



Families With Children from China Winter Newsletter 2010 Austin, Texas

Note from the President...

Dear Membership,

Chinese New Year celebration - It's our largest event and we are personally inviting you to don your Chinese clothes and join us on Saturday, February 6th from 2:30 – 5:30 at Covington Middle School. It should be an awesome event.

We will have Asian drumming in the courtyard, a large silent auction, a chance to get a family photograph taken and an hour of entertainment featuring both April Rain and Love of China dancers, Shaolin Wushu Kung Fu demonstrations and Anthony Chen, an amazing violinist. In addition, we will have a nifty FCC slide show, video segment and a meaningful opening ceremony performed by our children and parents. Cool, huh? Can you tell I am jazzed by this event this early? We will end with the dragon dancers, and then go feast at the Buffet Palace-Westgate. I hope you will join us for this incredible time.

To register online go to www.main.org/fccaustin/ and look under "Events". While you are there, we ask that you pay your annual membership dues. This money supports our educational and social events, and we have tried to offer many of these at a significant discount or free to members. In addition, your dues help us support four major charities that work with orphans in China: Grant Me a Chance, Love Without Boundaries, Half the Sky/ China Care and The Phillip Hayden Foundation. We have featured these organizations in our newsletters but you can read more about them on our web site under the "Links" section. I understand that paying your FCC dues might not be high on the "to do" list, but it feeds important work. It matters. Join today.

Lastly, as my Year of the Ox comes to a close, I want to thank everyone who has supported me and the board of officers. We have worked hard to make our community stronger and are looking forward to a great Chinese New Year celebration of all we have accomplished this year. The officers have asked me to consider staying on for another year to continue some of our projects, especially our August culture camp. I am humbled by the request and will gladly serve another term, if membership votes to amend our by-laws. This protocol is available for viewing on our web site. Please take a look at it when you have a chance. Here's to an incredible Year of the Tiger.

Gong Xi Fa Cai,

Becky Harding, Austin FCC President

PS: I also want to thank my family for being the light in the room.

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Mark Your Calendars

Chinese New Year
Saturday, Feb. 6, 2010

UT China Care Playgroup
Sunday, January 31, 2010

Attachment Issues Workshop
February 28, 2010

Culture Camp,
August 9-13, 2010

Chinese New Year Celebration

February 6, 2010



2:30 to 5:30 PM, Covington Middle School
Dinner afterward at Buffet Palace

Order discounted tickets online now: <http://www.main.org/fccaustin/events.htm>

- ◆ A professional photographer on hand to photograph your family
- ◆ A slide show of FCC families and friends following the journey of our lives
- ◆ An opening ceremony created and performed by FCC children and friends to celebrate our " Spirit of Community" with music, dance, video and performance art
- ◆ Traditional performances featuring Taiko Drumming, Chinese dance and Kung Fu demonstrations
- ◆ Austin's FCC Annual Silent Auction with hundreds of unique Chinese related items for sale
- ◆ Barefoot books and our lending library available
- ◆ Year of the Tiger t-shirts for sale
- ◆ And a huge favorite - THE AUSTIN DRAGON/LION DANCE TEAM!

We are committed to keeping the cost of our Chinese New Year event and the newly created After-Celebration Dinner as low as possible. So you will have a choice this year - attend one or BOTH of these community building events.

Send in your slides!

Each year FCC produces a slide show for Chinese New Year featuring pictures of our FCC families and children from throughout the year. We run it at the very beginning of our Chinese New Year program. We've received lots of positive comments in the past telling us that our kids love seeing themselves up on the "big screen," and parents, too, have fun seeing images of our FCC community and families. We want this year's slide show to be the best ever, and we hope you'll help by submitting three to five of your favorite pictures. Shots can be of your kids being silly or serious, of your family, of FCC events, of playgroup activities, of trips back to China, of new adoptions, or anything else that has touched you. Please try to send new or different photos from any you might have sent in the past to help us keep the program fresh. Email your photo submissions or questions to Stacey Cone at stacey.cone@gmail.com.

There will be stunning entertainment!

The entertainment section of this year's Chinese New Year event will feature some familiar friends and some new ones. As you arrive and weather permitting, the Austin Taiko Drumming troupe will be performing and offering our children a chance to drum in the courtyard. We will start the entertainment portion of the event with the slide show and then continue with an hour or so of people and performances designed to celebrate the spirit of our unique and amazing community.

After the slides, we will have some video commentary from some of our children then begin a very special opening ceremony. After the welcome, we will watch performances and demonstrations from the April Rain School of Chinese Dance, The Love of China School of Chinese Dance and the Wushu Shaolin Kung Fu Academy. Anthony Chen, the outstanding violinist from the Austin Lyric Opera and the Austin Chamber Music organization will perform as well. We will then go outside for the traditional Dragon and Lion dance (weather permitting), before heading to Buffet Palace-Westgate for a community dinner. Should be awesome. Simply awesome.

Dining options at 2010 Chinese New Year Celebration...

In recent years, the Austin FCC board has tried to address everyone's wishes with regards to food at our Chinese New Year celebration. We have heard your concerns about the cost, the food being cold or running out, and your desire to socialize with friends that you might only see once a year... This year, we think we have the perfect solution!

Buffet Palace has been kind enough to allow us to reserve a room, during the busiest time of year for Chinese restaurants. Our reserved room will hold about 150 people; so if you want to eat with Austin FCC members, make sure to purchase your tickets early!

For those of you who wish to keep costs low, you have the option of attending either the celebration at Covington Middle School or the dinner at Buffet Palace. If you enjoy seeing our FCC children perform and enjoy exposing your family to Chinese culture, come enjoy our entertainment. If you have little ones who may not be able to sit through the show, come socialize with old friends and meet some new ones at the FCC dinner at Buffet Palace. And if you enjoy the entertainment and want to socialize, come to both events!

Purchase your tickets (dinner only, celebration only, or both events) ahead of time and enjoy a significant member discount. Buy your tickets for both events and enjoy an additional discount of one dollar per person. To find the Chinese New Year ticket information, go to the FCC Austin homepage (<http://www.main.org/fccaustin/>) and look under "Events."

Participate in the Silent Auction...

The theme for this year's Silent Auction is shaping up to be Dolls and Toys. Thanks to our generous members and some generous companies, we have puzzles of Asia, a Ni Hao Kai-Lan tricycle, a Kai-Lan tea set, several Kai-Lan play sets, and dolls. Lots of dolls! Only Hearts Club dolls, Mulan dolls, a gorgeous Anne Geddes baby doll in Chinese costume, a terrycloth Asian doll (like the one that my daughter has loved from the first day they placed her in my arms), and more. We have numerous children's books: *My Little Book of Chinese Words*, *Lucky New Year*, an autographed copy of *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*, *Red Butterfly*, *The Tigers' Apprentice*, *The Year of the Rat*, *Child of the Owl*, *Lissy's Friends*, etc. And we have some wonderful Mandarin language learning materials: books, DVDs, CDs, and vocabulary flashcards with audio!

Don't worry; we also have items for the grown-up shoppers: scrapbooking materials, a sterling silver heart pendant from Many Hearts One Beat, adoption-related books for adults, restaurant gift certificates, a photo session gift certificate, two stunning women's shirts hand-made in China, etc.

Remember that we can only take cash and personal checks, and that you must be present to claim your item(s). It's not too late to add to the donations. If you need more information about the silent auction, or if you'd like to see a list of all the items that will be available, email Dianne Harwood at di@austin.rr.com.



*April Rain Chinese
Dance Performers*

Lunar New Year Celebrations

In addition to the Central Austin FCC Celebration on February 6th (see page 2), you can continue your Lunar New Year festivities with other activities in the Austin/San Antonio metro areas:

Hsiang Yun Temple & 360 Gallery of Austin Asian Lunar New Year Celebration

Where: 6720 Capital of Texas Highway, Austin TX 78731
When: Feb. 13–14, 2010
What: To welcome the New Year, Hsiang Yun Temple and 360 Gallery of Austin will host a series of Asian Lunar New Year activities, check all the events at www.ibps-austin.org. Some of the events include an authentic Chinese vegetarian lunch (12 noon), performing, talent show, lion dance (1:00 pm), and art exhibitions by David Stein (oil painting) and Cecilia Ling (photography).

Free admission, free parking and wheel chair accessible.

For more information: www.ibps-austin.org,
www.360galleryofaustin.org, or contact
ibps-austin@sbcglobal.net, tel: (512) 346-6789

Asian-American Cultural Center's Lunar New Year Celebration

Where: Asian American Cultural Center, 11713 Jollyville Road
When: Feb. 13, 2010 10am-3pm

For more information: contact 512/336-5069; www.asianamericanc.com



Chinatown Center Chinese New Year's Festival

Where: 10901 N. Lamar Blvd. Austin, Texas 78753
When: Feb. 20–21, 2010
What: Many performances by local groups including: April Rain School of Chinese Dance, Austin Taiko, Hanayagi Dance Company, The Love of China School of Dance, Master Yi's Tukong Martial Arts, Texas Dragon/Lion Dance Team and Summitt Dragon Dance.

For more information: <http://www.chinatownaustin.com/events.html>.

Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio Asian Festival –Year of the Tiger

Where: Institute of Texan Cultures, UTSA HemisFair Park Campus, 801 E. Durango Blvd., San Antonio, TX 78205
When: February 20, 2010 10 am – 5 pm

For more information: <http://www.texancultures.com/events/asian.html>



Vietnamese Tet Lunar New Year Celebration

Where: Summitt Elementary School
When: Friday, February 12 at 6 pm
What: \$2/person admission \$5/ person for a traditional Vietnamese meal, program of traditional Vietnamese dances and then ending with the dragon/lion dancers.

FCC and the University of Texas School of Social Work present

Chinese Culture Camp

Goals:

- To empower our Chinese-American children, to strengthen their ties to both cultures through sessions that teach Chinese language, heritage and cultural activities.
- To expand ethnic identity and build self-esteem, helping better prepare our children to respond to prejudice by developing skills for dealing with racism.
- To kindle new and close friendships, explore mutual adoption journeys, and build a sense of lasting community among children who share similar histories.

Dates: August 9 to 13, 2010**Time:** 9 am – 2:30 pm**Location:** Austin Chinese Church on Dessau Road

Eligibility and Placement: Children, ages 5-13, adopted from China and their siblings are eligible to participate in this camp. Students will be enrolled in a class based on the grade they will enter the next school year.

Class 1: Kindergartners, 1st and 2nd graders

Class 2: 3rd and 4th graders

Class 3: 5th and 6th graders

Class 4: 7th and 8th graders

High school young people are invited to participate as assistant counselors for no fee, but should complete the registration materials as well.

Member Pricing: \$200/first child and \$175/each additional child
Non-member price is \$225/child (Scholarships may be available based on need. [Contact Becky Harding](#) for details.)

How to Register: Enrollment begins March 1st and continues until April 30th.

Go to the web site (www.main.org/fccaustin/) under the section titled "Culture Camp" and print the registration materials. (They will be posted on line on March 1st.) Complete them and mail them to address on the forms. A non-refundable deposit of \$35 per child should be included with the registration materials. This secures your child's placement at the camp. The deposit will be applied toward the total payment due which is due by June 1st. A camp shirt is included in the registration price.

Content: Chinese language and character instruction, chop stick instruction and practice, ping pong tournament, Chinese jump rope activity, kite building, adoption - self identity (the oldest students will view and discuss Dr. Changfu Chang's film *Peer in the Distance*), master class with a dragon dancer, exploration of the major Asian festivals, adoption - dealing with racism, Chinese games and songs, and a tea ceremony. All campers will participate in the play, *Stone Soup* to be presented at a Friday night pot luck end-of-camp celebration.

Teachers: Linda Cao (dragon dancing), Furseley Gotuaco (play director), Em Hardy, Ph.D. (adoption issues, ethnic identity, dealing with racism), Kathy Lin (Chinese language), Valerie Zhong, Ph.D., (Chinese language), Amy Wong Mok (tea ceremony), Pat Morgan (adoption issues, ethnic identity, dealing with racism), Ruth Tang (Chinese language), Xiwei Chen (Chinese games), Sharon Lai (Chinese language).

Leadership: Rowena Fong, Ed.D. and Becky Harding (Directors), Gaylord Tsuei (English Pastor at the Austin Chinese Church) and Alexa Hinds (liaison to Austin Chinese Church) and FCC officers. Each class will have two adult Asian-American counselors assisting teachers and supervising and nurturing the children.





Buy Barefoot Books and Support Austin FCC

Barefoot Books are published by a small, independent grassroots children's book publisher based in Cambridge, MA. It was begun by two working mothers 17 years ago, who decided to start their own business to produce the kind of books they wanted, but could not find, for their own children. Still run by these two mothers, Barefoot Books brings authors and illustrators together to produce high quality children's literature which features rich language and beautiful art that engage a child's imagination. These multicultural stories introduce children to customs around the world, create a sense of global community, and convey universal messages.

When you purchase these beautiful children's books online from the FCC Austin Barefoot Books website, 20% or more of your purchase will go to benefit FCC Austin. So please, consider purchasing Barefoot Books as gifts for all the children in your life. In addition, FCC Austin is building a lending library and your purchase and donation of Barefoot Books will help build the library, as well as give cash back to FCC Austin.

Samples of these beautiful books will be on display at the Chinese New Year event at Covington Middle School on February 6th. Make a list of your favorites and then go online to purchase these and other Barefoot Books that can be previewed online. Please go to FCC Austin Barefoot Books website at: <http://www.barefootbooks.com/marketplace/7329>.

Odds & Ends

- * According to Phil Yu of the blog AngryAsianMan.com, Hong Kong director, Jingle Ma, has created a live-action film version of the Mulan story starring Zhao Wei. This is not a children's movie as the focus is on Mulan's vulnerabilities and relationships as she fights in the bloody war. The film opened in China, Singapore and Malaysia in early December and is still in negotiations to be distributed in the USA and Europe.
- * Again, Mr. Yu reports Disney is purportedly planning a Chinese version of the popular *High School Musical*. It's scheduled to be filmed in Shanghai and released in China this summer.
- * While we are referencing Phil Yu, check out his work at AngryAsianMan.com. The 27-year-old Korean-American's writings are a sort of clearinghouse for everything Asian American. The title reflects his thoughts about Asian empowerment and he often has readers send in examples of unintentional and/or deliberate examples of racism found just about everywhere in the world. He has a lot of current and positive articles as well.
- * And while we are on the subject of blogs, check out our own FCC Austin member Beckett Gray's blog at www.dragonsisterhood.blogspot.com. Her post topics include a variety of interests to the adoptive parent. Her new book, *The Dragon Sisterhood - A Guide to Chinese Adoptive Parenting in America*, is an extension of these writings and is available on amazon.com. She has generously donated two books to our Chinese New Year silent auction.
- * Actress Jean Smart is the most recent celebrity to adopt, bringing home a daughter from China this fall. To see a list of famous people associated with the adoption triad, go to <http://famous.adoption.com/famous/index-master.html>.
- * Abby Turner will have the Lending Library collection on display at our Chinese New Year celebration. If you have any materials to donate to the library, this would be the perfect opportunity to connect with Abby.

To Ethiopia and Back: The Davolt Family

By Pat Nealon

Zoey Davolt, 4.5 years old, knows how to get from Austin to Ethiopia and back again. In November 2009, she and her mom put together a map with lines of stars, tracing her dad Michael's journey to bring home her brother Ty. Zoey can also show you how to get to China from Austin and back again. A line of ladybugs traces the route that her mommy and daddy took when they brought Zoey home.

When Denise and Michael came home from China in 2006 with their daughter Zoey, they planned to enlarge their family again as soon as they could. As required, they waited a year after Zoey's adoption, and then filed paperwork with China for a second child in March 2007. As they waited, it became clear that their second referral could be years away. Wanting Zoey to have a sibling to grow up with, they began to consider other options.

Michael had a love for Africa. The Davolts found that Ethiopia has a successful international adoption program, and asked their agency to file adoption paperwork for them. At that time, it was highly unusual to file simultaneous requests for adoption with different countries, and the agency was unable to work with them. In time they found an agency active in Ethiopia and prepared to become a family of four.

In July 2009, about a month after filing the paperwork, they got their first glimpse of the beautiful boy who would become Ty, their son. The government of Ethiopia has a unique system for international adoption. As required, Ty lived for several months in a transitional home run by the agency before he was referred to a family. The agency represented the Davolt family in Ethiopian court to finalize the adoption, and in October all was ready for Ty to come home.

Denise and Michael had a tough decision to make: would it be possible for the entire family to go to Ethiopia? Zoey is a very active 4 year old, and the trip would be a short one. In the end, Michel made the trip on his own, while Denise continued to prepare Zoey for her new role as a big sister. "He's my hero," said Denise.

Denise and Michael had used a map of the world marked with ladybugs to show Zoey her adoption journey. Using stars, Denise and Zoey followed Michael and Ty's progress, with Denise showing Zoey how her brother's journey paralleled her own. Using Skype they welcomed Ty, seeing him in person for the first time. For the week that Michael was gone, two electric candles glowed in the windows of Ty's bedroom to welcome the travelers home. Zoey went to Build a Bear and made a dog for her little brother.

Now 14 months old, Ty is a healthy toddler. He shows no developmental delays and physically he's a "big boy" according to Denise. Michael teased Denise about the 18-month old clothes she prepared for Zoey's new brother in advance of his arrival. Sure enough, she laughingly reports, he is busting out of them already. Ty is, in his mom's words, "a happy little guy," eating, sleeping and playing with his new big sister.

Congratulations, y'all! Thank you for sharing your story with us and keep us posted. We hope to catch up with you at Chinese New Year.



Michael, Zoey, Ty, and Denise Davolt



The University of Texas China Care

By Esther Kwak

We at The University of Texas China Care, hope everyone had a wonderful holiday break and we would like to welcome the New Year by thanking all of the families who have supported us over the years. It is through the collective effort of parents, friends, and families that we have been able to accomplish as much as we have.

We are excited to share our upcoming China Care's events with you. Please mark your calendars and look forward to more information on future events because we hope to see everyone there!

China Care playgroups will resume on Sunday, January 31, 2010 at the Jewish Community Center from 2pm – 4pm. Playgroups will be held every other week there after until the end of the academic semester. There will be no playgroup on March 14th due to spring break. We look forward to reuniting with all of the parents and children! If you are not yet on our mailing list and are interested in learning more about our playgroup, please e-mail us at texaschinacare@gmail.com.

The University of Texas' annual Forty Acres Fest will take place in April. This festival invites students and the Austin community to enjoy delicious food, fun games, and music in efforts to learn about all of the different student organizations our campus has to offer. We are proud to announce that China Care will have a booth at this event and we'd love to see all of "our" families there. We will provide you with more information as it becomes available.



Also in April, Texas China Care will be hosting our annual Benefit Night in hopes of spreading our cause on campus as well as to the Austin community. In the past, we have had Benefit Dinners, which made our event a bit costly; however, this year we are in the process of changing things up quite a bit! This way, we will be able to bring ticket prices down and allow more people to learn about the purpose and motivation behind China Care. We will be hosting an inspirational show full of performances and prizes for all of our guests. We are finalizing our plans and will provide everyone with more information as soon as possible!

Again, thank you for all of your hard work and dedication in supporting our organization. If you would like to learn more about Texas China Care please visit us at www.txchinacare.org or e-mail us at texaschinacare@gmail.com.

I'm Chinese! By Kim Goodman

Becky Harding asked that I recount something I'd mentioned to her a while back, and I'm happy to do so. Last year, my 3-year-old daughter's preschool asked parents to share their culture with their child's classroom. The teachers informed the children one day, and I was told that Maya immediately, and proudly, announced, "I'm Chinese!" Another child replied, "I like Chinese food!"

When I found out about this, I knew we needed to participate. So a couple of weeks later, I came to her class around 11:00 with my husband's African drum, Maya's lion dance costume and head we had made for her that Halloween, and a couple dozen Chinese almond cookies we baked the day before. After Maya's performance, all the children were invited to take turns dancing around under the lion head, while some of the other kids could be under the material in the back, which made up the rest of the body. A couple of the children announced that they did NOT want to be the head of the lion and we told them that of course this was okay, but they were assured that if they changed their mind that it was fine, too.

Needless to say, all the kids danced under the lion head, amid laughter, loud giggles, and shouts of, "Abbi (or some other kid's name), quit pushing!" and "Can I try it next?" I also recall the visual of five or six sets of feet (some with lights going off) all jumbled up walking around with quick starts and stops under this thing, which at that point resembled a blue, life-sized caterpillar with a very large head moving around in a circle. After playing with the drum as well, they gobbled up ALL of the cookies, and Maya was just beaming.

Charity Spotlight: Grant Me a Chance

By Stacey Cone

As parents of internationally adopted children, we know, but seldom talk about, something that probably periodically causes us all pause. It's something that haunts the back of our minds. Something we can't help but remember occasionally when we lock eyes with our adopted children. Something we wince to think about too long—that hundreds... no, thousands... of kids—wonderful, amazing, beautiful, talented, fun, and adorable-in-countless-ways kids just like our own—are still languishing in orphanages around the world, waiting to find homes. And, worse, each one of them could be *our* child or children had things gone differently. Each one of them is alone. And each one of them needs a mommy and/or daddy every bit as badly as our own adopted children did.

Well, in May 2007, adoptive mom and former FCC President Tyla Gilchrist punched past the pause mode where most of us stop and got motivated to do something to help as many of those kids as possible, especially the ones that are harder to place with a family for one reason or another. Gilchrist recruited two other adoptive moms—former FCC president Holly Brooke and former FCC board officer Cheryl Bonfils-Rasmussen—to help launch a nonprofit organization committed to increasing kids' chances of finding families and homes. Gilchrist decided to call this organization "Grant Me A Chance."

Since that time in 2007, Grant Me a Chance has assisted more than 20 kids in different kinds of ways, working alongside other nonprofits, such as Love Without Boundaries, in countries like China, Thailand, Vietnam and Ethiopia. Love Without Boundaries and various other groups and placement agencies have the lists of children who need families. When they discover kids on their lists with special needs or peculiar circumstances that are potentially slowing their adoptions, they give Grant Me A Chance a call.

Funds supporting the nonprofit's work materialize in various ways, including the most old-fashioned. Gilchrist and Brooke have been known to donate generously directly out of their own pockets. Last spring, for example, they decided to promote adoption awareness locally by buying t-shirts printed for the cause and giving them away to students attending two high schools in Austin. The students who got shirts all agreed to wear them on the same day to school.

More often, Grant Me A Chance organizers sponsor fundraisers to get the money they need. This coming spring, they're hoping to hold a golf tournament with proceeds going to Grant Me A Chance. If they do, it'll be their first. And, as Brooke explains, it might be their last. "The golf tournament is a case where we'll probably have to spend money to make money," she says. "And that's a problem, but it happens a lot. It's one of the things we've learned along the way. There are lots of things we could do to raise more money, but we just don't have money to pay the people who want to help us do it. And they need to be paid something, even if they lower their costs for us considerably."

More often Grant Me A Chance organizers have raised money in low-cost ways, such as through sponsoring consignment sales. Brooke says they can raise anywhere from \$500 to \$700 dollars by sponsoring a children's consignment sale. But the sales aren't easy. They take extra hard work and a lot of time, something that Gilchrist, Brooke, and Bonfils-Rasmussen have little of after working full time all week. The sales require that a large volume of clothing be collected from donors, then be washed, dried, ironed, hung, and itemized for the sale. It's an onerous task but worth it when they can turn around and help a child. Still, Brooke admits that not all fundraising projects go well. "We recently held a women's consignment sale that was a total, complete bust," she said. "We did countless hours of work and only raised \$40 dollars."

But Gilchrist, Brooke, and Bonfils-Rasmussen aren't the types to get discouraged or back away. They face challenges of one sort or another all the time. The new Hague regulations governing international adoptions, for instance, along with stiffer adoption policies in nations like China, are making Grant Me A Chance's work more and more difficult. But Brooke says when they hit obstacles, they look for other ways to help the children in orphanages. Lately, that's meant moving toward providing other services, including covering medical fees, for kids who need it.

This month, Grant Me A Chance paid for the surgery of a nine-year-old boy who underwent an operation on his spine years ago that left him incontinent. Today, doctors believe they can repair the damage and cure the incontinence, something that has interfered with the boy's social and educational development. The organizers of Grant Me A Chance recently sent \$3300 to cover the surgery, and they're waiting now to hear how the boy is doing. Brooke thinks that if the

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Charity Spotlight continued...

incontinence is cured, the boy could become eligible for adoption and find a family and a home before he ages out of the system.

"You have to have a passion, I think," Brooke says. "You have to have something inside you that drives you. Knowing the kids are there needing help is a big part of that for us. And knowing that if we help just one of them, then we've made a difference."

To learn more about Grant Me A Chance, or to make a contribution, visit its website at www.grantmeachance.com.



"They will take with them what you give them": Joy Luck Club 101 Recap

"They will take with them what you give them," was one of the themes of our FCC conversation with Rowena Fong, Ed.D, in the Sunday, October 25 event we called "Joy Luck Club 101." A professor of Social Work at the University of Texas, Dr. Fong presented a program that expanded our understanding of the Chinese-American experience. She offered insights in what it is like to grow up in a Chinese-American family and detailed her impressions of specific family members roles and traditional cultural values. She also discussed her perspective about Chinese New Year, marriage ceremony rituals, funeral protocol and birth celebrations and traditions. We also talked about Asian-American stereotypes and ways in which we can all promote healthy Asian-American identity development in our children.

Held in her north Austin home, the two hour event ended with many of the eighteen FCC parents grateful for the amazing and unique opportunity to listen and ask questions about so many pieces of the Chinese-American experience first hand. Many of us walked out together affirmed that we should continue to give our children many, many Asian related opportunities and experiences. As they grow they can select the ones to keep or leave behind. Dr. Fong suggest, "make the circle wide so stuff will be left when they start throwing stuff out. They will thank you."

We thank Dr. Fong (aka Rowena) for opening her home and heart to FCC Austin. She is most generous. If you missed this session, we are planning another evening in the spring.



Becky Harding, Rowena Fong and Deanne Brown

LITERATURE REVIEW

By Cheryl Dragel

Although this column's regular title is Book Review, for this installment I am reviewing a study published recently by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. In November 2009, the Institute released "Beyond Culture Camp: Promoting Healthy Identity Development in Adoption," a significant study examining identity formation in adults who were adopted as children. In addition to providing a useful review of adoption research from the past several decades, the study gathers the thoughts and experiences of the REAL experts -- adult adopted people -- about positive identity development.

The 112-page study can be found at the Institute's website: http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/publications/2009_11_BeyondCultureCamp.pdf. Fortunately, for the time-crunched among us there also is an excellent 7-page Executive Summary: http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/publications/2009_11_ExSum_BeyondCultureCamp.pdf.

The study is based on data gathered from adult adoptees via a survey on the Institute's website from mid-October 2006 until February 2007. The study aimed to learn generally about identity development in adult adopted people, but also more specifically about the implications of how racial/ethnic differences between adoptees and their parents affect adoptee identity development. A total of 533 adopted people from age 18 to 69 responded to the survey. They were born in the U.S., Columbia, South Korea, India, and other Asian countries.

This may be the largest U.S. study ever compiled with data coming directly from adult adopted people. Moreover, respondents were self-selected Adopted-People-On-The-Web, rather than subjects in a clinical setting. Perhaps our own children, when they reach adulthood, will provide THEIR views for future studies examining identity development in transracially adopted people. Will they look back and find that we, their parents, paid attention to conclusions provided by research about how transracially adopted children develop healthy identities?

Of the 533 survey responses, the Institute excluded those less than 60 percent complete. This left a total of 468 working responses. For purposes of comparison, the Institute concentrated on two large groups of respondents: 179 South Korea-born respondents adopted by White couples; and 156 U.S.-born Caucasian respondents adopted by White couples. These two groups constituted over 70 percent of study participants, making the two cohorts as homogenous as possible for comparison purposes. To be sure, the composition of these two groups excludes people adopted by 1) parents of different races, and 2) single parents. But I think the study offers important conclusions that are worth our attention.

One of the study's surprising findings is that although the Institute hypothesized "adoption" as a piece of the identity puzzle would peak in importance during adolescence and become less important in adulthood, this was not the case. The study shows that adoption remains an important issue throughout the life of an adopted person. As children moved into their adolescent years, adoption did indeed grow in significance. But it continued to increase in importance well into adulthood, remaining significant to the vast majority of survey participants throughout their adult lives. This data supports the idea that identity work around the issue of adoption is ongoing for adopted people.

According to the White adult adopted people who responded to the survey, having contact with birth relatives is the most helpful way to develop a positive adoptive identity. Forty-five percent of White respondents experienced contact with birth relatives. Perhaps surprisingly, 30 percent of the Korean adoptees also have had birth relative contact, despite the prevalent assumption that people adopted from Korea have scant information about the families to which they were born. Though a significant minority of the Korean adoptees has had contact with birth relatives, this begs the question of how our kids from China will fare with respect to the development of positive adoption identity. Most of our children may not have birth relative contact -- in spite of hopes that the future will hold greater openness in China and the increasing acceptance and use of DNA technology.

Another noteworthy finding? The importance of racial/ethnic identity for the transracially adopted did not taper off after adolescence, as the Institute hypothesized. On the contrary, the importance of race and ethnicity increased in significance for the Korean adopted adults throughout their lives.

For children adopted transracially, learning how to cope with racial discrimination (including racial teasing) is a key aspect in coming to terms with their racial/ethnic identities. Of the Korean respondents in the Evan B. Donaldson Institute study, fully 80 percent reported discrimination from strangers and 75 percent from classmates. Almost half (46%) said they had negative experiences related to their race with their childhood friends, and 39% reported race-based discrimination from teachers. These numbers seem pretty huge to me. The need to address racial antagonism effectively remains a challenge for parents, teachers, and schools.

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Study data showed that integrating race/ethnicity into an adopted person's identity can be an ongoing and complex process. Of participants adopted from South Korea, 78 percent said they considered themselves White or wished they were White as children -- even though the majority grew to see themselves as Korean American in adulthood. Some of the factors to which survey participants attributed the shift were "simply maturity," having access to a diverse community, regular affiliation with Koreans and other Asians, and increasing knowledge about and taking pride in birth culture. For others, the shift came as a result of negative experiences (racial teasing or discrimination), which led them to reconsider their identities and come to terms with being Asian. As one survey respondent said, "I realized I never could change my ethnicity/race. I also developed a pride in being Korean and Asian. I reviewed things I liked about being Asian that European Americans did not have. I also grew comfortable with things I did not like about being Asian. As an adult I learned how to deal with racism/stereotypes in a way that makes me feel OK about being a 'border person' and a minority."

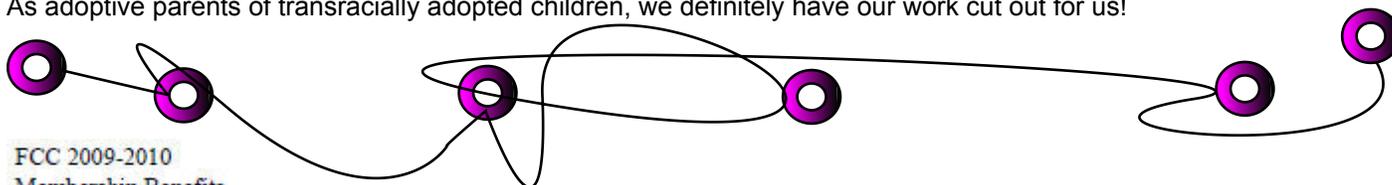
What can we do to help our children develop comfort with their race/ethnicity so their chances of forming an overall positive identity are increased? A few of the most important tools that Korean adoptees reported were "lived experiences," such as travel to the country of their birth, being enrolled in racially diverse schools, and having positive adult role models who reflect their own race/ethnicity. Imagine, for a moment, the loneliness of the survey respondent who described growing up in an all White community: "I WAS the diversity at my high school."

As FCC Austin prepares to debut its first culture camp during the summer of 2010, I know the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute's study "Beyond Culture Camp: Promoting Healthy Identity Formation in Adoption" will continue to resonate with me.

One of the takeaway messages of the study seems to be that while transracially adopted adults valued celebrations and learning about their countries/cultures of origin, such exposure by itself is insufficient. We must go beyond cultural socialization to seek out and provide our children with lived experiences that help increase their racial and cultural identification and comfort. Examples of this lived experience include birth country travel and being in racially diverse settings such as schools, neighborhoods, and larger communities.

Paradoxically, even though these experiences are critical to our children, they do not prepare them to deal effectively with racial discrimination or bias. Most of the Korean study respondents experienced racial teasing or discrimination from a broad range of sources, including friends, teachers, and classmates. Previous research has shown that White adoptive parents of transracially adopted children may tend to minimize the prevalence and negative effects of racism. Yet this study and previous research demonstrates that perceived discrimination is associated with greater psychological distress, including lower self-esteem and more discomfort with one's race/ethnicity. Clearly, more education and support is needed for adoptive parents to help their children cope effectively with bias.

As adoptive parents of transracially adopted children, we definitely have our work cut out for us!



FCC 2009-2010
 Membership Benefits
 Prepared by KAQ (12.3.09)

| Event | Date | Member Price | Non-Member Price | Savings |
|---|----------|--------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Dr. Chang film Screening (2 people attending) | May '09 | \$ 10.00 | \$ 14.00 | \$ 4.00 |
| Terra Cotta Fieldtrip Transportation (avg family of four) | June '09 | 40.00 | 68.00 | 28.00 |
| Adoption Workshop (1 attending) | Aug '09 | FREE | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Moon Festival | Sept '09 | FREE | FREE | - |
| Joy Luck Club discussion | Oct '09 | FREE | FREE | - |
| Chinese New Year '10 (pre-registration of avg family of four) | Feb '10 | 30.00 | 48.00 | 18.00 |
| FCC CNY Community Dinner (avg family of four) | Feb '10 | 37.50 | 45.50 | 8.00 |
| TOTAL MEMBERSHIP SAVINGS | | | | 65.00 (*) |
| Less: Cost of Annual Family Membership | | | | <u>-30.00</u> |
| NET BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP | | | | \$ 35.00 (*) |

* Varies based on events attended and number of family members participating.

MUSICA PARA LOS NIÑOS DE GUATEMALA

By Kellena Paige

Recently a group of Austin adoptive families of Guatemalan children from Central Presbyterian Church organized a benefit concert series, "Musica para los Niños de Guatemala" featuring Joe McDermott, to support the efforts of the Chiquimula Feeding Center in eastern Guatemala. These adoptive families reached out to FCC and asked for our support for their November 22nd concert event. We are proud to report that several of our members showed up to donate both their money and their time.

According to UNICEF, almost 50% of Guatemala's children are chronically malnourished. A diet of little more than tortillas does permanent damage—

hindering brain development and stunting growth, among other disabling effects. This chronic problem of malnutrition has become acute as Guatemala experiences its worst drought in 70 years. Church sponsored Feeding Centers in Guatemala are providing relief in this crisis. In lieu of ticket sales for the concert, a monetary donation was requested at the event. All proceeds were sent to the Chiquimula Feeding Center to buy food.

For the first 45 minutes of the concert children shared their talents as they worked to help children in another country. There was Chinese dance from April Rain, a martial arts demo that included a child adopted from Guatemala, and an amazing piano/violin duet from two children, one of whom was also adopted from Guatemala.

After that, Texas-based and nationally known performer and songwriter Joe McDermott took the stage and performed a benefit concert featuring his popular children's music. My kids adore Joe McDermott and he didn't fail to deliver. I think we may know all of his songs by heart and I got a kick out of seeing my kids howl with delight at the beginning of each song. Joe has been called "The maestro of imagination" for his creative approach and appeal. I have to admit that I was pretty thrilled myself when I got to hear Joe sing "Don't drop a brick on your foot, it will hurt" and "What's not to love about a skunk?" To my kids, it was the equivalent of seeing U2 or Aerosmith live, and a heck of a lot cheaper.

You can still help Guatemala's children. Please make your tax-deductible checks out to "Generations Church" (the Chiquimula Feeding Center's sponsoring church) and mail them to Kathi Thomas at 13524 Evergreen Way, Austin, TX, 78737-9119. For more information, call Kathi at 512-845-0155.



Joe McDermott pleases the crowd

Attachment and Bonding: Steps to Healing

By Pat Morgan, LPC

As a mom to a daughter adopted from China, I am always wondering about how my daughter's earliest experiences are affecting her now. As a therapist who works with children, I am always curious about my child clients. I want to find out everything I can about their prenatal development, delivery, and infancy even if they are not presenting in my office with an attachment issue. With our adopted children, I think attachment is always something to consider but to try not to obsess over. If our children have behaviors that puzzle or exasperate us, we have to sit with questions like "Is this just regular kid behavior but maybe a little more so?" or "Does this have to do with what happened in China before she came home with us?"

In this article, I want to focus on what can affect adopted children's abilities to attach to their caregivers. My comments should be relevant to our children with the very serious diagnosis of Reactive Attachment Disorder; but my comments here are focused on our children that are, as Heather Forbes of the Beyond Consequences Institute calls it, "attachment challenged." I will refer to children as "our children." Of course not all adoptees from China can be diagnosed with attachment disorder or attachment challenges.

First let's think about childbirth and infancy. In the best-case scenario, a child is carried with hopeful expectation then welcomed with joy. After the birth, the caregivers are tuned in to every nuance of the baby's movement. If there is a whimper of discomfort, mom or dad responds. If the whimper escalates to a cry, mom or dad zoom to the baby with apologies, love, and whatever was needed; breast, bottle, clean diaper, etc.

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There is play, laughter, and loads of eye contact. The baby looks at the parent and sees love. The baby is then able to reflect love back. Neural pathways get established in the baby's brain that tell the baby "everything is a-ok" and "I can trust these folks!"

This should happen again and again through the baby's first years. It is how the baby's ability to trust and the love connections to the parents are established. It is what underlies a secure person. A child raised in this kind of atmosphere will be able to tolerate a failure of empathy on the parent's part. Deep inside, when the child is distressed, they know that mom or dad will help them resolve what is going on even if they are crying right now. They will be able to soothe quickly after their distress is taken care of. They are able to go back and forth from distress to calm. In short, they are able to "self regulate."

It is not likely that our children had this ideal situation. They were likely carried with anxiety then welcomed with unhappiness. The parting from birth mom is a trauma even if the orphanage was better equipped to care for them. Care in an orphanage, even with the best of caregivers, is not the same as our best-case scenario. Foster care is better but it brings the trauma of leaving that relationship. In this situation, our children's ability to self soothe and self regulate were compromised.

When threats are real or perceived, adrenaline will rise. Think about the last time you were really scared or really angry. You certainly were not in a state to have a lesson about why you should not be scared or angry! When adrenaline is pumping it's hard to think rationally. And no doubt, it took some time to settle back down once the distress was over. Your fight, flight, or freeze response was activated. This is a response that can save you in an emergency. It is just not the best time for reflective thought. Most of us do not know about the daily life of our children that were in the social welfare home or in foster care. If the care was limited, it was likely that when they were hungry, dirty, or uncomfortable they had to cry for a long time before they were attended to. There may have been many, many times of the adrenaline rising resulting in the fight, flight, or freeze response. The neural pathways that get established may tell the child, "Maybe my

needs will get met, maybe not." In the case of serious neglect, the experience over and over again is "It's no use. I am giving up on these adults."

UPCOMING WORKSHOP:

Em Hardy, PhD and I are planning a two-hour workshop on 2/28/10 on attachment and adoption with a focus on our Chinese children. What we would like you to do is think about what questions you have about children and attachment. There are so many things we could talk about it is hard to narrow it down! Email any questions or thoughts about this to me at talktopat17@hotmail.com.

When a baby doesn't experience consistency from the caregivers, the stress response is easily triggered and harder to resolve. Adrenaline pumps. Fight, flight, or freeze response ensues. In children this can result in tantrums, screaming, yelling, hitting...you've been there. You have seen it. It will take longer for our children to settle back to calm.

What does this easy to dysregulate child look like when not in a temper tantrum? They can easily be

mistaken for children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. They tend to move fast. Some children have problems with focus because of their high levels of stress hormones. It is hard to learn when one is in an anxious state. These children may have trouble listening and responding to the adults in their life. They may be defiant at times.

Because these kids are anxious they tend to have a high need for control. They can be really bossy! It is clear to me in observing these children that they think, "If I can make everyone do exactly what I want, everything will be fine." I see this even in very young children who hardly have the words to think these thoughts! But as we all know, there are very few things we can really control in this life. And of course, what every child needs to know is that their parents are in charge. They need to know deep inside that they can relax in the knowledge that they are safe with their parents, that their needs for food, shelter, stimulation, love, and fun will be met consistently. Most children born into a loving family never question these basics. One can see the relaxation in their eyes and in their bodies as they relate to their parents.

I am a firm believer that children (and adults) who have had early trauma and less than ideal bonding experiences in early childhood can heal. Here are some of the ideas that I consider keys in healing early neglect and trauma:

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1. Work on your own ability to stay calm and regulated in the face of your child's dysregulation. Understand and have compassion for your own history of attachment and trauma, and seek to heal it if need be. You cannot lead your child to calm if you are not able to do the same for yourself.
2. Consider the concept of "emotional age" versus chronological age. Our children who have come from difficult circumstances have real gaps in their development. Certain parts of the brain may not have been stimulated in their first year. Find ways to allow them to regress safely. Don't be surprised if your six year old acts like a three year old at times. Of course all children need some regression at times. Our children may just need it a little more.
3. Keep a consistent structure for your child. In one of my favorite books, *The Boy Who was Raised as a Dog*, Dr. Bruce Perry writes about how he was called in to do psychotherapy with the children who were rescued from the Branch Davidian Compound. As soon as he got there, he saw that there was no consistent schedule for the children. Of course they were exhibiting extreme behaviors. Dr. Perry immediately dispensed with the idea of doing any kind of psychotherapy until the structure was set; bedtime, waking time, school time, play time, and a consistent schedule for caregivers. Therapy came much later for these children.
4. Play, play, play!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Make time for uninterrupted play! Play is what makes kids happy. Happiness creates dopamine, the calming agent in our brains that creates serotonin. These agents lower stress hormones. Play games that bring you into physical contact with your child. Avoid games that involve too much tickling as tickling can over stimulate their stress triggers. (Remember, even good stress is still stress and the body will respond to it.) See the book *I Love You Rituals* by Dr Becky Bailey. That is a great book for games that enhance bonding.
5. Attune to your child. Learn your child's rhythms and cycles. Learn what your child's stressors are. Intervene before there is a meltdown. Call them in for a calming activity, for snuggle time, for a snack, before they are in crises. All babies should have had the experience of their caregivers looking at their behavior and discerning their needs. This becomes more complex as our children grow. Sometimes it helps to journal or take written notes about what calms and what escalates your child. You can often find a pattern that will be helpful in heading off trouble.
6. Learn about the special nutritional needs that children who have experienced trauma and neglect have. Karen Purvis, in her book *The Connected Child*, has some good starting points to research this topic.
7. If you feel like you are getting overwhelmed by your child, seek professional help! Don't wait until things become unbearable! You may just need a consult and a little guidance. Or more long-term family therapy may be in order. Get with a good professional to help you sort out what is needed. There are good resources for working with children with attachment problems in Central Texas.

Of course this article is just a quick look at the issue of attachment and dysregulation in children. There are much more comprehensive discussions of these topics by greater minds than me! I have already mentioned some really good books; *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, *I Love You Rituals*, and *The Connected Child*. Others I would add to the list are *Parenting From the Inside Out* by Dan Siegle and Mary Hartzell and *Beyond Consequences, Logic and Control* by Heather Forbes and Brian Post. There are many more but these are my favorites.

Do you have photos, articles, reviews, resources, ideas or thoughts to submit to the newsletter? Feel free to email them to the newsletter editor, Angela Meek, at ammeek@att.net. We'd love to hear from you!

2009 Austin FCC Board of Directors

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Children and Attachment Issues Workshop offered in February

Date: Sunday, February 28, 2010

When: 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Where: The Dell Jewish Community Center - ECS Building

Cost at Door: Free to FCC Members - \$7/person for non-members

Registration: Email bjh0902@aol.com to reserve a seat by February 19, 2010

Presenters: Em Hardy, PhD and Pat Morgan, LPC

Topics will include, but not limited to:

- * What are the symptoms of attachment disorder and attachment issues
- * Strategies to enhance bonding with your child
- * Helpful parenting techniques

Em Hardy is an local psychologist who earned her Ph.D from Michigan Sate University. She has over 25 years of experience as a psychotherapist/consultant specializing in attachment and bonding issues related to adoption. Prior to moving to Austin, she practiced for many years in Colorado Springs, Colorado with over 10 years of experience with leadership training and executive personnel coaching.

Pat Morgan was licensed as a professional counselor in Texas in 1993 and has been in private full-time practice since 2001. In her practice, she works with children and adults. She has many years of experience as a play therapist for children and currently specializes in child therapy with children who have trauma and attachment issues. Pat and her husband, Richard, have one daughter, Rose, who was adopted from Jianxi Province in China. She is cuurrently serving her second term as the Cultural and Outreach officer on the FCC board.

Baked Nian Gao (*baked version of the classic Chinese New Year cake*)

- 4 1/2 cups glutinous rice flour (sticky rice flour)
- 3/4 cup of vegetable oil
- 3 large eggs
- 2 1/2 cups milk
- 3/4 cup granulated white sugar
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 Tblsp baking soda
- 1 1/2 - 1 3/4 cups mashed red azuki beans (available in cans in Asian markets)



1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly oil a 9 X 9 inch pan.
2. Mix all but the beans with an electric mixer at medium speed for 2 minutes. Beat for 2 more minutes at high speed.
3. Spread 1/2 to 3/4 of the batter on the bottom of the baking pan.
4. Bake for about 10 minutes, until the batter is just beginning to set.
5. Remove the pan from the oven. Add the red azuki beans. Since the batter isn't fully set the beans will sink in a bit - this is fine. Don't worry about trying to spread them out in an even layer over top.
6. Add the remaining batter over top of the beans.
7. Bake in oven at 350 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes. Cake is done when a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.

Glossary of Chinese New Year terms

From Chinese New Year Dragon by Rachel Sing

chunlian (CHWUHN-lee-en) -- a pair of greetings written in Chinese on red strips of paper hung on the sides of a doorway

fu (FOO) -- symbol for wealth and good luck

hongbao (HOHNG-bow) -- red envelopes with money that is a traditional gifte from adults to children

jiaozi (j'YOW-dzeh) -- dumplings filled with meat and vegetables