spent our time in China, first for eight days in Xishuangbanna and followed by six days in Hunan, Katie's birth province.

I realize in hindsight that the intimacy of just mother and daughter allowed for a deeper experience than if we had traveled together as a family of four. I let Katie make all of the decisions about what she wanted to do, where she wanted to go and even what she wanted to eat. This was her experience and I was there to support her.

Before our travel to China, we watched the *Somewhere Between* video and talked about Katie's expectations regarding returning to Hunan. We explored the possibility

of attempts to find her birth family, but in the end Katie said she was not interested in doing so. Katie said that she wanted to visit her finding location, orphanage, and eat as many local specialties as she could. You would have to know Katie to believe it but she managed to try every food offered to her with a hearty appetite and a smile. We politely declined an offer to have dinner with the live frog vendor at the wet market. I'm not sure how that experience would have gone.

Our guide, Wendy with Sun Travel, was with us every step of the way, meeting with us as we landed in Changsha, Hunan. We traveled the next day for over two hours by bus to the city of PinJiang where we spent four nights. Our first full day in PingJiang was the day we visited the PingJiang Social Welfare Institute. The orphanage director and staff were excited to see Katie and welcomed her with a huge bouquet of flowers. We were invited to have tea and fruit while we talked about Katie's achievements and life in Texas. The director was most impressed when he discovered that Katie raised over \$1,800 dollars with her sister's help selling candy bars and having a garage sale so she could pay for her own airfare to China and buy gifts for the nannies and children at the orphanage.

The director offered Katie's adoption file for us to see and allowed us to photograph the documents. There was no new information. I was surprised to see that they had kept the two photo albums we sent years ago. The director said it is always appreciated when they hear from the children and their families but most often it is not translated and they do not have anyone to translate for them.

Katie was able to meet, and have lunch with, an orphanage office worker that was in all of her baby pictures from the disposable camera we had sent in a care package before bringing Katie home. The lady no longer worked at the orphanage but when she found out Katie was there asking about her, she arrived within five minutes of receiving the phone call. She remembered Katie instantly by the mole on her eyelid and told us how her daughter has one similar so she often thought about Katie. Later in the week she brought her eight-year-old daughter with her to our hotel for a visit. The girls had fun practicing Chinese and English together.

Continued on next page

The most fun part of the visit to the orphanage for Katie was to see, hold, and play with the children. The most touching moment for me at the orphanage was to see my beautiful sweet daughter look down at the six-month-old baby she held in her arms and said, "Mommy, she's so beautiful." The baby indeed was beautiful. Hopefully another family will see past her severe un-repaired cleft lip and become her family. My daughter sees with her heart more than her eyes. I could not have asked for any more than that one moment to make our trip worthwhile.

The director invited us to lunch, where he offered several spicy local foods. The director was very impressed that Katie tried everything on the table. He said several children have returned for visits in the past and most did not want to eat anything but the rice. Katie's favorite specialty at the table was the "little lobsters" and her least favorite was the pig feet.

A driver along with our guide took us to the Sanshi Town Family Planning Office, where Katie was found shortly after birth. It was an hour drive from PingJiang. Sanshi Town is a poor small farming community.

When we arrived at the Family Planning Office, we were soon told that the office moved to the current location a year after Katie was found. With several locals and office workers making phone calls on their cell phones, they were able to find the person who found Katie at the old office location.

One of the men rode with us to show us the location, making several calls to cousins and friends asking if anyone remembered the babies found in 2002, as there were only three found that year. Everyone in town was very helpful. Katie thought it was funny that we were in an area of poverty but everyone had cell phones and wanted to help her find her birth family.

After arriving at the old Family Planning Office location, one of the ladies suggested we visit the local news reporter to broadcast a search for Katie's birth family. The lady said that with such a small town, she was certain someone would come forward with information. This was a very emotional moment for Katie. She did not plan to search for her birth family. We stepped away from the crowd for privacy and to allow Katie to gather her thoughts. While Katie and I talked about how she was feeling, I offered her support in any decision she made concerning her birth family search. Katie wiped her tears, blew her nose, and firmly said, "Let's do it!"

I told Katie that if she gets any leads or contacts, she can decide if and when she wants to follow through with further action. After meeting with the reporter, he said the county officials would not allow a broadcast such as this and recommended that we visit the town photographer to print some posters.

We spent several hours with the photographer and our guide Wendy creating a poster. The orphanage director even helped with

emailing baby photos from Katie's orphanage file for the poster. We were very popular in Sanshi Town. We attracted many curious visitors to the photographer's store. Katie put up 10 posters around and near Sanshi Town that included a current photo along with the finding information we were given and a description of very distinctive birthmarks. We returned to the hotel in PingJiang exhausted from an emotional day.

We never had any email responses to the posters but Katie is satisfied that all of Sanshi Town knows from reading her posters that she is loved by her family and has a sister. She also stated on the poster that she is very happy, healthy, is getting a good education, and lives on a ranch in Texas.

Katie's impressive and eager appetite for the foods of PingJiang earned a dinner invitation from the orphanage director for her last night in PingJiang. When the director arrived at our hotel he and his assistant had an armful of gifts for Katie. They presented her with a huge box of local snack foods, a beautiful Quan Yin necklace, and a music box. We then went out to dinner for a feast of oysters and Katie's favorite little lobsters. It was a memorable late evening back to the hotel and a perfect ending to our first visit to PingJiang. ❖

Janet McCormick lives on a ranch in Lockhart with her husband Richard, and daughters Katie, 11, and Kelsey, 9.

Treasurer's Report: You Say Goodbye and I Say Hello

By Alan Greenberg

Hum for a second, humor me please.

“Hello Hello? I don’t know why you say Goodbye I say Hello.”

More on that in a moment.

I spoke in our May 2013 issue concerning the charities to which we donated our proceeds from our Chinese New Year Celebration: *UT China Care*, *Philip Hayden Foundation*, *Love Without Boundaries*, and *Half the Sky Foundation*. Some of these groups use the funds to enable adoptions or to provide healthcare, education, or other forms of care for children located in orphanages in China. A reminder: our bylaws indicate that we are to donate excess proceeds from CNY and other events to social welfare organizations, and we’ve generally tried to maintain a healthy but not excessive bank balance by doing so. This does NOT reduce the need for our ongoing fundraising: more families than ever requested and received full or partial scholarships to FCC Culture Camp this past August. We received some specific donations for scholarships and we also used excess past fundraising dollars to help fund those scholarships. In the future we will continue to need to run our events “in the black” and to continue to receive contributions.

Meanwhile, it’s with some pleasure that we report back to you that we often hear back from the organizations to which we have donated with progress reports. Recently *Love Without Boundaries* updated us with a letter written by a 6-year old (with the help of her grandmother) named YanHua. We have been given permission to share that entire communication with you: <http://www.fccaustin.org/lwb2013sumr.pdf>.

As to why I am saying goodbye and hello? Well, goodbye. After three years of serving as FCC Austin’s Treasurer, *at my request* I am hanging up the checkbook, as it were, and in 2014 will be placing it in the capable hands of others. As the organization has grown and our events grow larger and more sophisticated—with more people to pay and more receipts to collect—those of us on the board have agreed that the Treasurer role really is a two-person job, with an outgoing payments and an incoming collectibles person, respectively. At the time of printing this we have my replacements identified and we meet shortly to begin discussing the transition, which will take place after Chinese New Year. Nothing has made me happier on the Board than seeing those little Microsoft Excel cells match the bank account, and to see how well the team of Board members and Member volunteers have run events. So far so good! It has been a privilege to work with this entire Board and to shepherd the finances of our great organization.

And why am I saying hello? Because I’m not leaving the board. Should you choose to elect me, I will happily accept the position of President of this fine organization at our January Chinese New Year celebration. While I will never be able to fill the shoes of Becky Harding, Kim Goodman, Abby Turner, and other past presidents—the work of FCC Austin will never be done. Looking forward! ♦

Alan Greenberg is the father of Claire-Lily Greenberg, 11, and Treasurer/Member of FCC Austin’s board since 2010.

Welcome Robin Davis

FCC Austin board of directors welcomes long-standing member Robin Davis to the board replacing Denise Davolt. Robin has served previously as FCC secretary and now will be one of the Vice Presidents of events. She and Abby Turner have begun leading the planning of this year’s Chinese New Year event to be held Sunday, January 26 at the new Asian American Resource Center on Cameron Road. ♦

Featured Friend: Wendy Kuo, Dumpling Making Teacher at our Chinese Culture Camp

By Becky Harding

Wendy Kuo and Joyce Wu have been volunteering their time at camp for three years now. They cheerfully shop for the supplies and then show up in the kitchen of the camp facility full of excitement and energy as they set up to teach this special class. They supervise as the children chop onions and blend the filling together. Then they, ever so carefully, show the campers how to fill and wrap the thin dumpling skins. In the past, the students have created prayer flags or read about Asian American role models while Wendy and Joyce take the platefuls of dumplings to the kitchen to boil over the stove. Finally, after waiting what I have been told is forever, the students eat their creations. This is always a very quiet time.

Becky: What is your professional background?

Wendy: I am a piano teacher. My husband and I have a music school in Austin called the Orpheus Academy of Music. Besides teaching piano, I play for church services and enjoy playing duets with friends.



Left-to-right: Joyce Wu and Wendy Kuo having some serious fun!

Becky: Your dumpling making class at camp is very popular. How long have you been making dumplings?

Wendy: I have been eating dumplings since I was in my Mom's belly and started making them as soon as possible afterward! Making dumplings is a great social gathering in

Chinese culture and something we did often in Taiwan growing up. I have many fun memories of my whole family gathered together during holidays, chatting, laughing and making dumplings together. My brother and I were always making very creative shapes for our dumplings. I am so glad that I have this opportunity to pass on this tradition every year at the FCC summer camp!

Becky: What do you enjoy about working with our camp students?

Wendy: My friend Joyce and I look forward every year to work with FCC camp students. I love seeing their excited faces when they come into the classroom. We have so much fun cutting vegetables, mixing all the ingredients together, wrapping the dumplings and waiting for them to boil. Even though it only takes about a few minutes to boil, we all feel like we had to wait for hours! The best part of all is to taste the yummy dumplings at the end of the class! During the process, I have gotten to know each camper and hope they have enjoyed getting to know me as well! ❖

Austin High School— The Academy of Global Studies

By Bob Radebaugh

Where are you sending your kid(s) to high school? Different high schools offer a variety of programs and graduation paths. One unique option at Austin High School is the Academy of Global Studies (AGS) program. We made a deliberate choice to send our daughters to AGS instead of through the regular Austin High curriculum. Here's why.

According to the AGS Mission Statement "AGS values all students' unique talents and encourages and challenges students to become intellectually curious, world language proficient, internationally aware, and globally responsible." AGS is part of the International Studies School Network (ISSN). The goal of ISSN is that "every student who graduates from an ISSN school possesses the knowledge, skills and habits of mind necessary to succeed and contribute in a 21st century global environment." The ISSN website www.agsaustin.org/issn-graduate-profile.html lists a profile including 17 attributes they strive to develop in each ISSN graduate. This is worth looking at for a better understanding of the AGS program in general, as I believe the program truly does an excellent job of developing each of these attributes.

Although it is not a designated magnet school and one must be in district to attend, AGS does provide an academically-challenging curriculum, with core courses being AP and Pre-AP. Requirements include four years of foreign language, as well as four years of English, Math, Science and History. Oh, and by the way, one of the

foreign language options is Mandarin Chinese! AGS is essentially a small school within a school. It has its own wing within Austin High with two dedicated hallways. A team teaching approach is used where each grade level has a team of teachers for core courses in Math, English, History and Science. Thus, whatever is being taught in each of those subjects is generally tied together with a common theme. As for the teachers, they in my opinion are some of the brightest, more interesting, diverse, and enthusiastic educators I've come across. As a whole they truly love what they do, work hard, and genuinely care about the success of their students. Based on my experience and discussions with both my children who are currently in the AGS program, the primary focus of AGS is on global societies, global interactions, and an understanding on how every subject from math to foreign language has a global connection. I am told from both Sara (Senior) and Grace (Junior) that a cornerstone of the program emphasized in all classes is an understanding and respect for differing cultures, races, religions, and ideas.

A major draw to this program from both students and parents is the travel aspect with the experiences this provides. Each year every AGS student is given the opportunity to go on a multi-day learning expedition. There are mandatory fundraisers for scholarships, to guarantee no student is denied an opportunity to travel due to their family's financial situation. I find this an incredibly amazing opportunity provided

by a public school, especially one with the economic diversity of Austin High. Here there are students who have never left the state of Texas, and even more who have never been on an airplane, much less had the opportunity to travel outside of the United States.

Freshmen go to Heifer International's Global Village in Arkansas, a third world simulator where students experience hunger and poverty in a third world country setting. Additionally they make stops at the Bill Clinton Presidential Library and Little Rock's Central High School, where they take a guided tour of the place where the Arkansas State Government resisted integration.

Sophomores go to Costa Rica; there the main base is Earth University, where a primary emphasis is on the sustainability and use of resources. Another day they visit a coffee plantation, and get to work alongside migrant workers from Nicaragua and visit a plantain plantation. Based on the feedback I got, a real highlight is a visit to the rain forest and spending the night with the BriBri people, an indigenous tribe for whom they complete a service project in their village as well as spending time getting to know their culture.

The Junior trip is an excursion to New Orleans, which combines a major service project with some fun stops and good food.

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The main learning focus of this trip, as started on the AGS website, is “answering our year-long question, ‘What is an American?’ with a focus on large, global themes such as science, religion, art, culture, music, race, immigration, etc.”

Finally, the Senior year is capped off with a trip to Spain. Although this year there were initial plans to travel to Turkey, due to political unrest in that area the trip will go to Madrid, Toledo, and Salamanca, Spain. This trip and the theme of the senior year is “what does it mean to be a global citizen?” Insight into this will be garnered by studying Spain’s ancient, recent and modern culture and history.

During each of these years the themes covered by these trips are underlying all the projects assigned, books read, and concepts covered in each of the four core courses. These are truly learning expeditions and not just for fun.

When considering AGS for your child, do think about the amount of work. Like Kealing Middle School’s magnet program, the AGS program is very rigorous. I’ve

been told by Sara and Grace and their AGS friends that they hear that a typical AGS core pre-AP or AP course has much more work than its regular Austin High counterpart. The curriculum is very challenging, with numerous projects, lots of reading, and an abundance of writing. Even the math projects will generally include a one to two page paper requirement explaining what you did, why you did it, and some critical thinking aspect of why it did or didn’t work, what could be done differently, and how might that affect things. Throughout the four years in their core courses they write scores of papers, create websites, make videos, and collaborate on numerous group and individual projects.

Lastly, learning through actively participating in community service is one of the most significant aspects of going through the AGS program. The goal here is to help students become active global citizens while at the same time experiencing personal growth. Each AGS student, in order to receive an AGS endorsement certificate verifying that they completed the AGS course of study as approved by the ISSN, must complete 120 hours of community

service over four years, as well as complete a Capstone Course and Project. The course is a culmination of all aspects of the tenets taught in AGS, with the Project being essentially, in my words, “a three-person group Eagle Scout project” designed to address a major global issue at the local level.

Overall, the Academy for Global Studies is a demanding and rewarding program that truly prepares students, not only for college, but also for being active citizens in a global environment capable of analyzing problems with consideration to all points of view. Both Sara and Grace have been challenged by this program and have sacrificed a significant amount of free time due to the work load; yet, both have indicated it was well worth it and provided them with a great sense of accomplishment and a better understanding of the world and how they function in it. ❖

Bob and Lisa Radebaugh and their daughters live in Austin and are long-standing FCC members. Both Sara and Grace have served as assistant counselors at FCC Culture Camp.

Tweens/Teens Activities

By Suzanne Danuser

A new school year, and new faces have joined the FCC Teen/Tween group (welcome new 6th graders!)

On September 22, 14 FCC tween/teens joined 13 UT China Care members for an afternoon of swimming, eating and socializing at the Danuser’s house. A very enjoyable time was had by all! Three FCC teens (Zoe Watts, Lily Harris and Emily Danuser) were appointed to work more closely with the UT China Care officers to plan more get-togethers this school year. Ideas floated were an ’80s movie night, an outing to Laser Tag, Main Event or Jump Street, and an afternoon at Zilker Park for outdoor games and picnic. Bimonthly gatherings were determined to be a realistic goal given everyone’s full school calendars.

If you or your tween/teen have an interest in getting more involved with these efforts, please contact Suzanne Danuser at suzerd@icloud.com, or (512) 576-6351. ❖



Book Review: By Pat Nealon

The Lydia Chin & Bill Smith Series

By SJ Rozan

Here are Lydia Chin's thoughts on a new client:

"Straying spouses and shady secretaries are my daily bread... if this case was about art, why call me?" The client says he is a collector of contemporary Chinese art and Lydia thinks, *"Oh. So this has to do with my contemporary Chineseness?"*

The Lydia Chin and Bill Smith mysteries by SJ Rozan are light reads: snappy dialogue, strong pace and plotting, with deliberate comic touches. Bill is a big, protective American, and Lydia is an ABC (American-born Chinese) from NY. They succeed because Lydia is deeply persistent, smart and observant, and Bill is capable and steady, a man of few smart, funny, apt words with friends in the NYPD and a handgun license. Lydia is reasonably attractive, neither superhero nor supermodel. She has a healthy fear of criminals, death, and her mother, whose critiques of her style and her profession and the lack of Chinese-born boyfriends are only ever temporarily suppressed. Lydia's unique resources include scores of relatives: a brilliant hacker, a hapless gang wannabe, and innumerable gossip "aunties" on

Chinatown's grapevine. Despite her doubts, Lydia's mother provides stealthy support and indispensable caffeine-powered tea.

Each book is differently weighted toward the grim or upbeat, and the dust jacket notes tell you the difference upfront. Locales change. SJ Rozan knows when Lydia needs to be serious and honorable. Violence is dealt with sparingly, although threats are dire and convincing. The unspoken attraction between Lydia and Bill advances slowly, even coyly through the series. Breathing gets a little heavy sometimes.

Life in Chinatown moves at a pace fast even for New York. Residents rarely break stride on very narrow streets. There are innumerable tourists and souvenir stores. The best part for me about these books is the illusion of knowing Chinatown better after a read. Lydia lets you in on decoy storefronts, hidden restaurants, and behind-the-scenes power sources. She names names so you can imagine hunting down unknown eateries and great bargains.

Ghost Hero was named to both AP's and NPR's Best of the Year lists. Oprah.com's list of recommended mysteries in 2012

included *Shanghai Moon*. Both of these stories investigate a significant time in modern Chinese history: *Ghost Hero* has its roots in the Tiananmen Square protests and *Shanghai Moon* is the name of a fabled jewel, part of a fortune stolen from European Jews who took refuge in Shanghai during World War II.

Lydia is excellent company. Her mother would be proud. But never say so. ❖

Pat Nealon is mom to Sophie, now a freshman in the Anderson Marching band. Pat and Sophie are transplants from New York City and are voracious readers.



SJ Rozan

Recent Past Events

September Moon Festival



The Moon Festival was well attended and members enjoyed a variety of great activities.



FCC member Marty Davis helps hang decorative lanterns in the trees at this September's Moon Festival held at Central market on North Lamar.



The Summitt Elementary School Lion and Dragon dance team performs at the Moon Festival. They perform the traditional lion dance, we then ask the children to make a wish on a tea light, and then carefully place it on a bamboo raft. The drums begin again as the tweens/teens carry the raft with the lighted wishes down to the water and set it afloat.

August Panel Discussion: Becoming A Transracial Family

After each panelist spoke about their experiences growing up as part of a trans-racial family, they discussed what elements helped them as they navigated through adolescence, shared some of what they wished they had done differently and what stood out for them. They expanded the discussion to talk about their own personal school situations and how same-race role models are important for them. ❖



Panelists from the August 19, 2013, Adoption Knowledge Affiliates and FCC discussion called "Race, Adoption and Austin: Becoming a Transracial Family" included Genevieve Norman, Jade Jones, Zach Turner, and Nyla Lengacher, LCSW.