

Families with Children from China

Austin, Texas Chapter

Winter Newsletter

January, 2015



President's Note

Welcome to FCC Austin 2015! You will notice something new this issue. The board decided that to improve our ability to be a community-centric organization, we will begin to password-protect the newsletter to enable us to profile our members and their families with greater openness. Every FCC chapter handles this sort of thing in its own way. In the past, our policy was not to post newsletters with pictures of member kids because we were reluctant to post information about members on the “open Internet.” We remain vigilant in this regard. But by password-protecting the newsletter, only those who are on our email distribution list or the closed Facebook group will be able to open the document. Anyone else looking at our website and wanting more information will have to email a board member to receive permission to see the (future) newsletters. We think this balances the privacy needs of our members while giving all of us a better way to see what we are all about. My favorite picture this issue is a shot of the “gang” that attended the 2013 Camp T Bar M retreat. The smiles are enough to make you want to sign up for the next one! (Hint, hint.)

First up this year: Chinese New Year on Sunday, February 22 (see details this issue). Then on Saturday, March 28 we will be holding a daylong set of workshops for kids and parents, run by Melanie Chung-Sherman, a Dallas-area-based, well-known authority on transracial adoption who herself was adopted from Korea. About a month later, May 1–3, we will be returning to Camp T Bar M for two nights of fun in the sun. Next up: Summer Series—stay tuned as planning is just getting started on that (and email me if you have ideas/requests for topics). Of course summer in Austin wouldn't be summer in Austin without Culture Camp, from August 10–14. Camp Co-Directors Becky Harding and Rowena Fong are returning to run yet another rock'em-sock'em Culture Camp, with a lot of new activities and a new location—registration will begin March 1, 2015, details forthcoming! Then in the fall: Moonfest. There will continue to be behind-the-scenes activities, such as a repeat of our Scholarship Fund in the spring, and access to the babysitting website.

With some sadness and much thanks, we say goodbye (from the Board, not from our community!) to two outstanding board members whose time to step down has arrived: the indefatigable Abby Turner, Past-President, Always-On-Librarian, who has served this organization almost non-stop ever since it was started—most recently as one of our Events Board members. And Bethany Morrison, the quiet, ever-steady Membership lead, who we hope is just taking a breather and will be back someday. This means I get to welcome Sue Sis-Boyd and Amy Harris and you get to vote on the entire Board at Chinese New Year.

A final request here: If you meet or know a family not familiar with FCC Austin, please let them know about us! Send them to the website, or do an email introduction—let them know that we are a resource so they can opt-in to whatever in our community interests them.

Alan D. Greenberg

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Please Join Us For FCC-Austin's 2015 Chinese New Year Celebration

Date and Time: Put Sunday, February 22, 2015, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on your calendar, as our community will celebrate the *Year of the Ram* at *The City of Austin Asian American Resource Center on Cameron Road*. This year's event will be a wonderful party, with the Austin Chinese Educational Services Choir, face painting, balloons, appetizers, cake, bingo, fun photo opp, Chinese dancers from April Rain, crafts, and a beloved Summitt Elementary Lion Dance performance! Enjoy catching up with new and old friends while your kids partake in a bevy of activities. You decide which activities best suit you...

Parking: There is limited parking at the AARC but plenty of overflow parking at the Rutherford Lane Campus next door. Follow signs at the event for parking.

Online Tickets: You may click on the link: <https://2015fccaustincny.eventbrite.com> to preregister and pay for your tickets. This is also an excellent time to renew your membership and get a price break for this and all of our 2015 events. **Please Note:** Anyone opting to pay at the door on the day of the event will be charged non-member prices. **Only checks or cash will be accepted at the door.**

T-Shirts: This year's tees are 100% preshrunk cotton, hand tie-dyed jersey knit! These are Limited Edition tees—we will print them only once, in order to not have leftovers; **t-shirt sales end Wednesday, Feb. 4th at 11:59 pm**, so carpe diem if you like this tee (<http://www.fccaustin.org/2015cnytee.pdf>)!

Slideshow: We will have a slideshow of members' families. If you would like photos of your family in the slideshow, email them to Alan Greenberg at ggroup@mindspring.com.

Food: Asian appetizers from China Palace will be available onsite this year and are included in the ticket price. The planning team has lined up a delectable selection of tasty morsels for us to enjoy!

Crafts: UT China Care will help with crafts. Make a keepsake for the *Year of the Ram*.

Schedule

2:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.: Appetizers, drinks, face painting, on-going pop-up entertainment, balloons, bingo, crafts, and slideshow will be available for your enjoyment. Pick up your Year of the Ram t-shirts at the box office (only prepaid tees will be available).

3:00 p.m.–3:15 p.m.: Taking advantage of a quorum, we will vote for this year's Board of Directors. President's Awards will be given.

5:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.: The Summitt Dragon Dance/Lion Dance Team will perform and bubble wrap will be tossed down for all the kids (and kids at heart) to simulate firecrackers; event ends at 5:30 p.m. ❖



FCC Retreat #2 – Calling All Campers

This one is so much fun you really should think about joining us. Join us at T Bar M Camp Travis for a weekend of family fun May 1–3, 2015. We have the *entire* camp all

to ourselves, which makes it a truly magical event where the kids are running around having a blast and the parents are cooking or otherwise entertaining themselves with

nature walks, games, and the like. New this year: a special 7th and 8th grade cabin for girls, which will be **chaperoned and supervised by** adoptee and former FCC member **Genevieve Norman** and her friend **Suchava Sutasirisap (aka Sushi)**. Some of you will recall that Genevieve and her family were profiled in a past FCC newsletter, and she was also **interviewed by NBC News*** this past fall. A few slots remain available for 7th and 8th grade girls for this cabin—and we note: parents not able to attend can still send their daughters to participate in this cabin. All registration forms and full payment are due no later than April 2, 2015. You can find all the pertinent information (and all the required forms) on our FCC website events page: <http://www.fccaustin.org/events.html>. Questions? Email Carrie van der Wal at carrielee@yahoo.com for details.

For those who have already sent in your paperwork and retreat deposit, please note that your registration balance is now due no later than April 2nd. ❖



2013 Camp T Bar M Retreat was sooooo much fun!

*NBC News interview: <http://www.nbcnews.com/watch/nbcnews-com/a-search-to-belong-in-china-leads-back-to-the-us-332051011664>

FCC Spring Workshops



Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW, PLLC

Please mark your calendars for upcoming FCC parent/children workshops on Saturday, March 28 with Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW, PLLC. A well-known therapist who happens to be a transracial adoptee herself, Ms. Chung-Sherman will be our 2015 FCC Chinese Culture Camp “Adoption Journeys” counselor. To introduce her to our FCC community, she’ll be facilitating age-appropriate, adoption relative workshops (similar to the

Jane Brown model we hosted here a few years ago) in March.

The workshops will be for ages 7–18 (grouped by age group), and there will be one parents-only workshop. All will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2015, at Riverbend Church, 4214 North Capital of Texas Highway, in Austin. A limited number of seats per workshop will be available. Registrations and workshop descriptions will become available in early February—stay tuned for more information. ❖



Moon Festival Fun!

2014's Moon Festival was held at Brushy Creek Park. A large crowd met on Sunday, September 14th for mooncakes and fellowship. Children played games with China Care members and got their faces painted. Although the day started chilly it quickly warmed and kids played in the water fountains. Families brought picnics and enjoyed seeing each other. Bobby Cordell arrived and made marvelous balloon

creations for hours! Summitt Elementary's amazing lion dance team wound up our afternoon. They performed while wishes were made on tea lights that were set adrift on the lake. Beautiful day and good times for everyone who attended.

Huge thanks to all who helped, especially China Care, Summitt Elementary Lion Dancers, and FCC members who pitched in to help in so many ways! ❖



UT China Care Playdates Scheduled

Those of you with little grasshoppers, or medium or large grasshoppers, we've got the UT China Care playgroups scheduled for the upcoming semester. First up: Sunday, February 1! The playgroup events are held from 2pm-4pm on alternating Sundays (depending on the calendar) at the Dell Jewish Community Center, located at 7300 Hart Lane in the Early Childhood Program Multipurpose Room. If you are not a member of the J, explain at the gate and the security guard will give you directions to circle around to the back of the building. Even better, let them know you are coming: email pg.utchinacare@gmail.com and they will put you on their email list. Spring dates are:

- February 1, 2015
- February 15, 2015
- March 1, 2015
- March 29, 2015
- April 12, 2015
- April 26, 2015 ❖

Parent's Afternoon Out



Teen and tween supervisors and gang either playing, or plotting next play strategies.

In early December, we held our second babysitting event with six FCC teens/tweens wherein they looked after a slew of kiddos so their parents could take a shopping break—or nap during the bustling holiday season. Here are a couple shots of the event. ❖



Parent Drop-off

Good Works from FCC

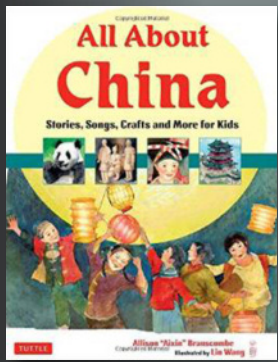


Besides our local scholarships we offer from time to time, FCC Austin has by policy shared extra proceeds from our Chinese New Year celebrations in the past with several international charities (as well as the local UT China Care). Two of those charities are Love Without Boundaries and the Philip Hayden Foundation (Shepherd's Field Children Village orphanage), each of which has recently updated us on specific children who have been supported by our donations. We include here a recent update from the latter concerning

Leonard, a special needs boy who receives care from Shepherd's Field:

<http://www.fccaustin.org/Leonard1214.pdf>. ❖

New Book by Allison Branscombe



All About China is a brand new book by Allison Branscombe, an FCC parent in California who was active on the board of FCC-Northern California for many years, who says this “is the book I wish had been available when my kids were young.” Here are some reviews:

“An eye-popping journey for kids of all ages—and grown-ups too. Enjoy this beautifully illustrated, information-rich ride through centuries of Chinese festivals, food, family and fun—and so much more.”

—Melissa Ludtke, Producer, *Touching Home in China*

“Educational, informative and extremely enjoyable. The illustrations are delightful and make this book a joy to explore from cover to cover! ... an entertaining, well-researched jewel for both kids and adults.”

—Helen Yee, Former President, Chinese Culture Foundation

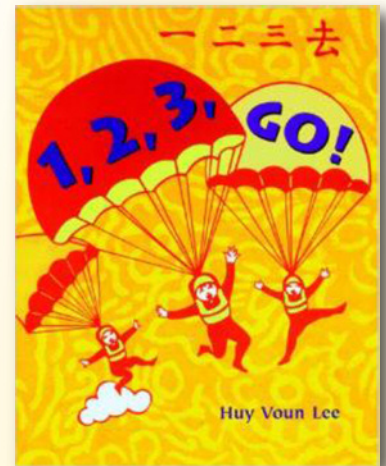
If you purchase this book using this link, <http://tinyurl.com/oa8fbcn>, a small donation will benefit the organization Love Without Boundaries. But you can read more about the book on Amazon as well: http://www.amazon.com/dp/0804843217/ref=rdr_ext_tmb. ❖

Free, Printable Year of the Goat Project

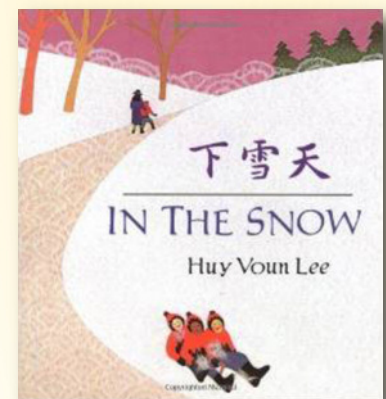
Jen DeCristoforo, whose *Lucky Bamboo Book of Crafts* has been an important element of the crafts projects that take place at Culture Camp, has made available a free printable Year of the Goat project. This might be helpful to any of our FCC community members who get invited to help introduce Chinese New Year to your children’s classrooms. Or maybe just something to try at home! Visit Jen’s website to see the project and the book: <http://www.luckybamboocrafts.com/free-project-lucky-bamboo-book-crafts-year-goat.html>. ❖

1,2,3, Go! and In the Snow by Huy Voun Lee

The FCC Austin Library now has these two delightful books to check out.



1, 2, 3, Go! is an introduction to counting with Chinese characters. Each page is a charming paper cut of children doing an activity. The number of children doing the activity is the count, as in “Six pull.” Characters are shown on the side for both the number and the action.



In the Snow has a little more story. A boy and his mother venture into the snow to learn characters on a snowy day. Both books are illustrated by Lee with beautiful cut paper and both books include pronunciation guides. They are engaging and instructive. Even if your child is not learning to write Chinese characters, these text promote an understanding of Chinese writing. ❖

Family Focus: The Bullis Family

By Nelda Bullis

“At first, my family was not so sure of our decision to go to China, but upon meeting Elaina and spending a few minutes with her, their doubts faded.”

—Nelda Bullis



Nelda, David, and Elaina at the White Swan, 2010.

Hello! We're the Bullises: David, Nelda and Elaina. We've been a family since March 29, 2010. On that beautiful day in Guangzhou, China, we adopted 15-month-old Gang Zixiao, and our forever-together began. Elaina Christine Zixiao, as we named her, was eating table food, walking... actually running and kicking a ball, laughing, and teasing during our first week with her, all very much to our surprise. Born in Maoming City, about 300 miles west of Guangzhou in the Guangdong province, her records also indicate she was in the orphanage since birth.

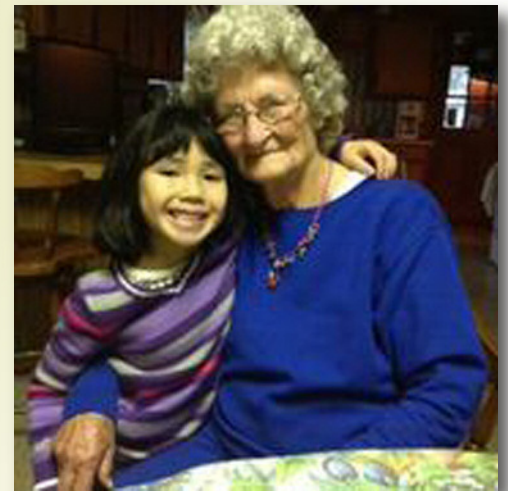
David and I have called Austin home since the late '70s, though we only found each

other in 2002. David came with two grown “making our family even more unique. We think Austin is the perfect place to be an adoptive family. Needless to say, we have explored a lot of parks and play areas in our area of town, off Duval and Hwy 183. Right now, Elaina’s play is concentrated at Davis Elementary, where she is a Kindergarten. She says drawing and coloring are her favorites. As a family, we enjoy hiking, occasionally camping, bicycling, and eating out at some of our favorite places: A+A Sichuan, Kerbey Lane, Julio’s, and Changos Taqueria. At first, my family was not so sure of our decision to go to China, but upon meeting Elaina and spending a few minutes with her, their doubts faded. Her only living grandparent is my mom, and they have a special relationship.

Last summer Elaina participated in the FCC Austin Chinese culture camp for the first time. We feel very fortunate to be part of this and other events sponsored by FCC. The family connections we’ve made through this organization have helped immensely in building our “village.” We met her “Big Sister” Linda at the China Care playgroup, and we see her as much as possible outside of Linda’s studies at UT. Last summer we attended the annual reunion of our agency Great Wall of China and enjoyed meeting similar families there as well.

Another valuable thing about FCC is the collection of books in its library. I recently read *White Swans*, which provided some much needed history and background and is so well written. In *The Dragon Sisterhood*, I found a good reference for a life book guide called, *LifeBooks: Creating a Treasure for the Adopted Child*. I’m excited now about beginning that project!

Adoption has given us so much more than we anticipated. We’re way blessed! And we’re looking forward to all that’s still ahead! ❖



Elaina and her grandma.