



CAMERON HOUSE

金美倫堂

Quarterly Newsletter

CURRENT

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Positive Growth

by Marijana Pavlich, Development & Communications Manager



You're in a strange city in a foreign country. You can't understand what people are saying. You can't read street signs, newspapers, job listings, or application forms. You might live in a 10x10 foot room with your family and share a kitchen and bathroom with several other families. Or you're in your native country but live with foreign-born parents or grandparents. You speak two languages and sometimes feel torn between two cultures.

This might sound familiar to some in the Cameron community—if it's not you, it might be someone you know. Imagine the day-to-day stress immigrants face, and the stresses they endure while trying to adjust to a new culture with different political, legal, educational, and social service systems.

The challenges of trying to navigate a new environment while struggling to learn its languages—linguistic and social—are numerous. If someone with the resources of Robin Williams, the comedian, can suffer and succumb to severe depression, then how much more difficult is it for people struggling with poverty, linguistic barriers,

unemployment, discrimination, violence, and reduced access to healthcare and social services?

Within the Chinese American community, many people still regard “health” as referring only to physical health—catching a cold, breaking a leg, or having a chronic illness like tuberculosis (TB). Health also refers to emotional and mental health, to the stress, anxiety, and depression that affects all people everywhere but sometimes becomes so intense and so long-lasting that it interferes with people's lives and can even cause physical illness.

Asians in America have high rates of suicide, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) coupled with low rates of accessing mental health services. Suicide is more common for this group than the overall population. In particular, older Chinese women and girls from 15–24 have especially high suicide rates compared to other groups.

Some of the factors that increase the risk of acute depression and anxiety are poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, domestic violence, the challenges of acculturation, and isolation from friends and family. These factors are prevalent among San Francisco's Chinese community which still has a large percentage of first and second generation Americans.

The two biggest reasons for reluctance to seek help stem from a belief that such issues should be dealt with only by the individual or within the family. There is still a strong social stigma attached to seeking mental health counseling. In fact, many people do not understand

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Letter from Executive Director, May Leong



As one of the oldest faith-based organizations serving San Francisco's Chinatown, the timing is right for Cameron House to take a deep look at its identity to ensure that it's on target and working as hard as it needs to in order to strengthen the positive impact we have on our community. Over the last year, we have undertaken an identity audit to reveal how we are experienced and perceived, to review how we talk about ourselves, and to see if our current identity assets are on target for building a strong future for Cameron House.

With the help of our partner Kite Inc., we conducted over 45 one-on-one, in-depth interviews involving external and internal participants including: staff, Board, donors, alumni, parents, and partners. Five focus groups included parents, youth, young adult and social service clients, and an online alumni survey that garnered over a 20% response rate. We also included an online review of our peer organizations.

The audit revealed a number of strengths for Cameron House: (1) our long and strong history of unbroken service; (2) committed and passionate people who believe in the mission and delivered results with such a huge impact; (3) external stakeholders who believe in the powerful work we do; and (4) an alumni community which appears unparalleled with multi-generational members involved in service and life-long relationships. In addition, the shared perception is that Cameron House is unique in providing a compre-

hensive, Christian-based approach.

Challenges were also revealed and fell mainly into the following areas: (1) the need for funding diversification; (2) low awareness of our organization; (3) a need for deeper clarity and understanding of who we are, what we do, and where we are going; and (4) to strategically move beyond the way we have always done things as we move into the 21st century.

The committee that worked on the project included staff and board representatives to ensure that the results would be true to who the organization is and that the strengths of Cameron House will continue to be valuable in the future.

As a result of this work, we have updated our mission statement, defined our faith statement, and refined our values. It was also revealed that we needed to update our visual identity and communications, so the Board and staff have been working together to create a strategic plan for the future. We look forward to completing this within the next year. We are excited and proud to share with you our updated statements.

Mission Statement

Cameron House empowers generations of Chinese American individuals and their families to fully participate in and contribute positively toward a healthy society. Through our Christian values, we enable every person to learn, heal and thrive.

Faith Statement

Rooted in the Christian faith and our Presbyterian heritage, we believe that God calls us to be an empowering presence in the community. We provide a safe place, are a trusted friend and advocate, meet people where they are, and walk with them as they fulfill their lives. We are a resource for people to explore faith and spirituality, and we believe and share Christian principles:

- Our work is a manifestation of God's love—we demonstrate God's loving kindness through our service and stewardship.
- All people are welcomed. Every person is

worthy of love and respect and will be treated as such.

- We promote justice for all.

Values statement

Our values guide our behavior toward each other and the people we serve. They embrace our demonstration of God's love through acts of kindness and sensitivity in all that we do and say:

- **Community.** We value our shared legacy with the Chinese immigrant community, with the Cameron House community, and our partnerships in the greater community.
- **Authenticity.** We are honest and genuine; we respectfully speak the truth with compassion and loving kindness that affirms and enriches each individual and our community as a whole.
- **Servant leadership.** Our leadership approach is geared to advancing the common good. In order to lead, we must also follow, contribute as peers, and serve in our communities.
- **Accountability.** We hold ourselves and each other accountable in the work we do and the communities we serve. We evaluate, learn and apply the knowledge gained to strengthen our impact and advance our mission.

We have strong relationships with so many people who have remained loyal to Cameron House over time. We deeply value these relationships and look forward to working together to make an even bigger impact as we continue serving the youth and families in our community so that they can learn, heal, and thrive.

Positive Growth *(cont. from page 1)*

how counseling works or how they could benefit from it. Even those experiencing domestic violence often don't understand how talking to a "stranger" can be beneficial to them.

The caring staff at Cameron House can provide guidance to people experiencing difficult times in their lives or refer them to other agencies. Our mission is to help people learn, heal, and thrive. We provide a Chinese Cancer Support Group, services for survivors of domestic violence, and a program called Accelerate to ease the challenges of acculturation for immigrants. For families experiencing difficulties, our successful Interactive Parent-Child Workshops offer advice and techniques to help improve intergenerational communication which can be especially problematic for immigrant parents and their American born or raised children.

Our Social Services Ministry collaborates with our Youth Ministries to identify youth who may be experiencing excessive distress at home or at school. Staff provide a safe, nurturing environment where children and youth can build healthy relationships with peers, youth leaders, and mentors.

If you are in need of help or have any questions about Cameron House social services, please contact Yulanda Kwong, Director of Social Services Ministry at 415-481-0401 x131.



Sharing the Holiday Spirit: Harvest Home

Every November, Cameron House provides low-income families with grocery bags full of culturally-appropriate food items for Thanksgiving. Last year, we filled 170 bags with 10 different delicious, nutritious products.

Our goal this year is to distribute 190 grocery bags between November 24-26. With a \$20 value worth of items in each bag, we will need \$4,000 to succeed.

We hope the community will support us in this effort and together we can feed our families in need!

Cameron Scholarships Awarded



Winners with donors David & Pauline Chan, Clovis & Pat Shem, and Josephine & Kenneth Kwong.

On Friday, June 20th, the Donaldina Cameron House Foundation presented the 2014 Academic and Vocational Scholarship Awards. Thanks to donors David and Pauline Chan, Micah Chu and Foy White-Chu, Kenneth and Josephine Kwong, and Clovis and Pat Shem, over \$16,000.00 in scholarship funds were awarded to graduating high school seniors.

Youth completed an online application that included an essay describing how participation in Cameron House programs had impacted their lives, educational and career goals, and how the scholarship would help further their academic plans. Then they interviewed with the Award Review Committee.

This year's scholarship recipients were Samantha Ly, Tiffany Mak, Anh Huynh, Kimberly Young, Flora Chen, Kelsey Johe, Gary Chan, Diana Chen, Christopher Chan, and En Fa Huang. Their profiles can be found on the Cameron House website.

These scholarships have meant a lot to past recipients. "The extra funds helped me give back to the two mentors who have supported me this whole ride, my parents," says Robby Yee, a 2011 recipient. "They are my financial support, and with the scholarship money, I knew that I was able to help them out. Even if it was just a little bit, it still gave me encouragement to strive to be the person they wanted me to be." Robby is currently a senior at

San Diego State University majoring in Kinesiology, the study of human movement.

Robby's many years in the Cameron House youth program have instilled in him the value of helping others. His long-term goal is to open his own physical therapy clinic. "I want to be able to make change in the lives of the people around me. I also want to give back to all of the institutions and programs that have given me the world, such as Cameron House!"

A scholarship also helped Kelley Yee who used her award to purchase books and supplies while studying Management Science at UC San Diego in 2009. It helped her focus on her studies. "During college, I worked part-time at the UCSD Catering Company. If I hadn't received the scholarship, I would have had to put in more time at my school job to cover some of my academic expenses."



Josephine & Kenneth Kwong with scholarship recipients.

Kelley currently works as a Senior Health Care Consultant at a Bay Area technology company and serves on the Cameron House Board of Directors.

The scholarship meant more to her than just money. "It was great knowing that there was someone in the Cameron House community that was willing to support me, even though I had never met them before. Knowing that really reaffirmed the huge impact Cameron House had on my life while growing up."

Celebrating Survival and Support

By Marijana Pavlich and Mei Teng

On July 12th, Cameron House's Chinese Cancer Support Group celebrated its 20th anniversary. Nearly 50 guests had fun dressing up for the photo booth, folding origami cranes, and sharing their experiences as a part of this special group. A DVD slideshow was created to commemorate this occasion. Each member received a copy with pictures of all the June Outings (1995 to 2014), the Thanksgiving parties, the Christmas celebrations, and other activities.

For entertainment, there were some very heart-felt performances. One member rewrote the lyrics of a Chinese song to express his feelings about being a cancer survivor. Other members composed a beautiful poem expressing appreciation for all that Cameron House has done for them. The festive group also celebrated July, August, and September birthdays—for survivors, a birthday signifies another year of successfully fighting cancer.

The group was thrilled to see their old friend, Mrs. Quan, a member since the group was established in 1995. Also present was Mrs. Lin who accompanied her husband to meetings for 10 years. During her husband's recovery journey, she walked each step with him and encouraged him along the way. She was so grateful to meet other cancer patients at the support group where she learned different food remedy recipes and exercise techniques as well as receiving emotional comfort.

The Cancer Support Group has met twice monthly for the last 20 years with 40-45 members attending each time. These gatherings provide support and valuable information for members and their families. Cancer can be especially hard to cope with in the Chinese population because of misinformation and stigma. The support group educates the community to know that cancer is NOT contagious; it cannot be "caught" through contact with others. In fact, people fighting cancer need the help and compassion of their family and friends more than ever while going through treatment. In August, Mei Teng, the group coordinator, asked the support group members to each raise \$10 for Phone-a-thon, and without hesi-

tation, they donated \$290! "I was shocked that they gave right away, and so much from their own pocket," said Mei. "A lot of them are living on social assistance so they don't have much to spare, but they still gave. They wanted to show their appreciation for the services they've received."

The group, Friends of Ai (Love), was formed by volunteers who wanted to offer emotional support for group members. The Cameron House staff trained them to visit patients in the hospital or those not well enough to leave their homes.

The Chinese Cancer Support Group was the first, and one of only two support groups in San Francisco for Chinese-speaking cancer survivors. This is also the only group designed for men as well as women and their families. Unfortunately, one of the main founders for this group notified us that they won't be providing any more grants. This program is too important to the community to lose, so Cameron House is dedicated to keeping it running.

Mei knows it's something special. "I feel blessed to join this program as a coordinator. I've learned to appreciate the many good things in life just by being around the wonderful group members."

Mei understands from personal experience how devastating it is for patients and their families to go through life-threatening illnesses and treatments. She feels it is her calling to work with cancer survivors and their families. Mei is also a Social Service Team Manager who oversees domestic violence case management, the volunteer group Friends of Cameron House (FOCH), the Accelerate program for immigrants, the Women's Support Group, and all the Social Services Ministry special events. If you need more information about this program, please contact Mei Teng at 415-781-0401 x127.



Mei Teng, center, and the Chinese Cancer Support Group celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Westminster Woods: Generations of Community

by Josh Chuck, Alumni & Special Projects Coordinator



Young campers enjoying the woods.



Young campers by the camp fire.

“When I am away at Westminster Woods, I am able to leave the stress of everyday life and school at home and spend time with my friends. I am able to take a step back and smell the roses for one out of fifty-two weeks.”

“While at Westminster Woods, away from the city noise and busy schedules of everyday activities, you can reflect, discover, and grow.”

Both of these quotes came from attendees of Westminster Woods summer camp. The first is from Max Hum who is currently a 10th-grader at Lowell High School. The second is from his mother, Belinda, who attended Westminster Woods over 30 years ago.

Belinda pointed out that many amenities of the camp that Max currently enjoys were not available when she attended. For example, there wasn't a playground, volleyball

court, or “West Got Talent” portion of campfire.

What does remain today is an environment in which youth can feel free to explore who they are and who they want to become.

Belinda said, “Growing up as a city kid of immigrant parents, there were few opportunities to travel and camp. Westminster Woods provided those opportunities to get out of the house, the neighborhood, and the city. I've appreciated the experience from Westminster Woods then and now.”

This year, 114 young people spent six days at the camp, and Cameron House provided financial assistance for 27 of them.

The theme was Self-Acceptance: Unlocking the Real Me. Our youth and leaders were encouraged to unburden themselves of things that prevented them from accepting themselves as the amazing individuals they are. The four daily messages were: Letting Go of Anger, Letting Go of Fear, Letting Go of Mistakes, and Letting Go of Others. During evening vespers, several youth shared powerful personal stories of trying to let go of these burdens.

Max was inspired. “This year's theme of self-acceptance helped me to keep my composure and to relax in times of trouble. The guest speakers really touched me. Because of Lauren Quock's personal story of gaining acceptance from herself and others, I am encouraged to be myself despite what others may think.”

Belinda is elated her son can benefit from the same sense of community that she did decades ago.

“You are only a kid for 18 years, and then you have the rest of your life to be an adult. While being a kid, you can get dirty, run free, laugh hard, do silly things, but also wonder, discover, and experience all that is possible. The Cameron House youth program provides a safe, loving, and supportive environment for the kids to learn, grow, and mature. They'll have the Cameron House foundation with them as they become tomorrow's leaders, making a positive influence to better their community and their world around them.”

June Mission Trip to the Yakama Indian Reservation



On the way to Toppenish.

On June 27th, thirteen members of the Friday Night Club senior commission, Oriflamme, journeyed to Toppenish, Washington for the one-week mission trip they had been planning for over a year. Toppenish is located within the Yakama Indian Reservation, about a three-hour drive from Seattle.

A team from Students Learning About Missions (SLAM) coordinated community service opportunities which included painting and yard work. The high school seniors also participated in faith-based activities such as a Native American Worship Circle. The group also had the opportunity to learn through cultural immersion experiences, for example, touring an Indian Boarding School.

The members of Oriflamme led the fundraising and planning efforts which also meant dealing with last-minute changes. Challenges during the trip included the long drive, the heat, and being in an entirely new setting. All in all, the trip turned out to be a learning experience in many ways.

Kimberly Young, Oriflamme member and incoming freshman at the University of California, Santa Cruz, shares a little about her experience:

Growing up, I had the good fortune of learning under instructors who saw the importance of revealing truth. From a young age, I had extensive studies in Native American culture that was not printed in the textbooks. For me, this mission trip was an exciting chance to not only actively serve a community, but to have first-hand experience in a setting I heard so much about.

For our group, it was especially hard-hitting to hear about the inconvenient truths of certain situations on modern reservations such as gang

violence, substance and alcohol abuse, and the disconnect between the modern and the traditional.

It was shocking to hear about American Indian boarding schools, which forced children to abandon their Native American cultures and identities. Most of our group were kept in the dark about such a pivotal point in American history. I was upset that this piece of truth about the fabric of our nation has been so hidden and collecting dust all these years; this truth that affects so many millions, past, present, and future.

I was so grateful to learn about the Yakama people and their cultures as I noticed parallels between their customs and what I am familiar with. It reminded me of the importance of collectivism and how much bigger this is than all of us. We learn to better understand ourselves through understanding others.

In short, this mission trip was more than lending a hand and spreading God's love. For me, this mission trip opened our hearts and minds and made us better people by teaching us what truth and tim'naknik (compassion) feel like. The days we had in Toppenish came and went, but the lessons we learned and the feelings we felt will hopefully resonate with us as we grow from the experience.

We are thrilled these youth experienced such an eye-opening service mission. Immigration and acculturation are an important part of our history. Special thanks to commission leaders, Joel Smith and Trang Luong, and chaperones Sing Quan Derrick Cheuk, and Rev. Kimberly Elliot.



Oriflamme members at Toppenish.



DONALDINA CAMERON HOUSE
920 Sacramento Street
San Francisco, CA 94108
www.cameronhouse.org
415-781-0401

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Calendar of Upcoming Events



Cameron House
Nov. 24–26, 2014
Harvest Home



**South San Francisco
Conference Center**
Feb. 7, 2015
Soul & Elegance Gala

Please check the Cameron House website for holiday closures.