



RealPower Pie

by Chris Jeong



Felix the Pie Man in the kitchen.

RealPower is a project that focuses on practices to improve the health and well-being of all in the community we call Cameron House. On Fridays, the focus is on food and youth.

As a metaphor, RealPower Pie is used to summarize a typical Friday—simple, tasty, and deeply satisfying—but there are a few key things that make for great pie. After a slice of RealPower Pie, the taste buds are dancing and the heart is singing.

As I pull into the CH lot, two things immediately make me smile. There are a few choice parking spots on the shady side, and one of them is occupied by Felix's car. He beat me to the kitchen again and is completely focused on his flaky crust. Two months ago he decided to challenge himself, learn something completely new, how to make pie. Custard, chocolate, banana, and his famous Yellow Pie have all been gifted to us through the handiwork of Mr. Pie Man.

Why is this significant? For many years, those same hands along with a quick mind, were the primary tools employed by a robust police officer assigned to motorcycle duty. Six and a half years ago, while

on a Toys for Tots escort detail, he got into a terrible accident, sustained life-threatening injuries, and is still recovering. Although his left hand doesn't grip like it used to, his memories fade too fast, and he is in constant pain, you would not know this if you saw him in the kitchen making his pies.

RealPower is about resilience, clear purpose, and love. Felix is an inspirational example of all three. He has helped out as an adult mentor with the Bilingual Afterschool Program (BAP) and Kitchen Medicine Apprentice (KMA) programs for over a year. Unless he is taking care of his own family, Felix is there every Friday to cook for, encourage, and teach the kids.

Felix's sidekick MaryEllen arrives early, ready to get down to business. "Sidekick" is only accurate in the sense that the two of them are consistently there to execute the KMA plan for the day—usually revealed to them only minutes before the real fun begins.

MaryEllen is a sharp, well-traveled woman with many talents, interests and insights—a real powerhouse. Though her professional cooking skills were honed and utilized in such places as the Blair (White) House, she is quite okay working in our humble community kitchen—where equipment moves like the wind, dirty dishes pile up spontaneously, and the Pie Man is sending flour in all directions.

RealPower is not about domination, but rather, it is about connection. Using food, cooking and culture as the medium, the KMA program strives to connect youth to their peers, to their younger brothers and sisters, and to their older "aunts and uncles."

In order to create the conditions necessary for every-

Carnival in the Year of the Horse!

Annual community event raised over \$40,000!



The annual Cameron Carnival is a longstanding tradition in Chinatown. It truly is fun for the whole family!

For the 66th time, the Cameron House staff, students, volunteers, and partners came together to provide our community with fun and fellowship on the first Saturday of May. The main yard of Cameron House was festive all day, filled with kids playing games, winning goldfish, and enjoying amazing balloon animals.

Ken, a participant in our Bilingual Afterschool Program and Friday Night Club, looked excited. “I won three goldfish!” When asked what else he was going to do at Carnival, Ken answered, “Everything!”

The official Dunko Champions were Kim Tang and Kim Yee with 27 dunks each during their 20 minute shifts. Congratulations! Josh Hee was dunked 40 times in about 40 minutes, around 20 times by his loving younger brother, Robert.

When asked what else he was going to do at Carnival, Ken answered, “Everything!”

A big shout out goes to Executive Director May Leong who was dunked 20 times and also to Finance Director Bill Vigna who started off his very first Carnival with a seat on Dunko!

This year we partnered with the Chinese Historical Society of America, located down the block from Cameron House. They provided a jolt of energy with live music by the Francis Wong Unit, a traditional Dragon dance by Kei Lun Martial Arts, a dumpling making class, and a lively Line Dance session led by Cameron House alumni Bob and Leslie Chan!

As always, food was a huge part of what made Carnival fun. Traditional favorites Jade Waffles and Thai Iced Tea were complimented by Red Bean Eggettes and Hawaiian Burgers. The new premium meal, featuring Mayan pork and seasoned rice, was a hit along with the soda fountain. Of course, the Guern Fun and Spam Musubi sold out early in the day.

The Presbyterian Church in Chinatown hosted a presentation of films produced by Cameron House and a musical production by the senior commission, Oriflamme.

We want to give an especially big THANK YOU to our dedicated planning committee and the huge team of volunteers--over 220!--who made this year's Carnival possible. Thank you for all your hard work!

We hope everyone who attended had a terrific time and will continue to support Cameron House. This year, funds raised will support Summer Youth Programs.

To see Carnival pics, go to the Photo Gallery in the What's New section of our website at www.cameronhouse.org.



Oh no! Even super heroes fall to Dunko!

Angel Island Escapade

New girls programming gets its feet wet.

On March 30th, a group of nine high school girls, ranging from freshmen to seniors, embarked on a backpacking adventure to Angel Island! This was the first trip arranged for our new Girls' Programming, a part of our Youth Ministries.

Girls' Programming is composed of event-based activities specifically geared towards high school girls. Our goal is to create a positive space where teenage girls can talk to each other about issues unique to them and feel safe in a society that's still dominated by men.

The girls had a Friday afternoon lesson on packing and planning for camping trips. After trying out their backpacks, the girls ended up leaving a lot more at Cameron House than they originally intended!

The next Sunday morning, they began their adventure on the ferry, after which they hiked to the first camp site and practiced putting up tents. The next day, they reached the summit. Once there, the skies opened up and hit them with the biggest lightning and thunder storm of the year! The wind was so strong that the rain blew at the girls horizontally and many were blown backwards.

Quickly, they hiked down to the next campsite and waited at the Angel Island Immigration Station for the rain to let up, giving them time for squeezing and drying out their clothes and packs. Finally getting some respite from the storm, the girls quickly and expertly set up camp and made dinner.

This was every girls' first backpacking experience, and the first time Associate Directors Kelcie Wong and Cody Friesenborg have led a trip like this. Afterwards, several youth shared how they accomplished something they never thought they'd be able to do.

Although the rain created challenges, it helped the trip become a memorable experience. We're happy to report that all nine girls want to go backpacking again!

Special thanks to Bay Area Wilderness Training, a non-profit in the East Bay that supplied us with the training, practice, and equipment that we needed to make this trip a reality.

We hope to take the girls out on even bigger trips in the future and appreciate the community's support.



Before the trip, the girls had a training session. Lesson learned. Don't overpack!



Hiking on Angel Island. This was the first time any of these girls had gone backpacking.



Despite the thunder and lightning, the girls kept their spirits up and had a lot of fun!

A Special Message from Executive Director May Leong

I would like to touch on three topics that some people may find hard to discuss: cancer, domestic violence, and the importance of mental health.

On June 8, 2014, my father Chat Gong Leong passed away from complications caused by lung cancer. He had just turned 79. After 21 days in the hospital, including the ICU and a physical therapy facility, he never made it home. We were all devastated, especially our stepmother who took great care of him. He left behind six children and seven grandkids.

Cancer was no stranger to our family. Almost 40 years ago, my father had lung cancer. At that time, it was due to years of heavy smoking. They removed the cancerous part of his lung and after adopting a healthier nonsmoking lifestyle, he lived well beyond the five-year recovery period.

My dear mother, Oi Yee Leong, was not so lucky. She passed away from nasopharyngeal carcinoma 30 years ago, just before her 44th birthday. Although this is a rare form of cancer for the general US population, it is most prevalent among the Chinese, especially those from Southern China. Doctors call it the Chinese cancer. My mother was one of five in her family that had it, including her mother, aunt, uncle, brother, and half-brother.

Recently, I came across Canadian country music artist Terri Clark's quote, "When someone has cancer, the whole family and everyone who loves them does, too."



I found comfort in this acknowledgement of the pain I was experiencing and something much more. You see, my family history is a little more complicated because of domestic violence (DV). In addition to my parents' illnesses, I grew up with DV in our household. The adults around us didn't know how to address this and/or felt that it "wasn't that bad." I recall my mother wearing sunglasses on a cloudy day to hide her black and blue eyes as she took us to school. Our friends' parents saw this, and the reality was that we were all affected by it.

Growing up in a low-income Chinese immigrant family, we had four major challenges to overcome: (1) parents with limited educations trying their best to raise children in a country whose language they didn't speak and whose culture they didn't always understand; (2) in our community, people believed they needed to avoid those with cancer lest they catch it themselves, so it was a taboo subject to talk about; (3) we didn't know we were not alone in suffering from domestic violence and that support was available; and (4) parents who didn't value the importance of mental health or understand how it ultimately affects one's physical health and those who love them.

When our mother died, my brother and I were recent college graduates and our sisters were just in their teens. I was 22, working, and had access to counseling through my workplace healthcare plan. Through the advice of my non-Chinese friends, I sought and found a therapist to work with.

Seeing my therapist was the best thing I ever did to begin acknowledging and addressing the many issues of my childhood. It helped me start the long process of working through the grief of my mother's death. Together in our sessions, we uncovered the fact that I was depressed as a teenager and that I carried this into my adulthood. In a safe environment, I learned to build strength and a vocabulary of choices for how I could handle different responsibilities at home and at work.

This trained professional helped me feel less of a burden to friends and family because I had someone dedicated to me to confide in. Therapy comes in many forms, from one-on-one counseling to group support sessions, to couples and family counseling. There is a spectrum of services to choose from to suit each situation and personal preference.

People You'll Meet at Cameron House



Peter Shum – Counseling Intern

Peter Shum is a counseling intern at Cameron House working with individuals and families. Presently, he's getting his Master's Degree in Counseling at Western Seminary and plans to graduate in a year. Peter has a passion to serve the Chinese population, particularly people who have problems with gambling and sex addiction. Born and raised in Hong Kong, he is fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. In 1993, he came to the United States to study electrical engineering. After graduating, he worked at a company in Silicon Valley as a hardware engineer for 13 years. In his free time, Peter enjoys basketball, swimming, and hiking.

A Special Message, *continued from page 4*

After our father was admitted to the ICU, I flew to New York to join my family. When older patients are hospitalized, a variety of medications are administered to address their maladies. My father was experiencing some of the side effects from these drugs including aggressive and abusive behavior. This brought up painful memories for us.

What we thought had stopped had not. My stepmother was also experiencing domestic violence, even though it wasn't to the same degree as when we were younger. Still, it was affecting everyone who loved our parents. After this discovery, we began looking for an agency like Cameron House, one that offered culturally sensitive services for everything from cancer care and women's support groups to ESL classes to grief counseling.

Since first sharing the details of my family with CH community members, my family and I have been flooded with love, support, and prayers. On behalf of my family, I thank everyone for the wonderful care they've shown, and for the stories they've shared. We don't feel alone in what we're facing, and we are truly grateful and blessed to be part of such a devoted and compassionate community.

The complexities facing families like mine underscore the need to talk openly about the work we do at CH so that our community will no longer feel cancer, domestic violence, or mental health are topics too shameful to talk about.

As a well-established organization, we are here to help families in need, whether it's a physical illness such as cancer or challenges such as language and cultural barriers. In our youth leadership programs, we provide a safe environment where youth can make mistakes and grow, and when needed, we refer them to professionals trained in mental health counseling and care-giving.

My hope is that after reading this you will talk to others about your own experiences and the services we provide to help families in need. Even if you're not exactly sure about the latest details of our programs, we welcome you to schedule a visit or join me for a Tea with May to learn more. Or simply call (415) 781-0401 with your questions, and staff will be happy to give you more information.

Blessings to you and your loved ones.

RealPower Pie, *cont. from page 1*

one involved to learn a skill, teach it, and shine, we use the Progressive Mentor Method. The adults, Felix and MaryEllen, will teach the senior KM Apprentices how to make a Korean dish called Tteokbokki as soon as they arrive. Likewise, the senior apprentices will instruct the junior and freshman cooks. The young “pee-wees”, as we call the BAP youth, get to interact with all three levels of teachers.

RealPower embraces and engages the process of creative destruction and destructive creativity. In addition to Friday night traffic and end-of-the-week fatigue, a small group of volunteers has been meeting to plan an event for October 4, 2014 that will break new ground. We have decided to explore the subjects of growing, aging, and dying with a healthy mixture of realism and optimism. The working title for Skillfest 2014 is Living Well and Dying Free.

This is the fifth Skillfest and each one has been different. The common thread that binds them is the goal of bringing local wisdom together to share. In contrast to the past, this year’s Skillfest gathering



RealPower is about creating the conditions for everyone involved to learn a skill, teach it, and shine.

is being organized by 11 people with a diverse yet complimentary set of perspectives and skills.

Together we are undertaking the project of creating a vitality hotspot known as a “Blue Zone.” While on assignment with National Geographic researching communities around the world where people live longer, healthier lives, Dan Buettner coined the term “Blue Zone.” In addition to healthy diets and activity levels, having social structures that support intergenerational interaction, and a culture that values elderhood factor heavily into the making of a Blue Zone. This is the current thrust of this group. Skillfest 2014 will be the kick-off event for this ongoing endeavor.

For more details about this exciting event, keep an eye out for online updates and eNews.

Due to limited space, this article was edited down to fit this print issue. For a beautifully written, full-length version of Chris’ article, please visit our website.



Youth enjoy learning healthy cooking in the Kitchen Medicine program.

Cameron House empowers generations of Chinese American individuals and their families to fully participate in and contribute positively toward a healthy society. We put our Christian faith in action to help people learn, heal, and thrive.

Cameron House is located at 920 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94108. For more information call (415)781-0401 or visit www.cameronhouse.org.

A Stress-Free Day in Alameda at the USS Hornet Museum

By Yulanda Kwong, Director of Social Services Ministry



Social Services Ministry staff led a bilingual tour for survivors of cancer and domestic violence.

On June 21, the Cameron House Social Services Ministry staff led two charter buses packed with 83 people on a day trip to the USS Hornet Museum in Alameda. On that beautiful Saturday morning, we crossed the Oakland Bay Bridge from San Francisco Chinatown to the port in Alameda where the USS Hornet docks.

The USS Hornet (CV-12) is one of the legendary aircraft carriers of the United States Navy. Commissioned in 1943, she was out at sea in the Pacific during World War II, and she was most distinguished for not being destroyed or seriously damaged during the attacks. Also, the USS Hornet was selected as the Prime Recovery Ship for Apollo 11, America's first lunar landing mission in 1969.

Visiting such a legendary and historical landmark elicited positive emotions and proud feelings of being an American or being in America. Many of the participants, who are cancer survivors and domestic violence survivors, were excited to learn about the history of this amazing ship and the United States. The Social Services Ministry staff did plenty of preparation and homework on the subject of "American History" and "USS Hornet" to serve as English/Cantonese tour guides for this trip since there were no bilingual tour guides provided by the museum.

During the trip, many learned how to say the "Pledge of Allegiance" aloud for the first time. Many also commented that they "learned a lot from this trip. It was very educational and fun." The June Outing is one of the highlights of our programs and services. This is our 17th year coordinating this annual outing. Many folks are already looking forward to next year's outing. One participant expressed that she "did not sleep well yesterday night because I was so excited about today's trip."

Many of the individuals and families who we serve are working long hours and in multiple jobs. They may not have access to transportation, or the language capability, or even know of places outside the city where they might go with their families. The only places they encounter every day are their home, workplace, and immediate neighborhood. Therefore, we hope to continue to offer these opportunities to the people we serve so they can explore and learn new things while enjoying a stress-free and fun day outside of San Francisco.



Eighty-three people packed two buses to see the legendary USS Hornet.

Phone-a-thon

September 2, 3, and 4



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