

Current



*Before, when I spoke with someone, I would always cry. I had a bit of depression. I felt like I couldn't do much and that the sky was falling down on me. ... As you can see, I don't look like a person who had depression. So if there are certain things that you are struggling with, come to Cameron House and seek help, because they can help you. ~Jackie**

Each of us have faced, at one time or another, moments of loneliness, fear, or shame. We can remember the pain we felt or how overwhelming our circumstances were. Hopefully, we had people to turn to - a friend, loved one, or community who listened to us and gave us the space to talk, to cry, and to just *be*. Looking back, we can now gratefully recognize the love we experienced at those crucial points in our lives, and how that love helped heal and define us.

But what if those moments were not fleeting? What if they were a continual state of being? What if there was no one to talk to, no one who could - or would - listen to our heart-felt cries?

This is the predicament that many immigrant women face when they are experiencing Domestic Violence (DV). They are trying to settle into a new country, with all that implies: learning the language, customs, and laws of their new home, being separated from family, friends, and one's homeland. This naturally creates feelings of vulnerability, loneliness, and separation. When DV is added, the situation becomes overwhelming. And abusers frequently foster isolation to maintain power and control, so women remain emotionally and physically cut off from the people they love and they become even more

dependent on their abusers. Without money, English language skills, a job, or a place to go, they feel lost and can't even begin to see their future.



They also feel shamed by the abuse and are afraid to expose it for fear of retaliation or more explosive tirades of violence. Unaware of the laws and resources available to help them leave the situation, they stay. And if they have children, their energy is also spent trying to protect *them* from the violence. With shattered dreams and crushed hopes, their lives become an endless uphill battle.

This is what Social Services Ministry (SSM) saw 30 years ago. We knew that these women needed support to leave their batterers, find housing, work, and child care - and receive the love, friendship, and counseling that would promote healing. But services for DV

survivors were minimal at that time, and there was virtually nothing available to help Chinese women in their native Toishanese or Cantonese. So we created the Cantonese Women's Support Group (CWSG) to give hope, love, and freedom to the women we were encountering.

Thirty years later, the CWSG is still a powerful force for healing and transformation. In the group, DV survivors meet other women going through similar circumstances. All of the women in the CWSG struggle with DV and its aftermath; all of them speak Cantonese; all of them need peer support, legal assistance, and

a place to feel safe to talk about their issues. When they come to Cameron House, they find out they're not alone.

"When the women first come to the CWSG, they're still afraid," says Ming Quan Chan (DV Case Manager). "First of all, we make sure they are safe. And then we give them legal assistance so they can feel safer. We help them get restraining orders and escort them to the courthouse. They see that someone is beside them - someone from Asian Women's Shelter, their attorney, and us - the women are surrounded by people who care about them."

The next steps revolve around finding permanent housing, looking for a job,

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May's Corner

Thank You to the 545 guests, Board, staff, and volunteers who helped us celebrate this year's gala – Home, Soul & Elegance on February 27th at the South San Francisco Conference Center. This is the largest attendance we've had in recent years; and it was a joy to have everyone present, honoring the dedication and vital community contributions of

Byron Ho, Lenora Lee, Rev. Bert Tom (posthumous), and Gum Moon/Asian Women's Resource Center, each of whom received the Donaldina Cameron Excellence in Leadership Award.

The evening's program included two youth speakers who shared some of their experiences with us: Friday Night Club (FNC) youth leader Raymond Li and Michael Zhao, a senior in the Ambition Commission (also part of FNC).

Both Ray and Michael talked about the need for a safe place and dedicated adults to help guide them when they're 'hanging out with the wrong types of people, skipping school, and losing the ability to interact in social settings.' Hearing their stories reminded me of the many similar ones I've heard from numerous alumni who later gave back by serving as Board members and key volunteers in the areas of education,

social services, business, the arts, and wherever else life took them when they traveled and lived abroad.



(L) Board Chair Tom Pong, with all of the evening's Honorees, Executive Director May Leong and members of Bert Tom's family

Compassionate and impactful community leaders like Bert Tom, Byron Ho, and Lenora Lee, along with the staff at Gum Moon/Asian Women's Resource Center have always provided



safety, support, guidance, and learning opportunities to the people they serve.

Each of the night's honorees reminded us to continue our legacy of fighting for, and reaching out to, marginalized and at-risk communities within our society. With San Francisco's skyrocketing housing costs and the challenges many Chinatown residents face, our programs are needed more now than ever. Because of friends and alumni like you, they have opportunities for a healthier and happier life.

This April marks my third anniversary as Executive Director at Cameron House. I remain humbled, inspired, and privileged to work alongside everyone to continue our mission of helping people to learn, heal, and thrive, in our home at 920 Sacramento St. On behalf of everyone at Cameron House, we thank you for making this gala such a well-attended and fun event! Without your support, none of this would be possible.



"It is not enough to live our lives in the safety of our own experiences and the lives we've built immediately around us."

~ Lenora Lee

"You have to look in the rearview mirror occasionally to see where you came from, while you're moving forward towards your destination."

~ Byron Ho

To view our Gala album, please go to cameronhouse.org/news/gala/



and learning English. Even in the best of circumstances, these are huge issues to deal with simultaneously. But within the safety of the CWSG, they find the hope, resources, and support to assist them.

And, just as important, the women find friendship. Most of the group's members become life-long friends, helping each other shop or pick up children from school. Even amidst their own pain, the women learn to reach out and help others, becoming both, a positive example and a healing touch.

Karen Chu (DV Case Manager and CWSG co-leader) has witnessed several compelling examples of that. She recalls meeting a DV survivor and recent immigrant who was looking for shelter (there are only three shelters for victims of DV in San Francisco, so rooms are not always available). Karen immediately invited Alice* to the CWSG, knowing that she could gain valuable resources while also experiencing the support of the other women. When Alice first came to the group, she started talking to the other women, most of whom had been in the U.S. for a longer period of time. After explaining her situation, one of the mothers in the group invited Alice to her own home.

Guest speakers are invited to talk to the group about various resources in the community (i.e., DA's Victim's Services, Cal Fresh, or API Legal Outreach services) or to help promote self-care (i.e., teaching the women exercises, dancing, or simple massages they can do to relieve their stress). Our SSM staff also lead group discussions on topics like healthy relationships, parenting tips, and dealing with emotions.

Having guided group discussions on this last topic, Lisa Chow (Individual and Family Counselor and CWSG co-leader)

talks about her hopes for the women. "I'd like to see them understand their feelings, their emotional ups and downs" she says. Communication skills, too, are vital to their well-being. "Even if you don't speak English perfectly," she continues, "you can make yourself understood with a positive attitude and the way you treat strangers. People can sense your sincerity." If their interpersonal relationships suffer, their lives will be lacking, even when their basic needs are fully met. But, Lisa explains, with an awareness of their feelings and good communication skills, "they can be happier, even when they face life difficulties."

The children, too, blossom through the CWSG. The women are encouraged to bring their children with them. The evening begins with a meal, after which the mothers gather in the group and the children are supervised in a separate room.

Because of the abuse they've witnessed or experienced at home, the children tend to be more withdrawn at first.

They are quiet and remain by themselves. But after a few months, they begin to open up, play with the other children, and have fun.

Lisa explains that she works with the kids through arts and crafts. "I ask them, 'How do you think you can be a helper to your mom? To your brother or sister? By cleaning up? By being good? Draw that.'"

Lisa talks about one young child who everyone believed was a slow learner. When she first came to the group, she didn't understand things as quickly as the other children. "But now," Lisa says, "she picks things up right away. She's really stable, happy, and active. She's

made great progress." Through the loving care and support their mothers receive and the nurturing and care they, too, receive, they are transformed.

The CWSG was the first Cantonese-speaking DV group in the Bay Area; and we are still one of very few. After a year, we check in with the group members to see if they are ready to "graduate." If not, they continue in the group until they are ready.

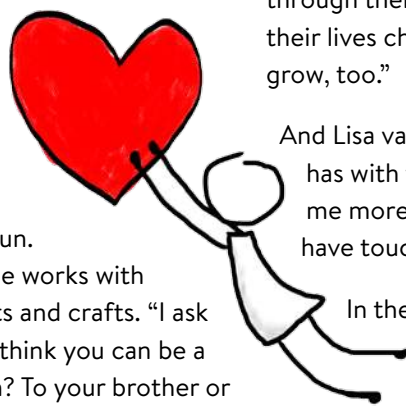
And for us? How has being a leader in the CWSG affected our staff? Karen says that the experience has shown her how resilient and "great mothers can be. They are without language skills and lack support, but they still raise their kids." Then she smiles and says softly, "They touch my heart when they come to my office and say, 'Thank you. I can't do it without you.'"

Ming appreciates being called "Ming Jai," which means "sister Ming" and jokes about the huge family she now has. She's quick to add, "My clients are my sisters. I have helped them go through their difficulties. I love to see their lives changing. And they help me grow, too."

And Lisa values the relationship she has with the children. "They know me more and trust me more. They have touched me, too."

In the Cantonese Women's Support Group, we give the survivors of domestic violence a hand and walk with them so they are not alone. Over time, they become more independent and confident. They get job training or go to school, and they begin to see their future. They discover hope, the assurance that they are never alone, and the awareness that they, too, have the capacity to give back and inspire others.

*Names have been changed to protect identities



A Life *truly* Lived

When we are motivated by goals that have deep meaning, by dreams that need completion, by pure love that needs expressing, then we truly live life.

~ Greg Anderson

Dee Shigley was born, raised, and married in Indiana; and in 1961 she and her husband Bud moved to California, where she became actively involved in the Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Women, and Donaldina Cameron House. She served on our Board of Directors, in the Cameron House Guild, and on the Foundation Board of Directors. She was committed to her faith, her family, and mission work. Bright and energetic, she was not a person who did things in halves. She poured herself out for others, giving her time and heart completely, without holding anything back. A three-time cancer survivor, she knew fear, sickness, and pain personally. Yet, with compassion and humor, she continually reached out to anyone who was in need, supporting and empowering them. She epitomized the Presbyterian Woman, the life truly lived. It is impossible to highlight everything she did (and was) to us, yet, it is only fitting to pay tribute to her life and the people she touched. So we'll let a handful of the Cameron House family members who knew and loved her share their own fond memories of Dee and the impact she made in their lives:



As I Remember Her by Harry Chuck

Most folks who visit Chinatown usually come as tourists. They will meander casually along the main street, Grant Avenue, buy a few souvenirs, and if they're really adventurous, stop to eat at a Chinese restaurant.

That description of a casual visitor did not describe Dee. I can't remember exactly when we first met, but it seems to me I've known her my entire adult life. I came to appreciate her consistent warmth, friendliness, and ready smile, which brightened up your day.

As an Elder at the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, Dee's concern for mission led her to Cameron House, where she became actively involved with the supportive programs of the Cameron House Guild.

It wasn't long before Dee became acquainted with our staff members on a first-name basis, familiarizing herself with our individual responsibilities and

the complexities of an immigrant and underserved community.

Often, she would invite friends to Chinatown who she felt would benefit from knowing our ministry and culture. I thought of her as a modern-day evangelist, whose easy-going style brought people together from the different corners of God's vineyard.

One day, Dee added to her many personal responsibilities the call to serve on the Cameron House Board of Directors. She was a God-send. Frequently, she provided the spark that would get things started, attending our meetings with enthusiasm and prepared with an understanding of the issues. You could see why she was often sought out to serve on church session and Presbytery committees.

Sometimes she would just show up at Cameron House around noon and ask if anyone wanted to go out to lunch. I came to learn that these were not chance visits, but often came at a time

when we, the staff, were facing some difficult challenges. You had to love this woman who would make several round trips into the city each month, during times of heavy traffic, and then return home after late-night meetings. She always gave so much of herself.

Those who knew her marveled at her tenacity and selflessness. She lived with what most of us would consider serious health issues (like cancer). Periodically, news would reach us of another setback, hospitalization, or surgery. Then, one day, to everyone's surprise, Dee would appear at a Cameron House gathering, with her sleeves rolled up and ready for work!

Many of us will always remember Dee Shigley as a role model of discipleship. She was ever so humble and so caring and faithful. She taught us so much by personal example.

I join in thanking God for this wonderful friend in Christ, who many of us will miss but never forget.



Tinkering *the art of discovering*

Wilson has implemented more STEM activities into our BAP program. In this school year alone, our youth have built gumdrop domes, marble roller coasters, straw bridges, paper structures, water filters, and catapults. Each grade, 1st through 8th, has been involved, and they are learning crucial and valuable skills.

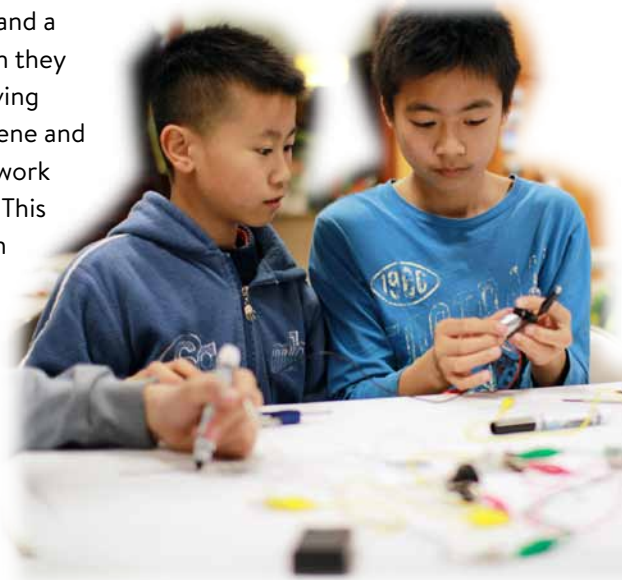
While Tinkering is a facet of STEM, it does not employ a strict process. It is more open ended and free flowing, which is one of the things the youth really enjoy. They receive the materials they need to build something and are left to their own creativity and experimentation.

In the first Tinkering class, Wilson and Rene supplied the students with alligator clips, light bulbs, on/off switches, battery packs, and batteries (provided by DCYF and Techbridge). Their assignment? Creating light fixtures using the materials, their imagination, and a lot of experimentation. When they had difficulties, instead of giving them hints or suggestions, Rene and Wilson encouraged them to work together and try new things. This fostered the skills of problem solving, collaboration, exploration, and experimentation. Laughter, sighs of frustration, and cheers of accomplishment echoed throughout the room as the youth tried new configurations of their materials.

The second Workshop entailed the children receiving cups and other containers, pens, paper, batteries, and motors. Their assignment this time? Create a Scribble-bot (a robot that, when turned on, rolls on the paper, drawing a design). Once again, questions, amusement, and groans pervaded the room as the youth engaged in trial and error. But the end result was worth the effort. With smiles on their faces, the youth had created their own robots!

Along with the technical side of building projects, the students also learn to move beyond their perspectives. When told to build catapults, the middle-school girls didn't want to participate; they didn't think that girls played with catapults. "I explained to them that this wasn't a gendered activity," says Wilson. "Just as there are male and female athletes, male and female doctors, there are also female and male engineers. Then the girls got into it. Not only did they build their catapults, they built a popsicle-stick wall to see if their catapult would be strong enough to knock it

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What happens when you combine skilled BAP teachers, a room full of youth, colored pens, batteries, and a box of everyday items? You have a creative setting where questions are welcomed, laughter is plentiful, and learning is fun.

The Tinkering Workshop is one of the newest classes hosted by our BAP program. Staff members Wilson Tan and Rene Kamm attended a two-day workshop on the subject, hosted by San Francisco's Department of Children, Youth, & Their Families (DCYF) and Techbridge, a nonprofit founded by Chabot Space & Science Center to increase the representation of women and underrepresented youth in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

The STEM curriculum developed by Techbridge follows a process similar to an engineer's: identify the problem, brainstorm, design, build a prototype, test, evaluate, and redesign. As our Academic Enrichment Coordinator,

A Faithful Woman Among Us by Mildred Hall

Our churches have many faithful members. And among them are several who may have become your role models in being Christian and in church leadership. Dee was one of them for me.

Having become active in Women's Fellowship in my local church, the time came for some of us to become more involved by participating through the other levels of the church: women in the Presbytery, in the Synod, and on the national level.

Dee was instrumental in gaining support for Cameron House from her women's circle at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. She was an Elder who also served on committees of the San Francisco Presbytery.

What I appreciated about Dee was her method of introducing women to participate and become involved in the church, and specifically with Presbyterian Women (PW). Her quiet way of asking people to serve or become involved was never invasive

or forceful but enough to make you think about saying 'Yes.' Her inspiration to me was that she was always supportive even when I felt some disappointment in fulfilling tasks.

We remember Dee with thankfulness for her life as a friend who was loving and compassionate, supportive and influential, and faithful in service to the Presbyterian Church USA and PW.

Remembering Dee by Jeanette Huie

I can't remember if I first met Dee at Cameron House or through Presbyterian Women back in the 1980s, but through those two organizations, our paths continuously crossed. Whenever we met as PW, her smile and laugh would brighten the meeting and her wisdom and insights strengthen the group. She valued how PW connects women together and oftentimes leads to friendships.

I admired how she advocated for others and for important causes close to her heart. Many women from the San Francisco area attend the Church-wide Gathering of PW, held once every three years. Dee would often fly there a day early so she wouldn't miss

a minute. At some of the Gatherings, she and

her roommate reserved a suite at the hotel so that they could host an informal 'party,' providing pizza, soda, and a memorable evening of fun and laughs. That was one of many ways she contributed to keeping Presbyterian women connected.

A Short Memory of Dee by Tom Pong

I remember Dee because she was always there for you. Dee was an honest and genuine person. I first met her in 1993 when I joined the CH Board. She was a mentor and dear friend. I learned the art of quiet persuasion and consensus building from her. From her actions, God's love and compassion was clearly evident. We should all strive to be like her. We are blessed with her presence and the caring that she has given to the kids, families, staff, and volunteers at Cameron House and Chinatown.



Dee Shigley brought life and love to our community and our programs. She was a true friend and a true disciple, and she will be *truly missed*.





down. The boys just built their catapults and were done.”

In these varied construction projects, our youth are taking the knowledge they’re gaining from their STEM classes, and combining imagination with trial and error. “The kids have to think creatively to solve the problem and not be afraid to try something that might not work,” says Rene. “Even if I were to give hints to them, it wouldn’t be as meaningful as when they figure out each step on their own.”

Creating light fixtures and scribble-bots, our youth are learning valuable skills and crucial STEM knowledge, which are establishing solid foundations that will remain with them throughout their lives.

“These activities build up creative thinking, perseverance, and collaboration,” Rene states. “That’s what we need more of in society today, and learning these skills now will prepare them for success.”



In Their Own Words:

“What was the most challenging part of the activity?”

- Making the markers stay
- Making the scribble-bot move

“What did you like about the activity?”

- Actually learning about mechanics
- Getting messy



This year, the BAP Spring Break program will focus on tinkering and will include trips to the Exploratorium, San Jose Tech Museum, and the San Francisco Main Library (for a tinkering with legos activity).

bloomingdale's

On October 3, 2015, Bloomingdale’s hosted Cameron House in their Shopping Works Wonders program. Youth, Alumni, Board members, and staff worked tirelessly during the all-day event to help promote Cameron House. We received \$9,565 from that event, and representatives from Bloomingdale’s came to the Friday Night Club on February 2, 2016 to present a check to the youth. Thanks, Bloomingdale’s!





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THE 68TH CAMERON CARNIVAL 2016

• SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2016 ★ 11AM-7PM •

It's Springtime and that can only mean Cameron Carnival, a unique, family-friendly community event that is open to the public and is admission-free. Includes games and prizes created entirely by youth, a youth play, silent auction and gift shop, dunko, and delicious homemade food: Spam Musubi, Jade Waffles, Thai Iced Tea, Guern Fun, Potstickers, Soda Fountain, Baked Goods, Burgers and Sausages, BBQ Chicken and Ribs Western Lunch Plate!

And for the little ones, there will be a jumper house, jewelry making, balloon animals, and of course, the goldfish game!

Cameron Carnival is only possible because of you, our volunteers and friends! **We still need volunteers** to fill several shifts on Carnival Day. It's a great way to meet new friends and contribute to a special family event! **Go to our website to see our available shifts:** cameronhouse.org/news/carnival/

Other ways you can help:

- Become a Carnival Sponsor (deadline: April 22nd)
- Donate silent auction/gift shop items (deadline: April 24th)
- Purchase discount bonus packs (deadline: April 24th)
- Spread the word to families and others you know!

For more details, visit cameronhouse.org/news/carnival or email Cody at cody@cameronhouse.org.

All proceeds support our amazing Summer youth programs. You won't want to miss it, so come on down and say, "Howdy!"

Can't come? You can still make your presence felt by donating bonus packs for neighborhood kids to enjoy the day! (Deadline: April 24th)