

Families with Children from China

Austin, Texas Chapter

Summer Newsletter

July, 2012



President's Letter

One of my favorite things about being prez is connecting with our members; it is truly invigorating!

I had the pleasure of meeting some of them last month over dinner to share ideas regarding events for our tween/teen population. This was something quite necessary, given that our kids are only getting older, and quite frankly, our organization hasn't offered much for this particular demographic... and we want to address this oversight.

Some truly wonderful ideas came out of this meeting—things that only the parents of a tween/teen (or teens themselves) would have come up with, and I share them with you in one of the articles in this issue.

A subcommittee has now formed for this new endeavor so that we may begin to offer some of the suggestions proposed in the article soon. Meantime, on behalf of the Board and myself, we hope you have a “cool” and refreshing rest of summer.

Warm Regards,
Kim Goodman
President, FCC-Austin

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Xi Shuang Ban Na Exchange Learning Project

Project leaders Rowena Fong, Ed.D., Becky Harding, and Amy Wong Mok are looking for students and their families to serve as ambassadors to Banna. Once selected, the students will meet regularly throughout the year to build community, learn about Chinese protocol, prepare with a partner a presentation about their lives in the United States, and practice a short entertainment selection. The students and their parent(s) will arrive in Banna on Saturday, June 15, and stay until the following Saturday, June 22, 2013. During that week, they will present at different schools, have lunch with Chinese students, tour the city and surrounding area, have dinner with their Banna families, and then return to the hotel for daily end-of-the-day gatherings. The Chinese host will provide accommodations and meals, while the families are expected to pay for airfare and any independent traveling they might do before or after the week.

Eligibility

This project is open to FCC member students who are in middle, high school, and college, ages 11 and up. The youngest eligible will be entering middle school (6th grade) by the summer of 2013. The student and one parent will participate in the program. They need to be open to different customs and types of experiences as well as having outgoing, flexible and positive attitudes. We are looking for students and parent(s) in excellent physical shape for traveling and touring as well as who are genuinely interested in goodwill between the two countries and peoples. A healthy mindset and emotional stability is also important, since returning to China can be challenging for some individuals. Please read Julie Kniseley's article in this newsletter edition: *What to Expect when Returning to China*, to see if this project is a good fit for your family.

Responsibilities

Before leaving for China, the student and a parent(s) will be expected to participate in



Dāim Iges/Alamy

trip preparation meetings throughout the school year. In addition to lessons on Asian etiquette and customs including what clothing to wear while visiting in China, the student will be assisted with a public speaking portion of the project. S/he will, working with a partner, prepare in English, an 8–10 minute presentation about their life and experiences here in the US. They will give this presentation several times while in China.

In addition, the group will prepare several short entertainment segments such as singing a song, playing a musical instrument or reciting a poem, as these presentations are a custom when dining with guests in China. All students will contribute to this portion of the project in some way that matches their skill set.

In China, the student and parent(s) are expected to fully participate in all arranged activities and tours. Any individual traveling may be done before or after the week in Banna at the expense of the family. Selected students and families are expected to obtain the necessary travel documents and airfare arrangements.

Lastly, we are looking for students who are leaders and will represent the finest qualities of character and integrity as they represent their family, school, city, state, and country on this exchange event. One of the major goals of this project is to create and nurture longstanding relationships between the FCC students and families and the students and families of Banna.

Selection Process

Students interested in participating will write and submit a 2–4 page essay and from these essays and the application form, the project leaders will invite students to an in-person interview. Finalization of the project participants will happen after all of the interviews are concluded. The timeline for these steps is as follows:

Presentation and Information Session for Interested Families

Friday, September 7, 2012 from 6:30–7:30 pm at the Asian American Cultural Center

Application materials will be available at this meeting.

Application Due

The materials are due Sunday, September 30 to Becky Harding. They can be sent in traditional mail or email.

Interviews Begin

After reviewing the applications, selected students will be invited to a 30-minute interview either Friday, October 19 or on Saturday, October 20 at the Asian American Cultural Center.

Candidates Notified

Students chosen for the program will be notified by Monday, October 22.

First Meeting

All students and parents involved in the program will meet Saturday, November 3 from 10 am–11:30 am at the Asian American Cultural Center. Additional monthly meetings will be scheduled at this session.

Trip

June 15–22, 2013

Questions may be directed to Becky Harding at bjh0902@aol.com. ❖

2012 Chinese Culture Camp

By Becky Harding

Our third FCC-UT Chinese culture camp offering is only a few weeks away and camp co-director Rowena Fong, Ed.D., and I are excited at the terrific sessions we have in store for the campers this year. At this point, each of the 78 families should have received an email with the schedule, class offerings and other important information about the camp experience. After a year of planning, it's almost here and we are exceedingly proud of the curriculum for this year!

We are delighted to share that we have 24 college and high school camp counselors working with us this year. Each class will have three counselors, in many classes exceeding our goal of a 1:5 ratio. As some of you know, these people are truly the heart of the camp. Most of the college counselors are returning from previous years and have experience volunteering with the UT China Care program. We have 10 high school FCC members assisting the college counselors this year, including four returning from last year. This is an outstanding group of young people. Families will have

the opportunity to meet all of these folks at the Thursday, August 2 parent orientation meeting.

This year's camp has almost 30 teachers whose volunteer offerings range from delivering a one-time single session to coming every day for an hour the entire week. All campers will have an hour-long adoption journey class each day with either Em Hardy, Ph.D., or Pat Morgan, LPC. Most of the campers will be using Ying Ying Fry's book *Kids Like Me in China* to discuss returning to China for a heritage trip and other related adoption issues. We hope to have one of the older classes Skype with Ying Ying, who is now 18 years old, on Friday of camp week. In addition, the older campers will have the opportunity to listen to the adoption journeys of adult Asian adoptee Sarah Han as well as Lane Allisan, co-founder of China's Children International, who is a counselor for us this year. Other FCC college and high school students will also be on these adoption panels, which proved hugely popular last year. It is rare for our children to hear these individuals talk about their experiences

and get to ask questions. It was amazing last year and clearly one of the most meaningful pieces of camp.

The Mandarin teachers, Sharon Lai, Kathy Lin, Robyn Stringfellow and Yang Cao will teach their three-day classes on how to write, read and say words associated with rice, noodles, dumplings, and learn about the specialty foods associated with the Dragon Boat, birthday and Chinese New Year celebrations. This "Mandarin and Food" class should be very popular as we had a very positive response to the dumpling making class last year. Wendy Kuo and Joyce Wu from Orpheus Academy are back to teach that class again.

Amy Lan will teach some basics of the T'ai Chi five elements form to the youngest two classes of campers, then return each morning to lead the entire camp in the form. The idea is to try to recreate what these children might experience on a morning in China. Should be very interesting!

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At the annual training meeting at Dr. Fong's house, the college camp counselors relax. Left to right, they are Angie Wong, Shan He, Tuan Le, Lane Allison, Jamie Nanquill, Ysabelle Sosong, Stephanie Kuo, Jenny Jong and Michael Hung.



The adoption panel from last year's camp included Sarah Han, Genevieve Norman and Jacob Berk, who spoke to the Tigers and Dragons classes about their adoption experiences.

Family Focus: The Greenbergs

By Alan Greenberg

“ Did I mention that most of the people wearing masks here are wearing masks that don't work? Or that I hear they're using bras in Taiwan because of a mask shortage? Or how even some people in restaurants or at the government ministry wear their masks over their mouths but not their noses? ”

—From one of my emails posted from Changsha

Everyone responds to extraordinary events, oh let's say a weird cold virus creating a pandemic-induced terror and confusion, in different ways. I'd like to write a heart-warming tale of bonding and love, sweetness and light, like David Norman's great piece last newsletter, but hey, I was a guy facing a crisis of historical import. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) had just been appearing in the news when we received our referral in March 2003. By June adoptive travel would be shut down for several months as the Chinese government struggled to understand and cope with the outbreak.

I had only one thought by the time to travel in May 2003: “LET'S DO IT.” There was no stopping me, I felt like “Ahnold” in *The Terminator*. And adopting Zhang Man Li (Claire-Lily Greenberg to some of you) was the single best thing I've ever done in my life, SARS or no SARS.

I never believed I needed to treat this any differently than I'd treat a surrounding flu or cold outbreak: lots of hand washing, portable Purell, no sharing of water bottles. But the confusion and rumors surrounding what the Chinese governments were doing were enough to make one's head spin. There were a wide variety of provincial actions

initially as a means of containing the illness. “You can't fly through Hong Kong unless you want to go through quarantine in Beijing! Ten days in a hotel before you get your kid in Changsha if you fly through Shanghai!” I hadn't seen a zombie movie in years but the fears people expressed about being exposed to a person traveling to a country with a SARS outbreak made *Night of the Living Dead* seem like *My Little Pony*. Things were so in flux, I had to change the air itineraries three times, paying change fees three times (thanks a lot, American Airlines!). We called the CDC, we called the consulate in Guangzhou, we called just about anyone who had an opinion, but there was no way I would postpone travel (which was an option we considered).

So my future daughter's mother Karrie Key stayed behind to avoid the possibility of quarantine and I was joined by my friend and Austin FCC Member Laura Francis of El Paso, who was intending to adopt her first of two gals the following year. (Her daughters Maddie and Emma attended last year's FCC Culture Camp.) It just so happens that Laura was a former pediatric ICU nurse, there to help this novice diaper changer the first week. All of the disarray with travel meant that our Great Wall China Adoption group consisted of only five families, from Ohio, New York City, Michigan, College Station, and yours truly.

What was meant to be a great family adventure turned into... a great family adventure, with plenty of hilarity amidst the tension and exhaustion of a first baby.

Officials at airports and hotels took our temperatures and swabbed our hands every time we boarded/disembarked a flight or entered the hotel. I had been in China for all of two days and they made me wear a mask to prevent giving SARS to the babies and SWI workers. My adoption photos show me getting fingerprints and footprints with mandatory mask.

Only half of the travelers on internal China flights wore masks; many did not, or only put them on during takeoff and landing. And by the end of the trip, with Laura's expert understanding of all things medical, I ignored the mask option and chose to breathe freely with my new daughter. With the help of Barbara and Mark from Michigan, Andy and Anne-Mette from New York, Carol from College-Station, and the Haverland-Leperes from Ohio, we had a great second week, and we'll be vacationing with the New York gang this summer.

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FCC Austin Survey Results

By Jena Goodridge

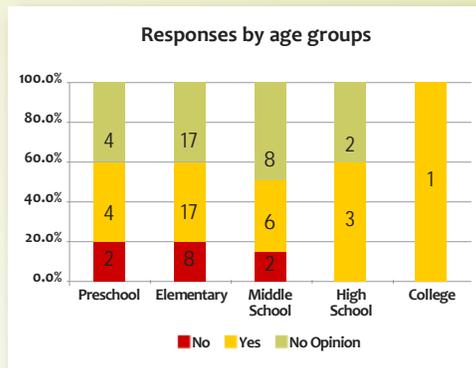
The FCC Board strives to provide events that are valued by and are relevant to the membership and improve on what we deliver.

With that in mind, the FCC board sought a better understanding of the FCC membership's likes, dislikes, and wishes through a recent survey conducted late April to early May.

In that survey we explored demographics, which events are valued by membership, and the needs of membership. We also provide members with the opportunity of providing candid, open feedback.

Sixty of you responded—which is a statistically reliable number—and we thank you so much! What follows are the results of the survey:

Demographics: 14% of you report that your adopted children are in the “preschool and younger” category, 57% in “elementary school,” 22% in “middle school,” 7% in “high school” and 1% in “college.”



We have received feedback that there aren't enough events for our older children. With the survey data, we can see that most of our membership is in elementary and middle school. However, with the current slowing trend in Chinese adoptions, we can expect our membership to shift to the right toward older categories. We will need to consider evolving from delivering activities focused on the younger set to activities and events

that are more attractive to the older set. As Kim reports in this month's issue, we've recently begun to explore with families containing older kids to brainstorm ideas that would be attractive to this group. One thing we've discovered is that they are very busy and families' schedules are very full! If you are in the middle school or high school group (or any of the other groups), we welcome your specific ideas if you didn't already provide them. We want to make FCC relevant for you. Stay tuned and contact Suzanne Danuser, suzerd@yahoo.com if you wish to contribute to this effort.

General FCC Events: Next, through the survey data, we looked at the events that FCC offers each year: Chinese New Year (CNY), Moon Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Culture Camp, Summer Series and Speakers/Workshops. For these events, survey responses rated each event on both favorability and attendance. We mapped these responses on a high/low favorable and attendance map.

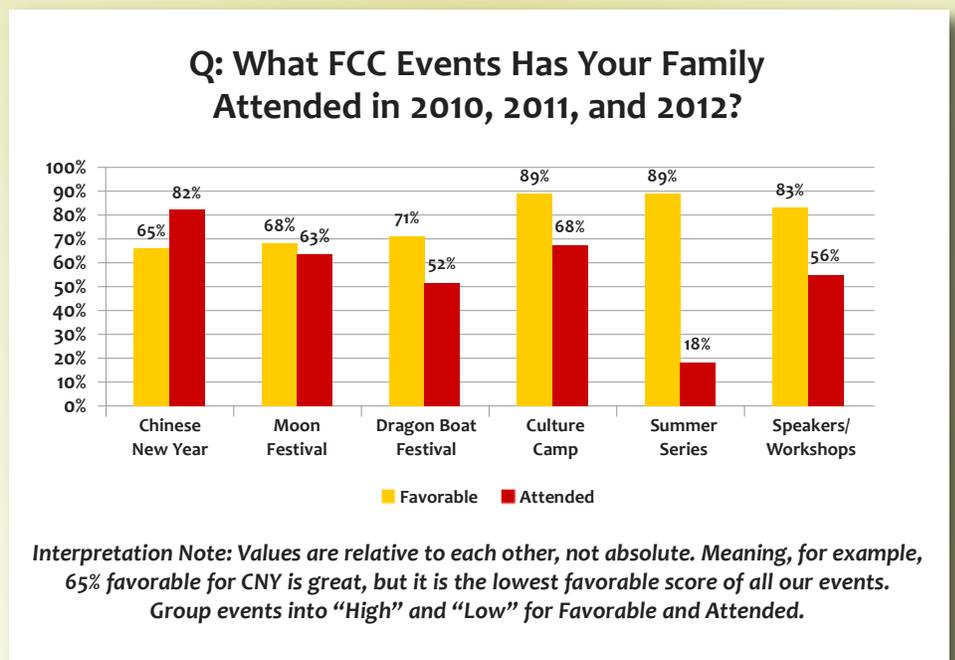
For those events that are both highly attended and receive highly favorable ratings, we'll be looking at how to replicate

or improve them (Culture Camp). For those events that are highly favorable but less well attended, we'll continue to offer these with the understanding that sometimes it's more about the events serving small groups in specific targeted ways (Summer Series, Speakers/Workshops). For those events that are highly attended but low on the favorable scale, we're looking into changing/improving them (Chinese New Year, Moon Festival). And, finally, for those events that are low on both attendance and favorable reception, we'll look at whether those events are worth FCC resources in the future (Dragon Boat Festival).

CNY Specific Events: The same mapping strategy was used to evaluate each CNY event. Performance/Show and Lion Dancers rank high both from an attendance and favorable perspective, indicating that FCC should continue with both. While “length of show” attendance is high, favorability is low, indicating that a change is necessary. Finally, “silent auction” and “children's crafts” are low in both attendance and favorability, which also indicates the need for possible change.

CNY Venue: The final question we asked around CNY was regarding a change of

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

A Series of Summer Gatherings

Below is a list of the remaining events for the summer.

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

Braiding/Hair Techniques + Makeup Workshop

Targeted for girls aged 10+, this workshop offers a plethora of hair and makeup ideas for our community.

When: Sunday, July 22 from 2 pm – 4 pm

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

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

Contact: Kim Goodman at weatage@gmail.com

Katie Malinski's Mother-Daughter Puberty & More Workshop

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

When: Sunday, July 29 from 2 pm – 4:45 pm

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

Cost: \$75, registering online at <http://www.eventbrite.com/event/3692791238>

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

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

Book Club

Abby Turner has been leading this book group of adoptive moms for over ten years and welcomes new members in reading *The Postmistress* by Sarah Blake for August and then participants come to a related theme dinner to chat about it.

When: Wednesday, August 1 starting at 6:30 pm

Where: TBD that week and emailed to participants

Cost: Free to anyone

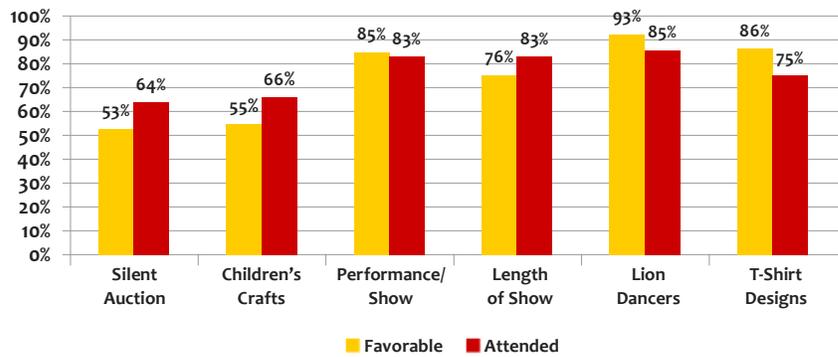
Contact: Abby Turner abby814@austin.rr.com

Survey Results Continued from page 5

venue. 40% of respondents indicate that they would like a change of venue, and one that provides for more socialization for families and is more centrally located. Only 13% of respondents say they would not like to change the venue. 47% of respondents say they really have no opinion, that they are open to change, or that they need more information. Based on the survey results, for 2013 CNY the Board has decided to expend extra effort to find a new location but maintain the portions of CNY that membership finds enjoyable, while changing those events that are rated low.

Thank you again for your participation. If you have a comment, please feel free to contact Kim Goodman at weatage@gmail.com. ❖

Q: CNY Activities: Rate the following items from 1 to 5, 1 being the least satisfied, 5 being the most satisfied



Interpretation Note: Values are relative to each other, not absolute. Meaning, for example, 53% favorable for Silent Auction is great, but it is the lowest favorable score of all our activities. Group events into "High" and "Low" for Favorable and Attended.

Family Focus Continued from page 4

Of course a story like this wouldn't be complete without Claire-Lily sleeping only three hours during the return trip. She finally got to sleep for 45 minutes before the TSA agent in Los Angeles made me remove the Baby Bjorn and its contents, which led to a full hour of crying (her, not me) at the gate for our final flight home. And of course after 24 hours of travel her Mom Karrie (who had met us in LA) and I and our friends at the

airport had a huge struggle with the car seat to get it installed. The car seat won the battle, we won the larger war the next day.

Why am I telling our story this way? I guess it's because our beginnings as a family were hilarious in their own odd way, and perhaps it's having that sense of humor in the midst of chaos that has contributed to the well-being of my funny, happy 10-year-old. I'm a single Dad with joint custody and a great

life and a great co-parent in my daughter's mother. Claire-Lily laughs at my jokes, sometimes groans at the worst of them, but her own sense of humor (and a lot more of course) will stand her in good stead as she faces what the world brings her in her lifetime. As I often tell her, "you don't have to laugh at me, but don't forget it's always ok to laugh at yourself." ❖



Aunt Laura, Alan and Claire-Lily listening intently to what next lovely piece of paperwork needed completion just after I'd been handed the bundle of joy in my lap.



Doing official paperwork, wishing I had invested in a medical supply company.

Wimberley Glass Works/Brewster's/Blue Hole Summer Series Event

By Alan Greenberg

Seven families rambled down the road to San Marcos and Wimberley on June 23 and were treated to a gorgeous hill country day trip. We started at Wimberley Glass Works, where the staff ably awed our kids (and us) with their derringdo as glassblowers working with 2,200+ degree ovens and hot molten glass.

We moved on to Brewster's Pizza, whose owner Bruce Collie sports several Super Bowl rings for his time as an NFL offensive lineman. Besides making amazing NY style pizza and brewing beer, Bruce is a genuinely great guy who let us handle and play with the rings... a treat for many a guy and gal at lunch. He and his wife have 13 kids and

most of them work at the restaurant, which gives it a charming family feel.

Final to the day: most of us went on to Blue Hole, an amazing swimming hole in the heart of Wimberley. Swinging on the rope into the cold blue waters was a treat for

all of the kids, and some of the grownups. This unconventional field trip was less about Chinese culture, while all about bonding, hanging out, and learning who likes artistic glass, who likes anchovies and football, and who likes to swim! ❖



Hot glass undergoing preparation to become a lovely bowl.



FCC Austin family member taking a spin into Blue Hole.

Chinese Culture Camp Continued from page 3

Xiwei Chen will return to play Chinese games and sing songs with the younger children as will Fursey Gotuaco. Fursey, a master teacher, is a high school administrator but taught theatre for many years. He uses theatre activities to empower the children with lessons in self esteem and integrity. Bob Boyko and Martha Durham from Austin Taiko will come for a drumming lesson for some of the younger children.

We were able to provide Selma Lan with the provinces of her students as she will teach a session to the Pandas about everything associated with the geographic area where they were born in China. Tiffany Chen will teach a very hands-on class on Chinese painting. Claire Dubiel will demonstrate and teach some Chinese yo-yo skills. Minta Stohrer will offer her class her origami techniques. Lucia Markert will teach a class about abacus usage.

In partnering with *Mei* magazine, the oldest Tiger class will research and write articles for submission with assistance from journal-

ism teacher Thanh Tran. Heidi Zhou Castro, the anchor/reporter from YNN News, will return from last year and teach a three-day media project class to the Dragons. We plan to see what their film version perspective of camp looked like at the Friday night pot luck dinner.

Each class has a special week-long class and we are excited to have the Bunnies singing traditional Chinese songs with teachers Rick Gabrillo, Wendy Kuo and Joyce Wu. The Monkeys, led by Alisan Turner, will perform a mash up dance of traditional Chinese dance with Asian inspired hip hop. The Pandas will learn a Kung Fu form taught by Santanu Rahman. The Tigers will learn the art of lion and dragon dancing with Linda Cao and Todd Morton and the Dragons will have a week of robotics with teachers from Bits, Bites and Bots.

Our service project, led by FCC parent Carrie van der Wal, will have the campers creating artistic interpretations of what Chinese New Year means to them. These one hundred pictures will be donated to

the Dell Children's Medical Center here in Austin to be on permanent display at the facility.

We have much more-traditional Chinese kite building, playing shuttlecock, huge bounce houses, chop stick techniques for those who need them, making prayer flags, red envelopes, bright green camp shirts and the Chinese word of the day! It all wraps up with our fabulous community building pot luck dinner on Friday night. We have a few new ideas about table arrangement and food serving to streamline the evening by the way. See you soon!

PS: If you were one of the families that wanted to get on the roster this year and didn't, please know that Rowena and I are in discussions about how we can accommodate more children at next year's 2013 camp. We understand that this is a very popular and rich experience and we are looking into several camp models that would serve more families. I will keep you updated as we plan for next year's event. ❖



Katie Malinski
LCSW

4 Tips for Parenting Teens

Parenting teenagers can be one of the toughest jobs in the world. But if you keep these four important concepts in mind, you'll find they help you with challenges both big and small. (And for those of you who do not yet have a teenager—keep reading anyway—many of these concepts are easiest and most successful when you start early.)

1. The relationship is the most important thing. Your child needs a life-long, strong, healthy, communicative relationship with her/his parents. In all interactions with your teenager, remind yourself that the overall priority is to keep the lines of communication open, and the relationship as positive as it can be.

2. Share power. This is typically hard for parents. Understandably so—transitioning from doing *everything* for our children to playing the role of sideline supporter is a tough one. But children don't magically transform into responsible, capable adults on their 18th birthday—rather,

their maturity and capability are forged a little bit every day, when we let them be in charge of stuff and they succeed on their own... or fail on their own. Either way, we have to let them be in charge of an increasingly large slice of their lives now if we want them to be able to do it later.

3. Parents are experts on long-range success, but teens generally are the experts on short-range success. This is almost always true socially, and is often also true with short-term academic success. In other words, yes, you probably do know best how to dress for a job interview and what quality level of work will be required in college. But your teen often knows the intricacies of their English teacher's makeup work policy, and certainly what kinds of clothes will help them to blend in with their friends and make sure they have a place to sit at lunch. Both are important. Remember to give your teen credit (and some freedom) to manage their short-term success.

4. The single best way to get your kid to change is to let them see you changing. The power of role modeling cannot be overstated! There is a lot of power in acknowledging that—even though we're the parent—we're still not perfect. It also sends the message that in your home—everyone is committed to growing.

This is a powerful and positive message! ❖

Katie Malinski, LCSW, is a licensed child & family therapist and parenting coach. In addition to her one-on-one work with families and children, she presents dynamic parenting workshops on a variety of topics, including: Beyond Birds and Bees, Parenting Through Divorce, Mother-Daughter Puberty & Communication, Your Parenting Toolkit, Increasing Your Child's EQ, Typical Parenting Conflicts, and more.

Katie blogs about parenting and therapy at www.katiemalinski.com/blog, or be social at: www.facebook.com/Katie.Malinski.LCSW.

Want to Become a Board Member?

While the board changes with new members from time to time (most recently with Jena Goodridge as Secretary and Bethany Morrison as VP of Membership), we're also growing in the form of subcommittees. Subcommittees and volunteering

are great ways to potentially segue into becoming a board member, if this is something of interest to you. And quite frankly, subcommittees allow us to offer you more, simply because there are more people available to make the event a success.

That being said, we would love some help for this year's Moon Festival! So, if you're interested in helping out with Moon Festival or any other event, please contact Kim Goodman at weatage@gmail.com. ❖

Fried Eggs with Chopsticks: One Woman's Hilarious Adventure with a Country and a Culture Not Her Own

By Polly Evans

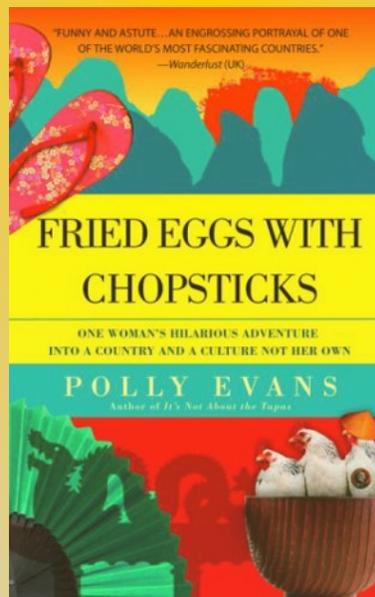
The tone of this quirky travelogue through China is set in the first paragraph, when Polly Evans describes the corpse of Mao, the preservation of which Mao's personal physician, Li Zhisui, had supervised. Evans finds herself wondering if Li's attempts to rectify the mistakes of the medical team, who had bloated the cadaver with 21 liters of formaldehyde, had truly been successful, or if she was in fact looking at a "waxen substitute." In spite of myself, I'm drawn in.

Evans had lived in Hong Kong for a few years shortly after its handover from the British, and had traveled to mainland China on several occasions. She could see the widening divisions between city dwellers with their ever-increasing affluence and the country-folk whom they left behind. She set out to experience both sides of life in China by enlisting as many forms of transportation as were available.

Many of Evans's amusing experiences were because she set out to book a more primitive form of travel when a faster alternative was available. For example, when she tried to book a 13-hour boat ride from Hangzhou to Suzhou, the incredulous residents kept telling her there was no boat ("Mei you"—don't have) and to take a five-hour bus ride instead. She eventually found the boat.

But most of the charm of this book lay in her blend of historical tidbits with her accounts of daily interactions with postal clerks, travel guides, and waitresses. In her account of her visit to Nanjing, Evans describes the memorial to Sun Yat-sen, and then explains how Sun was in the United States when rebels overthrew the Qing Dynasty, finding out from a newspaper that he was a leading candidate to become president of the new regime. And then in

On the whole, this book is a great summer read, giving accounts of small snippets of life all over China. I question the book's subtitle, in that I did not find it a "hilarious account," merely an enjoyable one. I rolled my eyes at some of her attempts at humor, such as her supposed difficulties in ordering meals. I didn't believe her to be the clueless English tourist she made herself out to be. Her method of pointing at the meals of other diners worked wonders in getting her excellent food in tiny village restaurants, and she proved herself to be quite resourceful in making travel arrangements all across the country from Beijing to the remote regions of Yunnan province. Her curiosity, open-mindedness, and eye for unusual details enriched her stories, and I finished the book with a smile on my face and a desire to know more about daily life in this country of my daughters' origins. ❖



the same chapter, we read about the difficulties of mailing her recent teapot purchases back to her home.



Author Polly Evans

Adopted Children Discover China

By He Dan

Note: This article was published online (http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2012-07/04/content_15548457.htm) on July 4, 2012 by China Daily, and features FCC Austin member Cheryl Bonfils Rasmussen along with daughter Ying Li.



Six-year-old Ying Li learns Chinese calligraphy with her adoptive mother, Cheryl Bonfils-Rasmussen from Texas, at the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption in Beijing on Tuesday. Wang Jing, China Daily

Learning to write the Chinese characters for "love" and "happiness" in a Beijing classroom was the first activity for a group of American families on a cultural tour of China on Tuesday.

But this was not a typical tour group, although the parents may have been born and raised in the United States, their children were born in China, before being adopted to be raised on the other side of the world.

Thomas Shuo Fahnle, 10, learned Chinese calligraphy and paper cutting with great interest at the cultural class, accompanied by his adoptive father David Charles Fahnle.

The boy, wearing a hearing aid, dipped his brush into black ink and then painted on blank paper following the teacher's instructions.

However, for the first three years of his life, he could not hear at all, said his 58-year-old adoptive father.

The boy had been fostered by a child welfare institute in Beijing until he turned three when the single father adopted him in 2005. After seven surgeries he can now hear from both ears.

"I have been a teacher of deaf children for 36 years and I know this is the area I really know something about," Fahnle said. "When I chose him, I knew his medical history and knew what I could do both educationally and medically to help him to hear and improve his academic skills, and at the same time give him a caring and loving home."

Thomas kept showing his father his "masterpieces" from the class and received compliments and encouraging words in return.

The harmonious scene made it difficult to imagine he greeted his father "with violence" at their first meeting.

"I look so different from you guys (Chinese), so when I first visited him in the orphanage and tried to hold him in my arms, he cried

and he spat at me and he tried to bite me. It took a while for him to trust me and get confident around me," Fahnle said.

He said he understood the boy's panicked reaction as he had been taken care of by different nursing staff as a baby and because there are many babies in an orphanage, "he never knew who he could call mom or dad, he never had his own toys, and nothing really was his."

"I believe the Chinese orphanage system has done wonderfully in delivering a nursing service but that cannot replace parenting," he said.

Fahnle said while it was difficult at first, the boy adapted to his new life in the US after a couple of months.

Some 130 American families with 200 adopted Chinese children are scheduled to spend three days in Beijing. Activities include a cultural class in the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption, which is in charge of overseas adoption affairs, visiting tourist attractions such as the Temple of Heaven and the Great Wall, and taking a bite of famous Peking Duck.

The group will then travel to three popular tourism cities of Xi'an, Chengdu and Guilin. The Chinese government will cover their travel expenses in China.

Some families also plan to visit the child welfare institutes where the adopted children used to live.

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Tween/Teen Brainstorming Meeting Results

By Kim Goodman

So, we had the logistics: June 25th, 7pm, Waterloo Icehouse... the names were all familiar, but not necessarily the faces (it's been a year since I saw some of them at the last FCC Austin Culture Camp).

I met with Linda Nenno-Breining, Abby & Alisan Turner, and Suzanne & Emily Danuser on that warm summer evening to hear about what they would like to see FCC offer to the tween/teen community, and to discuss other ideas and gain more input from them. I learned A LOT that night.

The gist of the meeting revealed that there seems to be a need for just a few culture-related events, along with some that are service-related. But the vast majority of the events should be fun, and cultivate/maintain friendships among their peers, regardless of their peers' ethnicity.

In other words, all the events we offer this group should be with the option to bring a friend. They're not opposed to potentially meeting a new Asian friend or seeing someone they lost touch with from an old playgroup (they look forward to reconnecting with old friends)... but they're simply more outgoing & willing to attend an event with the guarantee that a current friend will be there, too. And ideally, any structured event offered to this group would include some free time to mingle.

Below are some ideas that were shared and/or evolved over dinner in no particular order:

1. **Videography workshop**, with a topic of choice
2. **Hunger Games Party**
3. **Harry Potter Party**
4. **Lucky Chaos Theatre Workshop** that would welcome non-Asian siblings, too
5. **Room makeover workshop** sponsored by Ikea
6. **More ways to earn service hours...** possibly via volunteering at UT China Care playgroups & FCC events
7. **Get together with some female UT China Care students** to talk about growing up Asian in Texas, college-prep advice, etc.
8. **Opportunities to acquire/improve upon certain skills**, such as babysitting, studying, etc.
9. **Online babysitting network:** password protected, for FCC members only... to be vetted by the board
10. **Workshop hosted by a local therapist** (or Asian Adoptee/Therapist Melanie Chung Sherman) addressing teen adoptee issues for parents
11. **Perhaps some face time for the teens with an Asian Adoptee/Therapist** on a focused, specific topic (lukewarm reception by Alisan & Emily)
12. **Visiting China with other teens** (perhaps the Ban Na Exchange Program could fulfill this desire)
13. **Bring tweens/teens together over movies** within our FCC library
14. **Trip to San Francisco for CNY**, in order to feel what it's like to be in the majority

Needless to say, by the end of the evening I think we were all feeling a sense of accomplishment in laying the groundwork to cultivate a program for our current and future tweens & teens. Suzanne suggested that we have a trial run of six months to one year to test drive this new endeavor.

As of this writing, Abby, Linda, and Suzanne have volunteered to serve on a subcommittee for these tween/teen events, which is absolutely perfect in so many ways... because honestly, something like this certainly needs to be headed by parents of a tween/teen; someone truly in touch with that particular age group. Suzanne and Linda are requesting other interested FCC parents and their tweens/teens to help with prioritizing and event planning. If you would like to be part of this, please contact Suzanne Danuser at suzerd@yahoo.com (or 576-6351), Linda Nenno-Breining at lnenno@yahoo.com, and/or Abby Turner at abby814@austin.rr.com.

So thank you: Linda, Abby, Alisan, Emily, and Suzanne, for taking the time to meet and offer some fabulous, timely ideas that will surely resonate with FCC Austin's teens and tweens, a group we expect to grow dramatically in the next few years. I'm genuinely excited about these ideas and looking forward to getting started on some of them soon!!! ❖

Kung-Fu at Culture Camp: What to Expect

Traditional Chinese Lion Dancing and Traditional Chinese Kung-Fu go hand in hand. Typically, at a Kung-Fu school, the most advanced students are the ones who are asked to do the Lion Dancing to represent the school.

It's important to show great spirit when maneuvering the Lion, and that takes a lot of strength.

Not just physical strength, but a strength from the mind, spirit, and body.

At Austin Kung-Fu Academy, when we teach our Lion Dancing, we make sure there is a firm foundation of Kung-Fu training in place. Kung-Fu is one of the ultimate ways to unify and strengthen the mind-body-spirit.

As part of our students' process to develop this to their potential, we have been training them to prepare for competitions at tournaments, where they demonstrate their solo routines, and get scored by a panel of judges.

I'm happy to report that all of our students scored very well, and got medals. Some even got first place, and we are very proud of their accomplishments! That said, it's not really about the medals, it's more about the experience and process. They all walked away from that tournament with a different energy. They now possess a strengthened spirit and physical ability that illuminates when they participate in class.

It becomes pretty clear who has gone through the process of training for a Kung-Fu competition when watching a class. It

is those kids who will be chosen to do the Traditional Chinese Lion Dancing.

I will be teaching the Kung-Fu portion in this year's FCC Austin Chinese Culture Camp. I will be teaching the kids a routine called Say Sup Bot Kuen, or 48 Fists Set. This is one of our beginner competition routines, and many of our kids got first place with it.



Even though they won't be training for a competition, per se, they will be performing that Friday night to showcase Say Sup Bot Kuen. So we will train in a very similar process as though we are preparing for a competition. My hope is that the kids will tap into an inner strength and spirit and confidence that they may not have yet realized.

I hope you are impressed and proud of what we achieve in our week together. Perhaps afterwards, you may think about getting your kids involved with our academy to train

for actual competitions. If they get a few under their belt, they may just be considered to be part of our Lion Dance team!

Since so many of our kids have placed and received medals, many parents tell me that I am a very gifted and talented coach and mentor. That is extremely flattering and kind. However, I tell them the same thing my Kung-Fu teacher told me, "All I can do is open the door. It is up to you to walk through it."

With today's busy society, I'm mostly impressed with the parents and kids who prioritize this and make the time and sacrifices for this experience. It's something that they will carry with them forever, and I believe will give them an edge as they navigate through life.

Overcoming fear, developing confidence, remaining humble and positive, and learning how to make a powerful first impression when stepping onto a national stage—these are the things that I believe any child could benefit from.

I look forward to working with the kids during Culture Camp. I hope our presentation will match the bold claims that I make in this article. :) ❖

Santanu Rahman
Director of Austin Kung-Fu Academy
<http://www.AustinKungFuAcademy.com>

Cheryl Bonfils-Rasmussen from Texas said she plans to take her two daughters Mei Li, 9, and Ying Li, 6, to visit their Chinese “hometowns.” The two girls were adopted from child welfare institutes in East China’s Jiangsu province and Southwest China’s Chongqing municipality.

Bonfils-Rasmussen said she was upfront with her daughters about their history and both of them feel curious about their past in China.

The mother also encourages her daughters to study Chinese language and culture in their daily life.

“They are very proud of their Chinese background. They perform Chinese dances at school, at Chinese New Year festivals, and other cultural events, and when teachers want to talk about Chinese culture, they often ask the girls to participate and share their cultural heritage with the classroom.”

Overseas families have adopted more than 100,000 Chinese children since the 1990s, according to the statistics from the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

“This tour is helpful to improve these children’s confidence, because it made them feel the love of their motherland although their birth parents abandoned them for certain reasons,” said Lily Nie, the founder and CEO of the Chinese Children Adoption International, a Colorado-based agency.

Zhang Shifeng, director of the China Center for Children’s Welfare and Adoption said this kind of tour also gives the Chinese authorities a chance to see if the children adopted from China have been taken care of by their adoptive families.

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What to Expect When Returning to China: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

By Julie Kniseley

Intensity. China has become even more intense, especially in the cities. Most public places are extremely crowded and noisy, and the streets are jammed with buses, cars, trucks, motorcycles, and bicycles. For most Americans, stimulation overload becomes a daily challenge. It’s good to build in quiet time for the family every day.

Language. The language barrier can be challenging, but also fun. Many Chinese people in the larger cities speak English—especially kids, who will want to practice their English as they pass by in the street. In more far-flung cities and towns, English becomes more rare, so expect to do some pantomiming. Caution: some kids who have learned Chinese are often self-conscious about their skills and avoid talking, or feel nervous about making mistakes. Try not to pressure them to speak.

Pollution. There is much more pollution in China, of all types. The skies are often hazy and there is much more exhaust from factories, cars, buses, and trucks. In the cities, the streets are often fairly clean, but in the countryside it is not unusual to see piles of trash on the roadside or in canals.

Friendliness. For the most part, Chinese people are very friendly toward tourists. Mixed-race families are not as rare as they once were, especially in larger cities. There will be more curiosity in smaller or more remote cities, and you will start to notice more attention—and stares—from the local people. This can be especially uncomfortable for ‘tween and teenage girls.

Fantasy vs. Reality. Kids often have a fantasy of what it will be like in their homeland. It’s good to discuss their fantasies

before the trip, and watch home movies from other families or documentaries about life in China so they get a more realistic image of what it will be like.

Animals. It can be difficult to see how animals are treated in China. It’s not unusual to see live animals (e.g. chickens) in small cages outside of restaurants, freshly killed animals hanging in markets, or trucks crammed with animals heading to market. For especially sensitive kids (and adults), this can be difficult.

Emotional Intensity. The return trip to China can be very emotional for kids as well as adults, even after getting home—especially if you return to the orphanage or seek out the original finding site. It can take some time to process all of those feelings. Some kids return home very happy and excited they went, and others are disappointed or even dismayed by what they experienced. The trips often bring up a lot of feelings about their identities and where they fit in. Keep the communication lines open and be prepared to answer questions or see a counselor long after the trip.

Be Physically Ready. Traveling to China can be an endurance test. Be sure to be physically prepared. Take longer walks with your kids, and focus on cardio and strength exercises. Take especially good care of yourself prior to the trip.

Toilets. Last but not least, there are still a lot of “pit” toilets in public places. This is difficult for some kids and adults. ❖