

Families with Children from China

Austin, Texas Chapter

Spring Newsletter

May, 2013



President's Note

The camping retreat weekend is fresh in my mind and spirit. It was extraordinary and such a gift of “time” to ourselves and our children. Simply time to be. It was a family event with 12 families of all shapes and sizes coming together to enjoy the fabulous Texas countryside. The ease of the camaraderie and the joy in watching our children, ages 2 to 15, romp for hours filled me with a happiness only equaled by the taste of the gooey s’mores made over a roaring fire on Saturday night.

As my big kid and I watched the mist rise over the Pedernales River on Saturday morning, we talked about all the amazing FCC activities happening in the next few months. We will leave in June for a week in Xi Shuang Ban Na as a part of the cultural exchange program, to be followed in August by one of the most terrific culture camp experiences—at an awesome new facility. The summer series (read on!) looks great as we are delighted to bring chef Dorothy Huang back to town as well as partner with Adoption Knowledge Affiliates for a compelling panel discussion about creating transracial families through adoption. My older daughter and I agreed as we set off in search of coffee for me and juice for her that Saturday morning, that it’s a great time for FCC Austin and we are blessed to be a part of it all.

Take good care,
Becky

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

A Series of Summer Gatherings

Once again, FCC-Austin is offering 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!

Teen/Tween Chinese Cooking with Yang Cao

The teen/tweens learn to make several fabulous Chinese dishes taught by our camp Mandarin & food teacher and web designer extraordinaire, Yang Cao.

When: Saturday, June 1 from 5 pm–8 pm

Where: Suzanne Danuser's home

Cost: Free to members

Contact: Suzanne Danuser at suzerd@yahoo.com

Note: This event caps at 12 people. Rising sixth graders are welcome to join the FCC Teen/Tween group beginning with this event.

Book Club

Abby Turner has been leading this book group of adoptive moms for over 10 years and welcomes new members in reading *Some Girls, Some Hats and Hitler: A True Love Story Rediscovered* by Trudi Kanter for June, and *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* by Katherine Boo for July. Restaurants to be chosen later.

When: The first Wednesday of every month (June 5 and July 3) starting at 6:30 pm

Where: TBD that week and emailed to participants

Cost: Free to anyone

Contact: Abby Turner abby0814@icloud.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, June 23 starting at 3 pm

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

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

Contact: Abby Turner abby0814@icloud.com

Mom's Night Out

We would love to have more attendees! We get together the last Wednesday of every month; we don't plan the place in advance... I usually send out an email the Monday before, so if someone wants to be notified, please send me your email.

When: Wednesday, June 26 & July 31

Where: TBD

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Parent-Child Chinese Cooking with Dorothy Huang

With your child, learn to “wrap and roll” Chinese and Japanese 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.

When: Saturday, June 29 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 sykoraz28@me.com

Note: This event caps at 12 people

New Families Meetup

Open to families who have either adopted or moved to Central Texas within the last year.

When: Saturday, July 20 at 10 am

Where: Waterloo Ice House, 6203 N. Capital of Texas Hwy., Austin, 78731

Cost: N/A

Contact: Host Bethany Morrison at bethany@cre8d.com

Race, Adoption & Austin: Becoming a Transracial Family

We are partnering with Adoption Knowledge Affiliates for this parents-only event. Rowena Fong, Ed.D., will moderate a panel discussion about the intricacies of transracial families. Speakers include Amy Ford, Jade Jones, Nyla Lengacher, LCSW, Genevieve Norman, and Zach Turner.

When: Monday, August 19 at 7 pm

Where: Settlement Home, 1607 Colony Creek Drive, Building B, Austin

Cost: Free to members

Contact: Becky Harding at bjh0902@aol.com

IKEA Room Design/Makeover Workshop

Have design issues in a specific room? Does your tween/teen want to change their room and give it a more sophisticated look? Do you have any kids about to head off to college desiring an attractive and functional dorm room? Allow the design experts at IKEA to help you come up with some solutions by attending this workshop!

When: Thursday evening, July 18, 6:30–7:30 pm

Where: IKEA, inside the entrance area, 1 Ikea Way, Round Rock

Cost: Free to members

Contact: RSVP by Monday, July 15th to Kim Goodman at weatage@gmail.com

Note: Restaurant stops taking orders at 8:00 pm.

FCC Austin Spring Retreat 2013

By Carrie Van der Wal

Like the majority of us who have busy lives, most of our extensively planned vacations are geared towards achievement: enduring the transportation, conquering new territories, braving theme/state parks, or surviving extended family visits, often in combination with and dominated by school calendar crowds. As families, our vacation aims are often Go. See. Do. The tranquility that we strive for can be overshadowed by the abundant technicalities, muddling the memories that we paid big bucks to make. Moreover, as parents, after finally herding the luggage and kids back home, we find ourselves needing to recover from time meant to be restorative.

While assuredly enjoyable and entertaining, our FCC gatherings share some of those vacation traits (substantial planning, monumental efforts, a cornucopia of activities) but are accomplished within far shorter time constraints. In other words, they're memorable but hectic... short but sweet. Why do we devote ourselves to both vacationing and FCC events? We do it to connect, both within our own families and with our unique FCC community. Ultimately, we do it for our kids.



We planned this first FCC Spring Retreat with those same connection objectives in mind but with a sanctuary twist; our aim



was to connect via repose. By not planning much of anything, we had ample time for what mattered most: each other. Each family's biggest weekend efforts consisted of being a part of one Meal Team but even that was gratifying, getting to know each other better in the kitchen, working side-by-side. Those few hours of effort paid off handsomely; work one meal whilst for the other three, the only effort necessary was to saunter into the dining hall and make plates from the scrumptious buffets. For this Mom, minimal cooking and cleanup played a huge part in being able to truly relax.

I think that I can speak for the other 21 parents when I declare that the best part of the retreat weekend was letting our kids literally run free. There was nothing for a parent to worry about (i.e.: traffic, strangers, getting lost) but ample entertainment for all ages: a vast array of sports equipment, tree houses, tetherball, sand, exploring, and play, play, play. That first

morning, our sons took a hike with their Dad but, besides meal times, they were primarily engaged in playing with all the other children. Truly, I've never seen our six-year-olds so continuously blissed out. In our 40 hours at T Bar M Camp Travis, neither asked, "What can I do?" Instead, when they did touch base with us, our boys wanted to tell me about their friends. I felt the same.

Speaking for my family, we feel like ours has grown. For that, we are so grateful.

We joined FCC-Austin to connect with families similar to ours—for our kids to connect with other children similar to them. We luxuriated in all those connections at the FCC Spring Retreat. And in having such a relaxed weekend together, we strengthened our own family bonds, with vacation memories to last a lifetime. ❖

FCC board member Carrie Van der Wal was the planner of our retreat.

Year of the Snake Chinese Culture Camp Preparations Underway

During the week of August 5 through August 9, the hallways and classrooms at north Austin's Summitt Elementary School will buzz with activity and laughter. With the registration period completed, this year's FCC-UT Chinese culture camp is off and running, with over a hundred kids in nine levels of classes enrolled in the camp. Because we moved to a larger location, everyone who wanted to register made it on the roster and we have no wait list. Yay!

Co-camp directors Rowena Fong, Ed.D., and Becky Harding have created the master schedule. Included among the many offerings are new classes such as the IQuest Global Enrichment Center's contribution from teachers Iris Wong and Tracey Vickery. This is called "Power Point Karaoke," which combines improv, creative, and critical thinking skills into a fun sharing piece. Chris Tong from the International Shaolin Wushu Center will teach the Pandas (3rd and 4th graders) some Wushu skills in their weeklong class, and Linda Cao, together with Todd Morton, have expanded their contribution from teaching lion dance to the Tigers (5th and 6th graders) for the week to also teaching the art of the long dragon to the Monkeys (1st and 2nd graders). We are having a beautiful long dragon made in Hong Kong specifically for this class. We know many students return to camp year after year so we have added some new and interesting sections to engage them.

Returning to teach the Mandarin and Food classes are teachers Yang Cao and Robyn Stringfellow, who will engage the students in the "say it, write it, read it and eat it" strategy of learning some Mandarin vocabulary. This three-day class was a big hit last year and we are designing another series of food-connected-to-language units to inspire the kids in hopes of sparking an interest in Mandarin. Area therapists Em Hardy, Ph.D., and Pat Morgan, LPC, will again guide the Adoption Journey classes. The oldest



Returning college counselor and president of 2013 UT China Care, Kathy Tian, and the new college counselors Savannah Luu, Jeanne Feng, Beth Hsieh, Allison Yeh and Isabelle Seto at the training meeting held in April (not pictured: Tim Chang and Isabelle Kuo). They join returning college counselors Lane Allison, Tiffany Chen, Genevieve Norman and Angie Wong. We have 15 assistant, volunteer high school counselors as well.

group—7th and 8th graders—will screen *Somewhere Between*, and hopefully Skype with either one of the girls featured in the film or the filmmaker, Linda Goldstein Knowlton. Dallas-area therapist and adult Korean adoptee Melanie Chung-Sherman will join us for a day speaking to classes as a part of the adoption panels.

College counselors returning include Lane Allison, founder of China's Children International, Tiffany Chen, former FCC intern, Genevieve Norman, the first child adopted from China in Texas, Kathy Tian, president of UT China Care, and Angie Wong, who has been with us from our very first camp. Joining them are a fine batch of new college age recruits from the UT China Care program as well as 15 high school student members of FCC. The college counselors had their first training session in April and all of the counselors will meet in August to prepare for the week.

This year's service project is under the guidance of FCC parent Kathleen McDonagh and all of the campers will create sack lunches of non-perishable food items. These bags will be donated to a local school to give to students who may need to supplement their meals on the weekends if they receive free or reduced lunches during the school week. We are calling the project "Kids Helping Kids."

More details about class rosters, specific class curriculum, counselor assignments, and parent volunteer opportunities will be emailed to participating families in the next few weeks. Because Dr. Fong and Becky Harding are also leading the FCC Xi Shuang Ban Na Cultural Exchange Learning Project with Amy Wong Mok, they plan to have as much of the camp organizational process completed in early June before they leave for China. ♦

The Evolution of a Playgroup

By Robin Davis

Monday morning playgroup was perfect for our girls in the early years. We typically met at a playground and while the kids played, the moms talked endlessly. We discussed adoption, potty training, preschool, napping, Chinese classes, holiday plans and much, much more. Our daughters formed a community with their friends and we all looked forward to our time together.

The years flew by and soon our discussions turned to homework, busy schedules, after-school activities, reading and still so much more.

Our girls were growing up and the playground was not the right place anymore but we did not want our group to dissolve. We decided to embrace our love of reading

and Chinese culture by starting a mother-daughter book group. For the last two years we have met once a month at a Chinese restaurant to discuss an Asian-themed book and share a meal together. Most months we give the book “a thumbs up” and less frequently we read a book that is not our favorite. Our daughters are now finishing up second and third grade and we are getting ready to move on to chapter books that they can read independently. Of course, we will be reading the book also but maybe on our own!

We have found Asian-themed books through the recommendations of friends, librarians and the internet. We try to pick books six months ahead to give each family time to find the book from the library or purchase them in plenty of time.

I encourage you to find some time and a few FCC friends and start a book group—memories will be created. ❖

“Be awesome! Be a book nut!”

—Dr. Seuss

Suggested Reading: Kindergarten-Third Grade

- *Chopsticks*, Jon Berkely
- *How the Ox Star Fell from Heaven*, Lily Toy
- *Ruby's Wish*, Shirin Yim
- *Seven Chinese Sisters*, Kathy Tucker and Grace Lin
- *Shining Star: The Ann May Wong Story*, Paula Yao
- *Twenty Heartbeats*, Dennis Haseley and Ed Young
- *Weaving of a Dream*, Marilee Heyer

Tween/Teen Update

By Suzanne Danuser

It's been 10 months since FCC parents Suzanne Danuser, Abby Turner and Linda Breining agreed to create events to bring the teen/tween age group (7th–12th graders) together more frequently. Ideas for the group were published to the FCC membership last fall.

Events so far have included a pool party last September with UT China Care members, a movie night at Regal Gateway cinemas and group dinner at local restaurant Fire Bowl Café, and a viewing of the film *Somewhere Between* for teens and parents with Pat Morgan, LPC, at the Danuser home.

Suzanne Danuser met with three of the UT China Care board members in early February to discuss more integration opportunities with FCC Teens. The UT China Care group desires more interaction with the teen group specifically, and they were very open to possibilities. They would like to encourage more boy attendees from FCC as they have several male members who want to be involved with the kids. As college students, they love the idea of gathering in personal residences (as they are away from their family homes!) or venues that foster more interaction between individuals. Ideas from that discussion were to have some kids come to campus and spend some time with the members, hold board

game nights or movie nights in a home, and attend free outdoor activities. FCC Teen family attendance at their annual Talent Show in late February was also discussed and was broadcast to the membership.

One major note: We have found that scheduling activities for this age group is quite a challenge! So many pulls on their time and interests! Having said that, recent and future near term events are:

- We just held a visit with UT China Care students at Zilker on Saturday April 27th.
- Saturday, June 1st from 5–8 pm: A cooking class at Danuser's home with Yang Cao. RSVP required. Limited to 12 members.

If you are interested in getting more involved with these efforts, please contact Suzanne at suzerd@yahoo.com. ❖

Deep in the Heart of... Xi Shuang Ban Na

By Janna Bear

Most “travel groups” to China meet only once they arrive there, bonding (or not bonding) as best they can. Families do their pre-travel preparations on their own and, once they arrive in China, the experience remains quite family-centric. This travel group is turning out to be something quite different—a working group.

We are five teens adopted from China, their moms, and three intrepid leaders: Amy Wong Mok, Rowena Fong and Becky Harding. This summer we will be the first citizen (i.e. not government official) cultural exchange group to visit Austin’s sister-city in China, Xi Shuan Ban Na. In the last FCC newsletter, Becky Harding—both leader and mom on this project—wrote about the process of forming our group. I’d like to share some of our preparations in the months leading up to our departure.

At first, there was a lot of talking as we collectively wrapped our minds around what the trip might entail and what the girls might want to share with the students they’ll be meeting in schools there. Who might we meet? What are the best ways to present information to them, given the need for translation? What technology will we use, and how do we reduce the risk of failure? What gifts do we want to bring, how many, and who gets them? What kind of travel visa is best? Because we are on the first trip of its kind, we don’t have a clear picture of what we’ll find when we get there. Our goal is to prepare well, create a structure both solid and flexible, and then be ready to respond with open hearts and minds to whatever comes our way.

We’ve been meeting monthly, with the girls putting in extra hours between sessions pulling together their presentations. I’m



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struck by the care and commitment they are bringing to this project. They are creating personal video introductions and preparing short “lectures” on topics they think will interest kids in China. They have chosen and are practicing songs to present to officials, and have created beautiful artwork to give as gifts.

Amy has been giving us lessons in ‘cultural translation’—everything from proper dress to what is expected of parent/child interactions. We’ve discussed ways the Chinese concept of “losing face” might come into play, and how to hold a teacup showing respect for our hosts.

In my early 20s, I was fortunate to spend a summer in Mexico on an American Friends Service Committee project—an experience that shaped my outlook on cultural exchange. I learned that moments of simple, shared human experience (chatting in a kitchen, laughing at a shared joke) can leave the greatest impression. Years later, I clearly remember the look in an old woman’s (or street-smart guy’s, or young child’s) eyes when we’d realized it only seemed we lived worlds apart.

Through all of our preparations to bridge worlds, we’re breaking down our own per-

sonal boundaries and coalescing as a group. Watching the girls practicing their presentations, I get to witness their individual interests and talents. Those who were shy are speaking up, and I’m impressed by our group’s desire to listen to and include all. We’re an eclectic group, bringing different experiences to the table, and I’m hopeful that our group of young ambassadors will get to share this range of themselves with our hosts in China.

We’re building a whole new kind of travel experience for teens and look forward to sharing more with you once we return. ❖

Janna Bear is a member of FCC Austin with two teens adopted from China. She and her daughter Pema are participating in the Ban Na program.

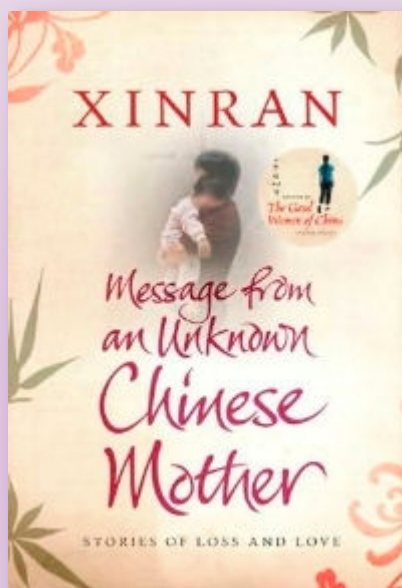


Book Review: Deanne Brown, Assistant Director, Chinese Culture Camp

Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother: Stories of Loss and Love

By Xinran, author of *The Good Women of China*

After Xinran had finished writing *The Good Women of China*, a book I personally couldn't read without crying, she still had stories of some women that were "too painful and too close to home." Her own childhood was shaped by the Cultural Revolution and a ten-year separation from her mother, who, even after they were reunited, was distant and emotionally disconnected from her. After an incident where she witnessed a newborn girl smothered in a slop bucket, she began researching and writing about girls born in China and their fates. By any measure, these true stories of Chinese birth mothers and daughters, midwives, and families struggling to survive in the social and economic chaos that exists in most of China are heart-wrenching and tragic on a scale that most Americans never witness. As a part of her research, she includes a brief history of international adoptions and the one-child policy, although she is clear that the reasons for the number and brutality of infant girl deaths and abandonments in China are much more complicated than just recent political policies.



Her special message, however, to adopted Chinese girls and their adoptive families, is crucial. Every woman she interviewed, especially the birth mothers who knew, or thought they knew, that their daughters had been adopted, shared the same feelings. Their daughters were precious to them, and keeping them alive for the chance that they might have good lives was their desperate hope. She writes, "So, dear children, that you are alive and thriving today is because your mother challenged social conventions, oppression, and ignorance to give you that gift of life.

Valuing your own life now is a way of paying her back; fulfilling yourself is a way of thanking her." Letters to Xinran from adoptive mothers included in the book echoed my feelings about my daughters' birth mothers and what I wish I could tell them about how cherished their daughters are. After reading so many letters and meeting Chinese adoptees around the world, she established a charity, The Mothers' Bridge of Love (<http://www.mothersbridge.org/>), to help them reconnect with their Chinese culture and to help families understand adoptive and birth cultures.

When my daughters are adults and old enough to understand how complicated life can be, I hope that we can read a few of these stories together and use them to grieve the wounds that suffering and abandonment began, but that adoption and family have helped to heal. For now, I am sure that I can say that our daughters were and are courageously loved and sacrificed for, and I pray that somehow their birth mothers can know their love has been honored. ❖

Brain Training: What Is Neurofeedback? How Is it Different from Biofeedback Therapy? How Can it Help my Child?

By Jennifer Schriever, MA, LPC, NCC, BCB

These are questions that I am frequently asked. I find that many people have at least heard of biofeedback therapy, though they may not know exactly what it is. My quick answer is that biofeedback is simply therapy involving “biological feedback” or information from a person’s body. This may include measurements from muscles, skin temperature, brainwaves, heart rate, and more.

Neurofeedback therapy is a specific type of biofeedback that has evolved into a very effective treatment for many different problems, and it involves training a person’s brain to function in a more efficient state. For example, a person with anxiety, who likely exhibits very fast and reactive brainwave patterns, can be conditioned using Neurofeedback therapy to decrease the “anxiety” brain activity and also to increase the “relaxed but focused” brain activity simultaneously. In 2012, the American Academy of Pediatrics rated Neurofeedback therapy a “Level 1” or “most efficacious” treatment option for children with ADHD.

During Neurofeedback, the client sits in a chair facing a computer monitor. The computer is connected to an EEG (electroencephalograph), which in turn is connected to sensors applied to the scalp. Special software monitors the electrical activity in the brain and delivers the information to

the therapist, who determines the appropriate settings to effectively reward the client. This type of therapy works through a kind of innate learning called operant conditioning. The therapist both determines the treatment protocol and the conditions that the client’s brain must meet in order to get a reward. The reward is usually visual and auditory in nature, and involves changing an image and a sound on the computer monitor that lets the client know how they are doing. Over time, the brain becomes conditioned to produce the more efficient (relaxed, focused, etc.) brainwaves. This kind of therapy can take 20–40 sessions or more, depending on the client’s goals and presenting issues. I find that children and teens respond very well to rewards that involve watching a movie, or that “looks” like a video game.

At the Austin Biofeedback Center, we have over 60 years of combined clinical experience working with children and teens with a variety of presenting symptoms, including ADHD, Anxiety, Depression, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Sensory Integration, Headaches, and Trauma. As counselors who specialize in Neurofeedback and Biofeedback therapy, we often integrate different kinds of treatment into a child’s training plan. That is to say, we find it most effective to combine therapies as needed. A child who presents with anxiety will benefit from a comprehensive program designed to train the child out of a constant “fight



or flight” state. For example, we may use neurofeedback to train the brain to a more relaxed state, as well as muscle-tension biofeedback to train the body to a more relaxed state. We frequently incorporate counseling into the sessions as well to give the child cognitive “tools” that they can use as needed. We find that this well-rounded approach addresses the system from many different points, and leads to much better outcomes. ❖

Jennifer Schriever, MA, LPC, NCC, BCB, is a Texas-Licensed and Nationally Certified Counselor, and is board-certified in Biofeedback Therapy. She has over 20 years experience in all modalities of Biofeedback, including Neurofeedback therapy and Quantitative EEG. For more information, please contact the Austin Biofeedback and Neurofeedback Center at (512) 794-9355, or visit our website at www.austinbiofeedback.com.

Family Focus: The Duncans

By Bethany Morrison

“Racially I used to say I was white, yet now I say I’m Caucasian; containing the word Asian, I look for even humorous ways to connect with our daughter!”

—Carol Duncan

Carol Duncan started taking Mandarin classes soon after she and her husband Michael started the process of adopting from China. At that time she had no idea how useful the lessons would later prove to be. Carol’s father had a U.S. government position that required the family to move abroad frequently while Carol was growing up. She developed a love for languages and foreign cultures, hearing and babbling Mandarin as a tot in Taiwan, picking up some Greek, and becoming fluent in German. Carol’s experiences have taught her that not only are languages useful for communication, they are invaluable tools for learning about cultures. Adopting from China and learning about their child’s culture was one of the reasons Carol chose to study Mandarin.

During the wait for their adoption referral, Michael accepted an assignment which required the family to move to China. The couple had only just begun setting up house in Shanghai for a couple of weeks when they received a midnight call from their Austin-based adoption agency, informing them they had been matched to a beautiful baby girl in Jiangxi Province. Their daughter Ella was a mere 45-minute flight away, in the city of Fuzhou. Ella was twelve months old at the time of her adoption.

Carol continued to study Mandarin and used her language skills, connections, and some investigative work to find Ella’s foster

family. The Duncans flew to Jiangxi for Ella’s third birthday and had the tremendous privilege of meeting Ella’s foster mother, a very special lady dear to the whole Duncan family. A few months later, the Duncans repatriated to Austin, TX, where most all of the extended family lives, including all four of Ella’s grandparents.

“Typical American mixed mutts with English, Scottish, Irish, and also Native American roots,” was how Carol described her and Michael’s ethnic heritage. They both feel that when they adopted Ella, she and her roots and her culture were grafted onto their family tree, creating really a Chinese-American family. Carol cautions that being a Chinese-American family is something that must be practiced, not just claimed. She and Michael feel a strong obligation to keep their child and themselves connected to her Chinese roots. A recent Talk of the Nation episode on NPR posed the question, “When did ethnicity become an important identity for you?” Carol was moved to write the following:

Biologically predominantly white, I’ve always longed to know more about my maternal great-grandmother who was Native American, but my Mother sadly reports that any discussion of that identity was always ashamedly hushed during her childhood.

Fast forward to now... as an adoptive mother of a child from China, I say that our family unit is Chinese-American. There is certainly no shame

or hiding the ethnicity of our daughter, of our family. We consciously involve ourselves in the Chinese and wider Asian culture in our community.

Racially I used to say I was white, yet now I say I’m Caucasian; containing the word Asian, I look for even humorous ways to connect with our daughter!

At the Duncan household, Chinese New Year is welcomed with firecrackers in the front yard. The Duncans keep Ella connected to Chinese culture in many ways, which include celebrating Chinese holidays, attending some language lessons, attending local cultural fairs, making cultural presentations at Ella’s school, and through friendships with Chinese families. They also look forward to a return trip to China this summer when Ella and Carol will attend a language and culture camp in Shanghai. They plan to travel back to Jiangxi to reunite with Ella’s foster family.

Of course they’ll be back to Austin in time for our very own FCC culture camp. Carol, Michael, and Ella, we very much look forward to seeing you then and we can’t wait to hear all about your experiences in China! ❖

FCC board member, Bethany Morrison, resides in Austin with her husband, two young kids, and a tiny flock of backyard chickens.

Chinese New Year, Then and Now and Forever More

By Alan Greenberg

FCC's Annual Chinese New Year Celebration was held on Sunday, February 3 at the Marchesa Hall. Incorporating feedback from a survey of membership conducted in 2012, our event this year was held in a more central location, offered food as requested by many members, and offered more activities for a variety of age groups. In recent years we've held the event in southwest Austin on the campus of Covington Middle School, with a focus on entertainment by a variety of artists and the silent auction. This year we went out of our way to make a "party" happen, as one of the biggest requests we get from members is that they want time to connect with one another.

And party we did. From the dumpling eating contest (winners were scored on quantities AND style/humor) to the DJ to the green screen photo booth to the potstickers and egg rolls and Napa salad from China Palace Restaurant, we had a great time. And we capped the event with the TDDT and Summitt Elementary lion dancers—as always—who were exceptional this year. The silent auction raised approximately \$1,200, which has been donated to charity (see Treasurer's report).

We Want to Know What You Think!

Whether you attended this year or not, please complete our short 10-question survey at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JWKLb9H>
by May 28, 2013 to give us feedback as we

begin to plan for 2014's big event! Your input helps FCC stay strong and do better every year!

FCC board member Denise Davolt will be the Chairperson for our 2014 CNY celebration and we seek volunteers to be a part of the planning committee. No one was over-burdened in February because we had a team of parents and contributors who shared in making a great event happen. Just ask Robin and Kellena and Denise and Sandi and Deanne and Dianne and Bethany and Kim and Jena and Becky and the rest of the gang—apologies to any names left out. We seek high energy, creative, and detail-oriented folks who might be Committee Leads for Decorations, Food/Refreshments, Crafts, Activities, Sponsorships, Record Keeping, Signage, and the like. The first committee meeting will be held sometime mid-July and if interested, please contact Denise Davolt at denisedavolt@gmail.com. And you know: the sooner we wrap up the *Year of the Snake* and begin planning for next year's celebration of the *Year of the Horse*, the more likely the ride will be smooth and easy. Just how we like it. ❖



Dragon Boat Festival Redesign

Becky Harding

As some of you might have noticed, FCC-Austin board of directors decided to forgo our traditional booth at the year's annual Dragon Boat Festival held at Festival Beach on Town Lake. Sponsored by the Asian American Cultural Center, FCC has in the past few years "boothed it up" with crafts and shirts as a part of the marketplace arena by the performance stage at the festival. Based on our FCC membership surveys, we decided to put our energy into actually competing in the dragon boat races for the 2014 event.

FCC parent and former board member Kellena Page has agreed to captain our effort and will begin gathering the 21 people needed to row, call directions and literally beat the drum for the boat this winter. Plans are for about 6–8 practices starting in late winter/early spring with our contracted coach and boat. The races are usually held on the last Saturday in April. We are looking for a team of adults and/or teens to represent FCC in this amazing Asian American event. Contact Kellena at KellenaPage@yahoo.com if you are interested in participating! ❖

Yes, Virginia, There Is an FCC Library!

By Abby Turner

Did you know FCC Austin has a library? We have a great collection of books and DVDs on various subjects related to adoption and China. It is very easy to borrow a book. You can peruse the list of titles at: <http://www.fccaustin.org/library.html>. Then just send me an email at abbyo814@icloud.com. I will either mail you the materials or drop them at your home. There will be an envelope to mail the items back when you are finished. I will already have it addressed. You just need to mail it book rate.

Here is a list of a few children's books in which you might be interested:

- *Dragonwings*, Lawrence Yep, about a 4th grade level about early immigration
- *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze*, a Newberry winner about ancient China
- *Mysterious Adventures of Foy Rin Jin*, a picture book about a dragon
- *Sagwa: the Chinese Siamese Cat*, Amy Tan
- *Motherbridge of Love*, by Mother Bridge of Love, Illustrated by Josee Masse
- *The Great Race: The Story of the Chinese Zodiac*, Dawn Casey, Illustrated by Anne Wilson

- *Little Leap Forward: A Boy in Beijing*, Guo Yue, set in 1966 China about an 8-year-old boy.
- *Lin Yi's Lantern: A Moon Festival Tale*, Brenda Williams & Benjamin Lacombe
- *We're Riding on a Caravan: an Adventure on the Silk Road*, Laurie Krebs & Nelen Cann
- *Magic Boat and Other Chinese Folk Stories*

I hope to hear from you soon! ❖

May 2013 Treasurer's Report

By Alan Greenberg

The state of the treasury is solid. FCC earned about \$1,200 from the Silent Auction at Chinese New Year and on the basis of those proceeds and other well-run events throughout 2012 that left us with a surplus, we have donated \$1,000 apiece to four "favored" charitable/non-profit organizations: UT China Care (<http://www.txchinacare.org>), Philip Hayden Foundation (<http://www.chinaorphans.org/>), Love Without Boundaries (<http://www.lovewithoutboundaries.com>), and Half the Sky Foundation (<http://www.halfthesky.org/en>). You may click on those links and read about these fine organizations.

Meanwhile, we want to acknowledge a different type of giver and a different type of "giftee." It's through the generosity of some of our members that we have received pledges of donations to cover at least two children who otherwise could not afford to attend Culture Camp this coming summer. And several of you have raised matching donations from your corporate employers for FCC. So we encourage all members in a position to afford it to consider an extra donation to help cover scholarships to camp. Four families donating \$50 apiece = one scholarship. Four companies matching those donations = two scholarships. And we do indeed have scholarship requests. In fact, we thank Dr. Rowena Fong, camp co-director, for donating \$500 for funds she received from the UT School of Social Work.

And then there are the giftees—those of you who benefit from the donations we receive. Our policy as a board is that we try to turn no one away—so never hesitate to ask if you wish to attend an FCC event for which you otherwise might not be able to budget. Where possible, we encourage service to the organization: donate some time! Offer to pitch in on an event! We could use the help, and you will find us a fun bunch. And we are heartened at the extent to which members are involved in helping us put on events. In fact, the recent retreat to T Bar M was member Carrie van der Wal's idea and board supported, but not board driven. So join us in helping drive the overall (not just financial) health of the organization through time and ideas. ❖

Alan Greenberg is FCC-Austin Treasurer and Dad to Claire-Lily, 10.

Featured Friend: Linda Cao, Lion & Dragon Dance Teacher at our Chinese Culture Camp

By Becky Harding

In September of 2009, we held our traditional Moon Festival celebration at Brushy Creek Park. Those of you in attendance might remember that it was a magical time, with families galore painting umbrellas and playing in the spray area. When the lion dancers arrived and the drumming began, something special seemed to swirl in the air. I met Linda Cao, the lion dance leader, that night as she tipped her lion head up and started talking about how honored they were to be a part of our celebration and we have been friends ever since that moment.

Becky: You volunteer to teach the lion and dragon dance class at camp and we are very grateful. Where did you learn this art form? What is it about lion dancing that you love?

Linda: I started learning lion dance when I was a freshman at the University of Texas here in Austin in the fall of 2000. The lion dance team was recruiting and I thought it would be fun to try it out and I loved it ever since. I love everything about lion dancing, from learning new tricks and moves to the experience of being a part of something wonderful and exciting.



Becky: What is your professional background? How does it fit with lion dancing or does it?

Linda: Out in the real world, I am a typical lab rat serving the people of Texas by screening newborn babies for specific genetic disorders and diseases. Lion dancing doesn't quite fit in the sterile and monotone atmosphere that is the lab. Lion dancing is too colorful and fast paced, with lots of noise and movements.

Becky: What is the best aspect of teaching at our culture camp?

Linda: The best aspect of teaching at FCC's culture camp are the KIDS. They are so enthusiastic and motivated to learn and share a part of their culture. I wanted to provide them an opportunity to learn something different and unique that they have seen during festivals and shows but have yet to try out for themselves.

Becky: Anything else you might want to add?

Linda: Thanks for everything you do Becky! It is great to be able to share a little bit of culture with the community. The vibrancy and awe aspect of lion dancing is what makes lion dancing so much fun. We see more and more kids from different backgrounds and ethnicities wanting to be a part of something unique. That's how I felt when I started lion dancing and I can only hope that it'll get better and better. ❖