

Current



REV. NORMAN FONG RECOGNIZED FOR DECADES OF SERVICE

By Cameron House Staff

On May 19th, the San Francisco Theological Seminary honored Rev. Norman Fong with its Distinguished Alumnus Award. Fong is the Executive Director of the Chinatown Community Development Center as well as a long-time member of the Cameron House community. Throughout his career, Fong has fought to ensure that vulnerable communities have access to the basic human right of secure, quality housing. Although his advocacy work has taken him around the world, his Chinatown roots have always called him back home.

Fong's activism began in 1970 when his family was evicted from their home in Chinatown. With the support of the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown and Cameron House, Fong's family was able to find housing again. However, this episode gave Fong a direct experience of the vulnerability of immigrant communities as well as the shortage of housing available in Chinatown. By 1972 Cameron House and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown played a central role in mobilizing community members to fight for affordable housing in Chinatown. Under the leadership of his longtime mentor Rev. Harry Chuck, Fong helped organize traditionally disempowered groups such as youth and seniors. After a ten-year battle, Mei Lun Yuen opened, providing the community

with 185 units of housing for the elderly and families.

After seeing a successful example of a church community organizing for social change, Fong felt inspired to go to divinity school. Upon his arrival at his East Coast seminary,



Chinatown Community Development Center Executive Director Norman Fong.

Fong was disappointed to find that the principle of "faith in action" practiced by Cameron House and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown was more the exception than common practice. Never one to settle for less, Fong protested and fought to make the curriculum at his divinity school more relevant to the struggles of low-income communities and communities of color. For his activism, Fong got the opportunity to travel to Hong Kong

and the Philippines through the Mission Intern Program with a focus on global human rights. During these experiences abroad, Fong constantly wondered how he as an American might create the largest possible impact. And across all these experiences the answer was the same: go home and fight for change there.

When the federal government lifted its restrictive national-origin immigration quotas in 1965, San Francisco's Chinese population saw a dramatic increase in immigrants from Hong Kong. By the time Fong returned from his time abroad in 1979, he found himself in a changed Chinatown. He observed many more immigrants living in an environment without adequate services. They lacked quality housing for families, adequate protection for workers, and positive outlets for young people. Additionally, Chinatown had become a battlefield of open gang warfare which came to a crescendo in 1977 with the infamous mass shooting at the Golden Dragon Restaurant that left five people dead and 11 wounded. This situation presented a unique challenge for social service providers in Chinatown, who had to bridge both a linguistic and cultural gap.

Against this backdrop, Fong realized the urgency and importance of supporting immigrants and their families. He went on to finish his Masters of Divinity at San Francisco

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Yo's Two CENTS

By Interim Executive Director Yulanda Kwong

May is the month to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Asian and Pacific Islanders as well as the month to spread awareness about mental health in our communities. Mental health is still an issue in our society that's difficult and challenging for many people to talk about or address. As human beings in this world, each of us has most likely experienced some level of mental health issue over the course of our lives. For example, we may have felt unhappy or stressed about something, struggled with our own inner thoughts, tried to explore who we are and our life purpose, worried about other people's perceptions or expectations, experienced a traumatic event, felt isolated or unloved, struggled to let go, or wrestled with a tough decision. Whatever that situation may have been, our mental health encompasses our psychological, emotional, and social well-being.

As a matter of fact, our mental health impacts our whole well-being, including our physical health. It also affects how we think, feel, and behave. Our mind and body are linked together holistically as one.

As we embrace our own cultural heritage, or who we identify ourselves as, sometimes our culture may create barriers and stigma that make it more challenging for us to seek assistance. As someone of Chinese ethnic descent, I understand that many Chinese families deal with family issues, such as mental health, behind closed doors within their own home. Sometimes we are afraid to seek professional help until things become unmanageable for us or when it is an issue that now impacts other people outside of the home. Instead, how can we channel our culture's strong family values to support one another and address issues before they become extremely severe? It is not only

about supporting those who are struggling mentally, but also family members who are on the journey in healing with them. There is hope and resources in the community to assist families.

Taking care of our mental health starts as early as when we are infants. People need love and care throughout their different stages of life. It is important to love ourselves and treat ourselves well. We must learn to love ourselves first in order to love others. Life is like a journey where we don't know how it will take flight. However, we do know that life is a precious and valuable gift that we should cherish and appreciate and learn to live it wisely. These are my two cents.

If you are struggling, Cameron House provides low-cost to no-cost counseling in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. Call (415) 781-0401 and ask to speak with an intake counselor.

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Theological Seminary, whose progressive practices matched his ideals, before joining Cameron House's Youth Ministries team. Fong identified the need for more afterschool and summer programs that served the unique needs of bilingual Chinese and English-speaking youth. He envisioned and created a bilingual summer youth program that focused on both academic attainment as well as whole-child development, which continues to this day. During this time, Fong also served as the minister at the Presbyterian Church

in Chinatown and lived on site at Cameron House.

Today, Fong serves as the Executive Director at the Chinatown Community Development Center, where he continues to empower youth and seniors to advocate for quality housing. When Fong thinks about the trajectory of his work and life path, he often cites the passage Micah 6:8, which reads, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Throughout his life, Fong has sought

to promote justice and compassion, both globally and at home.

Fong would like to acknowledge the many mentors he has had over the years, who inspired him to enter the ministry and provided a living example of faith in action. They include Rev. Calvin Chinn, Rev. Harry Chuck, Rev. Gordon Lam, Rev. Larry Jack Wong, Rev. Virstan Choy, Rev. Bert Tom, Rev. Wesley Woo, and Rev. Lloyd Wake. He would also like to acknowledge the support of his colleagues Rev. Bradford Woo and Rev. Andy Choy.

CAMERON CARNIVAL DRAWS CROWDS, RAISES CASH

A big thank you to the over 1,000 community members who attended the 70th Annual Cameron Carnival. Together we soaked 20 people in the dunko tank, ate 450 jade waffles, and raised \$60,000! We could not have done it without you, and we can't wait to see you all again next year!



Top row: Carnival goes of all ages take aim! Whether shooting hoops (left), tossing ping pong balls for goldfish (middle), or catapulting shots into terracotta warriors (right), a steady hand is essential for success at Carnival.
Middle row: Anson Ho takes a plunge in the dunko tank (left), while a papier-mâché Colossus of Rhodes towers over the yard (middle). Meanwhile, the laws of gravity cease to exist inside the bounce house (right).
Bottom row: Where there's food, there's friends, thanks to the handiwork of guern fun volunteers (left). Popular fashions this year included face paint and glitter (middle), as well as flower crowns and unicorn horns (right).

REMEMBERING GORDIE LAM

On March 7, 2018, the Cameron House community lost one of its beloved members, Gordie Lam. Gordie touched the lives of countless others through his mentorship and ministry. He will truly be missed. His longtime friends Rev. Wesley Woo and Doreen Der-McLeod shared these words at his memorial service.

By Rev. Wesley Woo

In 1961 I, like so many of my friends in Chinatown, used to play basketball at the Chinese Rec Center and Commodore Stockton gym. One day some friends asked me to join them and play basketball at the Cameron House yard. So I went on a Friday night. But that night someone there stopped me and told me that I could not play unless I joined a club. That person was Gordie Lam. So I ended up joining a club. More importantly for this context, this led to an almost 60 year relationship during which time Gordie became a close friend, a colleague, a mentor, and a brother.

In thinking about what I want say today in remembrance of Gordie I realize that there are so many stories and experiences to share, but not enough time to do so. So, instead I will try to sum up some thoughts and talk briefly about four qualities about Gordie that come to mind and which I admired and respected him for.

The first quality is that Gordie was a man of deep, steadfast, and constant faith. When we first met he was already a leader in the Cameron House program. And since then, all his vocational choices throughout his life have been driven by his faith and the church. He always put his faith into action in one way or another.

The second quality is about family. Family, writ large, mattered very much to Gordie. Of course this involved his immediate family, including his brothers and sisters and their children

and grandchildren. Yet, his sense of family was always large and expansive and included so many of us. Gordie and his family always welcomed virtually all of us as a part of an extended Lam family. And this was particularly expressed in so many gatherings that almost always included food and drink.

Third, throughout his life and in all that he did, Gordie embodied a joy of living, and life abundant. There was not much about him that he did not express joyfully, boldly, and generously. Of course we all knew of his quirky and corny sense of humor. And in church he sang hymns and prayed boldly and loudly. And there was his food. He loved cooking and sharing his food with so many of us—truly a breaking of bread. He thoroughly enjoyed life

abundantly.

Finally, I found early on and deeply appreciated, that there was a quiet and calm side of Gordie. Perhaps it was because it speaks to my own introversion. However, throughout the years, he and I would often be together or sit quietly, neither one of us saying much. Yet, I never felt uneasy about that. Instead, I always felt very comfortable and connected to him in that silence, quietness, and calmness. There was almost a meditative side of him.

In sum, Gordie Lam was a man of deep and abiding faith, an expansive love of family, full of the joy of living, and yet, having a calm and quiet character. Gordie, I celebrate your life and am glad that I was a part of it.



Left to right: Gordie at his retirement party at the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown. Gordie at Lomo Lodge circa the 1970s.

REMEMBERING GORDIE LAM, CONTINUED

By Doreen Der-McLeod

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's ... Gordie Lam! Although Gordie could not leap over tall buildings, he could effortlessly leap from the floor to the top of a 30-inch cabinet. No wonder his athleticism was legendary. What he lacked in height, he made up with his athletic prowess and agility which allowed him to outjump and outshoot other players.

I had the privilege of working with Gordie three times in the span of my career. I worked with Gordie in the 60s when I was hired as Girls' Worker at Cameron House and he was working there as the Junior High Director. The second time I worked with Gordie was in the 1980s when we worked at what is now Chinatown Community Development Center. He worked with Chinatown CDC as the Director of Property Management and I worked with the planning and

neighborhood improvement arm of the agency. We would both return to Cameron House at the end of our careers in 2000.

Gordie will be remembered by different people because he impacted so many people during his lifetime. For me, several things stand out about Gordie. His sense of humor. My husband calls it his corn-ball sense of humor. He loved to make jokes and waited for a response from people, and if you did not respond, he would break out in a grin and wriggle his eyebrows for emphasis. If you did not laugh at his joke, you ended up laughing at his antics. He will be remembered for his ability to live life with joy and humor.

Gordie took on leadership like a duck to water. He taught and led by example. Like a good Boy Scout, he was always prepared. He was a meticulous planner. He not only trained several generations of youth leaders, but supported

those he called into service to work with youth – whether it was for Junior High Day Camp or High School Club leaders. His and his wife Sandy's home became the drop-in center for many youth and young adults. While at Cameron House, they opened their home and extended hospitality to peers, youth, and young adults who felt comfortable enough to drop in to chat or simply to play with their children, Marcus, Wendy, and Jonah.

Gordie loved to eat and cook. But I believe that cooking was a way he chose to extend hospitality to others. Every meal he cooked or served in his home was communion, a breaking of bread, an opportunity to forge new bonds with others and to build community.

Gordie lived his life with joy and gratitude. He honored his parents, loved his siblings, loved his wife, Sandy, and their children Marcus, Wendy, and Jonah. He opened their home and shared his life and love of food with family and friends. In Sandy, he found his soulmate and partner for life. His commitment to following Christ was lifelong. When people called his work "a job," he always corrected them and said, "it's not a job, but a 'vocation or calling.'" For Gordie, his work at Cameron House, Chinatown CDC, and St. Paul's was a vocation. Gordie may have wondered why God called him to be in certain places, but he would always give it his all. He never defined his success or worth by how much he made, but by how well he served the people in the places and situations that God placed him.

And now it is time for us to bid Gordie farewell and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"



Gordie (far left) dancing in Culbertson Hall.

CAMERON HOUSE HOSTS INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

Young Men from Germany Learn Value of Multiculturalism and Community

By Cameron House Staff

This past May, a youth basketball team from the German city of Heidelberg stayed at Cameron House for 11 days through an international exchange program. This is the fifth year in a row that Cameron House has either sent youth to Heidelberg or hosted German teenagers. In the spirit of cultural exchange, the German team of 12 young men and four chaperones had the opportunity to learn the art of dragon dance on the Cameron House upper deck, walk across the Golden Gate Bridge, and shoot hoops with a local San Francisco youth team.

Youth basketball coach Simon Reibert has represented the German delegation since 2014. During each of his visits to the United States, Reibert sees the possibility of something profound, noting that “basketball is only the vehicle to the core of the impact.” Beyond basketball, Reibert sees value in immersing his team in the Cameron House community as well as the sights of San Francisco. Experiences like eating a banquet dinner prepared by Cameron House’s feast master Jon Hee or enjoying San Francisco’s multiethnic enclaves can be eye-opening, especially for German teens who may lack a tightly-knit community or live in places with few people of color.

Through these experiences, Reibert hopes to challenge what Germans call “Ellenbogenmentalität,” or “elbow mentality,” which refers to a mindset of putting personal needs ahead of collective ones, and at the national level can manifest as the wave of anti-immigrant backlash sweeping Europe. Against the backdrop of increasing numbers of



Clockwise from top: The team poses in the gym at Booker T. Washington Community Service Center. There’s no better place to practice the art of dragon dancing than on the upper deck of Cameron House. No tour of Chinatown alleyways would be complete without a stop in Ross Alley.

immigrants and refugees populating German cities, Reibert is trying to make sense of how his youth can build a just and multiethnic society in Heidelberg. One certainty though, is that every year he and his youth are “blown away” by the level of racial diversity on the streets and buses of San Francisco, as well as the warmth and hospitality of the Cameron House community.

None of these life-changing experiences could have taken place without the careful planning and on-site support of Cameron House alum Kelcie Wong. Since 2012 she has been a key player in making the

international exchange a success. Wong volunteers her time to organize and facilitate the trip, and her planning begins a full year in advance. Next year a delegation of young women from San Francisco is slated to visit Heidelberg. The partnership between Neighborhood Centers Together and Heidelberg California Connect makes this trip possible for San Francisco youth whose families might otherwise not be able to send their child on a trip abroad. To learn more about these organizations, visit www.sfnc.org or www.hc-connect.org.

NEW STAFF JOIN CAMERON HOUSE

By Cameron House Staff

The Cameron House community is excited to extend a warm welcome to its two newest staff members, Lei Dong and David Pon.

Lei Dong joined Cameron House in June 2018, serving as Cancer Support Group and Events Coordinator. Having grown up in Oakland, she is grateful for the community that has helped her and her family, and is therefore passionate about giving back. She believes in a mythical yet wonderful law of nature, that to attain happiness, freedom, and peace of mind, one shall give them to others. Lei has a B.A. in Chinese. She also studied in a graduate program in Teaching Chinese as Foreign Language in Beijing, China. Lei is fluent in Cantonese and Mandarin. She especially loves cooking at home and hiking in the woods.



Cancer Support Group and Events Coordinator
Lei Dong.

Since May 2018, David Pon has served as Cameron House's Marketing and Communications Coordinator. He grew up in San Francisco and holds a B.S. in Environmental Sciences. His previous career focused on connecting Bay Area youth with their natural and outdoor spaces, and he is thrilled to help provide Chinatown families with social services and youth leadership opportunities. Last summer, David traveled to China for his first time and visited his ancestral villages through the Him Mark Lai Family History Project. This transformative experience inspired him to study Cantonese, which he did not grow up speaking. He currently lives with his fiancée in Oakland, where he loves long summer days and the smell of barbecue on his charcoal grill.

Even though these two Bay Area locals didn't grow up in the Cameron House community, we hope this is just the beginning of many joyous years as members of our team!



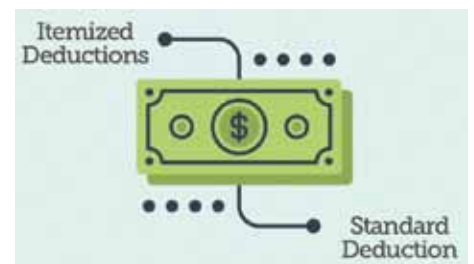
Marketing and Communications Coordinator
David Pon.



By Keira Chu

2018 arrived with a number of significant changes in the U.S. tax code. Here's a tax tip to maximize on your tax savings in 2018:

The standard deduction has been increased to \$12,000 for people who file as single and \$24,000 for married people who file jointly. If your deductions in 2018 are less than the standard deduction, consider bunching multiple years' worth of charitable contributions together so that your itemized deductions exceed the standard deduction in any given year.



You can then go back to utilizing the standard deduction the following year in order to fully maximize on your total deductions over a number of years.

Charitable contributions can be made into a donor-advised fund for a full deduction in the year the gift is made and distributed to your charity of choice anytime in the future.

Before taking any action, please be sure to discuss this strategy with your tax advisor.



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events

upcoming

Date	Time	Event
Aug. 5	10:45am - 12:00pm	End of Summer Service Worship at Presbyterian Church in Chinatown - Please join us in recognizing our amazing summer volunteers.
Aug. 11/16	1:00pm/2:00pm	Westminster Woods Youth Camp (Dropoff/Pickup) - It's time for another unforgettable week of friends, faith, and fun!
Aug. 29 - 30	6:00pm - 9:00pm	Big Give - Help us sustain the future of Cameron House during our biggest fundraiser of the year.
Sept. 29	TBD	1950s Reunion - Reconnect with old friends and learn about what's happening at Cameron House today! Details to come.

PHONE-A-THON IS NOW THE BIG GIVE

Wondering what happened to Phone-a-thon? It's been renamed the Cameron House Big Give. We wanted to draw attention to Cameron House's rich history of community support, and with this new name we invite you to sustain our work for generations to come. As part of the Big Give, we will still be hosting a phone bank at Cameron House, which will take place August 29th and 30th.