



Families With Children from China Fall Newsletter 2010 Austin, Texas

Letter from the Prez...

Co-directing our camp will probably be one of those events that I will want mentioned in my obituary. It seemed to complete all the goals we wanted to attain; yet more than that, it really changed lives in such a positive way that I still don't think I quite have absorbed it all.

As my family returned to its Fall routine, we encountered folks associated with the camp experience, and they shared the most remarkable stories with us. One family now has chop sticks on the table every night because of the chop stick races at camp. Several parents have talked to me about the discussions their children want to have about their adoption journeys. Children who were, perhaps, reluctant to talk about their stories now casually chat and ask questions from the backseat of the car. My own children seem to embrace their Chinese-American balance even more than before camp. And it may have been the adult beverages available at our Central Market Moon Festival, but the joy and affection seemed to just float over the waves of people there.

Community. Yes, I think when I am much older and look back over my life, this phase of it will be full of light

Take care,

Becky

*Becky Harding
FCC Austin
Year of the Tiger
President*

What's Inside	
2	Adoption in Schools Workshop
2	FCC Officer Selection
3	Christmas International House Hosts
4	Chinese Culture Camp Review
5	China Care 2010-2011
6	Odds & Ends
7	Family Focus: Williams Family
9	Meeting with Mei-Ling Recap
9	Book Review
10	Heritage Tour
12	Enhancing Attachment
13	Girl Scout Update
14	Moon Festival Magic

Mark Your Calendars	
	Filling the Adoptive Backpack Monday, October 18, 2010
	China Care Sunday, October 24, 2010 Sunday, November 7, 2010
	Officer Nominations Deadline: November 14, 2010
	FCC Chinese New Year Saturday, January 22, 2011

Adoption Knowledge Affiliates presents
Adoption & Schools Workshop
with Deanne Brown and Becky Harding

Monday, October 18, 2010
7 pm at Westover Hills Church
8332 Mesa Drive, Austin
Free admission and open to the public

FCC officers and former teachers Deanne Brown and Becky Harding will conduct their popular "Adoption and Schools" workshop at the monthly AKA meeting. This will be a continuance of their previous workshop presented last August for FCC members.

The four major areas of discussion will include:

- What is the ideal school for your child?
- How to build a strong relationship with your child's teacher.
- How to give your child tools s/he might need to handle adoption or racism issues or situations.
- How to be a positive advocate for social change.

For more information please go to: <http://www.adoptionknowledge.org/meetings.htm>.



FCC Austin Officer selection

With the welcome of the Year of the Rabbit in January, the board of FCC officers will change and we are looking for people interested in serving on the board for the 2011-2012 year. Most of the current members will remain or change responsibilities, yet we do anticipate needing a couple of individuals to join the leadership team.

Officers come from our membership and are traditionally people who have attended most of the major FCC events in the past few years and are active in the adoption or Asian-American community. They should be able to communicate through email and can attend our meetings that are held every six weeks on Sunday evenings. They are encouraged to participate in all of our events and projects. In addition, each board member has a title and is responsible for an assignment related to that title and writes at least one article for the quarterly newsletter.

If you are interested or have questions, please contact Becky Harding at bjh0902@aol.com by November 14, 2010.



Christmas International House Hosts Needed

By Kathi Thomas

We need host homes for Christmas International House (CIH) students who will be coming to Austin December 18–January 2. You can host for one week or both. CIH students are international students who are going to colleges and universities in the US. It is expensive to travel home and very difficult to get visas renewed to re-enter, so many stay here.

These students tend to be the “cream of the crop”— some of the finest young people you will ever want to meet. They are from countries all over the world and are studying here. They join the CIH program to make friends with an American family. We look at this as a peacemaking mission. When our students return to their home country, hopefully they will be able to look their fellow country folk in the eye and tell them about the great experience they had with a Texas family. It is not uncommon for families to keep in contact with students for years after they’ve visited through CIH. We are just now getting in applications, so we don’t know the home countries of this year’s students yet, but in the past, we’ve had students from China, South Africa, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, France, and Ecuador. The majority of our students are from Asia (since that is where the majority of international students in the US originate).



As a host family, your responsibilities are fairly simple: provide a place to sleep, provide breakfast (it can be “do it yourself” or you can cook for them each day if you please), get them to and from their meeting point each day, and include them in your family activities. We will have several days when the students will stay home to bond with the families. In Austin, our usual meeting point will be at Hastings Communication Services, at 825 W. 11th St., but you may arrange carpools with some of the other hosts so that every family doesn’t need to drive in each day. The activities (such as the ranch night at Hal & Betty Meyer’s Jack Mountain Ranch) are open to hosts and their families, and we encourage you to attend, but you are not required to do so. Please give this some consideration. Your family will have a special experience sharing your holidays with “a stranger in a strange land” and you may find a life-long friend.

If you would like to host or want to know more about this program, feel free to contact Kathi Thomas, coordinator of the program, at: kathi@hastings.com. You may read more about the program at <http://www.christmasih.org/Host-HostHandbook.htm>. FCC family who hosted last year will be happy to answer your questions; contact Shawn Dubiel at sdubiel@stgdesigns.com.



FCC and UT School of Social Work Chinese Cultural Camp Review

We spent a week together at the Austin Chinese Church empowering our Chinese-American children, strengthening their ties to both cultures. We expanded ethnic identity and built self-esteem by helping better prepare our children to respond to prejudice and gave them some skills for dealing with racism. We kindled new and close friendships as we explored mutual adoption journeys and build a sense of lasting community among children and families who share similar histories. We had a lot of fun too.

I loved the chop stick races and the quilting. I wish we could do this every week! ~ a child

I just wanted to once again thank you for all of your hard work, dedication and vision in making culture camp such a huge success... my daughter had a great time and seemed to learn so much also...Her counselors were fantastic and played a huge part in the successful week... ~ a parent

I don't think I can put into words just how much this camp has impacted me. I can't believe I got the chance to meet some of the most wonderful kids I've ever met. If any of my kids felt even 1/100% of the impact they've had on me, I'll be satisfied. I can't thank you guys enough for this camp. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. ~ a counselor



Lion dance teachers Linda Cao and Todd Morton teach the group about the physical requirements needed to perform in costume.



Camp Counselor Ysabelle Sosong, and adoption teachers Pat Morgan and Em Hardy prepare for class at camp.

They hung on your every word - as well as your shoulders and waists...As these kids go through their incredibly arduous teen years they will be challenged in ways that will not be fair or pleasant. They will question themselves and seek to discover who they are as young Asians amongst others who do not understand them - sometimes do not want to understand them...And in these times of self-doubt it will be you they think about and it will be your strength of character that they will strive to emulate.

~an Asian-American teacher in a post camp letter to the counselors

China Care 2010-2011

My name is Lucy Liu, and I will be one of the Playgroup Directors for this 2010-2011 school year! The other Playgroup Director is Brittney Wang, and I hope that you guys have seen us running around at either last year's Playgroups or at Chinese Culture Camp!

For those who are new to Playgroup, it's basically a 2 hour play time on Sundays where China Care members just play and interact with local Austin kids who have been adopted from Asia. This year, we are hoping to incorporate more Chinese language and culture into Playgroup. We usually start out with a skit (about Chinese history or "folk tales") and branch out into activities such as coloring, craft making, or games. If the weather is nice, we'll try to go outside to the playground! And right around the end of Playgroup, we'll have snack time. We'll try to make the snacks a little healthier this year, I promise! :)

Playgroup Schedule (Subject to change):

October 24, 2010	2-4pm	Gullett Elementary, 6310 Treadwell Blvd.
November 7, 2010	2-4pm	Dell Jewish Community Center

For playgroups at Dell Jewish Community Center (DJCC), we will be in the Room ECP MPR (Early Childhood Multipurpose room). The address for the JCC is:

Jewish Community Association of Austin
7300 Hart Lane
Austin, Texas 78731

I just want to stress that Playgroup is open to EVERYONE! The JCC has been gracious enough to lend their facilities to us, but I want to just state that Playgroup has no religious affiliations! There are also no fees/memberships for parents! The age group for our activities really centers around the 3-8 age group, but we are trying to start a group for older kids.

Another part of China Care is the Big Brother Big Sister program. Basically, your child is matched to one of our China Care members and you guys can individually schedule meetings/play time. This is a great chance for these kids to establish a strong relationship with an older "role model!" If you want more information about BBBS, please let me know!

Please do not hesitate to e-mail me (lucyliu2k@gmail.com) or Brittney Wang (brittanyjwang@gmail.com) or our Texas China Care e-mail (texaschinacare@gmail.com) if you have any questions or concerns! :)



Thank you!
Lucy Liu
China Care Playgroup Director 2010-2011

**UT China Care volunteers
Kathy Tian, Ai Ton and Lucy Liu**

Odds & Ends

- * Save the date for The Year of the Rabbit celebration - Our Chinese New Year event will be on Saturday, January 22, 2011.
- * Kids eat free at Mama Fu's all day Sunday and at Zen Japanese Food Fast all day Saturday and Sunday with the purchase of an adult entry.
- * Join us on Facebook at Families with Children from China - Austin, Texas Chapter. This is a great way to keep up with all our events and activities as well as join in an active discussion of various topics important to our community. www.facebook.com/
- * Abby Turner hosts a delightful weekly lunch fest and Sandi Ross hosts a wonderful monthly "Mom's Night Out" gathering. Both ladies served as past FCC presidents and welcome anyone to join these social celebrations. Contact them for details at "Just for Moms" on our web site at www.main.org/fccaustin/
- * If you have a child with hair 10 inches or longer from the base of the pony tail and are anticipating a hair cut, you might consider donating the pony tail to the "Locks of Love" program. The hair is used to make wigs for children who are ill or have issues with hair loss. It's a great learning lesson for our children and it makes the morning routine go a little faster. It truly is a win/win. For details and guidelines go to www.locksoflove.org/donate.html.
- * Last call for Year of the Tiger shirts! They are \$10/each and 2 for \$15 with adult and some youth sizes available. They make great gifts. Contact Becky Harding by November 20th if you need some.
- * Several compelling adoption documentaries in the PBS Point of View series are available to watch on line at www.pbs.org/pov/ through November.
- * Check out the Sagwa web site on pbskids.org for cool Chinese games and activities.

Chinese language as an official language curriculum

Austin ISD school Murchison Middle School offers a 6th grade discovery unit, and a full-year 7th and 8th grade Chinese language courses taught by non-heritage teacher, Ms. Robyn Stringfellow. Students can continue their Chinese language studies at Anderson High School, their vertical team secondary school, and study with Ms. Kelly Long in her four year Chinese program. This is an exciting model and parents could encourage other school districts to use a similar structure for implementing full-time Chinese language into their systems.

Ms. Stringfellow's middle school Chinese Club participated in our FCC Moon Festival last month at Central Market and hopes to partner with us again on other events and projects. Trained at the Beijing Language and Cultural University, she also has an International Relations degree from Redlands University in California. We welcome this new partnership into our growing adoption and Asian-American community.

Family Focus: The Williams

Sue Williams with Becky Harding and edited by Angela Meek

One of the absolutely best parts of being on the FCC board are the connections we make with families in our membership. We have so many interesting and diverse people coming together, raising our children in this community. I met Sue Williams through this summer's Chinese culture camp and thought I misheard when she mentioned she had children and grandchildren from China. As it turned out, I had not misheard her.

Sue Williams and her family went to China for the first time in 2005 joining her daughter's family as they adopted granddaughter Lucy. Everyone had a wonderful trip, really enjoyed the country and most of all fell instantly in love with Lucy. At home, Sue and her husband were unable to stop thinking about the need for people to adopt these beautiful children. They thought about that a lot for two years, until finally they convinced themselves they were not too old to start over with a family!

Sue and her husband had two biological children at a young age and had 9 grandkids by the time they were 50. They decided they still felt young enough to parent so they signed up with an agency in 2007, just in time for the very long waits to happen. They quickly recognized they did not have the years it would take to wait for a non-special needs adoption, and almost immediately sought an older special needs child. They were matched with Jia in Feb of 2008 and traveled to get her in May of 2008. They took their granddaughter Lucy with them, along with 3 grandsons, and daughter and son-in-law, and had another wonderful trip and smooth smooth adoption. Jia could not have been happier to join the family and fit in beautifully. The Williams thought they were done and that they would dote on this little angel and raise her as an only child. They felt so lucky to have everything work out so well....It NEVER occurred to them that they would ever be going back.



Sue Williams and Becky Harding

Little did they know in June of 2008, that when they traveled to China to pick up their little daughter Jia, they would be meeting their next daughter Juni Yan.

The Williams had received photos of Jia while waiting, always with the same group of older children. Always with the same little round-faced, smiling girl. They wondered about this smiling girl....their Jia was never really smiling for the camera....but this little girl was always smiling into the camera, next to Jia. From day one, the Williams wondered about her, what was her situation, what was her and Jia's relationship... they had even given some forethought to what if.....Like, what if she was also available for adoption ?

On June 4th 2008, the Williams visited the Xuzhou orphanage, just three days after uniting for the first time with Jia. During that visit they met miss Juni Yan, she was still round-faced and smiling constantly. They hugged her, let her know how beautiful she was. She was very shy. She was very sweet and she made an impression. But the Williams were very overwhelmed with the emotions of the day, visiting an orphanage that had been Jia's home for 18 months, seeing her living conditions, the people who cared for her, and her orphanage mates....it was almost too much to absorb really. They left that day feeling drained but grateful for Jia and went about their new life, feeling incredibly blessed with one little girl from China.

Fast forward 6 months. Six months of adjustments, learning about each other, 6 months of pediatrician visits and 6 months of entertaining awe... adoption is like a euphoria. It is wonderful, it is intense and it is all absorbing. Then it happened....

...continued Family Focus: The Williams

There had been a disruption involving a child from Jia's orphanage. A sweet baby girl had been left behind by a family who decided not to adopt her. This was also a child the Williams had "met" when they visited in June 2008. Having met this baby, the Williams really agonized for her. They desperately tried to think what they could do? Thankfully, there is a group of moms who have adopted from Xuzhou who decided to advocate to find this baby girl another family. Sue Williams joined in.

There was an agency who would help. But they also asked, that as the group advocated for this baby girl, could they also advocate for an older girl who had been on their list for over a year? They sent her file....and a photo....it was a photo of a shy, round-faced little girl, it was Jia's orphanage mate...it was Juni Yan.

The Williams submitted a letter of intent to adopt her the same day they opened that email with her photo. They just knew she was meant to be in their family. They were amazed by the circumstances of finding her, but saddened she has had to wait so long.....little did they know back in 2008.

The Williams have two beautiful daughters from China, who are sisters forever, a wonderful granddaughter who loves them both and they just feel so fortunate to have them all. And they are still not done with China...they have a new grandson, Joe, age 8 home just two months. Sue's daughter and son-in-law were so encouraged by their experience with the older girls, that they decided to adopt an older child too!

Adopting older children was and remains a learning process. Sue said they hoped for the best, but planned for the worst. She read all the books and felt pretty well prepared to deal with all the issues you hear about adopting older kids. Jia, the first, made the whole thing seem ridiculously easy. She was anxiously attached at first, but soon felt secure and had no other issues. Juni did have Sue using some of what she learned in those books! She grieved harder, has a mind of her own (just like most other 10 year olds) and forgets she is just a kid, not a parent, but overall, she has been a easy dream too. Parenting a child adopted older is so different that raising one that age that has been in the family all along, but the Williams have really enjoyed the process and feel humbled by their girls everyday. They are the bravest, most loving and giving girls you will ever meet. Sue does not believe she could never have adapted to the challenges they have taken in stride, even though Sue is "grown up".

Sue relates one of the challenges that was recently overcome after attending culture camp this summer. Juni was very reluctant ever to speak Chinese once in the US. Every occasion that someone would speak to her, at a restaurant, or bank, or even with her Chinese language teacher, she would shy away, sometimes give a head nod, or answer in her best effort English, but never speak to them in Chinese. On the third day of camp, the family was ordering dinner at the counter of a Chinese restaurant, and much to Sue's shock, Juni looked straight at the cashier and asked her, "do you speak Chinese, cuz I do!" That pride in her language came directly from her experience in camp. She preceded to have a conversation, two way conversation that night, for the first time since being adopted 9 months prior. Now, she often asks people if they speak Chinese, even Caucasians!!!

Incidents like this underline the importance of maintaining the childrens' Chinese culture. Sue believes the activities and relationships that come from the FCC are important to all children from China, but vital and WONDERFUL for the older children that are brought home. Considering how foreign the US seems to the children, these opportunities to be with other Chinese children, other families who are made by adoption, and to relive their culture, the culture that they actually remember are incredibly invaluable. Sue states they are hugely thankful and try to attend all that they can.



Adoption Knowledge Affiliates Annual conference is
 "The Adoption Journey: Illuminating the Complexities"
 Friday & Saturday November 12 & 13, 2010
 Austin, Texas. For more information, visit
<http://www.adoptionknowledge.org/confer1.htm>



Meeting with Mei-Ling

This summer, in a unique coordination effort, FCC-North Texas, FCC-Houston, and FCC-Austin hosted Mei-Ling Hopgood and her mother, Chris Hopgood. Adopted at eight months from Taiwan, Mei-Ling's book, *Lucky Girl*, details her experiences growing up Asian-American and reuniting with her birth family as an adult. The evening was extraordinary.

My visit to Austin was an absolute pleasure, and we are grateful for such warm hospitality. My mother and I loved meeting all of you—it always makes me smile seeing such international families, imagining my own 35 years ago. The questions and the discussion with FCC-Austin was lively and intriguing; I can see how much all your members want to do what's right for their children. Each adoptee and his or her family have their own unique blend of pasts to explore and their own futures to carve. We are all part of the immigrant story of this nation, which is so much more complex and interesting than the stereotypes might suggest. We know this. We live it. I wish all of you lots of love and luck as you continue on your journey. (PS: The Tex-Mex was fabulous!)

—Mei-Ling Hopgood

Book review: **Three Names of Me**, by Mary Cummings

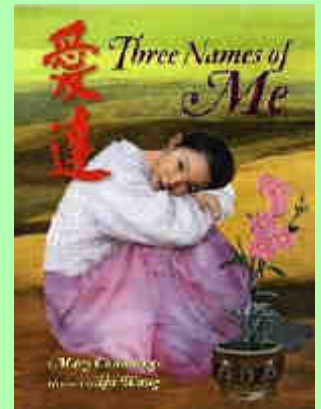
Review by Becky Roberts

Our internationally adopted children have a lifelong challenge ahead. They must learn to balance the mystery in their first years with the life they know today, and incorporate their Chinese and American selves into the adult life they will lead tomorrow. I was grateful to find Three Names of Me, by Mary Cummings, because it presents the perspective of a preteen girl who is living with these complexities.

Ada Lorane Wang Bin Bennett was adopted from China as a baby and is living with her family in America. For special projects, she writes out her whole name. She includes a heart for her third name, Ada, which her parents chose. For her second name, Wang Bin, which came from her orphanage, she includes a crown for “the refined Chinese princess part of me”. But she also includes a star “for the name I only heard once, the name before my remembering.” The mystery of her first name is mentioned gently. “It’s someplace in my heart. I don’t know how to say it. I wish I could.” Her early life is also included, with small hints of emotion, but in a simple way that allows the reader to identify his or her own feelings.

When we read that Ada does not like people staring at her family, but she does like “hot dogs, stuffed animals, and roller coaster rides”, my nine year old daughter Claire immediately responded that she agrees with everything except the roller coaster rides. When I read the book with my five year old daughter Ming, she spent a lot of time examining the pictures of Ada as a baby. They each responded to Ada as a real person (which of course she is, the daughter of the author.)

The strength of the book is not only its young protagonist, but that it provides a means to discuss adoption or heritage issues with your child as you read it together. While the beautifully illustrated story is short, it is also chock full of launching points for conversation. I recommend it as a good book to read together with your kids once in a while just as a way to check in on how they feel about their Asian-American heritage and about their adoption.



Heritage Tour: Trip of a Lifetime

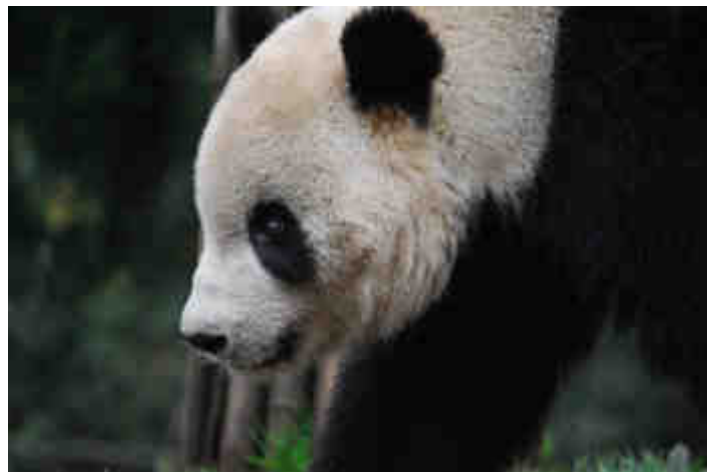
By Julie Kniseley

When we first adopted our daughter, Xiaoman, I didn't quite understand the impact our adoption would have on her as a Chinese person and on us as an American family. My primary focus was—a baby! Yes, I listened dutifully to the social worker's advice about how to keep Chinese customs alive in our family, and yes, I read many web posts, blogs, and books about how important it was to acknowledge our daughter's culture, make it a part of our household, and ensure that she was aware of her roots. Later, I attended Jane Brown workshops and learned about racial stereotyping and how to teach our daughter to appreciate her ethnicity and love herself, and looked for more Asian role models that would help her see herself as a Chinese person and not an extension of us (like so many adoptive parents, Anglo people).

As the years went by, my appreciation for the importance of this effort (yes, it is an effort) grew. Our daughter struggled with her identity: when she was younger, she wanted to be blonde. She would look in the mirror and dislike what she saw, even though she was, and still is, beautiful by any standards. Kids questioned her about her eyes and being adopted. I redoubled my efforts to bring Chinese culture to her life by enrolling her in private Mandarin/Chinese culture classes, taking her to Asian festivals, art exhibits, play groups, and Chinatowns, as well as transferring her to a more diverse elementary school. In Kindergarten, she changed her name from the Anglo name we gave her back to her Chinese name—a bold statement to reclaim her heritage. I followed her lead after that by asking questions to probe her state of mind. I began to understand how deeply important her heritage was to her, and that we had indeed become a Chinese-American family.

Today our daughter is nine, and we celebrated this year by taking her on a two-week "heritage" tour of China in March/April. It was even more special because we visited the parents of our Chinese exchange student while we were in Beijing. (Our exchange student spent his senior year with us and graduated from Austin High School in June.) His parents were thrilled to meet us and extend their hospitality, and took us on several day trips around Beijing and their home. We traveled with Our Chinese Daughters Foundation, an organization that specializes in tours for families with children from China. It was an excellent trip and one that I would recommend for all families like ours.

We took the "Panda Hugs" tour, which begins in Beijing. This was a much different trip for us compared to the adoption trip because: 1) we traveled much lighter, 2) we were not preoccupied with the adoption, and 3) the tour was packaged for families and the guides shared much more interesting information about the history, culture, and daily life in China. In our group, there were about 14 girls ranging in ages from six to 14, and there were about 12 adults. Typically the girls would sit in the back of the bus and entertain themselves and the parents (and grandparents) would sit in the front with the tour guides. Every day was incredibly well-organized with multiple site visits, and the girls received a gift for each day, which would serve as a remembrance of the trip. Sometimes the guide would sit in the back and talk to the girls about daily life and customs. One OCDF guide stayed with us for the entire tour, and local guides joined us in each city.



In Beijing, we visited the Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven, the Great Wall, the Olympic venues (Bird's Nest and the Cube), and the Bell Tower. One of my favorites was a fascinating tour of a hutong, when we were able to go inside a hutong house and meet with the owner. We also visited a school for disabled children and adults, and a silk carpet factory. Every meal was excellent and eaten family style, so we enjoyed getting to

...continued Heritage Tour

know the other adults in the group (the girls sat together and the adults sat together). It was fun trading leftovers—they usually wanted our leftover noodles, and we wanted their leftover vegetables. One evening we saw the Peking acrobats; they were incredible! It was wonderful to see China through our daughter's eyes, hear her comments about what it felt like to be in the majority, and see how much Chinese she understood but was too shy to speak.

We took an overnight train to Xi'an, and the train trip was certainly part of the adventure. The kids just loved it. We were divided into groups of girls and boys, with four to a berth, and slept overnight as the train rolled hundreds of miles through the countryside. We arrived in the early morning hours and walked several blocks from the train station to a bus. There was an immediate difference between the two cities—Xi'an is more rustic, and the people there were not as used to seeing Anglo people, particularly those with Asian babies. This became more pronounced as the trip went on and we traveled farther into the depths of China, and the stares grew longer. Later that day our local guide took us to a Buddhist pagoda, and we saw a beautiful dancing/singing performance. The following day we drove to the country and spent the afternoon at the famous Terra Cotta Warriors exhibit.

The following day we flew to Chengdu in the Sichuan province, where we finally saw the pandas. We took a bus to the mountains (absolutely gorgeous) to the Bi Feng Xia Panda Reserve. It's a beautiful preserve, with many pandas of all ages throughout. The girls had their photos taken with one very docile panda. The next day we enjoyed Chengdu, visiting a tea house, learning local customs, and getting foot massages. After this, the families split up, with some opting to visit the provinces of their daughter's origin, and others opting to travel home.

We opted to fly to the Hunan province and visit our daughter's orphanage and see her finding site. It was not an easy trip emotionally, but for our daughter it was a tremendous gift. She was able to visit where she lived for 15 months and meet some of her caregivers. It helped her form a memory of the place, understand what her life was like, and gain an appreciation for what her adoption means. Our guide and driver (hired by the OCFD) did not have an easy time finding the "finding" location, which was an hour-plus drive outside the city of Chengde in a small farming community. We stopped many times to ask for directions, and when we finally found the spot, a small, very curious crowd gathered.

It was the trip of a lifetime, and gave us a glimpse of, perhaps, our daughter's history. We don't really know if this is where she is from, but it could be, and that's all we have to go by. In any case, it was a fascinating trip into the hinterlands of China, and one that we will always remember.

Overseas Travel: Tips & Tricks

Has it been awhile since you traveled overseas? Ready to plan that return trip to China? The dream family vacation to Australia, Europe, the Bahamas? In addition to updating passports and refreshing immunizations, there are other things that should be on your preparation "to do" list. Here are some resources to assist you.

Travel checklists: <http://www.tripresource.com/beforeyougo.htm>

Health info: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

Flying with kids: <http://www.flyingwithkids.com/>

Packing smart: <http://www.travellerspoint.com/packing-tips.cfm>

Travel insurance FAQ: http://insurance.freeadvice.com/insurance_faq/travel/

Picking a travel agent/agency: http://www.tripology.com/consumer/good_agent/

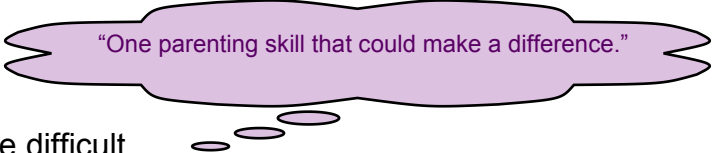
US Department of State overseas travel: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html

Permitted/Banned travel items: <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>

enhancing attachment

By Pat Morgan

Over the last few months, this corner of the FCC newsletter has been about attachment issues and challenges. As a contributor I felt it was time to shift the focus from defining the problem and focus on parenting skills that enhance attachment. Over the next few months I and several of my colleagues will take turns at writing on this theme:



"One parenting skill that could make a difference."

Hopefully, what is written here will be useful to all parents who read this newsletter; for those whose children have difficult behaviors that are common to children and to those children who have true attachment challenges. As I write this and think about columns to come, I remember that every problem our children have is not necessarily related to adoption. On the other hand, all of our children do have the common history of abandonment at birth and loss of birth parents. Some have gotten through that journey to our homes and do not live with much after effects. Some of our children are deeply affected by what happened to them before they were adopted and it affects their lives every day. With that in mind I am going to call our first topic:

THE MELTDOWN PREVENTION PROGRAM.

Or in other words, "intervene before your child loses it" vs. "waiting until you can't take it anymore." So, does your child have tantrums at times? Does your child act out by yelling, hitting or screaming? Or maybe your child has quieter versions of this such as sulking or shutting down when upset. Or does your child just get too over stimulated by the environment? Dealing with stress and/or stimuli is all about our capacity to self regulate.

It is important to remember that all children have to **build** the capacity to self regulate. Our early experience of care giving is what sets this template of experience and expectations. Babies in the best of circumstances will feel stress or stimulation then have the experience of care givers soothing them. They have the experience of arousal then soothing again and again and again. It is like their brains and nervous systems have been trained to deal with stress and/or arousal. If a child has experienced loss, neglect or abuse in their early years, their ability to self soothe is highly compromised. Heather Forbes says it well. "Our memory system is what allows us to translate stress into fear or joy." ¹

So if you have a child's whose early template of experience and expectations are that of disappointment and lack of care, when they are faced with stress it will be easier for them to go into our basic fight, flight or freeze mode. That is why what looks like a small upset to the adults is perceived by a child as a threat to their sense of safety.

If you have a child who is easily triggered by stressors, it is likely that you already know what some of those triggers are. It is helpful to sharpen your focus on your child's triggers by making notes about what led up to the meltdown. What was the interaction with friends or family? Did it have something to do with food? Is there a pattern to the time of day or even a time of the week?

You see your child beginning to escalate... is their play becoming wilder and louder? Is it the look in their eye? If so, it is time to pull your dear one aside and have some loving contact **while they are still able to be responsive!** A back rub, a quiet little talk, snuggling, pushing down on their shoulders

...continued Enhancing Attachment

as they stand before you... whatever works in your relationship that strengthens the connection will help to bring their energy down to a manageable level. We as parents have to be the ones that help them to regulate until our child is able to do it on her own.

I recently worked with a family who was having fights with other kids and tantrums at daycare. The daycare staff figured out that this child could not tolerate more than thirty minutes of free play at a time. The staff started calling the child aside for some one on one attention after twenty-five minutes of play. They would talk to the child, have the child pound some play dough, or otherwise make a connection. This made a big change on the playground for my little client and the rest of the daycare! I would like to end with a useful acronym that is common in a 12 step recovery program:.



It stands for don't get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired. I think those are common culprits that are behind our children's meltdowns and a good place to start when considering how to head off trouble! Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired - these are the cues we can watch for. Our children can feel contained and understood.

¹: *Beyond Consequences, Logic and Control* by Heather Forbes and Bryan Post



Girl Scout Troop Update

With a goal of the first meeting before Thanksgiving, FCC parents Deanne Brown and Robin Davis are preparing to start this FCC and Asian-American troop. Deanne is currently taking the leadership training and they are completing the required financial organizational process as well. If you are interested in this program for your child, email Deanne (deanne_brown@hotmail.com) for more information.



Allen Michie, Kellena Page, Stacey Cone, Kim Goodman and Dianne Harwood

Don't forget to check out the Austin FCC website. The web contains the latest event updates, play groups, membership renewal, and invaluable links and other resources.

<http://www.main.org/fccaustin/>

2010 Austin FCC Board of Directors

- Becky Harding, President
- Stacey Cone, VP Membership
- Kim Goodman, Co-VP Social Events
- Deanne Brown, Co-VP Social Events
- Kellena Page, Treasurer
- Pat Morgan, Culture and Outreach
- Dianne Harwood, Secretary

Moon Festival Magic

By Kim Goodman

This year's Moon Festival planning just seemed to be going too smoothly... indeed, the storm brought on by the remnants of Hurricane Hermine foiled our Moon Festival plans at Brushy Creek Lake Park. This wonderful park was utterly deluged with mud and sludge, which actually approached the roadway.

However, our prez, Becky Harding, came to the rescue with an alternative venue: Central Market on north Lamar. It had everything we needed and then some! Not only did it boast a much-needed waterfront to cast off the children's wished-upon tea lights aboard our bamboo raft, but it also has a restaurant, playscape, ample seating, and plenty of green space for the kids to enjoy—all in a very *central* location!

We had a great turnout; approximately 200 people in all. Under a blue sunny sky and temperate weather, everyone seemed to genuinely be enjoying themselves. Folks sampled moon cakes ordered by member Lucia Markert, kids participated in physical activities such as wheel barrow races and face painting (provided by our wonderful UT China Care students), moms relaxed and visited friends, and dads walked around with a child on their shoulders or enjoyed a glass of wine or beer with an excellent dinner. It truly was a lovely day.

Nine-year-old Xiaoman Lancaster and her teacher, Santanu Rahman captivated the kids with their demonstration of Kung Fu. She had just received her black belt a day or two prior to the demonstration. As usual, the Texas Dragon Dance/Lion Dance Team enchanted young and old with their performance. After each of the kids made a wish upon a tea light and placed it on our bamboo raft, the lions led us down to the water's edge.



Heading down the steep hill toward the water felt a bit harrowing. Board member Stacey Cone and I were joined by a plethora of kids "assisting" us, some of whom (my own child included) were either weaving in and out from under the raft because they were too short to grab hold of it, or others who seemed to be dangling from the raft as we carried it down. At first it was rather worrisome; however, after glancing toward a smiling Stacey, I realized just how perfect that moment was. These kids actually felt an ownership, not necessarily to the raft and candles, but to the ceremony itself. After all, these were their carefully placed wishes to be sent out to the universe. How beautiful is that?



Finally, with the crowds dissipating, and saying their goodbyes, the board members gathered near the stony bank—a group of friends, basking in the afterglow of their hard work and this

enchanted evening. And then something else simply amazing happened: Stacey noticed a lone girl standing at the sandy bank, nearest the raft. It was dusk. This girl slowly, reverently, bowed to the raft... then she ran up the hill to catch up to her family. This beautiful girl was nine-year-old Grace Milligan. Perfect.

