

Families with Children from China

Austin, Texas Chapter

Spring Newsletter

April, 2014



President's Note

Well everyone, in my first official stint as President of Austin Families with Children from China, I'm pleased to report that the state of the union is terrific. To follow in the footsteps of the inimitable, extraordinary Becky Harding—and those who filled this role before her—will be challenging. My chromosomes are a bit different but so far no one has noticed (or said anything) and with your help, I'll get the honor of being one of the first FCC Presidents ever who is a dude. Fun!

A lot of FCC Austin's board's activities take place behind the scenes—in our meetings and via phone and email. That's one kind of fun (seriously). Then there is the other kind: when our vision is realized, when members of the community come out to take advantage of the events we plan and the resources we provide. We had a very well-attended Chinese New Year celebration at the new Asian American Resource Center on Cameron Road. Kudos to Becky Harding, Abby Turner, Robin Davis, Bethany Morrison, Jena Goodridge, Carrie van der Wal, Sandi Ross, Gail Boston and Erich Rose, Kim Goodman, Kellena Page, and the many volunteers who helped make it a great event. UT China Care, thank you for working the door! Sorry if I left anyone out! And as the incoming President, I was especially grateful to Gail and Erich for making it a noodle-eating contest instead of a dumpling-eating contest. Sometimes sheer genius is right in front of you! Outgoing President Becky Harding did a ton of behind the scenes stuff, including getting some celebratory cakes that were a big hit, and gave special President's Awards to Abby Turner and Dr. Rowena Fong, Ed.D of UT. To Abby for her years of service to FCC Austin; to Rowena for her years of support and her dedication to our summer Culture Camp (as co-Director).

Now on to business! From Jenny Bowen's upcoming appearance at BookPeople on April 23, to a wonderful Summer Series with activities for parents and kids alike, and from our fifth year of Culture Camp to a brand new scholarship fund for some of our older kids, things are coming together. Dates are set for Moonfest and Chinese New Year 2015 (the Year of the Sheep) and we are running on full "horsepower." (I assume everyone remembers this year's theme.)

In this issue, Abby Turner reviews Jenny Bowen's new book just in time for next week's author visit. Carrie van der Wal provides her Focus on the Family after a recent return trip to China. We visit with Joyce Wu, piano teacher extraordinaire at Orpheus Academy and regular volunteer at past Culture Camps. We have full details on the Summer Series, and Becky Harding fills us in on the latest regarding the sold out Culture Camp. Finally, Jena Goodridge unveils our new scholarship program! We could not afford this program were our events not run with such panache and cost-consciousness by your board. On that note, let me mention one new board member who has taken the reins of being Treasurer: Vicki Gargano. Her deft check-writing and Quicken skills are already in play.

All in all, good stuff and we hope to hear from you soon or see you at one of our future events!

Alan D. Greenberg

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

The 2014 Summer Series

FCC Austin is once again offering various opportunities for our members to enjoy (and enjoy each other) this summer. Questions may be directed to the leader of the respective sessions.

June 8: Xiang Yun Buddhist Temple Tour

Join us for a private FCC tour of Austin's Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun temple (<http://www.ibps-austin.org/>) on the scenic Capital of Texas Highway. We'll meet at the Temple right before the tour and, if you'd like, caravan together afterwards to nearby Waterloo Icehouse (with kids playscape) for an early dinner. This event is free, but reservations must be made no later than Friday, May 23rd.

When: Sunday, June 8, at 4 p.m.

Where: 6720 N Capital of Texas Highway Austin, TX 78731

Cost: The tour is free; we'll go Dutch for dinner

Contact: Carrie van der Wal, carrielee@yahoo.com

June 14: Preschool Playgroup

Join other preschoolers and their parents at an FCC Preschool Playgroup.

When: Saturday, June 14, at 10:00 a.m.

Where: Brushy Creek Park, 3300 Brushy Creek Rd., Cedar Park, TX 78613

Cost: Free

Contact: Host Bethany Morrison at bethany@cre8d.com

June 22: FCC Austin at Round Rock Express

The Round Rock Express, in partnership with Chasco Constructors recognizes local charitable organizations during their home games, and also offers special group rates. On June 22, it's our opportunity to kick back (no school the next day!) and enjoy a game. FCC President Alan Greenberg will help host the event. Come cheer on the Round Rock Express and FCC Austin!

When: Sunday, June 22. Game starts at 7:05 p.m.

Where: Dell Diamond, 3400 East Palm Valley Boulevard, Round Rock, TX 78665

Cost: \$7 per person. Send your check (made out to FCC Austin) to Abby Turner, 7806 Monona Ave., Austin TX 78717.

Please include your contact information with your check.

Contact: Abby Turner at abbyo814@icloud.com

July 19: Chinese Cooking with Dorothy Huang

Back by popular demand we're again offering Chinese Cooking with Dorothy Huang, the highly acclaimed Houston chef and cook-book author. Come and join us for a delightful afternoon of fun and food as we learn together to prepare authentic Chinese cuisine. (See Dorothy Huang's Potstickers recipe in this issue.) This event is open to adults and children (ages 8 and older) but limited to 16 people, so reserve early!

When: Saturday, July 19 from 3–6 pm

Where: The Goodridge residence in North Round Rock; address will be provided once you've made your reservation.

Cost: \$40/adult & \$20/child

Contact: Robin Davis to reserve your space, robinsdavis@austin.rr.com

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August 16: Prez's Potluck and Pizza Party

Staycating during August? Want to have some fun while half the town gets out of Dodge? Join some of your FCC friends at a Prez's Potluck and Pizza Party. Alan Greenberg and his daughter Claire-Lily will host a late summer, let's relax and hang gathering at his central Austin home. FCC is buying pizza and healthy beverages for the kids and we encourage adults to bring their favorite adult foods and beverages.

When: Saturday, August 16, 5–8 p.m.

Where: Alan's house in central Austin (address provided with RSVP).

Cost: A dish to share, and adult beverages

Contact: Alan Greenberg—RSVP to gggroup@mindspring.com by August 15

Sons of China Playgroup

Though we don't have anything set up yet, we'd love to soon! If you're interested in a Sons of China/boys playgroup, please contact Carrie van der Wal (a.k.a. Odin & Torin's Mom) and we'll make it happen.

When: TBD

Where: TBD

Cost: Free

Contact: Carrie van der Wal at carrielee@yahoo.com

Dorothy Huang's Chinese Cooking: Pot Stickers (Yields 45)

1 pound lean ground pork (or ground turkey)
1 package (10-ounce) frozen chopped spinach,
thawed & drained

Seasoning Ingredients:

1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon sesame oil
2 tablespoons chopped green onions
1/2 tablespoon minced ginger
1 package dumpling wrappers, thawed
2 tablespoons cooking oil
1 1/2 cups chicken broth

Dipping Sauce:

1 tablespoon shredded ginger
1 teaspoon chili garlic sauce
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1/4 cup vinegar
1/2 teaspoon sesame oil

To Assemble:

1. In a large bowl, combine pork, spinach and seasoning ingredients. Mix well.
2. Put 1 tablespoon filling in the center of the wrapper. Wet edges with water all around. Fold it into a crescent shape by pleating the outer edge of the dumpling. Press the edges together firmly.

To Cook:

1. Add 1 tablespoon oil in a 12-inch non-stick skillet over medium heat. Arrange half of dumplings in the skillet. Turn heat to high. Cook uncovered for 1 to 2 minutes or until brown on the bottom.
2. Add 3/4 cup chicken broth. Reduce heat to medium. Cover tightly and cook for 5 minutes or until all the liquid is absorbed. Transfer dumplings, brown side up, to a plate.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with the other half of dumplings.
4. Combine dipping sauce ingredients in a small bowl.
5. Serve dumplings with dipping sauce.



AARC Upcoming Events

The Asian American Resource Center: 8401 Cameron Road, Austin, TX

Register Forms: <http://www.austintexas.gov/aarc>

Asian Fantasy Character Design Workshop, Featuring Yangsook Choi

Saturday, May 3, 2014

Session 1: 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Session 2: 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

\$10 per child, ages 4 to 10

Registration deadline: April 27

Walk-in or phone registration only.

Payment due at time of registration.

Meet mythical characters from ancient Asia, and then design your own characters! Hear the stories about Filipino vampire Sigbin, Korean goblin Tokebi, a child sumo wrestler Kintaro, and a Nine-Tailed Fox from the Han dynasty. What kind of fantasy creatures will you create? Korean-born Yangsook Choi is a children's book artist and author who was selected as one of the most prominent new children's book artists by Publishers Weekly. Her books have been acclaimed as "Best of the Best" by the Chicago Public Library, selected by PBS Reading Rainbow, and have received the International Reading Association's Children's Book Award. She received an MFA in Illustration from the School of Visual Arts in New York City and is currently based in Austin. Books include *The Name Jar*, *New Cat*, *This Next New Year* and many others. Visit www.yangsookchoi.com for details.

Summer Camp: Passport to Asia (2 weeks)

Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Ages 5 to 12

\$250–\$275 (no classes July 4th)

Walk-in or mail in form to register.

June 16–27: Explore the Middle East

June 30–July 11: Adventures in China

July 14–25: Discover Korea

July 28–Aug. 8: Trek through Southeast Asia

Summer Camp: Teen Workshop (2 weeks)

Monday–Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Ages 13–17

June 16–27: Comic Art, Ink and Digital Techniques

\$300

June 30–July 11: Painting Asia

\$275



Jenny Bowen at BookPeople on April 23rd

If you are a member of the FCC Austin Facebook page, you already know the buzz about Jenny Bowen's upcoming Austin visit. Even so, it's worth reminding everyone about this event. Jenny Bowen is founder of Half the Sky Foundation (<http://halfthesky.org/en>) and has written a book Abby Turner reviews in this issue of the newsletter (calling it "lovely"). *Wish You Happy Forever: What China's Orphans Taught Me About Moving Mountains* is a story of interest to all of us. Whether we only adopted and never looked back at China, or whether we have worked hard to expose our kids to all things China; whether we have donated our time and money to social welfare organizations helping kids in China and elsewhere, or whether we have just taken our kids to Chinese New Year celebrations and said, that's enough!

Every one of us is on our own journey, marching to our own drumbeat, but sometimes it's important to come together as a community—to learn together, to laugh and cry together, to build something larger than our individual journeys. We think a really special evening is in store for those who attend, and we hope to see you at Jenny's appearance on Wednesday April 23 at 7 pm. BookPeople is located at 603 North Lamar in central Austin. ❖

2014 FCC-UT Chinese Culture Camp Sold Out in 17 Days!



Rowena Fong, Ed.D, Jessica Xiao, Alisan Turner, Geneve Chin, Quynh Nguyen, Raelyn Beck, Kimmie Banks, Genevieve Norman, and Becky Harding

This August, FCC Austin and The UT School of Social Work will host our 5th annual Chinese cultural camp from August 4–8 at Summitt Elementary School in north Austin. With 100 children on the roster, this Year of the Horse camp has several new features as well as some of the traditional elements from the past camps.



Co-Directors Rowena Fong, Ed.D., and Becky Harding have expanded the leadership team to include assistant camp directors Vicki Gargano and Bethany Morrison: financial, Robin Davis and Susan Boyd: supplies & materials, Debbie Aleman and Shawna Mayerson: educational, and Deanne Brown and Dianne Harwood: proactive—

camp week. This team oversees the 40-plus parent volunteers that handle all of the tasks that make the camp happen.

More new features this year include conflict resolution training sessions conducted by Sensei Joy Williamson and staff from the Sun Dragon martial arts studio for all the students, a cooking class for the oldest group taught by Dorothy Huang, a field trip to the Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun temple, and dining and etiquette classes for the 5th and 6th graders at a local Chinese restaurant, as well as dumpling making for the 2nd and 3rd graders. We will have karaoke sing-off sessions and lots of cool Asian crafting, too!

Of course, the heart of our camp consists of the fabulous college and high school counselors. On April 5th, Rowena and Becky held the traditional training session for the contracted college counselors at the Asian American Resource Center. These college students will be in charge of the classes, with ample support from FCC high school students who volunteer as assistant high school counselors.

Pat Morgan, LPC, will return to teach the Adoption Journey classes this year. Long-time camp teacher Em Hardy, Ph.D., has stepped down this year unfortunately to take care of some health-related issues. Em's contributions to our camp adoption classes have been enormous and we will miss her generous nature and kind spirit. Janie McMahan, M.A. Counseling and LPC intern, has accepted our invitation to join us and teach the adoption journey classes this year. Janie, an area therapist associate, and an adoptive parent, has three grown sons. For more information about Janie, visit <http://www.janiemcmahan.com>. ❖

Dragon Boat Festival

Now that we are officially in April, the month of income tax returns, wildflower blooms, pollened cars, Eeyore's Birthday Party, and SCHOOL SPRING FEVER, just a reminder that it is also the month for Austin's Dragon Boat Festival.

This year's festival is on Saturday, April 26, from 10 to 3 at Festival Beach, hosted by the Asian American Cultural Center (<http://www.asianamericancc.com>).

Some of our FCC kids have performed Chinese dancing at the festival with their respective classes and will probably be doing so again.

Mark the date on your teen/tweens' calendars and more details will be provided as we get closer! ❖

—Suzanne Danuser

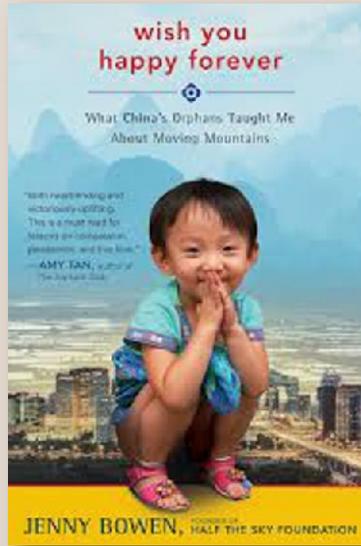
Book Review By Abby Turner

Wish You Happy Forever: What China's Orphans Taught Me About Moving Mountains

By Jenny Bowen

This lovely autobiographical book tells the story of Jenny Bowen's experience with Chinese orphanages and the creation of the charity Half the Sky (<http://halfthesky.org/en>). It would be of interest to anyone concerned with the welfare of children around the world and specifically to those of us who love someone who was once a Chinese orphan.

Bowen tells the story of her mission to bring love and respect to the children in China's orphanages. She felt they needed training and supplies to create loving environments for these infants and toddlers. Her organization, Half the Sky, worked with the Chinese government to help 52 orphanages and over 10,000 children. Although Bowen worried that she strayed off mission, the strength of her love for these children has achieved wonderful success in recreating homes for orphans. Now Half the Sky Little Sister Preschools and Infant Nurture Centers have changed the lives of thousands of children.



Reading *Wish You Happy Forever* was a delight. Her writing is descriptive and rich in detail. She tickles your funny bone and touches your heart on every page. Of course, some of the stories and experiences are painful and sad, but they are related in a compassionate and hopeful way. I feel as if I myself met special children and experienced their recoveries and awakenings. I am proud to have been part of donations made in recent years by FCC Austin. Bowen experiences Chinese culture and bureaucracy and explains how she prevailed. She only talks a bit about

her family's adoptions and in detail about Half the Sky's birth.

If you enjoyed *Three Cups of Tea* you would also like Bowen's book. I highly recommend *Wish You Happy Forever*. Watch Jenny Bowen's book trailer on her Facebook page. There will be a copy of the book available from FCC Austin's library and **you can meet Jenny Bowen and purchase your own copy at BookPeople on Wednesday, April 23rd at 7:00 pm.** ❖

Abby Turner is an FCC Austin Board Member and Co-Events Chair. She also is our resident librarian in charge of the FCC Austin lending library.



Author Jenny Bowen

Family Focus: The van der Wals

By Carrie van der Wal

“They have seen China again on their terms, as part of a strong family, filled with adventure and shared together... it definitely feels like we have reinforced our family as a Team.”

—Carrie van der Wal



My husband Hans and I knew that it would be a slight possibility to adopt twins from China, but we followed the procedures for that chance (both with the U.S. and Chinese dossier paperwork), noting our preference for an infant girl or twins of either gender. Though we were initially told that our wait would be 6–12 months, our referral came over two years after starting the adoption process. During those years, twins were our focus; with every falling star, with all the birthday candles, and every bale of transported hay we saw on the highways (“Hay, hay, bale of hay—take my wish and go away!”), we wished for twins. We even addressed them as such, saying “When we get the twins home...” or “With the twins...” The summer before our referral, I even started purchasing in pairs. Fortunately, because I prefer primary colors over pastels, I hadn’t been stockpiling pink during the wait.

On September 29, 2008, our agency director called to tell us that they had received our referral for fraternal twin boys! We were absolutely ecstatic! Within days after our referral, via the magic of the Internet, we discovered that our sons were living at an American-run, special needs orphanage (Shepherd’s Field Children’s Village, near Beijing); our agency wasn’t aware of this; all their paperwork said that the boys were at Jiaozuo SWI, in Henan province. Ultimately, none of that mattered, though we

did have to decide on new names; the choices of Claudia and Hermina were no longer suitable. Our sons lived at SFCV from aged 10 months to 27 months. They were transferred there because of suspected heart conditions (since diagnosed as benign heart murmurs) and were returned to Jiaozuo SWI three weeks before we became a family, on December 8, 2008. Every day, I am grateful that we have them, and that they have each other.

Less than a year after becoming a family, we moved from NW Austin to a larger house in Old Town Pflugerville. Eighteen months after we’d settled in (and acquired more furniture), I learned about the new Chinese Immersion program to be offered at Austin’s Doss Elementary school (see the article in the FCC Fall 2013 newsletter <http://www.fccaustin.org/2013fallnews.pdf> for more information). What an incredible opportunity! In order to apply for the program, though, families had to live within the Doss boundaries; no transfers allowed. So, we moved to the Doss neighborhood, getting rid of over half of our household possessions, putting about 10% of what was left into storage, and spending the next thirteen months in a 999 sq. ft. apartment with rambunctious twin boys and a border collie mix dog. Yes, it’s been an adventure but so very worth it. I’m happy to report that both boys made it through the Chinese Immersion lottery process, and, as of last fall, are in the same First

Grade class at Doss Elementary, re-learning their first language. They will be able to continue studying Mandarin in junior and high school. We are thrilled—thrilled and so very grateful.

Two years after becoming a family, an old friend came to visit. She’s a single mom to a daughter adopted from China as well as an MSW that works as a private therapist. She highly recommended that we take our boys back to China—their first trip back—as soon as we possibly could. I distinctly remember her saying, “Most people think that they should wait until their kids are older, to get ‘more’ out of the trip. But it’s never too early to let them fall in love with their country.” That advice stuck with me. After settling in to a new town home last summer, I started looking for a trip to the People’s Republic of China; six months ago, I found a terrific deal on a package trip to Beijing and made reservations for mid-March, 2014.

While a group tour certainly isn’t our preferred mode of travel, it made sense; instead of having to expend energies on navigating hectic Beijing, we could focus on our boys, enjoying it all together in a “no hassles” mode. In addition to offering us all the highlights (i.e. The Forbidden City, The Great Wall, The Summer Palace,

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Temple of Heaven, Ming Tombs), the six-night package tour included two and a half free days, one of which we used to independently visit the boys' former orphanage, an hour outside of Beijing. Unfortunately, the orphanage director wasn't able to meet us as planned, but the visit was a great success nonetheless. For our first trip to China, I'm glad that we opted for a shorter, laid-back trip instead of an extended whirlwind.

Notably, our trip wasn't an "adoption heritage tour," but it didn't have to be billed as such to offer the heritage connection. In fact, ours were the only children in the twenty-person tour group; it gave the boys the advantage of being fawned over by our fellow travelers. All of the boys' in-country skipping made their bliss at being "home" immediately evident. The first days that we were in China, both talked about wanting to live there again—the confident awe of seven-year-olds! On a scale from one to ten, they've rated the trip as "Infinite!"

Instinctively, we knew that the trip would be so good for them, making them feel even more proud of their heritage and (hopefully) ergo, themselves, but we'd never imagined the *immediate* influence. It's hard to effectively explain but so apparent to Hans and me. For example, our boys



have always been affectionate, but the hugs and kisses and cuddles greatly increased during and since our trip. Our boys seem more confident now, more mature, more settled. When they'd left China over five years ago, their worlds were shattered; it was chaos, colossal on a toddler scale. I can't help but feel that that has been with them ever since. Now, for lack of a better term, they seem to have conquered that divide. They have seen China again on their terms, as part of a strong family, filled with adventure and shared together. And I feel that our being relaxed the entire trip (i.e., on a no-hassles tour) played a great role in all that. It definitely feels like we have reinforced our family as a Team.

Naturally, all children are different, as are their reactions, but for our sons, reintroducing them to their homeland seems to have helped them—in magnificent, immeasurable ways—see and discover and embrace parts of themselves that they had been missing, that they had been forced to leave. We're all looking forward to our next trip back. ❖

FCC Austin Group Trip to China

FCC Austin board member Carrie van der Wal is in the initial stages of arranging an FCC Austin group trip to China in the next year or two. Please provide your input by participating in an FCC Austin China trip survey. <http://bit.ly/PwDvSh>.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1xxnwJEPaXS8nmnnXjfJVT7rkqifkohYBNoYC65G-Qr8/viewform>

FCC Board Announces Two New Scholarships

The FCC Board is excited to announce to two new scholarship opportunities (<http://www.fccaustin.org/events.html>):

The first opportunity is for young members who are returning to China for a Volunteer/Welfare Trip. This \$500 scholarship will be awarded to an FCC member between the ages of 13 and 23 who is preparing to return to China as a part of a volunteer trip where s/he will be directly involved in projects that assist the welfare of children currently in foster or welfare institutes. While not a scholarship for a heritage trip, this scholarship is meant to help defray the costs of travel to China while undertaking such Welfare and/or Volunteer endeavors.

The second scholarship opportunity is for young members who will be preparing to enter or who will be returning to a college or university. This \$500 scholarship will be awarded to an FCC member between the ages of 16 and 23 entering or returning to college or university in the fall of 2014.

Applicants for each of these scholarships will be asked to respond to a choice of essay topics, and their responses will be judged blindly by a committee independent of the FCC board. The scholarship application and full submission directions were posted on the FCC website on April 8th. The deadline for submission is May 6th, four weeks from when the application process opened.

The FCC Board has received regular feedback on the changing needs of our FCC membership and has responded with these scholarships as a means of engaging with tweens, teens, and college kids. We hope that you are as excited about these scholarship opportunities as we are! ❖

Friends of the Family: A Series to Highlight those Supportive of our Community

Featured Friend: Joyce Wu, D.M.A.

By Alan Greenberg

Joyce Wu, Doctor of Musical Arts, has been teaching piano to my daughter Claire-Lily for more years than I can count at Orpheus Academy, perhaps as many as five, but also is a friend to FCC. She has joined Wendy Kuo of Orpheus Academy at Culture Camp in the past to teach the kids an Intro to Chinese Music class for several years, as well as how to make dumplings.

Alan: When and how did you start playing music?

Joyce: When I was about four years old, one of my older cousins was selling a piano which she had had since she was a teenager. My parents bought the piano from her and started taking me to piano lessons.

Alan: When did you realize it would become your career?

Joyce: After taking piano lessons for a couple of years, I auditioned for an elementary school which offered a professional music program along with the regular standardized curriculum and they accepted me. That elementary school I went to was part of a school system that also provided both junior and senior high school education, but you had to apply for it every time. It didn't automatically upgrade you to the higher division because you were already in its



lower division. I applied and got accepted for both. You could choose to apply for either the regular division or the music program. It didn't cross my mind that I'd apply for the regular division and not to be in the music program. I guess partly because all of my friends were applying for and continuing in the music program and I just wanted to do the same. Then I went to college (Soochow University in Taipei, Taiwan) and majored in music. The piano professor I studied with there was inspirational to me. I looked up to him and just wanted to be a musician and a music educator like him one day. I guess that's when I decided music would be my career.

Alan: Where are you from originally and what was it like growing up there?

Joyce: I was originally from Taipei. I was born and grew up there and my family is still living there. It was nice to grow up there. People were friendly, polite and humble. Places were easy to get to because the public transportation was very well developed. You didn't have to drive to get to places, which means the students who did not have driver's licenses or cars can still hang out

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with friends and go to places by themselves without their parents driving them and picking them up. The food was phenomenal. There were always lots of inexpensive varieties to choose from. The weather was nice and mild. It never got really cold or very hot (it never snowed). The average humidity was above 80% so it rained often and you got sweaty very easily. However, it was a perfect environment for plants to grow so the trees and grass are always green and vibrant. There were typhoons every year, which sometimes would bring excessive rain and wind and result in flood and mudslide. In addition, Taiwan is a small island sitting on the ring of fire. Therefore, we were familiar with earthquakes. The folklore said the earthquakes were a giant bull who lives underground and tosses and turns in its sleep.

Alan: Why did you come to the states and what was it like when you got here?

Joyce: I came for the graduate school at UT and stayed after I got my degrees and graduated. It was a bit of a cultural shock to me when I got here. The language was an issue for me. My English was fine, but I couldn't handle the accent that well. I didn't have a roommate so I had to take care of things by myself. The first two years were the hardest, then it got easier and easier after that.

Alan: What do you like about teaching piano?

Joyce: What I like the most about teaching piano is I get to work with students with different personalities and from various backgrounds. Some are shy, some are more outgoing; some are more passive, and some are opinionated. Everybody is different and unique. Both their strengths and weaknesses need to be carefully recognized and supported in order to offer students the proper tools and skills to reach their fullest potential. Sometimes I have to be creative to get through to them. It can be a lot of work, but the sense of accomplishment is greater, too.

Alan: Do you have any tips for parents about encouraging their kids to play and stick with an instrument?

Joyce: The kids learn the most from their home practice. What teachers see in the lessons is the learning result of the student from the past week. The real learning process happens at home. It makes parents' role as supervisors to their children more delicate—you do want to give them enough push to help them achieve their fullest potential, but definitely not too much and leave them no room to develop their own unique being. There are many online articles offering different insights and techniques to help children practicing their instruments at home. For instance, Deceptive Cadence from NPR did a series of related reports last year. Among them, "Getting Kids to Practice Music—Without Tears or Tantrums" probably is the most helpful one to our particular topic here. Kids nowadays have to deal vast amount of information at the same time. Sometimes they sacrifice the details, both necessary and

unnecessary ones, to keep up with the rapidly changing world we live in. The one recommendation I would give to the parents is to help the children recognize and not to slip on important details. We are talking about helping the children practice their instrument here, but this could apply to other fields of their learning, too.

Alan: What do you enjoy about helping out at our FCC Culture Camp?

Joyce: I've never thought of myself teaching groups of kids how to make dumplings before. I know very well how to make dumplings. It's one of the dishes we often did at home as a family activity when I was younger. I still make it sometimes for my own to eat. But it's a very different experience to show the children how to make dumplings and have them making their own. Then we (the grownups) cook the dumplings and everybody eats. It's very nice to see how excited they are when the dumplings are done cooking and served to them.

Alan: What are your favorite classical pieces, pop songs, and/or jazz tunes?

Joyce: At this moment, I have a couple of favorite classical pieces. Noble and Sentimental Waltzes (Valses Nobles et Sentimentales) by Maurice Ravel, Clarinet trio in A minor by Johannes Brahms, and The Story of Babar the Little Elephant (L'histoire de Babar le petit elephant) by Francis Poulenc. ❖

FCC Austin's 2014 Chinese New Year Celebration



Celebrating the Year of the Horse—in Style!



President's Award Prizes



Passing of the Proverbial Leadership Can of Coke from Becky to Alan.