

# Families with Children from China

## Austin, Texas Chapter

Spring Newsletter

April, 2017



## President's Note

Fellow families: Thanks for entrusting me as your new FCC Austin Chapter president! I hope to help shepherd this great organization, for my time, half as well as the previous board presidents have.

I've always appreciated Families with Children from China: we as a group share a family existence that is special, and difficult, and joyous all at the same time. Being together with FCC and you reminds me of the gifts that are always present in my own family, but that I otherwise might take for granted, or see only through the prism of my childhood background. Celebrating and sharing events with you reminds me of the deep cultural identity that must be felt by Kathie's and my daughters.

Perhaps you—like me—have experienced that it is easy to forget that our children may look different from others around us, or that they came from another culture. While this forgetting surely results from our deep love for them, we owe it to them not to forget. I have to remember that they view their world, and our world, through a prism of Asian identity—maybe often, maybe everyday. I'm sure I will never really know what they experience.

I was born and raised in Midland, Texas. As an undergraduate, I escaped to Austin and studied liberal arts and anthropology at UT Austin. I went on, in the late 1980s, to study architecture in the Boston area and happily discovered a real city, a city with ethnic neighborhoods that gave me my first look at—among other things—an American Chinatown. There I had my first taste, and smell (mmm!) of noodle soup and Chinese culture. After working in San Francisco and Stuttgart, Germany for nearly six years, I moved back to Austin where I bound my life with Kathie's. Ella Jiao and Qiu Li first graced us with their love and silliness in 2008 and 2010, during two epic voyages to China, and we became a family. In the ensuing months and years, I watched Kathie expose our girls, and ourselves, to enriching resources like Families with Children from China. Had it been just me, having grown up in my privileged and homogenous Midland, Texas, I'm afraid I would have missed FCC. Kathie has taught me a lot, and I have trailed along dutifully.

But in this role, I'm not trailing anymore. I will do my best to allow our board and organization to serve you. And I hope I can touch FCC in a positive way that maybe even feathers with some of my interests. For instance, I'm setting up an afternoon "design" session at a local P. Terry's restaurant in August between willing FCC kids and my friend, Michael Hsu AIA, IIDA, renowned Austin architect. [Michael is the P. Terry's architect as well as the creator of other countless, amazing buildings around Austin.]

My hope for this upcoming year is that our board reinforces the bonds and community we already have in Austin, but also makes FCC sticky—like flypaper—for new families that hear about us and meet us. I hope that it continues to expose our children to the many important and creative Chinese and Asian role models living among us in our community.

If you see me straying off course, feel free to push me back on track; I will listen. I'm still learning about this organization, and many, if not most of you, know it better than I do. In return I will also ask you, the life-blood of FCC, to continue to pitch in and keep this organization vibrant and exciting to our children and to us. See you at the Family Retreat on the 28th!

Tom Hurt, President FCC-Austin

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# In April: Our Annual FCC Family Retreat

Join us for the 2017 FCC Family Retreat, from Friday, April 28 through Sunday, April 30!

This will be our fourth gathering at **TBarM Lake Travis** in Spicewood, Texas and we anticipate more campers than ever before. Based on first-come, first-served availability, you can reserve your family's cabin by sending in your registration materials post-marked no later than April 8th.

Activities may include the following: letting your kids run around to their hearts' content; planning and cooking a meal with



a team; rock wall climbing; lots of great conversation; relaxation in the Great Outdoors; s'mores around the campfire; visiting with old friends or making new ones. If you can only make it for the day, consider coming out as a Saturday Day Guest and attend Our China Stories founder and local adoptive parent Jena Heath's Saturday afternoon presentation on Birth Parent Searching. Her presentation will document the experiences of those who have talked with her about finding first families. She will also share some resources for those who want to try to make these connections. She does this as a fellow adoptive parent and as a researcher, not as an expert on birth parent searching. The presentation is included in your registration and open to all retreat participants. Jena is happy to field your questions about it in advance. Contact her directly at

[jenaheath@gmail.com](mailto:jenaheath@gmail.com).

All registration materials are posted on our FCC Austin website Events page. To register either as campers or Day Guests, please complete the required forms and, along with your check, send to the address indicated within the materials, no later than April 8th. We hope to see you there! ❖





# UT China Care Playgroup

Playgroup is a biweekly event facilitated by UT China Care members where local Chinese adoptees interact with UT students during the school semester. It is an opportunity for members to serve as mentors and provide guidance to the kids as they explore their Asian American identity. We often invite performers that expose the children to their Chinese heritage. Last fall, we invited the Love of China Dance School, Texas Wushu, and a predominantly Asian American a-cappella group. This spring, we have invited Texas Lion Dance Company, a calligraphy artist, and an art group to the playgroups.

We strive to bring diverse performances each semester so that the children can get a greater appreciation for the rich culture of China. Besides showcasing performers, we also do arts and crafts and have playtime on the playground. Each semester, we try to plan a fun field trip and picnic at the park. Last fall, we took a field trip to the

Austin Thinkery, a children's museum that features science exhibits and workshops.

At playgroup, we encourage our children to embrace their Chinese heritage. We also hope to provide a setting where friendships between children and relationships between China Care members and children can naturally develop. Our children grow up in unique situations, situations that many of their peers may not understand or be able to relate to. Playgroup is unique as it offers a setting of mutual understanding that stems from a shared experience.

Below are our upcoming dates and performances for Playgroup this spring:

- April 9th: Calligraphy Artist
- April 23rd: Field Trip

We typically hold Playgroup at the Dell Jewish Community Center from 2–4 pm every other Sunday. If you are interested in joining or have questions, please email us at [pg.utchinacare@gmail.com](mailto:pg.utchinacare@gmail.com). We welcome new families and are always happy to see new faces! ❖

## Connect with Us!

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

### Mom's Lunch Wednesdays

Please contact Kathy Berke at [kathyberke@yahoo.com](mailto:kathyberke@yahoo.com) to be included in email announcements and reminders.

### Book Club

This group is open to all Moms and meets at a restaurant monthly to discuss the current book. We enjoy a wide variety of literature. For information, please contact Abby Turner at: [abbyo814@icloud.com](mailto:abbyo814@icloud.com).

### Mom's Night Out

On the last Wednesday of each month, adoptive moms meet for dinner at various restaurants for a night out. For information contact Abby Turner at: [abbyo814@icloud.com](mailto:abbyo814@icloud.com). ❖

## 2017 FCC Summer Series

**Beginning of Summer Swim Party and Grill Picnic** at Beverly S. Sheffield Northwest District Park—just bring your swimsuit and grill meat, hotdogs or patties. FCC will have buns, fixings, chips and juice.

Tentative date (please check website for updates and details): Sunday, June 4th, 4–7 p.m.

**Afternoon of Design Fun** with Michael Hsu, AIA, well-known Austin architect and creator of the P. Terry's restaurants, or "futuristic burger transporters" as they are known in the field of architecture.

Kids will get to practice drawing and make models of their own creations, and Michael will show some of his design creations. FCC to provide art supplies.

Tentative date (please check website for updates and details): Sunday August 6th, 3–5 p.m., at a central Austin P. Terry's, (exact location TBD).

Check the **FCC Austin Website** for more summer events. We are hoping to organize a skating party around mid-summer, as well as other FCC get-togethers. ❖

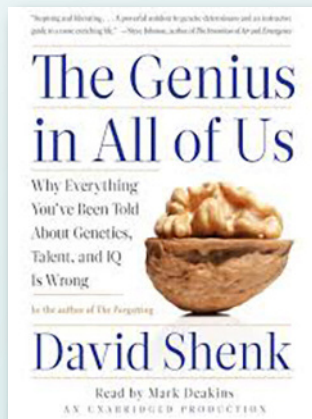
# Book Reviews

By Abby Turner

## The Genius in All of Us: Why Everything You've Been Told About Genetics, Talent, and IQ Is Wrong

By David Shenk

As an adoptive parent, I am often thoughtful about genetics and how they impact my children's lives. Shank reveals the current scientific knowledge about nurture plus nature in a readable and interesting way. If you enjoy nonfiction this is a great read.



## Hag-Seed

By Margaret Atwood

This was FCC Book Club's read for March. We found it thought-provoking and engaging. Recommended by all.

Felix is at the top of his game as Artistic Director of the Makeshiweg Theatre Festival. After an act of unforeseen treachery, Felix is living in exile in a backwoods hovel, haunted by memories of his beloved lost daughter, Miranda. Revenge is brewing in the shape of a theatre course at a nearby prison. Here, Felix and his inmate actors will put on his *Tempest* and snare

the traitors who destroyed him. Margaret Atwood's unique take on Shakespeare's play of enchantment, retribution, and second chances leads us on an interactive, illusion-ridden journey filled with new surprises and wonders of its own.



## Unidentified Suburban Object By Mike Jung

Chloe has just about had it with people not knowing the difference between someone who's Chinese, Japanese, or Korean. She's had it with people thinking that everything she does well—getting good grades, winning first chair in the orchestra, et cetera—are because she's ASIAN.

Of course, her own parents don't want to have anything to DO with their Korean background. Any time Chloe asks them a question they change the subject. They seem perfectly happy to be the only Asian family in town. For school, Chloe finally gets to explore her family history. But what she unearths is light-years away from what she expected. A funny novel for middle graders that explores racial stereotypes and has a crazy twist! ❖

# Family Focus

By Clay Robison

In 1993, my wife, Jena Heath, read a cover story in the *New York Times Magazine* by the father of a baby girl adopted from China. The story was Jena's introduction to China's One Child Policy and the international adoption program. It moved her, and stuck with her. Lucky for me, it stuck with her for 15 years. We brought our daughter, Caroline, home in April 2008. She had just turned 2. Jena was 46 and I was 61.

Many of us in the FCC family know what it means to wait for years to bring your child home. Many know what it is to be an "older" parent, facing midlife and diapers at the same time. The particular worries, frustrations and overriding joys of waiting for our children, meeting and getting to know them, seizing the opportunity to



*FCC board member Clay Robison, with Caroline and Jena Heath.*

engage with and commit to learning about a new country, a new culture, is the ride of a lifetime. I am honored to share these experiences with you, as an adoptive dad, and now, as your FCC-Austin Treasurer.

Today, Caroline is almost 11, a rising sixth grader whose favorite subject in school is Chinese. She adores my two older children and they have embraced their little sister. After spending decades as journalists in newsrooms in Alabama, North Carolina, Washington, D.C. and Texas, Jena and I are

fully involved in our new chapters. Jena is an associate professor at St. Edward's University and I am a spokesman for the Texas State Teachers Association. Our family is about to embark on our first trip back to China since Caroline came home with us. Jena and I are excited and a bit nervous to, in effect, introduce Caroline to the country of her birth. I look forward to sharing our experiences with you all and to hearing about your families and the adventures you share. ❖



# Meet the New FCC Board of Directors



**Tom Hurt**  
FCC Board President & Dad  
to Ella Jao (10) and Qiu Li (9)



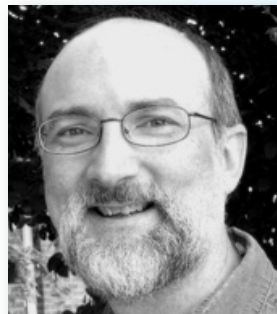
**Dianne Harwood**  
VP Events & Mom to Alison (12)  
and Joshua (11)



**Nelda Bullis**  
VP Membership  
& Mom to Elaina (8)



**Clay Robison**  
Treasurer & Dad to Caroline (11)



**Mark Estes**  
Secretary & Dad to Claire (7)

## 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 PayPal feature. Your PayPal donation of \$30 or more establishes your FCC membership for the current calendar year. Thank you for your continued support. ❖

# 2017: Celebrating the Year of the Rooster



## Chinese New Year Silent Auction Results by Dianne Harwood

There are many reasons I love Families with Children from China, but a particular favorite, is that we get the opportunity to help the children in China who are still waiting for their forever families. One way FCC Austin raises money for charitable donations is through the Silent Auction at our annual Chinese New Year celebration. For several years, we did not have a silent auction at CNY, but 2017 saw its return.

Many people contributed their time, talents, muscles, and resources to the auction. Thank you, thank you, thank you to the wonderful donations from FCC members, especially Holly Brooke, Kathie Tovo and Marilyn Cole. Volunteers, including Kathie Tovo, Jan Bach, and Carol Duncan, prepared for, set up, worked, and closed out the auction. Ladies, I appreciate your help more than I can say. Thanks to all of you, and our eager buyers; we raised more than \$900!

Some of the most popular items were the artwork, most of which were donated by the Brooke family, and the quilts, handmade by Deanne Brown. These beautiful quilts were used for our Culture Camp, and have special memories attached to them for many of our kids who attended the camps. They were among the most hotly contested items, and I hope the winners truly enjoy them.

It's not too soon to start thinking about items for next year's auction. The auction only works if we get donations. Please consider making a donation for the 2018 silent auction. ❖