

Families with Children from China

Austin, Texas Chapter

Spring Newsletter

March, 2016



President's Note

I vividly remember the first time our family attended a big FCC event. It was in late January 2011 that we went to the Chinese New Year party, celebrating the Year of the Rabbit. Though it had been over two years since we adopted our twin sons, it took us that long to feel ready to wade in to FCC. Looking at the crowd at Covington Middle School that winter afternoon, my first reaction was a blissful “Wow—all these families like ours!” My second reaction, one which lasted all afternoon was “Every one here knows each other but us.” Though we shared the commonality of adopting Chinese children, my husband and I felt like outsiders; not knowing anyone, FCC frankly felt like one great, big clique. Please don't get me wrong; *every single person* we met that day was welcoming, friendly and very kind but still, Hans and I felt like strangers, on the outside looking in. Of course, our sons didn't feel that way at all. They were completely at home with all those other exuberant children, readily absorbing the kinship.

Honestly, after that CNY experience, I had twinges of doubt about FCC. I felt that FCC may not really be for us, but, knowing that what we do as parents isn't “for us,” I forged ahead. After that first CNY, I started attending FCC workshops and parent events. We started taking the boys to China Care playgroups, visiting with other waiting parents there every month. Our family had a fantastic FCC experience at the Dragon Boat races that spring, our sons attended their first Chinese Culture Camp that summer and our family enjoyed our first FCC Moon Fest at Central Market that fall.

Like in all other components of our lives, our relationships within FCC developed slowly, via repeated exposure. Like all others, those FCC relationships were strengthened by working together for the common good. At the following CNY party, on February 4, 2012, again at Covington Middle School, I remember thinking how far we'd come. I distinctly remember feeling that we were surrounded not by strangers but by friends. Ever since, FCC Austin has felt like home. Like family.

Five years after our first Chinese New Year celebration, as the votes were cast for the 2016 FCC Board, I looked out over the ballroom and, as has happened many times over the last few years, I was awash with gratitude, aware that some of my family's favorite people on the planet are those within FCC.

To those of you that might feel as we did five years ago, I extend my hand. Join us. FCC Austin welcomes you and yours with arms open. To all my FCC friends—old, new and forthcoming—thank you for letting me lead this vibrant, vital village as your FCC Year of the Monkey President. Especially, thank you for letting our children grow up with yours, surrounded by FCC support, commitment and community.

I look forward to working for you and with you in the months ahead.

Warm Wishes,
Carrie van der Wal

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Picture Your Family Here...

Retreat—Top 10:

Here are, in no particular order, the Top 10 reasons why your family should attend the 2016 FCC Family Retreat:

1. To relax
2. To make family memories
3. To let your kids play outside—unfettered—for hours on end with their FCC peers
4. To enjoy a weekend outdoors before the weather turns brutal
5. To connect with your kids and with other FCC families
6. To disconnect from the screens that dominate our lives
7. It's an inexpensive mini-vacation in a natural setting, close to home
8. To attend Melanie Chung-Sherman's adults-only presentation, Intersections: Race & Adoption
9. To do whatever you'd like: command the foosball & ping-pong tables, visit with other parents, enjoy the birdsong from your own porch swing, hike down to Lake Travis, try out the Rock Climbing Wall and the Barn Swing, read a book in the shade, play poker, nap, enjoy the Lake Travis views or all of the above. Besides your family's involvement in preparing one meal (a couple of hours work), you're not obliged to do anything else but sweep your cabin at check-out.
10. Your three other retreat meals are all the more pleasurable because all you'll have to do is fix a plate then clear it from the table.

All the information and registration materials are on our website, under Future Events. Registration deadline is April 1, 2016. Questions? info@fccatx.org. ❖

Mark Your Calendars

- Friday, April 1: Last day to register for the 2016 FCC Spring Family Retreat
- Saturday, April 2: *Ricki's Promise* screening at the Asian American Resource Center
- Sunday, May 15: FCC Parents Resource Group meeting
- Sunday, June 5: FCC President's Potluck Pool Party, 4011 Merimac, Austin 78731

Come See Ricki's Promise: I Promise You Won't Be Disappointed

By Alan Greenberg

Pun intended! This is a challenging movie to watch—it's about identity, family, betrayal, and the complexity of the situations families in China and elsewhere have faced as a result of the One Child Policy. But I promise you, this is a worthwhile film to watch. I believe Dr. Chang last came to Austin in 2011 for a screening of *Sofia's Journey* and *Daughter's Return* (in which we were first introduced to Ricki, one of two girls in that film who returned to China to meet their birth parents). Ricki promised to return to spend more time with her birth family when she graduated from high school. On that return trip she discovers a great deal about her parents, her younger brother, and her extended family. I think the documentary is suitable for any 13-year-old and above who is mature. You can see a trailer here:

<https://vimeo.com/91186593>. And you can see a list of all of his movies (and order any you'd like) here: <http://www.lovewithoutboundaries.org/>.

So join us for a free screening of *Ricki's Promise* at the Asian-American Resource Center on Saturday evening, April 2nd. We'll be holding a private lunch with Dr. Chang at a restaurant TBD that Saturday for FCC members, so stay tuned for details on that as well.

Here is Dr. Chang's bio:

Changfu Chang, a native of Jiangsu Province, China, is a professor at Millersville University of Pennsylvania teaching in the areas of television production and mass media. He holds a Master's from Nanchang University, China and a Ph.D. from Purdue University, United States. Prior to his coming to the United States in 1995, Dr. Chang worked as a television journalist and a magazine editor in China. An award-winning documentary

filmmaker, Dr. Chang has produced or co-produced a dozen widely acclaimed programs including *Chinese Women*, *The Gate of Fujian*, *Golden Venture*, and *Illicit: The Dark Trade*.

In the last 11 years, Dr. Chang has been the producer/director/writer of eight films on adoption: *Love without Boundaries*, *My Unforgotten Daughter*, *The Willow Trees*, *Embracing World Cultures*, *Long Wait for Home*, *Peer in the Distance*, *Sofia's Journey*, and *Daughters' Return*. He is also the co-director of the documentary, *The Invisible Red Thread*, produced for the Canadian television network OMNI. *Love without Boundaries* (2003), his first documentary on the subject of adoption, is widely regarded as a must-have among the adoptive community and was, along with his other films, aired in major television markets in the United States. In spring 2008, after five years of production, Dr. Chang released *Long Wait for Home* (48 minutes). This much-anticipated film profiles three birth families, several orphanages, and presents Chinese views on international adoption. In spring 2011, Dr. Chang released *Sofia's Journey* (45 minutes) and *Daughters' Return* (50 minutes), which document the gripping journeys of three teenage girls in the birth parents search in China that ultimately becomes the search for their own past, identity, and their own place in the complex relationships entwined with love and abandonment. Each film is a roller-coaster, packed with unexpected turns of events, outpourings of emotion, and a timely engagement of critical issues concerning adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents.

Dubbed "the professor of adoption films," Dr. Chang has received rave reviews for his work. *The Adoptive Families* magazine called

Long Wait for Home "realistic, gritty, and heartbreaking," that provides "answers to the ever-present question: Why?" In the revised and updated version of the national bestseller, *The Lost Daughters of China*, author Karin Evans enthusiastically introduced Dr. Chang's work at length, commending his sensitivity in the depiction of the birth parents and the important contributions he had made to the adoptive community. Dr. Chang was featured in several leading newspapers such as *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the London-based *The Financial Times*. In addition to interviews by media in North America and Europe, Chinese media give extensive coverage of Dr. Chang's work. In 2009, China's Jiangsu Educational Television produced a 45-minute documentary film featuring Dr. Chang and his work. ❖



Dr. Chang continues to write and produce films for the adoptive community and the general public. Currently, he is working on *Orphans in China*, which takes an intimate look at the lives of several orphans who are not adopted internationally but remain in Chinese society.

What Can You Do?

By Carrie van der Wal

In my nearly three years as FCC VP/Culture and Outreach, I've put together some pretty good FCC events. However, what I feel has been my greatest FCC contribution was one that I instigated and organized *before* I was a part of the FCC Board—the 2013 FCC Family Retreat. Here's how it came about.

In the April 2009 FCC newsletter, I'd read that the board wanted someone to lead a group camping adventure. Though my family didn't become vested in FCC until almost two years later, that camping bit stuck with me. Once my family got involved with FCC—especially with Chinese Culture Camp—we relished the community camaraderie; seeing our sons interact with their adopted peers is, for all of us, the paramount benefit of FCC. However, though Chinese holiday festivals and Culture Camp potlucks were rewarding, they were also fast-paced and passed far too quickly. I kept thinking about what we could do in order to allow our families—especially our kids—to spend more time together than just a few hours at Moon Fest and CNY? Knowing that all FCC families might not have family camping gear, nor care to invest in same, a retreat with accommodations seemed like a good solution.

In October 2012, I contacted the FCC Board, sharing my ideas of an FCC retreat

at a summer camp-type facility with a meal teams feature. They were enthusiastically supportive. After the dates were chosen, I researched facilities. Once TBarM Lake Travis was targeted, Board member Alan Greenberg designated himself as my Board liaison, assisting me in finalizing all the details and—voilà!—the FCC Family Retreat was established.

Still with me? The point of my story is that you don't have to be on the FCC Board to make something happen for our community. So, what can you do to help keep us connected, bringing our families together? Need inspiration with that? Here are some examples of activities that you, with Board support, could organize and lead:

- group outing to the Hill Country Science Mill in Johnson City
- community service project
- roller skating meet-up
- bake sale fundraiser for FCC
- kids toy exchange
- geocaching group
- family choir
- float trip

In talking with our sons about why Mommy volunteers and my stint as Board President, Torin wanted to know if he could be on the Board, too. When I explained that he was too young, he suggested an FCC Kid's Board. When I then explained all the work

that Board members were expected to contribute, his proposal morphed into a “Kids Idea Club.”

Last night, we discussed possible KIC events. Our boys came up with these:

- a trip to the Corpus Christi aquarium
- water balloons/water guns afternoon
- painting at a pottery studio
- camping trip
- fishing trip
- picnic at a park
- biking
- pool party
- trampoline park
- go out to dinner
- ask ideas from other kids

The last is my favorite and, I think, the best suggestion. Ask your kids what they'd like to do for and with FCC—what events they'd like their family to organize and lead for our community. I can't think of a better way to model volunteering AND continue the connections our children have forged through years of FCC Chinese Culture Camp. So many of you repeatedly/heroically volunteered your time and efforts to sustain Chinese Culture Camp. Though we'll all miss CCC this coming summer, and assuredly, all you dedicated CCC volunteers are deserving of a break, I ask you to please consider contributing your time and talents to FCC on a different scale, helping our community stay connected. We need you. What can you do? ❖

FCC Scholarships

Established in spring 2014 by then FCC Board President Becky Harding, FCC Austin will again this year offer two scholarship opportunities to members in good standing.

The first scholarship opportunity is for young members who are returning to China for a volunteer/welfare trip. This \$500 scholarship will be awarded to an FCC member between the ages of 13 and 23 who is preparing to return to China as part of a volunteer trip where s/he will be directly involved in projects that assist the welfare of children currently in foster or welfare institutes.

While not a scholarship for a heritage trip, this scholarship is meant to help defray the costs of travel to China while undertaking welfare and/or volunteer endeavors.

The second scholarship opportunity is for young members who will be preparing to enter or return to a college or university.

This \$500 scholarship will be awarded to an FCC member between the ages of 16 and 23 when they enter or return to college or university in the fall of 2016.

Applicants for each of these scholarships will be asked to respond to a choice of essay topics; their responses will be judged blindly by a committee independent of the FCC board. The scholarship application and full submission directions will be posted on the FCC Austin website beginning March 28, 2016. The deadline for submission is May 9th. Scholarship winners will announced on June 14th. FCC Board member Mark Estes will oversee these scholarship opportunities. ❖

Smile.Amazon.Com — An Easy Way to Donate

Did you know that you can easily donate to FCC Austin when you shop at Amazon? By using their Amazon Smile feature, 0.5% of your purchases comes to FCC as a donation. By visiting <https://smile.amazon.com> and selecting FCC Austin, you can contribute with just a few clicks. Note that you must select the FCC Austin chapter when it asks you which organization you wish to support; be sure to choose ours, as there are other FCC chapters as well. Search the available recipient organizations with the search term “Families with Children from China” and then scroll through to the Austin Chapter. Though not all Amazon purchases might be eligible, we noticed that Amazon tells you once shopping if an item is “Amazon-Smile” eligible the same way it tells you if an item is Prime eligible. Thank you for your support! ❖

Connect with Us!

Below is a list of opportunities to connect with fellow FCC members on a regular basis.

Mom's Lunch Wednesdays

Every Wednesday, Austin area Moms connected via adoption meet for lunch at Galaxy Cafe on Mesa Boulevard. If you would like to be on the list and reminded of each week's meeting, please contact Sandi Sykora-Ross at: rosyk@austin.rr.com.

Book Club

This group is open to all Moms and meets at a restaurant monthly to discuss the current book. We are not a serious group but enjoy a wide variety of literature. For information, please contact Abby Turner at: abby0814@icloud.com.

Mom's Night Out

On the last Tuesday of each month, adoptive moms meet for dinner at various restaurants for a mom's night out. For information contact Abby Turner at: abby0814@icloud.com. ❖

Letter from the Ex-President

By Alan Greenberg

After 5.5 years on the board—3.5 as Treasurer and 2 as President, I swim off into the good night with fond memories of formerly-new-friends-now-old-pals, school and church gymnasiums teeming with our kids wearing yellow or green t-shirts (and the kids were howling over their fun), dumpling-making lessons, and most important: a great community of like-minded souls who are doing their best to raise thriving kids. Okay, we're not always like-minded.

Like the time a few weeks ago when one of our littlest and sweetest members, maybe five or six years old, said to me at

Chinese New Year: "Are the big lion people coming?" I said, "You mean the lion dancers?" She said, "Yes." I said, "No, they couldn't make it this year so we're having a little dance." She smiled and said, "That's good. I don't like them, they're too loud."

What's the point to this story? We're a diverse community—doctors and lawyers, social workers and homemakers, politicians and teachers, artists and scientists. And we have a diverse set of kids that all want and need different things. As you all know what Mick sang, "you can't always get what you want, but if you try sometime you find... you get what you need."

I like to think those who came before me and those who are coming after (thanks Carrie!) have created something that will get you what you need – when it can. It won't always be able to, but you have to ask—give something in return by asking and then helping to make it happen.

So best wishes to all. I'm not disappearing as I swim away... I see a few rocks on which to rest in coming months, including the Ricki's Promise screening I am coordinating, and the retreat.

It's been a true pleasure to be the Prez. Take care of you and yours. ❖

Year of the Book, Year of the Baby, Year of the Fortune Cookie by Andrea Cheng, Illustrations by Patrice Barton

by Abby Turner

This is a wonderful series of books about a Chinese American girl and her family. *Year of the Book* is about Anna's fourth grade year, her friends, and her love of reading. The author voices Anna's thoughts in a realistic and complete way. Anna thinks about her Chinese appearance and wonders about her classmates' lives. In *Year of the Baby*, Anna's family adopts a baby girl from China. The baby has a few developmental delays. Anna considers her new sister's health and China's one child policy. Anna incorporates her sister into her science fair project for 5th grade. Anna thinks about her friends' positive characteristics and differences. She learns to appreciate their strengths and her own. *Year of the Fortune Cookie* takes Anna to middle school. She feels out of place and wonders if she is more Chinese or more American. She visits China and makes some discoveries. Anna is a thoughtful and smart child. The race, adoption and school issues are well considered and various points of view are represented. I loved all of these books and would recommend them to any girls between first and fourth grade. ❖

FCC Austin Has a Library!

Our collection features books and DVDs for children and adults. We have titles that feature Asian children and stories of China. We have documentaries about searching and reunions. There are picture books for reading about adoption and parenting ideas for adoptive parents. The list is on the FCC website under Library. If you would like an item, please contact me at abby0814@icloud.com. I will either bring it or mail it to you. I will provide a way to return it. There are no due dates or late fees. Check it out! ❖

Meet the New FCC Board of Directors



Carrie van der Wal
FCC Board President & Mom
to Odin (9) and Torin (9)



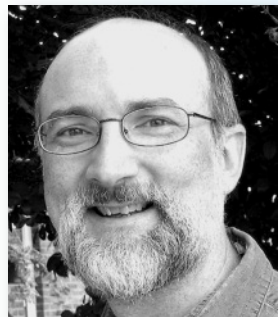
Christine DeVries
VP Culture and Outreach
& Mom to Sara (6) and Tessa (5)



Nelda Bullis
VP Membership
& Mom to Elaina (7)



Jena Goodridge
Treasurer & Mom to Emily (12)
and Zachary (9)



Mark Estes
Secretary & Dad to Claire (6)

We Need You!

FCC dues keep this organization going. FCC dues cover all our various FCC expenditures, large and small; they fund our two FCC teen scholarships and also pay for our FCC post office box. Your annual \$30 investment in our community goes in to the fund that pays for insurance, both for our events and for the organization overall. We use your dues to help pay for all that our FCC members enjoy at the “free” Moon Fest each year such as crafts, Moon Cakes, the Lion Dance performers, the balloon artist and even the “Hello! My Name is” stickers. Your dues also help pay for a small storage facility to (finally) keep all our FCC gear in one place, such as the Moon Fest raft as well as all the components and tubs of materials from years of Chinese Culture Camp. Happily, having all of that gathered together and easily accessible, we were able to use many of the craft supplies from Culture Camp again at our recent Chinese New Year celebration. Yes, we’re a frugal Board but we literally can’t do all this without your dues.

If you haven’t already, please renew your FCC Family Membership. Why not do it right now? Everything you need is on our website: <http://www.fccaustin.org/members.html>, including a new PayPal feature. Your PayPal donation of \$30 or more establishes your FCC membership for the current calendar year. Thank you for your continued support. ❖

2016: Celebrating the Year of the Monkey

Families with Children from China celebrated the Year of the Monkey on Sunday February 21st at the Asian American Resource Center. Close to 175 members, friends, and volunteers gathered together to join in on the fun. The Austin Chinese Senior choir and April Rain School of Dance entertained the audience throughout the afternoon.

Kids and adults alike enjoyed a balloon artist, face painter, crafts, food, a noodle pulling demonstration, and of course, the annual noodle eating contest. Stepping down as President, Alan Greenberg awarded two President's Awards: 1) to Robin Davis, who has put on events for FCC Austin for many years, and 2) to UT China Care, an organization near and dear to our hearts. We also enjoyed games with the Murchison Chinese club and a new FCC board of directors was elected. Some lucky kids won giant stuffed animals in the raffle and the afternoon concluded with a spirited dance contest.

Thank you to the host of volunteers who contributed to making this celebration a success, and we all look forward to celebrating the Year of the Rooster in 2017!! ❖

