

Families with Children from China

Austin, Texas Chapter

Fall Newsletter

October, 2015



President's Note

I'm looking backwards and forwards at the same time with this newsletter. The look back is on a great summer for FCC, which kicked off with a huge turnout for Dim Sum in June at Fortune Restaurant. We must have had 45 or more FCC members—special fun for me was meeting some new people (you know who you are!). The traditional President's Potluck was more intimate, maybe 20 or so parents and kids and it was a real treat to see some of our youngest members. The Xie Wei Chen talk at the Davis home about growing up in China blew me away. We also had a number of tweens and teens joining us for that event. Her talk and pictures really resonated for me when I saw *Coming Home* recently (see our movie review).

And then there was Culture Camp. We bid adieu to Becky Harding's and Rowena Fong's stewardship after six fantastic years—realizing just how lucky we were to have such a professionally run camp. The board is working with several member parents who are investigating and putting together their ideas for another camp. Stay tuned. Either way, we will continue to incorporate some of what camp provided through other events and gatherings. Read in this issue about the Retreat next April 29–May 1 and some of what we have planned.

Just a few weeks ago we celebrated Moonfest at Central Market in Central Austin. It wasn't just me who thought it was one of the best attended Moon Fests ever—with lots of UT China Care kids and our own teens showing up. Many of our kids were counselors at Culture Camp this past summer—and took us up on the request to show up in their camp T-shirt. Many of the bonds formed today by our kids will last long into the future.

We have so much planned for you this year, from more UT China Care events, the Columbus Day Weekend Chinese art event in San Antonio (which may have passed by the time you are reading this), the Parent's Resource Group being formed by Board Member Carrie van der Wal, and another terrific Chinese New Year celebration scheduled for Sunday, February 21st.

It goes without saying that I thank the Board: Nelda Bullis, Robin Davis, Vicki Gargano, Jena Goodridge, Amy Harris, and Carrie van der Wal, for all that they do, as well as Kim Goodman, our creative lead. Besides being great companions for Chinese cuisine, they are one great team. And of course I thank all of you volunteers for helping out so often.

And we remain a resource for you. Please do read my article later this issue called *Two Deep Questions about FCC*. Are they deep? Maybe not. But I am hoping the title gets you thinking.

Have a terrific fall, and may your teams of choice win or at least play fairly, may your Halloween baskets fill high, and may you get an occasional spa day or movie night.

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Save the Date: FCC Family Retreat

By Carrie van der Wal



Sharing a delicious meal with friends.

Our third FCC Family Retreat at Camp TBarM Lake Travis will be held the weekend of April 29–May 1, 2016. As in years past, there will be the mighty meal teams, the Rock Climbing Wall/Barn Swing activities and s'mores around the campfire on Saturday night. Just like last year, we'll have a tween/teen cabin exclusively for 7th to 9th grade girls, again chaperoned by Genevieve Norman and Suchada (Sushi) Sutasirisap. For those who don't wish to commit to an entire weekend, day guests on Saturday are encouraged.

We're also excited to announce that this year, we are making available an adult-only, Saturday afternoon presentation by someone already well known to many of you, adoption counselor Melanie Chung-Sherman (profiled in our May newsletter this year). The price for attending Melanie's presentation is included in the fee. While some of you may wish to hang with your kids, we welcome and encourage everyone 18 or older to come meet and hear from Melanie.

There are three changes of which we'd like all previous retreat families to be aware. We will only reserve (with advance registration) the "deluxe" cabins for those families with children under five years old. Also, to adequately cover costs incurred, we are nominally raising the fees for all attendees over 12 years old. Additionally, please note that instead of taking deposits, we're streamlining the registration process: all registration materials will be due and full payment must be paid no later than April 1, 2016. Reminders will be sent out once we have the paperwork online and available for signing up. This is truly one more event meant to create community, and judging by the photo, you can bet it works! In the meantime, if you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me either by email or phone: carrilee@yahoo.com, (512) 809-3434.

We hope that you'll join us!

Fees

(all children five and under are free)

For 2 nights in cabins:

- \$80 per person for FCC member families, 12 years old and above
- \$70 per person FCC member children, ages 5–11
- \$95 per person for non-members, 12 years old and above
- \$80 per person for non-members, ages 5–11

For Saturday Day Guests:

- \$35 per person for FCC member families
- \$45 per person for non-members; children five and under are free. ❖



This year's teen/tween meal team.



By Carrie van der Wal

On behalf of the FCC Austin Board and to support our FCC Austin membership, I've initiated a parents group—Parents Resource Group (PRG)—to explore and discuss issues relative to our children and our FCC families.

PRG will meet every two months. For each meeting, we'll center on one topic. Approximately a week in advance of each meeting, I'll email group members with the adoptee-related topics to be discussed, sharing links to *Read This* articles and video links if available. Parents will be encouraged to share other related resources during PRG meetings as well.

The first meeting will focus on the effects of trauma/institutionalization on neuro-development as well as common developmental/academic problems traumatized/

institutionalized children face. At subsequent meetings, we'll explore issues such as talking with our children about racism, tools for bullying, body image, the challenges and changes of adolescence, etc.

Please note that PRG will not be a therapy group; it will be a parent-led, safe and confidential space for us to learn together, share common narratives/resources and build and strengthen bonds within our FCC community. Even if some might feel that the topic doesn't directly affect them or their children, I'm hopeful that the parents committing to PRG make it a priority to attend each PRG meeting. Commitment to a consistent support network, I believe, will be key to making this a success. Additionally, information and resources that parents think they and their families may not specifically need now could well be beneficial later. At PRG, parents will be encouraged to suggest certain topics to be explored, either by mentioning it within the group or confidentially contacting me.

PRG is open to everyone in our FCC community. For those attending who are not current FCC members, we'd appreciate a nominal \$5 donation each time you attend; these donations will help cover the cost of the meeting space rental.

All FCC PRG meetings will begin at 4 p.m., last approximately 1.5–2 hours and will be held in northwest Austin, at The Trails clubhouse, 4011 Merimac, Austin 78731.



These are the scheduled PRG dates (Sundays): November 22, January 10, March 6, and May 15.

If you'd like more information or would like to join FCC PRG, please contact me: carrielee@yahoo.com or (512) 809-3434. For those enthusiastic parents who have already committed to establishing our PRG, thank you all for your patience. Thank you for your participation. As I've never attempted organizing anything like this before, I truly appreciate your support and involvement. Let's make this work for all of us. ❖

Looking Forward: Important Calendar Dates

- UT China Care Sundays: October 11, October 25, November 8, and November 22 at the Dell JCC on Hart Lane, 2–4 pm each day. Email Aleena and Katherine at pg.utchinacare@gmail.com and they will put you on their list
- Parents' Resource Group (Sundays): November 22, January 10, March 6, and May 15 (see article for details)
- Chinese New Year, Sunday February 21
- FCC Annual Retreat, Friday–Sunday: April 29–May 1 ❖

Focus on an FCC Family: The Davises

By Alan Greenberg

Robin Davis is an FCC Board Member and well known to the FCC community.

Alan: Tell us about your family—the entire gang.

Robin: We have two older sons: Max is in his fourth year of Medical School at the University of Michigan and plans to pursue a career in orthopedic surgery, and Ian, a recent University of Georgia graduate is living in Riga, Latvia and serving a year of Jewish foreign service for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (an organization that provides humanitarian assistance to Jews and non-Jews alike) before starting law school. My husband, Marty, does business development for a software company and he travels frequently for his job. And of course there's Abby.

Alan: You have a part-time job, serve on our board, are active in the community, and are a full-time Mom. What do you do for balance?

Robin: I work part time as a dietitian at a pediatric dialysis unit in Austin. I am fortunate to have a great job with flexible hours that allows me to balance my work and home life!

Alan: What led you to bring Abby home from China?

Robin: We always felt like someone was missing from our dinner table. Adopting Abby was a family decision and the best choice we ever made!

Alan: You have been on the FCC Board for three years as Co-Chair of Events. What led you to join the Board?

Robin: As I recall, another Board Member asked me to help plan CNY after Denise Davolt left the position due to an out of town move. I was thrilled to help, especially with something as fun as planning a party!

Alan: What has been most rewarding about being a board member?

Robin: Certainly getting to know the other members of the board. Working with people brought me closer to those individuals and also closer to the organization. Another rewarding benefit is that my daughter is more involved and she takes pride in the fact that our family is helping. If I had not been on the Board, then FCC events may have taken a back seat to other activities that we could have been caught up in.

Alan: You have your final six months on the Board. (And from all of us at FCC, thank you for your service!). So my final question: whatcha gonna do with all that free time?

Robin: Hmmm—catch up on some reading. I am also interested in getting involved in some volunteer projects that tackle hunger right here in our community. ❖



Two Deep Questions About FCC

By Alan Greenberg

I get asked a lot: “How does the board work?” And “What do my dues and donations pay for?” Well, I could joke: the board works hard, and your dues pay for us to not mess up! But the facts are, 1) the board’s busiest times are based on the season, and 2) your dues really pay for some important things that—without your contributions—would probably mean we wouldn’t have the organization we have today.

Dues

Let me start with the annual dues. FCC-Austin is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. (And hey, contributions and dues are tax exempt!) At the amazing low price of \$30 a year, you are contributing to a pool of funds that we use for the following:

- Insurance (yes, that costs money folks) for certain events and for the organization overall
- General expenses related to running the organization—we really try to reimburse people. But remember, things like lion dancer outfits, arts and crafts for events, beverages for and payments to performers, etc. cost money too. And when we don’t bring in as much money as we pay for something, FCC has to make up the difference.
- Cash for specific “free” events when we fund items like refreshments or space for a teen event or workshop. That includes Moonfest, which—yes—costs us money!

- Our scholarship program for our teens (college and China service project every summer)
- Scholarships for Culture Camp—we have had several donors fund scholarship for families needing a camp scholarship, and frequently the Board has voted to fund some scholarships as well.
- Donations (when we have excess Chinese New Year event proceeds, otherwise when we find ourselves with extra cash) to some of our favorites causes, from UT China Care to the Philip Hayden Foundation and others.

As a member, you also get discounts to our events.

Why is this important? Well, if 50 families belong, that’s all of \$1,500 per year. A total of 100 families = \$3,000 per year. Not a lot of breathing room there. Fortunately the board is remarkably frugal and wise with money, and we stay in the black. But the reason I mention this is that we need members and we need members’ dues.

And this is a Great opportunity to remind you to sign up for Amazon smiles. We got our first check recently for being in their program. Peanuts! Go to <http://smile.amazon.com/> please and sign up. You have to select Families with Children from China–Austin as your charity of choice.

How Does the Board Work?

I like to say I love hard work. I could sit and watch it for hours. But to be honest, the work comes in fits and starts. As President, I try to keep communications going, field calls from members, collaborate with the board on our events and initiatives, and pay attention to the budgets and bank account. The board itself typically has a minimum of five members (but can be higher), including President, most of whom end up having specific roles (say Jena Goodridge as secretary and scholarship fund administrator, or Robin Davis and Amy Harris as Co-VPs of Social Events). We meet probably five–six times a year for a delicious Chinese meal (not something covered by FCC, so perhaps the primary out-of-pocket we have), plus do a lot of other work/communicating via email and phone. The time commitment varies but when we have a great team as we do now, the workload is pretty balanced and it all works out well. We typically invite new board members based on seeing people volunteer after they get to know the organization, so that’s the best way for you to get involved if you are interested in supporting FCC Austin! ❖

Adoption Oral History Project

By Jena Heath

Greetings:

I am creating a digital audio archive of the stories of adoptees from China and their families. For the next year, at least, I will be traveling to talk with anyone who would like to share a personal adoption story—adoptees and their families. The goal is to create a place for adoptees to hear the direct, unmediated stories of others who share their experiences and to be able to document these stories for posterity. I am particularly interested in talking with adoptees who have searched for birth parents

and with adoptive parents who have embarked on birth parent searches. I will launch the archive with the interviews/oral histories I collect over the next few months. Even better, however: The archive will also allow adoptees and their families to record and upload their stories themselves. For those of you who are NPR listeners, think of it as a kind of StoryCorps for the Chinese adoption community.

A bit about me: I am an associate professor of Journalism at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, who spent 20 years in newsrooms as a reporter and editor. My daughter, Caroline Chun, 9, came home from

Yangchun, Guangdong Province, in 2008, a week after her second birthday. I helped launch Austin's only public school Mandarin immersion language program and coordinated a Sister School relationship with my Xishuangbanna Yunjinghong Elementary School, in Yunnan Province.

If you would like to learn more about my project, please contact me at: jenaheath@gmail.com. If your FCC chapter or related organization is holding a Culture Camp, I'd love to attend to share more information. ❖

Let's Meet Up!

Our FCC road trip to the San Antonio was delightful! What I loved most was seeing the kids so engaged during our customized tour in the San Antonio Museum of Art's Asian Art collection. What we all enjoyed, too, was hanging out with other parent friends while our kids played together Saturday evening. We were at an outdoor restaurant; it was very relaxed.

This got me thinking that we could all benefit with this kind of family interaction

more often, on a very casual, come-if-you-can, no fuss scale.

Would your family be interested in a monthly Sunday afternoon meet-up with other FCC families, including, perhaps, other local families with adopted children? We could choose two city parks—one north and one south—rotating locations each month. I'm thinking that it could be held the last Sunday of every month, say from 2–4 p.m., beginning in January if the

weather is nice. We could keep it simple, bringing lawn chairs and soccer balls or other outdoor games for the kids. A play-scape would be great, too.

Is this something that you'd be interested in? If so, let me know, and, if there's enough interest, I'll start an FCC Play email list. Contact me at carrielee@yahoo.com. ❖

Movie Review:

Zhang Yimou's *Gui Lai*, Starring Gong Li, Daoming Chen, and Huiwen Zhang

Coming Home

By Alan Greenberg

Just played at the Arbor Theatre in Austin, soon to a DVD player near you!

Well, Abby Turner gets a break this issue as I'm going to do something we haven't done in a while: review a movie fresh out. Here is the IMBD plot:

Lu and Feng are a devoted couple forced to separate when Lu is arrested and sent to a labor camp as a political prisoner during the Cultural Revolution. He finally returns home only to find that his beloved wife no longer remembers him.

Well, let's not forget DanDan, their daughter who is trying out to be the lead dancer in her troupe, as well as Mr. Fang, neighbors, and various party functionaries. This movie is suspenseful and at the same time, you will be astounded at how much it touches you. The movie opens with Professor Lu

having escaped the labor camp and trying to see his wife and daughter. I'll spare you any other spoilers other than to say that he's caught (duh, we still have a movie to watch) and the story takes us to several years later when he (and so many others) have been released to return to the cities.

I told my beloved date at the end: "Gee, I'd like a touch of melodrama to go with my comedy." So okay, I am confessing that the way the story is handled by Zhang Yimou is a bit melodramatic. More so than some of his great movies: *Raise the Red Lantern*, *To Live*, *Red Sorghum*, *Hero*, *The Story of Qiu Ju*, *Ju Dou*, and *House of Flying Daggers*. But:

and this is a BIG but: you should see it anyway. Gong Li is the Meryl Streep of Chinese cinema (Alan said humbly, "in his opinion.") The movie is riveting and she—along with her film husband, Daoming Chen—shows the pain and courage that so many must have had to endure and show during and



after the Cultural Revolution. How many times have you seen a movie in which the star has amnesia and you actually believed it? And how many times have you been touched by a spouse's creative efforts to bring back his wife's memory—as he struggles to make sense of what happened to her while he was gone? I have to stop now as I don't want to give anything away. Except one thing: add it to your movie queue! ❖

Jordan Montessori School

By Mary Field

(Editor's note: FCC does not endorse or promote any one school or program, but when we heard there was a Montessori school in northwest Austin with a Chinese immersion approach, we asked the school to provide a few details we could share with members.)

Jordan International Montessori began with a TV interview. Our lead teacher, Candice, overheard one of the founders of Google being asked who he had to thank most in life. He replied, "My Montessori teacher." Candice thought about her own students in the Chinese immersion program she taught, and wondered, with such a ringing endorsement from one of the world's top business people, was Montessori worth exploring for her own students?

Candice started teaching in America in Chinese immersion programs in Utah and Washington State. The Montessori Method struck her as a better way to offer tailored

instruction for all of the students. While the immersion programs in Utah and Washington State were indeed pioneering, they still more or less followed the teacher-centered model, so no matter what, some children would fall behind and some would feel held back. As a child-centered approach, the Montessori Method taps into a child's natural curiosity about the world. Instead of learning about colors by watching a teacher point at a flashcard, children in the Montessori program interact with specialized teaching tools, and in the bilingual program, they do it in both languages.

It's almost miraculous to see what happens within a few months of entering a bilingual Montessori program. Children clean up their work areas without being asked, while singing a song to themselves in Mandarin. Jordan Montessori was established to give the children of Austin the opportunity to have the two-fold benefits of this program, a learning environment that encourages



independence and creativity, with the opportunity to learn a second language. Jordan International Montessori accepts students from the age of 1.5 to 6. Children aged 1.5–3 are in one program, and children aged 3–6 are in the other. We also offer after school programs for teaching Chinese to students of all ages. We are a small school, committed to keeping the teacher-student ratio to 1:10.

A native of Taiwan, Candice Lin earned her Master's of Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Montessori from the University of San Diego. She received her Montessori diploma from the Montessori Institute of San Diego, affiliated with the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). She is assisted by Mary Field, who works on English skills with the students and also serves as parent coordinator for JIMS. Mary has a bachelor's degree from Fordham University and has an HSK 5 certification in Chinese.

Location: Jordan International Montessori School, 8863 Anderson Mill Road, #120, Austin, TX 78729

Details: www.jordanmontessori.com ❖



A Picture Tells A Thousand Words



1st UT China Care
Playgroup
of Fall 2015



San Antonio Trip/
Chinese Art Exhibit



Moon Festival, 2015





2015 Culture Camp



T Bar M Camp
Family Retreat



Dim Sum
Family Outing

