



Families With Children from China Spring Newsletter 2010 Austin, Texas

Letter from the Prez...

Dear Membership,

Once a month, I am the helping parent at my daughter's preschool. So a couple of days ago, I found myself sitting in circle time listening to a story about Vincent Van Gogh.

At the critical turning point of the story, Vincent decides to leave the village and must say good-bye to a young parentless boy he has befriended. A tiny classmate raised his hand and asked in the sweetest little voice, " why doesn't Vincent just 'dopt him and become a family?"

I waited for the eyes to move to me and my child sitting in my lap, but they didn't. The teacher, who I adore, answered by explaining about Vincent's financial status and the implications of his housing situation in four-year-old language.

I sat there weepy because adoption was such an obvious and positive solution to this young child. His world view is so beautiful at such a young age. Family meant people who care for each other to this little guy.

I was also weepy because my child isn't the role model for adoption in this room. Oh, she probably was way back at the beginning of the school year but now we have all moved through the stages of understanding and she is simply a part of the circle.

Enjoy this beautiful spring season in Texas,

Becky Harding
Year of the Tiger
President

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Mark Your Calendars

Dragon Boat Festival
Saturday, April 24, 2010

Jane Brown Adopt Workshops
May 14-16, 2010

Culture Camp,
August 9-13, 2010

Dragon Boat Festival

Saturday, April 24, 2010

By Kim Goodman

Come join us for the 12th annual Dragon Boat Festival hosted by the Asian American Cultural Center at Festival Beach on Lady Bird Lake, Saturday, April 24 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is free to the public. Along with the competitive and friendly races, there will be various vendors, food, kids' activities and crafts, as well as cultural entertainment.

Dragon boat racing is an ancient Chinese tradition dating back over 2500 years, and is an annual water ritual and celebration of the summer rice harvest honoring the dragon, the most revered, and only mythical, creature of the Chinese Zodiac. In Chinese culture, dragons are traditionally believed not only to rule the clouds and rainfall, but also the seas and rivers. In order to have a successful crop, rice seedlings need to be transplanted into the wet paddy fields during the spring. Honoring the dragon was thought to be a means for farmers to avoid bad luck and disaster for their crops and promote rainfall.

The dragon boats themselves are a type of canoe with a crew of up to 22 people: nine to ten sets of paddlers (not rowers), one drummer or caller at the front of the boat, and one sweep or tiller in the back of the boat. The leading pair of paddlers actually set the pace of the paddling, which is picked up in the cadence by the drummer for the rest of the paddlers, in order to synchronize the paddling.

Please visit the FCC Austin table. We'll have fans, lanterns, and parasols available for purchase and on-site decorating, as well as our beautiful Year of the Tiger t-shirts.

We hope to see you there!

A Note on Parking

from the newsletter editor

Don't be afraid to go to the festival because you fear Austin parking! My daughter and I went last year about half way through the day. True, there was no parking in the lot adjacent to Festival Beach. However, there are residential neighborhoods next to Festival beach.

If you are able to walk comfortably for a few blocks, you will find cars have parked along the streets in the area. (Just be mindful not to block anyone's driveways, of course. Be respectful of the area.)

We were able to walk in the fine weather, enjoy the races, eat some yummy food there for energy, and walk back with no problem.

TAIKO DRUMMING CLASSES

by Kellena Paige

Anyone who came to our Chinese New Year celebration this year saw it kick off with some awesome Taiko drumming in the courtyard. We heard from many people that this was one of the highlights of the celebration.

I've been wanting to take Taiko drumming classes for ages, but the popularity of this pastime meant that the Austin group was always full and closed to new members. Well good news! A new Taiko Drumming teacher is in town and Karen is taking students now. Sign up before her classes fill as Taiko drumming is a popular hobby, mainly because it looks so cool and sounds so powerful.

Weekly classes are \$60 per month for singles and \$80 per month for a child/parent duo. They are currently held in South Austin but will be expanding to other areas as her student base grows.

Karen Zeidan studied Taiko drumming at the Kurumaya Taiko Dojo in Miyama, Japan. Karen is an excellent teacher with a wonderful sense of humor and limitless amounts of patience. My 11 year old son and I are taking her class together and we have a blast. It's our weekly bonding activity and one of the highlights of our week.

If you are interested, you can contact Karen at kagamidaiko@hotmail.com or 512-917-4183.

FCC - Austin and Gladney Families present Jane Brown Playshops

Jane Brown taught me that I love my adopted daughters so much that I am colorblind. She helped me see through my daughters' eyes and understand the challenges they face being in a bi-racial family. I learned what I can do to support them at home and in their school.

Both of my daughters enjoyed the playshop. In Jane Brown's secure environment, they were able to openly talk about life as adopted Chinese girls. They also verbalized hidden questions they had about their birth mother, such as whether she was safe and what she looks like. After the playshop, they shared their experiences with me and we were able to have an open dialog about this important element of their lives.

~Karen Bondy, FCC member and parent

Friday, May 14, 2010 " The Interweave of Adoption, Race Ethnicity and Culture"

A discussion with parents and allies

7 pm - 10 pm at The Asian-American Cultural Center

11713 Jollyville Road 78759

Cost: \$ 20 members \$30 non-members

Note: Even if your child is too young for the playshop or has a conflict, we recommend that parents attend Jane's Friday evening session. It's a great way to prepare for the next stage of your child's development or revisit your thoughts about adoption issues.

Saturday, May 15, 2010

Playshop for kids ages 5 to 6

10 am - Noon with an hour afterwards for parents

Steve and Sandi Ross home - 3200 Aztec Falls Cove Austin TX 78746.

Cost: \$ 45 members \$55 non-members

Saturday, May 15, 2010

Adoptshop for tweens and teens ages 11 and up

5 pm (pizza) 5:30 pm - 7: 30 pm with an hour afterwards for parents

Steve and Sandi Ross home - 3200 Aztec Falls Cove Austin TX 78746.

Cost: \$ 45 members \$55 non-members

Sunday, May 15, 2010

Playshop for kids ages 7 to 10

time not yet set Two hours and 1 hour for parents

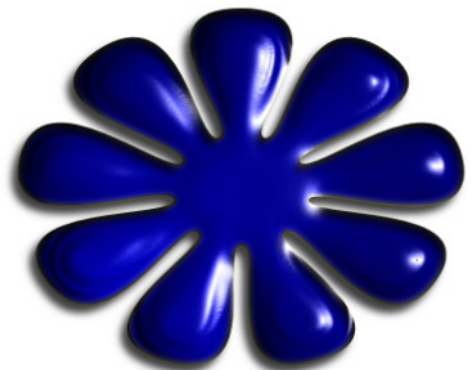
Steve and Sandi Ross home - 3200 Aztec Falls Cove Austin TX 78746.

Cost: \$45 members \$55 non-member

To register: Email Abby Turner at abby814@austin.rr.com with child's name, birth date, parent's name, email address and phone number. Then mail a check made payable to FCC to:

Abby Turner
6067 Amelo Dr.
Round Rock TX 78681

For more information about this event, including frequently asked questions, go to http://www.main.org/fccaustin/jb_article.htm on the FCC web site.



August 9-13, 2010

FCC Austin Chinese Culture Camp Update

By Becky Harding

Enrollment for our August camp is close to being completed. Currently, we have over sixty children participating as well as ten teachers, ten University of Texas China Care counselors and nineteen parent volunteers. Awesome! We have just a few opening for kids left, please email me (bjh0902@aol.com) if you have child ages 8 and up interested. The younger sections are full at this time but we have a wait list.

On April 17 and 18, co-camp directors, Dr. Rowena Fong and Becky Harding and teachers Em Hardy, Ph.D., and Pat Morgan, conducted training sessions with the UT China Care young men and women who have been hired to serve as counselors for the week. These Asian-American college students will assist teachers in the language classes, the adoption and race sessions and help the director of the play production as well as lead the active parts of the schedule involving ping-pong, kite building, jump roping, yo-yoing and chopstick practice.

Each class will have two counselors who stay with that group all day for all of their sessions including snack and lunch time, bonding with their students over the course of the week. We know from our research that it is these counselors that really make the camp experience fun and meaningful for the kids. We also know that same race role models are important for our Chinese-American children and we are grateful that these extraordinary young people are being so generous with their time and energy.

We have a lot of parent volunteers who have signed up to help as well. Those parents who have volunteered to assist us should expect to help with our Bamboo Cafe on the Deck, a place where parents can have a cup of coffee after getting their camper to the gym on time in the morning. This casual cafe will provide a space to chat with other parents and the camp leaders while drinking some coffee or tea. Some parent volunteers will help prepare serving trays of healthy snacks to each class of kids in the morning or they'll be a part of the team delivering lunch to our college counselors. Lastly, we will have several parent coordinators of our Friday night *Stone Soup* celebration pot luck dinner where all camp participants will share a meal and see the presentation of the classic community building story where we learn right before our eyes that "giving makes us all richer." Please consider joining us for this amazing, amazing



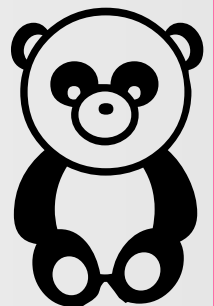
Students from The University of Texas China Care program pause for a moment during the two-day camp counselor training sessions led by camp co-directors Dr. Rowena Fong and Becky Harding and teachers Em Hardy, Ph.D. and Pat Morgan.



Panda Watch

Giant pandas Mei Xiang and Tian Tian are at the National Zoo on a ten-year loan from the China Wildlife Conservation Association. Mei Xiang is near the end of her current pregnancy, due any day now. You can check out the "panda cam" at the Smithsonian web site, learn about the science of pandas, get

panda wallpaper, listen to panda audio files, and view the photos from the birth of Mei Xiang's last cub in 2005. <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/GiantPandas/>



FCC Girl Scout Troop

by Robin Davis and Cheryl Dragel

FCC Austin is contemplating an exciting new project that would begin this fall: the launch of a citywide Girl Scout troop. The troop would combine traditional scouting activities and goals with education about Chinese culture. If your daughter wants to participate in her school's troop, too, she can -- by being officially registered for one troop and auditing the other.

There is precedent for a citywide FCC Girl Scout troop. Several years ago, Indianapolis FCC mothers Charlotte Ottinger and Chris Jacobson founded Troop 42 through Hoosier Girl Scouts Capital Council. Since then, the interest in Indianapolis has grown to include a second troop and offers programming for approximately 66 girls from all around the city and surrounding region. More recently, FCC of North Texas was inspired by the Indianapolis example and has founded its own FCC scout troop in the Dallas area.

What kinds of things does a citywide FCC Girl Scout troop do? In its first year, Troop 42 of Indianapolis had monthly meetings that included a Chinese calligraphy demonstration and hands-on practice with a local calligrapher; learning about Women and Medicine with local health professionals including several Asian-American women; and even took a road trip to Chicago, where they enjoyed dim sum in Chinatown and toured the Chinese American Museum of Chicago. In the course of these meetings and outings, girls earned scouting badges and patches, learned about Chinese culture, and were able to build friendships with other girls adopted from China, along with learning about traditional Girl Scout values such as discovering self, improving self-esteem, taking action to make the world a better place, connecting with other, etc.

Sounds awesome, doesn't it? If you think so, FCC Austin wants to hear from you -- whether you want to serve as a co-leader or see yourself operating more behind the scenes. If you want to help start an FCC Girl Scout troop in Austin, send an email about your interest to either Robin Davis (robinsdavis@austin.rr.com) or Cheryl Dragel (cdragel@austin.rr.com).

You can find out more information about the Girl Scout Organization as a whole online:

http://girlscouts.org/who_we_are/



ODDS 'n ENDS

>>Didn't get a chance to buy a red lucky tiger shirt? No worries! The Year of the Tiger shirts will be for sale at the Dragon Boat festival for \$10 each. We have ordered a second batch as we sold out of the adult sizes, so come and get yours. It's waiting for you.

>>We have nice lending library headed by Abby Turner. (Check out all of the contents on our web site www.main.org/fccaustin/) We have added the books, *Being Adopted - Search for Self* by David M. Brodzinsky, Ph.D, Marshall D. Schechter, M.D., and Robin Marantz Henig and *Adopted Teens Only - A Survival Guide to Adolescence* by Danae Gorbett. Big thanks to Em Hardy, Ph.D., who generously donated these selections.

>>Area high schools Westlake, Westwood, and McNeil offer Mandarin to their students as a language option. How cool is that?

>>At our recent Chinese New Year event, we partnered with The Blood Center of Central Texas to help register Asian Americans (ages 18–64) for the national bone marrow date base. BCT representative Rene Slatoper tells us that the most recent procedures for gathering bone marrow to treat illness involve blood draws and absolutely no surgery is required anymore. The current numbers of Asian-American participants in the database are still very low and we hope to make more connections to help raise these numbers. Contact Rene at 206-1266 if you have a suggestion for more events where she can continue the registration process.

UT Friendship Program

By Denise Davolt

In September 2008, I contacted the International Office at the University of Texas to inquire about the Friendship program. The goal of the program is for international students and Austin's community to meet and become friends. The process of being matched with a student consists of filling out a one-page application. Then applicants are contacted via email with the student match contact information within a week or so.

Our family was matched with Zou Beibei, a 26-year-old woman from Fushun, Liaoning province, China. She had recently arrived in the U.S. to begin a PhD program in Public Policy. Over the next year, Beibei was excited and eager to participate in the various holidays and events with our family. She went trick or treating, helped with Thanksgiving meal preparations, received her first stocking from Santa, exchanged Christmas gifts, celebrated birthdays, etc.

Beibei has become part of our family. As we have experienced various activities together, we have been able to have open discussions about American and Chinese cultures. As a family, our knowledge and understanding about China and the people of China has significantly broadened. Beibei is a great role model for our daughter. She has embraced the American culture while maintaining her heritage. Beibei adores our daughter and greatly admires our family for choosing adoption. We are hoping to coordinate a trip to China with Beibei to meet her family at the end of this year. We are so grateful that we have been given the opportunity to get to know Beibei. No matter where life takes us or her we will always stay in touch!!!

www.utexas.edu/international/iss/intercultural/friendship/

Vivian Shaw: A Young Woman of Distinction

By Dianne Harwood

Earlier this year, Westwood High School Junior Vivian Shaw was honored by the Girl Scouts of the USA as one of only ten recipients of the 2009 National Young Women of Distinction. Vivian also earned her Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award given by the Girl Scouts.

The Young Women of Distinction is awarded to Girl Scouts who have shown exceptional leadership skills while taking part in a community service project. The girls spend up to two years on their projects, which benefit people around the world, from the United States to Asia and Africa.

For her Adopt-A-Pal project, Vivian chose to reach out to children who survived the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan province, but who were orphaned or became disabled as a result of the quake. With the help of her community and her mentor Vivian raised the money to purchase a care package of MP3 players, notebooks, school supplies, and backpacks, which were sent to the earthquake survivors. She also recruited 20 Mandarin-speaking volunteers (students from Westwood High School and Canyon Vista Middle School) to be pen pals with the Chinese children. Some of the pen pals continue to correspond.

Vivian's mentor for this project was Austin FCC member (and former VP of Entertainment), Cheryl Bonfils-Rasmussen.

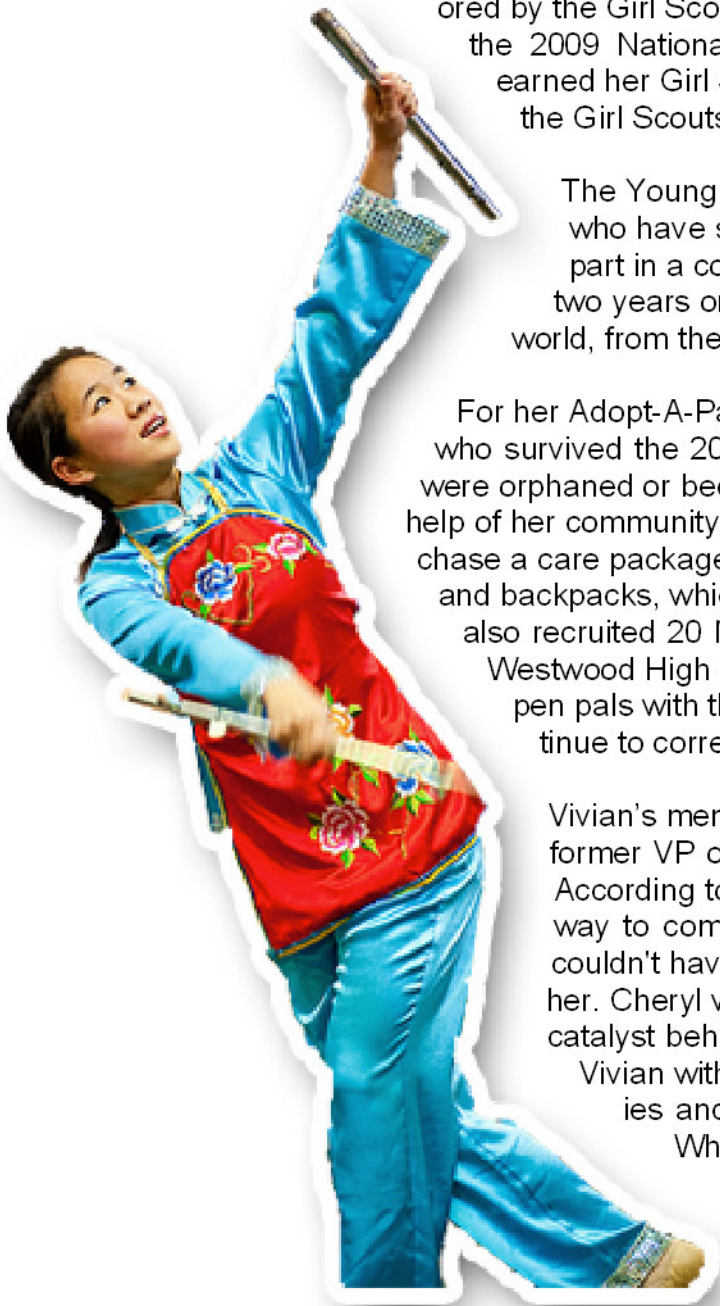
According to Vivian's mother Jean, "Vivian has come a long way to complete the service project, Adopt a Pal. She couldn't have done it without Cheryl, and many others like her. Cheryl was Vivian's project advisor and was really the catalyst behind finding contacts in China. She connected

Vivian with organizations such as Love Without Boundaries and Half the Sky to build a network of support.

When contacting these organizations failed to yield desirable results (because of privacy concern they could not release the names of their children), Cheryl was always there to help Vivian come up with new ideas and encouraged her. She was always available when Vivian had a question; in fact, we even drove

to her house at 10 PM one day to give her the final paperwork; she checked with Vivian on the progress of the project even when she was vacationing in Australia. She is so reliable, helpful, and positive. She is a great mentor and role model Vivian could have dreamed of. Her support really made a difference.

Vivian's award is really a recognition for every one involved in the project. We are so proud that the project has made a difference."



Recap: Austin FCC Chinese New Year

Austin FCC Year of the Tiger Chinese New Year Event

On Saturday, February 6th, we held our Year of the Tiger Chinese New Year celebration at Covington Middle School followed by a community dinner at the Buffet Palace. It was an absolutely beautiful day with nearly 400 people attending. Covington Middle School was a perfect venue at an affordable price with a relaxed staff that made planning easy. Buffet Palace provided delicious all-you-can-eat Asian food and an area for us to gather as a community to get to know each other better.

Our special guests were:

- ◆ Tim and Pam Baker, founders of the Philip Hayden Foundation
- ◆ Dr. Rowena Fong, an honored professor at the UT School of Social Work
- ◆ Yvonne Lim Wilson, editor of *Asian Austin News*
- ◆ Amy Mok, Director of the Asian American Cultural Center
- ◆ Westwood High School junior, Vivian Shaw, recently honored as a 2009 National Young Woman of Distinction by the Girl Scouts and her sponsor, Cheryl Bonfils-Rasmussen, 2008 FCC VP of Events
- ◆ Snow Wu, President of Great Wall China Adoption

The highlight of the event was, as usual, our adorable children dancing onstage in their elaborate costumes and big smiles. They always make me a little misty-eyed and proud. I'll forever be in awe of the beauty of ribbon dancing and I've already informed my four year old that she WILL be ribbon dancing some day. If she decides that she's into Goth when she's a teen, I'll dye her ribbons black. I'm willing to compromise.

We added many new performers to our line-up because we like to keep y'all guessing. This year the Taiko Drummers started the celebration with high energy and powerful drumming in the courtyard to get everyone's blood pumping. The performance inside started with a cool video segment featuring our FCC kids dancing and talking about their lives. Special thanks goes to our talented Stacey Cone for putting the video and FCC slide show together and for also creating the awesome tiger design on this year's t-shirts. Our narrators, Carol Duncan and Yang Cao, did a wonderful job as emcees. We had an opening segment that included many of our FCC children doing the normal cool things that teens and tweens do. Anthony Chen played the violin and Siming Yang, a member of the UT Chinese Students Scholar Association, performed Tai Chi shadow boxing and Kung Fu Sword. The performance ended with the Texas Lion and Dragon dance team performing outside in the sunshine.



In the other building we had a very profitable silent auction and all proceeds went to our sponsored charities. We also had a big map of China so that our children could mark where they are from and see how they are all connected. Our Chinese Daughters Foundation provided some wonderful Chinese merchandise to sell and Sarah Havard (sarahehavard@yahoo.com) was there taking professional photographs of our beautiful families.

Coming to our yearly FCC Chinese New Year event is a wonderful opportunity to gather and celebrate our children's heritage and provide them with a strong community in which to thrive. The FCC Board would like to express our sincere appreciation to everyone who came to celebrate with us. Thanks to you, we were able to raise a total of \$5,500 to disperse to the following charities:

- ◆ **Half the Sky**
- ◆ **Grant Me a Chance**
- ◆ **Love Without Boundaries**
- ◆ **Philip Hayden Foundation**
- ◆ **UT China Care**

A San Francisco Chinese New Year

By Kim Goodman

Our four-year-old daughter, Maya, has been obsessed with Chinese Lion Dancing for a couple of years now. She even wanted to be a Chinese Lion Dancer for Halloween when she was three; of course, we obliged, but that's a whole other story. So my husband, Chris, and I decided that this would be the year we would *carpe diem* and travel to San Francisco for Chinese New Year since he had a plethora of unused airline miles.

We arrived in San Francisco around 10:00 a.m. on Friday the 26th, and headed for the big city while dark clouds loomed above us. We donned our rain gear and headed for Ghirardelli Square to share a sundae and purchase a major supply of mouth-watering chocolate for the weekend. From there, we walked over to the wharf and got a sourdough bread bowl full of fresh, delicious, hot clam chowder, which tasted that much better on a brisk and rainy afternoon on the wharf. Then we checked into our hotel and relaxed a bit.



As the sun began to peek through the clouds, we headed over to the Zeum nearby. We had a blast with all of the interactive media this kid's museum had to offer: from recording our own movies, to modeling our own claymation figurines and recording their movements in front of a plethora of model-sized backdrops. We even made our own music video upstairs! Afterwards, we jaunted outside to the onsite playground to let Maya burn off even more energy in the now sunny, warm, late afternoon.

We then trekked back to our hotel to freshen up before climbing up (and I mean up!) California Street toward Grant Avenue, the main drag in Chinatown. All of the shops, vegetable stands, bakeries, and restaurants were bustling with nervous energy in preparation for Saturday and Sunday's Community Street Fair, when up to 500,000 people were expected to visit. I thought this number was perhaps optimistic, but after checking it out the next day, I believe this number was spot-on! I had never seen so many Chinese people in one place since China. This was great for Maya; she often had a look of contentment. I could tell she felt she truly belonged.

Later that evening we acquiesced, and decided to buy Maya an authentic Chinese Lion Dance head with articulating eyelids and ears from one of the many gift shops along Grant Avenue. The juvenile size wasn't nearly as expensive as I expected, and honestly, she'd played with the homemade one so much that it's now missing parts—I don't even know where the eyes are anymore. At any rate, we decided to ship it back home via FedEx for a reasonable price and sans sales tax, rather than schlep it back on the plane.

The next day, we headed out to the Haight-Ashbury district to window shop and treated ourselves to some doughnuts before going over to Golden Gate Park for a bit. The weather was misty, bright, and on the warm side; it was lovely. From there, we then headed back to Chinatown for more shopping and sightseeing. Once again, it was exceptionally crowded, and none of us had the patience to get in the kettle corn line for a "quick" fix, so we just kept walking until we found ourselves in North Beach (Little Italy). We ate a great Philly cheese steak house that Chris (the carnivore) had sworn he'd eaten at before, and then went to an Italian bakery and were complete gluttons.

We then set out to stake our claim along the parade route for that evening. The parade route began on Market and wound its way for 16 blocks along Geary, Post, and Kearney, ending at Jackson and Kearney. Note to self: in hindsight, it would have been best to try and find an area near the *beginning* of this long parade, as there were lots of gaps toward the end of three hour event. However, all along the route the crowd was about four people deep on either side of the street, making this a difficult prospect unless you staked your claim *well* in advance. The alternative was to purchase tickets in advance for stadium seating along certain parts of the route at \$30 per seat, which we thought was rather steep.

Barring the occasional batch of lion dancers, or a rare, ornate float, the parade itself actually seemed pretty lame. To top it off, the Grand Marshall was actually a no-show—I'm not kidding. While the car with the magnetic sign and driver were there, the Grand Marshall was not. But the finale made it all worth it! At the very end was the largest Chinese lion we had *ever* seen. The head alone was supported by four to six men, and the cloth body had about eight pairs of men underneath. Finally, the famous Golden Dragon wound its way toward us. It was 201 feet long, lit up, and had 100 people beneath it. It was absolutely magical!

Continued on page 10

San Francisco Chinese New Year recap continued...

The next morning, we headed back to Chinatown one last time for a few more trinkets, and to see performances by some of the parade participants on a makeshift stage. Once there, I found myself standing *right next to* the drummer for Austin's Texas Dragon/Lion Dance Team (TDDT)! If you saw just how many people were there, believe me, you would understand how unlikely this encounter was! We exchanged hellos (he's met us through Maya's natural curiosity of the inner workings of their lion heads), and he mentioned that the TDDT comes out every year to help carry the dragon in the parade... small world, eh? Later on, we headed back to the airport for the flight home, where we replenished our supply of Ghirardelli chocolate. I weighed myself the next morning out of curiosity. But I only gained about two pounds, because we did so much walking.



While I do regret that we never caught a ride on a cable car or visited more museums, this was a fairly short trip to San Francisco, and it certainly won't be our last. It was reassuring to know that there's definitely a place where we can take Maya to truly immerse ourselves in the sights, sounds, smells, and beauty of the Chinese culture stateside. While there seems to be a Chinatown in every major city of the U.S., San Francisco's is the largest. A little-known fact: The San Francisco CNY parade is one of the largest CNY parades in the *world* outside of Asia; upon reading this, we simply had to check it out for ourselves. I urge any family with Chinese adoptees to check out the Chinatown of a major city while traveling, time permitting... just to reconnect.

Talking About the Challenges in Adoption: A Report on the February 28th Attachment Workshop

by Pat Morgan, LPC

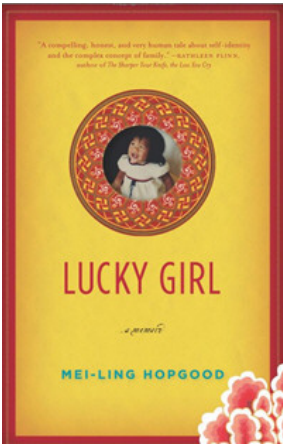
On a recent Sunday evening, 20 parents attended a workshop on attachment issues that was led by Em Hardy, PhD. and I. Most of the families were FCC members, although there were two families from Guatemala and a family in the starting phase of international adoption.

I thought it was an excellent discussion! Em and I were able to share a lot of good information about the basics of the process of bonding with an adopted child. We talked about the impact of trauma in the early years including the loss of birth parents and the stress of inconsistent to neglectful care giving. What behaviors a child might have after coming into a stable, loving home was another topic. The concept of responding to a child's emotional age vs chronological age was another key point. Parents shared struggles and ways of coping. We discussed what treatment approaches do and do not work for attachment problems.

We talked about what it means to have full-on Reactive Attachment Disorder. While some of our children do have this very serious condition, most of our children present with "attachment challenges." Both Em and I expressed our disdain for the negative, scary-sounding label of RAD KID. Even the children with the most serious issues should not have to bear this tag! As professionals who work with children with bonding problems, we are able to see the big picture and it is a hopeful one. RAD KID was an early conceptualization of serious attachment problems. As we become smarter about how to parent and treat attachment problems, our language is also evolving.

Those who attended were open about the challenges they have had with their children. The love and commitment these parents show in the face of daunting behaviors was inspiring. It was a supportive group and people spoke freely. It is always an antidote to isolation to hear from people who are struggling with similar behaviors at home. We really could have talked on for hours more. We hope to offer more workshops on parenting the adoptive child in the future.

For Em and I, it was a privilege to lead this group. Once again, we want to thank all those who attended.



BOOK REVIEW: *Lucky Girl*

Written by Mei-Ling Hopgood

Reviewed by Becky Harding

Everyone once in a great while, I discover a book where the story is so compelling and the writing style so descriptive and smooth that I devour the book in just a few days. I then spend the next few weeks, telling all my reader friends to get a copy so they too can have this profound experience. A few do. They almost always agree with me and we become members of this special fan club and exchange that all knowing glance when people talk of life changing reads. *Lucky Girl*, by Mei-Ling Hopgood, is one of these books.

Born in 1973 in Taiwan, Mei-Ling Hopgood was adopted at eight months old by two American teachers as her birth family already had five daughters and an adopted son and felt they couldn't afford her. This book is her recounting of her life growing up in Michigan and then the amazing journey of reunion with her birth parents and siblings in Taiwan. A journalist, the account flows with descriptions of her feelings and surroundings that are so vivid they stayed with me for days. The complexities of adoption, race and cultural identity are explored in an honest and grounded style not often found in a first effort. I recommend taking a look at it.

Here is a brief sample of her voice. At the end of the book, Mei-Ling writes, " I always tell people that I found my birth family by accident, that one sentence written in a Christmas card set off a chain of events that I still find mind-blowing. Most days, I'm glad I asked the questions that most adopted children never get the chance to ask. Most days, I like the eccentricity and complexity of my past. Now I offer my voice to the chorus of ancestors. I am not the son who can perpetuate the family name, but I can tell our story. I am not the heir that Ba wanted, but I, too, can be a keeper of our history. I choose to continue the narrative in my own way, using what I've learned to build our family. One day my husband and I hope to adopt. Giving our children even a fraction of the love and generosity that my mom and dad shared is the best legacy that I can think of leaving. Mostly, though, I've just really enjoyed parenthood and watching Sofia grow."

Lucky Girl is published by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

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/>

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!

2010 Austin FCC Board of Directors

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 Dianne Harwood, Secretary

Family Focus ~ The Markerts

The Markerts' adoption journey began with Guan Xiao Long. In January 2001, they received the wonderful news that a little boy named Guan Xiao Long was waiting for them at the Social Welfare Institute in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province. The name Xiao Long means morning dragon, which fits him perfectly as he is an early riser.



Guan Xiao Long referral photo

The family recalls that the seven week wait to travel to China was one of the longest waits they ever endured. They did finally arrive in Kunming on March 19th, 2001. After just a short stop by their hotel, they were united with their son at the Civil Affairs Bureau that same day. It was an emotional time for everyone. The Markerts gave him the name Kenneth Xiao Long Markert.

Kenneth is now in 4th grade and will be 10 years old in a few weeks. Last spring he decided to switch from playing soccer to doing Cub Scouts. During the Blue and Gold Banquet for scouts this spring, his den participated in the flag ceremony. Before the ceremony, each scout was supposed to tell the leaders what the flag meant to them. Kenneth's sentence brought tear to his leader's eyes. Kenneth said, "The flag represents my parents' home before they adopted me, and now it represents my home too." Kenneth is also in the Robotics Club, having fun programming Lego NXT robots.

The Markert's biological daughter, Elizabeth, is in 1st grade and is 7-1/2 years old. Elizabeth joined Camp Fire in the fall and took Mom camping at Pedernales Falls in October. Elizabeth started softball in the spring, and is really enjoying both the sport and the camaraderie. The most exciting moment so far this season was being up to bat in the final inning with the bases loaded and the score tied. Elizabeth hit a single and her team won the game.

The Markerts also like to camp together. This month, their camping trip was at Bastrop State Park with their church group (Wildflower Church, a Unitarian Universalist congregation). Just before the potluck on Saturday, Kenneth was a careful caring medic for an older woman whose leg was bleeding. After the potluck, Kenneth played a djembe drum for more than an hour during the group sing-along. People asked if he's been taking lessons (he hasn't). Looks like the Markerts will be looking into drum lessons for this summer!

Want to more learn about programmable robotics? Visit <http://www.nxtprograms.com/>

Never heard of a djembe drum? Read more about them at wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Djembe>



The Markert clan, December in Vermont.

ATTACHMENT AND BONDING ISSUES

by Em Hardy Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist

This article appeared several years ago in the FCC Austin newsletter and we print it again with permission.

You've likely been taught to watch for attachment and bonding problems, with no clear idea what that means. In the past, we just thought children were "resilient" and weren't very severely affected by traumas. As our understanding of trauma has evolved, we now know that children (and adults) "store" trauma in their brains and bodies. Trauma changes brain functioning. Trauma remains in the body and brain, yet we now have better and better therapies to deal with it.

If your child was in an orphanage prior to coming to you, they likely experienced at least two traumatic events: loss of their birth mother, and feelings of abandonment in the orphanage. Acknowledgement of those past hurts (unique to each child), as well as grieving and dealing with them needs to occur.

Your adoptive child, as with all children, needs to bond to the primary caregiver. Cradling your child, gazing at each other, warmly talking or singing with them, and feeding them is a part of the way that bond is established. This is true whether you have a newborn, a toddler, or a much older child. Chances are if they were in an orphanage, they may have missed that key attachment experience, and may have learned to react against it for fear of experiencing more loss.

Quite simply, that's what is meant by the diagnosis "Reactive Attachment Disorder." Greg Keck, Ph.D. and Regina Kupecky, L.S.W., in their book, *Parenting the Hurt Child*, explained how RAD develops and what it looks like. Some of the features include indiscriminate affection towards strangers, poor eye contact, demanding and clingy behavior, lying/stealing, destructive behavior, poor peer relationships, superficially engaging and "charming" behavior, lack of affection with parents (not cuddly), abnormal eating patterns, and lack of cause-and-effect thinking. Children may show only a few or all of these behaviors. Certainly, not all children who have attachment and bonding issues will actually have RAD. Nevertheless, it would serve them well for your family to recognize and deal with the issues.

One good way of thinking about your child's developmental needs and behavior is the theory of Erik Erikson. In his theory, Erikson lays out a series of developmental tasks and needs from infancy throughout the life span. For example, from birth to about 12–18 months, the child needs to develop trust. If trust was disrupted or absent, it becomes an issue that needs attention. And, if the child was in an orphanage, their needs were likely not gratified by a caregiver who would provide warmth, eye contact, talk, and special time with the child. Hence, both trust and attachment and bonding may be disrupted. In that case, those issues need psychological work, no matter what the child's chronological age.

By the time I see adoptive parents they're pretty exasperated with the professionals they've seen. The therapy didn't help, or the therapist didn't recognize medical/neurological issues, and they had spent a bundle with no positive results. My feeling about choosing a professional—and you should feel free to at least interview them by phone and sometimes in person—is that you should feel a good connection with that individual. That might not happen right away, yet if you continue to get bad vibes about that person or their work, discuss it with them. You can tell a lot by how they handle your questions and issues.

The therapist should be able to explain to you—without psychological jargon—how they work and the basis for doing so. You'll want your family to work with a therapist who knows a lot about child development, trauma, attachment/bonding issues, grief and loss, adoption issues, and about when an evaluation from other professionals (e.g. Occupational Therapists, Psychiatrists) might be helpful. And, of great importance, you'll want a therapist who doesn't attribute all issues to having been adopted. Adopted kids have "regular" issues too.

If you have an older child, they may be functioning at several different developmental ages. You might have an age-appropriate child in some situations, a toddler in others, and a "fussy baby" in others. This is natural because the child did not fully develop emotionally at those various ages. Reminders of past trauma may trigger the child to regress and behave much younger than they are chronologically.

Your baby needs you to be calm. If you need to consult with a professional, do so, and ask about any problematic behaviors. Start to address attachment and bonding issues, if they exist, as early as possible. And remember, almost all babies and children have some difficulties, as do we as parents!

Em Hardy, Ph.D. is a licensed Psychologist in Austin who works with adoptive families. You are invited to visit her web site (www.emhardy.com) to contact her for specific questions or concerns. Em will be teaching at the FCC Chinese culture camp in August and leading the post-camp support group.

Family Day Celebrations

By Stacey Cone

Among the most essential things we do as members of FCC is share the experience of our mutual adoption journey together, supporting one another when we can and learning from each other as we go along. This is the beauty, the attraction, and the power of being part of communities like ours. To one degree or another, we probably all sense the invisible but real ties that connect us, however tightly or loosely, because, when it comes down to it, we realize that all of our adoptions are genuinely events bigger than ourselves—phenomena in their own right.

As a community, we celebrate holidays special to the culture our children were born in—Chinese New Year, Dragon Boast Festival, and Moon Festival, to name a few. In lots of ways, we celebrate these holidays according to prescribed traditions with firecrackers and dragon dancers on Chinese New Year and moon cakes during Moon Festival.

But many of us celebrate one special anniversary apart from our community that has no longstanding prescribed traditions and no simple how-to formula. It's Family Day, or Gotcha Day, and most of us, if we celebrate it, just make our traditions up as we go along. But we wonder, don't we, what other families like ours do. And we wonder if there are some other ways we could celebrate more specially the birth of our multicultural, interracial families. So, what is it we are all actually doing on Family Day? Are we all doing pretty much the same things? Or is everybody doing something different? Have other families hit on better ideas for celebrating this occasion than we have ourselves?

To help answer these questions, we asked you all to share your families' traditions for celebrating Family Day, and we were amazed at the number of responses we got. We were even more amazed by the variety of traditions we discovered and by the touching, tender ways you all have found to celebrate and commemorate the occasion of your families' births. In the spirit of building and strengthening our evolving community, we share those with you now. A sincere and special thanks to all of you who participated by sending in your contributions.

We celebrate by making a special meal and dessert (child picks), and the child gets a small gift. --Anne Regen

We call our day "Family Day" and celebrate it with a small family dinner, usually with something special like dumplings, which are our daughter's favorite. Sometimes we have a full-blown Chinese meal. Mostly this is a day for being together and being grateful for being together. We also have a tradition of bringing down the "box of 16 gifts" from the closet, which contains special items we purchased when we were in China (things like a little tea set, a cloisonné mirror, a fan, a small pearl necklace.)

She receives one gift every year until she turns 16. Inside the box we also have the original outfit she was wearing when we first met her, including the tiny little socks, and we hold them and compare how much she's grown since then. She loves hearing about that day and what it was like for us, and what the experience was like for her. --Julie Kniseley and David Lancaster (daughter Xiaoman, age 9)

Here is a tradition we love: When my daughter Amy (whose Chinese name is Lening) and my daughter Bonnie (whose Chinese name is Yuemei) are celebrating their Gotcha Day, we call them by their Chinese names all that particular day. (Sometimes their teachers and friends get into the act, also.) Fun! (And, since their Chinese name is a special gift from China, we like for them to keep in touch with it.) --Mary Jackson

We celebrate Gotcha Day every January 19. We eat a Chinese meal, watch our video of the day we became a family and look at pictures from our China trip. But the most anticipated annual event is conducting the ceremonial height measurement to see how much everyone grew in the last year! I've attached pictures from both 2005 and 2010 so you can see the excitement from that event. --Karen Bondy (mother of Julie and Jade, age 8)

Our first (and only) gotcha day was a family affair. We all got together and ate dumplings at our favorite restaurant. The day we got our daughter Neko was a long, emotionally draining day. All we had to eat were dumplings from a shop around the corner of our hotel in Taipei. As Neko gets older we plan to learn how to make dumplings ourselves and it will be a gotcha day activity. --Mark Pedini

I imagine our tradition is not that different from many others. My daughter and I (it's just the two of us), have family pictures done every year on the anniversary of our gotcha day, and try to do something fun that day (like going some place to play) and then we usually go out for dinner with a few of our friends. --Vicki Gargano

I have scoured the Internet to try and find various Family Day traditions, but it's too overwhelming. We are still developing ours, but one thing we have tried to do every year around May 9th is take a family picture in about the same positions we were in when we took our first family photo at the local Civil Affairs office in China. We also refer to our day as Family Day instead of Gotcha Day since Gotcha Day is the event name we use for the day we got our beagle boy, Deuce, way back in 1999. --Joyce

Elyshia and I celebrate it like any other anniversary by going somewhere special out to eat, theatre, day trip, but we call it our "forever family day" and we always include our church family in on the celebration by bringing a cake on the Sunday closest to the date. --Elyshia and Eileen Danaher

More Family Day Celebrations

We call it Family Day, and it's really cool because we get to share it with 2 of our best friends who met their loveys on the same day. --Pat Nealon

For our day... we have the same "ritual". We spend some time together that day going through her special box. It's a box my mom made for her during the adoption process that has her name on it. I put special things in it from her life -- her gotcha day clothes, adoption certificates, photos, gifts and items I bought on the trip, some of her baby clothes. We tell her adoption story, read "I Love You Like Crazy Cakes", and have a special homemade meal of Chinese food. --Angela Meek (mom to Kayli, age 6)

We all love to celebrate gotcha day at our house. We typically start the day with waking our daughter who's gotcha day it is. (We have two daughters, Jackie Li, ten from Hunan and Julia Mei from Guandong province) with singing "Happy gotcha day to you" then we usually talk that day to them about our first day in China with them. How we met, what happened that day and the following few days after. We have a few gifts for them to open; they can choose a favorite dinner to be cooked for them that night or a favorite restaurant to go to. It's a very special day celebrated at our house, just like their birthday. --Cathleen, Bud, Jackie and Julia Dunphy

Our daughter Emma's Adoption Day is in September. Last year it fell on a Sunday, which is Steelers' Football time at our house. Since moving to Texas, we have made a tradition of eating guacamole during the games and having Kolaches for breakfast on special occasions. So on Emma's 4th adoption day we had Kolaches for breakfast then watched the Steelers game while eating guacamole. Later that day, we went to dinner at a Chinese Restaurant. For the grand finale, we had a piñata, which is 4-year-old Emma's favorite party activity. This year we are blessed to celebrate the adoption day of our second child Andrew who joined our family from Ethiopia in September. Who knows what fun activities will be planned. --Laurie and Steve Moyer

Final Family Day Thoughts...and a Mother's Day Poem

We started calling our day 'Family Day' because I had read so much controversy surrounding the term "gotcha day" on the email lists I'm on and in adoption magazines.

Once we changed the name, it occurred to me to include the entire family and make it a celebration of everyone. So now the tradition is:

All of us have dinner at Peony's, a really beautiful Chinese restaurant that makes high-end Chinese food. Both sets of grandparents come with us. When we were in China, I bought 18 gifts for Marley, one to give her each year until her 18th Family Day. I pick the most age appropriate one to give her. I also buy her a little something extra. I buy a couple of gifts for my biological son as well. Marley's adoption day was right near Father's Day so we celebrate that too, which means that my husband and both grandfathers also receive gifts.

After we have dinner and open our gifts, we all climb to the top of Mt. Bonnell; even the grandparents, so this can take a while. At the top, we go to a quiet corner and observe the gorgeous view and the sunset. We always bring two big red balloons with us along with a poem or sentiment that Todd and I want to send to Marley's birth parents. This is a poem that I found that I brought with me last year:

Mother's Day

One day a year,
The inevitable card, a dinner.
Mediocre chocolates in a box
elaborate enough to satisfy
a three-year-old's discerning taste.

Every day is mother's day
The hands stretched up for a hug,
pizza smeared kisses,
the soft warm weight
tucked in to my arms
trustingly surrendered to sleep.
Even the tired tantrums.

I am a mother
every second of the day.
My daughter is stitched
into every fiber of my life.
I love her with an intensity
that took me by surprise.
Surpassed only by the fear
of losing her.

But she has another mother,
The woman in the mirror,
The shadow, who comes
and goes through invisible doors.

You first felt her stir, roll
and kick inside you.
The contraction that announced
her impending arrival,
heard the first cry, touched
the downy fuzz on her head,

And left her.

And I grapple with this,
As she will sooner than I wish.

Without you, I would not have a daughter.
Your loss and hers is my gain.
I honor you by loving her
shiny black hair, rosebud mouth,
She is made of you,
how could I not?

How could I understand
That a day after her birth,
on an autumn night,
she was left outside.

When she cries in fear or anger,
Or wakes screaming from a nightmare,
I am seized with a rage
as unforgiving
as that September night.

When she tells me the life story
of how the neighborhood feral cat
is the same as hers,
I want to weep,
that I can't change it
or make it go away.

Can I say I would never do the same?
No
Judge not.....

Perhaps it was the desperation
of a mother
who throws her children
from a burning building.
Hoping and praying
that someone will catch them.
That they will be safe.
Perhaps, perhaps,
I will never know.

Do you miss her,
wonder at what might have been,
where is she now?

Our daughter is dancing, far away,
dressed in a Cinderella blue gown.
Serving tea to her Grandmothers,
singing songs of her own invention.
You may never hear her voice.
She may never see your face.

She is neither you or me.
She is the third way,
already crafting her own story.
You gave her life,
I give her the future.

We read our poems out loud, attach them to the balloons, and let the balloons go. Then we watch the balloons fly off while the sun sets before making the long trek back down to our cars where we say goodbye to the grandparents and head back to our home. --Kellena Page