

# Current



Images from our Lunar New Year Event | Recap on page 4



## Letter from the Executive Director

In recent weeks we have all witnessed how the pandemic has catalyzed tensions around racism, exacerbated inequity, and laid bare the raw wounds of social injustice. We are devastated by the increased threats to our physical and mental health and deeply concerned about the safety and well-being of our Asian communities.

In response to the recent incidents of hate and violence in Atlanta, on behalf of Cameron House, I signed the Asian American Advancing Justice Atlanta chapter's letter of solidarity to show our support. I'm also proud to report that our organization was named among over 60 organizations nationwide that provide support to AAPI citizens in a [digital article published by New York Magazine](#).

It's a stark reminder of the enduring importance of the Cameron House mission – employing our Christian faith-in-action to heal, advocate, educate and support our community members. We are here to offer a beacon of hope and recognize that we have much healing work to do.

As we continue to learn and adapt, our staff and volunteers are designing meaningful programs, offering critical services, managing operations, engaging alums, and raising funds to support the organization. Their determination and resilience allows Cameron House to continue to meet the needs of our clients.

We continue to provide critical counseling, case management, computer and ESL classes, tutoring services and Friday Night Club. As we look ahead, we plan to offer summer and fall programs and services as they are deemed allowable and safe.

In addition to our virtual and no-contact programs, Community Hub students, first welcomed last November to Culbertson Hall for weekday learning support, continue to thrive and the food pantry steadily supplies weekly groceries.

We have also planned a series of virtual engagements for our alums and friends, beginning this effort earlier in the year with a Lunar New Year celebration and the 11th annual Visual Performing Arts Festival. Upcoming virtual events include Cameron Carnival and our Scholarship Awards Ceremony (see page 4).

Fundraising efforts surpassed expectations through the leadership of our passionate volunteers and generous donors. Last fall's Big Give campaign included a successful peer-to-peer Facebook campaign and resulted in nearly 500 contributions and \$168,000!

This spring, Cameron House also secured a second round of federal relief (Payroll Protection Program) that keep our staff employed to deliver essential services.

Critical emergency operational support and grants from the SF Beacon Initiative, Asian Pacific Fund, Suzie S. Thorn Family Foundation, Women's Foundation of California, Chinese Community Health Care Association, and the Metta Fund provide support to our community learning hubs, provide gift cards for domestic violence victims, expand mental health support and facilitate on-going support of social networks for our elderly. A generous grant from the San Francisco Presbytery will engage our youth with youth communities across the City.

Continued service contracts with our City partner agencies – Department of Children, Youth and their Families, Department on the Status of Women and the Mayor's Office of Housing Community Development – continue to provide access to culturally- and linguistically-appropriate case management, counseling and educational services for children, families and those most vulnerable to gender-based violence, educational inequity, food insecurity and social isolation.

We invite you to join us at our next virtual event or with a contribution to our spring appeal.

We're proud of the enthusiastic effort of our volunteers, board and staff to create stability in the lives of those we serve and we thank you, our benefactors, collaborators, partners, and friends in working with us to spark hope in our community.

May we all be comforted in our losses, our grief and trauma. May we access the better angels of our nature, rise up in our common humanity, stand in solidarity with our brothers, sisters and folx and speak out in the name of justice. And may we each strive to reach our highest, most full potential to lift our communities, our nation and our global family.

Michael Lee

## Finding Friends and Faith at Cameron House

by Jeanette Huie

Jean Chin recalls the first time she walked through the doors of Cameron House accompanied by her girlfriends from Francisco Jr. High School one Friday evening in 1953, when she was just 13 years old. She quickly became involved with the Friday Night Club program as a member of the "Angelettes." When she remembers her club leaders, she can't help but smile.

Throughout high school Jean joined many Cameron House community activities such as making crafts, cooking, and preparing games and prizes for the annual Cameron Carnival. During the summer months, she served as a day camp leader for pre-school children, signed up for summer camp at Westminster Woods, and enjoyed retreats at Lo Mo Lodge that included hikes to Muir Woods and Muir Beach.

Notably for Jean, Cameron House was a place where she developed lifelong friendships and found the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown (PCC), a short walk from Cameron House. These were special times for Jean for bonding with her peers and the Chinese community, as well as exploring her Christian faith.

Jean's attendance at a Communicant's class, led her to join PCC where she was baptized in 1957, and where she continues to worship to this day.

In fact, it was during a Women's Fellowship meeting at PCC in the early 1980's that Jean shared her desire to return to college and earn an accounting degree. Her friends who recognized her artistic abilities, encouraged her to pursue the arts instead.

Acting on their advice, she enrolled at SF State University as an art student. She relished the opportunity to learn new things and registered for many, many classes. She completed so many classes, long after she had earned enough units to graduate, that she received a letter in 1987 urging her to please graduate!

Jean continues to channel her energy into her artwork and is currently focused on floral arrangements, jewelry-making, and sewing. During shelter-in-place, Jean has donated over 400 handmade face masks! She looks forward to the return of the annual Cameron Carnival,



where she regularly offers beaded jewelry for sale and the repair of broken necklaces and bracelets. Jean thrives on supporting the community however she can and advises "you must love what you do in order to do a good job."

Jean is proud of the important work Cameron House continues to provide to the community by offering sliding-scale social service programs in English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Vietnamese: "The many wonderful programs that help people, helping Chinatown residents - my people - and especially women. The ability to provide services in different languages is so important."

Cameron House "has been a big part of my life and has also shaped the lives of my children, who joined Cameron House youth programs and eventually served as club leaders. Including Cameron House in my estate plans was a clear choice," says Jean.

"I'm confident that my legacy gift will be spent well and go to very good use for future generations of Chinatown residents."

To learn more about including Cameron House in your will or trust, please visit [www.cameronhouse.org/give/planned-giving/](http://www.cameronhouse.org/give/planned-giving/) or contact Bill Vigna, Director of Finance and Operations, at [bill@cameronhouse.org](mailto:bill@cameronhouse.org).

# EVENTS

Son of Paper and Alex Luu  
Present

[Why You Don't Listen: An Asian-American Live Music & Spoken Word Event](#)

Saturday, April 24, 2021  
4:00 PM PST

Join us for a benefit concert with performances from Cameron House's own, musical artist Son of Paper and award-winning, spoken word poet, Alex Luu. Stay for a Q&A with the artists to discuss current social issues and how you can support our fight against racism and hate crimes. Tickets are free, but donations are encouraged. Proceeds will support Cameron House and Chinatown Community Development Center\*.

*Voiceless no longer - the outcasts have turned mainstream.*

Cameron Carnival  
Saturday, May 1st, 2021

This year's virtual Carnival will bring us together for theatrical performances, cooking class, and the undeniable Dunko!

Scholarship Awards  
Ceremony

Friday, June 4, 2021

We will celebrate our outgoing seniors and honor those who have received an award for college. This year's celebration will also feature past alums and our generous donors.

Learn more at  
[www.cameronhouse.org/news/2021-events/](http://www.cameronhouse.org/news/2021-events/)

## RECAP!

On the cover: February 13, 2021, Cameron House hosted a virtual *Lunar New Year event to ring in the Year of the Ox!*

We were joined by 170 friends, family, alumni, and community members as Dayton Leong demonstrated his mother's recipe for jai, a "Buddha's Delight" vegetarian monk's stew; Corey Chan and his team from Kei Lun Martial Arts performed a lion dance up Sacramento street and through Cameron House; and Sabrina Gee-Shin sat in discussion with Corey to share New Year traditions and discussed the chyuhn hahp, or Chinese candy box. Throughout the program, our FATE senior commission member, Jadee Tsan, performed two beautiful songs on guzheng, a Chinese zither. It was a night to remember!

You can access our past virtual events on the Cameron House YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/cameronhousesf](http://www.youtube.com/cameronhousesf)

*\*In the physical copy of this Current, the Chinatown Community Development Center was incorrectly referred to as "Chinese Community Development Center".*

## Farewell to Staff!

Annie Luu left her position as the Development Coordinator at the end of February. Annie joined Cameron House in December 2013 as the Development Assistant and had since been a staple in the Devo department. Annie hopes to continue her educational career in the field of social work.

Oliver Wijayapala left Cameron House at the end of last October. He was a part of the Cameron House youth programs including Friday Night Club and started working at Cameron House in 2018 as a BAP Coordinator and eventually became the Out of School Times Programs Director at the start of 2019. He is now working at a Chinese Immersion school in San Francisco.

Rachel Ng left Youth Ministries at the end of January. Rachel came on staff as a Youth Development Coordinator in the Spring of 2019 and soon moved into the role of Club/Youth Leadership Development Programs Director that same winter. Rachel is now pursuing a career in pastry and baking arts.

Julia Lin left Youth Ministry last October. Julia came to Cameron House as a Youth Engagement Programs Coordinator in February 2019 and also oversaw the Girls on Fire Program.

Thank you all for your service to Cameron House!

## Hello New Board Members!



Denise Lee Yohn

Denise is a volunteer at Cameron House's Food Pantry.

Denise is a keynote speaker, consultant, and writer on brand leadership and the director of the Faith & Work Journey, a spiritual formation and professional development experience. She

shares God's heart for cities and is excited to serve the community in Chinatown and beyond.

Denise and her husband, Chris, have lived in the Bay Area since 2016.



Liane Wong

Liane is an alumna of the Cameron House youth and young adult programs. She began attending summer day camp in the third grade through junior high and eventually became a camp director. Some of her fondest memories include taking

over 60 children on MUNI from Chinatown to Golden Gate Park, every day for six weeks. She also served as Carnival chairperson and as a previous board member.

Liane lives in Berkeley with her husband Paul and two sons. She is the Director of UCSF Fitness and Recreation Centers serving over 12,000 members. She has a B.A. in Broadcast Communications from SFSU and previously worked as a news/traffic reporter and DJ at radio stations KGO, K101, and KYUU.

Welcome to the Cameron House Family!



# BAP Virtual Sessions: An Interview with co-lead teachers Tiffany Mak and Stephen Fletes

## What does a typical Bilingual Afterschool Program (BAP) virtual session look like?

**Stephen Fletes:** Pre-pandemic BAP was a three hour program for students held at Cameron House. We launched the virtual format in October 2020 and condensed it to an hour. We begin with check-in or an opening question, which leads into a discussion topic. This week's topic was mental health and working on healthy habits. Then we have a break to focus on physical movement, since most people are just sitting all day, each student selects a stretch to lead. Then we move onto dedicated time to complete homework and use the breakout rooms, if needed. Once homework time ends we enjoy a group game or activity. We close with a takeaway, usually related to the earlier discussion.

**Tiffany Mak:** The BAP virtual sessions provide an environment where students can interact - not only with their peers but also with the teachers. We have a great time playing games, getting to know each other, and doing homework. I'm honestly proud of what it's become. Currently, BAP virtual sessions take place Tuesday & Thursday from 3:00 - 4:00 pm.

## What's your affiliation with Cameron House?

**Tiffany:** I have been participating in Cameron House programs since the 3rd grade. I began in Branches Youth Program (BYP),



then became a volunteer summer leader in high school in 2010. Last year, I saw the job announcement for an in-person BAP teacher, but no one really knew what that would look like, because of the pandemic. I decided to apply anyway and ultimately the position became remote.

**Stephen:** I had never heard of Cameron House until I moved to the Bay Area in 2017 and met Kelsey Johe, Marketing and Communications Coordinator at Cameron House, who talked about Carnival and all the other programs. In 2019, Kelsey told me about an open teaching position with BAP for the 3rd/4th grade class. I was hired and worked through spring of 2020. At that time, I was anticipating studying abroad, but because of travel restrictions related to the pandemic, I remained in the Bay Area. In November 2020, I joined the BAP virtual sessions as a volunteer teaching assistant and later came on as staff and co-lead teacher.

## What benefits are you seeing in the participants of BAP virtual sessions?

**Stephen:** Some students have become more comfortable academically and more willing to do homework with fewer distractions. A student in our sessions last year was very shy, but now he's one of the students that willingly turns on his video. Virtual sessions reduce the amount of social pressure created by a big room full of peers and the smaller sized sessions allow students to open up a bit more.

**Tiffany:** They seem to be more confident asking for help. Not only that, they're also more confident completing the assignments themselves. Students are in a classroom of

30 usually in-person and the small virtual group approach has the potential to create a tighter community. Zoom's chat function and breakout rooms create a more intimate space. I recently met one of our BAP virtual session participants in-person by chance. Before that moment, I only ever saw her online. It was an amazing feeling of joy to meet her in person, and to have her recognize me. We'll be meeting the rest of the students in-person later on in the month to deliver activity kits and check-in with them. I look forward to that! For me, it would really solidify the student-teacher relationships we've started to build.

## What challenges are students facing?

**Tiffany:** Some of the students have mentioned they want to improve their time management skills, in terms of doing their homework and attending class. Before shelter-in-place they had teachers to remind them daily and in person about homework. We're asking them to assume greater responsibility, but they're still growing and developing as kids. The students that show up to BAP virtual sessions are looking for support. I hope the program helps them academically while also allowing them to enjoy being a kid, at least for a little bit.

**Stephen:** It's like everyone else - you're in your room all day everyday. In your place of comfort, it's hard to switch between your "home-self" and your "school-self." It can be hard to get out of the comfort zone and into school mode.

## Have you seen unexpected positive outcomes of this program?

**Stephen:** There's homework help, of course, but we're also trying to allow the kids to be vulnerable. We want them to feel comfortable asking for help and feel safe talking about their lives. When I was their age, I was afraid of teachers. Even if I was struggling with homework, I wasn't able to open up to my teachers. So, if we're able to provide help, or just encourage them to ask questions and ask for the help they need, that's a win.

**Tiffany:** Homework help is the draw, but what I'm really interested in is the social and mental health aspect, as someone who comes from a background in the mental health field. I think it's really important for the students to connect with people outside their household, like friends and teachers that care about them. We don't know what's happening with their families, many students live in Chinatown SROs and don't have much privacy or space to themselves. We love to see them. They didn't know who I was before coming to BAP virtual sessions and I really appreciate these kids for getting to know me and getting to know each other.

## Who is invited to join this program?

**Tiffany:** Priority has been given to existing BAP students, but we hope to open up to more Gordon J. Lau Elementary School families. Currently we are serving elementary and middle school students.



For information about enrollment, please email Lauren at [lauren@cameronhouse.org](mailto:lauren@cameronhouse.org).

Learn more about BAP Virtual Sessions on our website at [www.cameronhouse.org](http://www.cameronhouse.org)



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Formal Greeting  
Primary Street  
City, State ZIP  
Country

To the teachers and social workers of Cameron House,

I am very grateful that you still care about our family during this pandemic and sent us loving food. Thank you!

金美倫堂的老師, 社工們, 很感激你們在這個疫病期間, 仍然關心著我們的家庭, 給我們送來愛心食物, 謝謝! 我們的聯繫電話是

*Youth Ministries Food Box recipient*

## HELP STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Cameron House stands with our Asian American staff, volunteers, alums, and supporters during this incredibly challenging time. With the rise in hate crimes fueled by racist rhetoric related to COVID-19, we are devastated by the surge of violent, racist attacks that are being perpetrated against Asian Americans around the country and in the Bay Area.

Anti-Asian violence is often underreported, if you or anyone you know experiences an anti-Asian attack, please report it at [stopaapihate.org](https://stopaapihate.org) | [@stopaapihate](https://twitter.com/stopaapihate)

Learn more about how to advocate for others with virtual Bystander Intervention Training offered at [advancingjustice-chicago.org](https://advancingjustice-chicago.org)

If you don't feel comfortable leaving the house alone and would like a chaperone, or would like to be a chaperone, call 311 and ask for a [Community Ambassador safety escort](#). This service is also available in Oakland at [compassioninoakland.org](https://compassioninoakland.org).

Dear Cameron House,

I came across your organization while searching for nonprofits that combat the rise of hate incidents against Asians. As a part Asian woman, I find it heartbreaking that some are still not respectful of others, especially elders. I also work in the nonprofit world with women, and I love the many services you are providing to the community. Blessings on your work.

*Note received from a donor*

Contact Cameron House at (415) 781-0401 or [info@cameronhouse.org](mailto:info@cameronhouse.org) for assistance.

[Visit our bilingual AAPI resource page.](#)