

Quarterly Newsletter • Fall 2021 • Available digitally at [www.cameronhouse.org/current](http://www.cameronhouse.org/current)

# Current





## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The chilly mornings of Autumn have arrived as we enter our 20th month of this COVID-19 pandemic. The world, our City, neighborhoods, families and each of us continue to navigate the disruptions affecting our societies, public health, and our economic well-being. Supporting people through disruptions and trauma and facilitating their transitions and transformation is an enduring legacy of our mission work at Cameron House.

Our staff continues to manage adaptively, leverage our network of collaborators to share approaches, problem-solve and advocate for our Chinese community. We've scrutinized our use of cash, tying our resource allocation to prioritized outcomes, and we have secured emergency and economic relief support to expand access to mental health counseling and support our clients' essential needs.

Summer was a splash of activity. We continue to put food in the hands of those who need it, listen closely to our clients and participants for unmet needs and respond with creative agency. Major private funding enabled us to hire professional teachers and social workers to the task of fostering students' social-emotional health, engaging them in summer camp to close the learning gap and preparing them for this school year. Our Friday Night Club juniors and seniors participated in a modified Westminster Woods camp and our seniors received support with college applications through in-person workshops. Our counseling team produced a summer series of webinars to prepare students and parents to return to the classroom, and introduced the value of music, visual arts, and pet therapy to promote wellness. And this fall, 61 elementary and middle-school youth enrolled in out-of-school time programming; one-third are new to Cameron House.

Our long-standing City contracts continue to provide 34% of our annual overall operating budget for out-of-school time programming for youth, domestic violence prevention, intervention and case management, and ESL/computer classes.

The continued success of Cameron House is a direct result of extraordinary, collective generosity – philanthropic support of our individual donors, event sponsors and foundations, and the investments of federal stimulus grants and City agencies – this critical funding has not only fueled the tireless efforts of our staff and volunteers to deliver essential services to our most vulnerable, but also allowed us to expand access to mental health counseling and support for parents and families. We are tremendously grateful.

As our community continues to struggle with the economic chasm between the “haves and have nots,” our young people are financially strained, emotionally drained, and facing significant barriers to employment. Their hope about the future is in jeopardy. Many of our participants and clients live on the edge of poverty and this pandemic has exacerbated the economic strains on individuals, households and families. The scale of trauma and need has greatly expanded beyond the capacity of social sector organizations. As such, our role and function as a community-benefit organization is being challenged. As we continue to provide essential services to keep people afloat during hard economic times we must also spark powerful transformations in the lives of individuals and families to create strong vibrant communities.

We've seized the moment of this pandemic to engage in strategic planning with two consulting groups that facilitated important conversations about how we can best meet the complex and dynamic needs of our community. The Cameron House board will soon approve an exciting set of strategic priorities and roadmap for the next several years. This is especially resonant as we approach the auspicious date of our 150-year anniversary in 2024. Our emerging priorities focus on the strategies of financial sustainability, programmatic focus, organizational culture and community outcomes.

Our mission to strengthen, build and empower our community are shared acts of collective passion, faith and compassion. We thank you for trusting and supporting our work with your hearts, your minds, your voices and your financial stewardship.



Mike Lee  
Executive Director

## Growing and Learning at Cameron House

Elizabeth “Liz” Poong Mark was first introduced to Cameron House in 1971 when her older sister, Carol, brought her to the annual community event, Cameron Carnival. Little did she know, it would be her first of many Carnivals to come. Even though she did not know anyone at that time, she was welcomed by the “huge building, filled with fun, laughter and activities.” Liz fondly remembers meeting one of her closest lifetime friends, Angela Jeong, at Friday Night Club.

At 15, Liz became a regular Friday Night Club participant where she enjoyed meeting students from different schools. During the summer, she became an orange-scarf-clad Day Camp leader for 1st graders and a Best Day of the Week Saturday program leader. She also taught Sunday school for one summer at the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown. As a high school senior, Liz was asked to take on the role as a Friday Night Club leader for the middle school girls group who would later become the Club group “The Ephesians”.

Liz recalls mentors and leaders who became role models to her, instilling leadership skills, the meaning of community, and the act of serving others. Some of her mentors/ leaders were: Harry Chuck, the late Gordie Lam, the late Sherman Mo, Barbara Fong, Keith Choy, and Jeanine Lim. Many of her high school and college commission members, the Eirenikos, stay in touch and have held a couple of reunions since their graduation. A fair amount of the group have

gone on to pursue careers in helping others such as physicians, lawyers, occupational and physical therapists, nurses, teachers and public health workers.

During her time at Cameron House, Liz learned more about what it meant to be a Christian. She joined the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown congregation in 1974 after being asked to help teach Sunday School.

After high school graduation, Liz went on to study nursing and held a career as a registered nurse for 40 years at UCSF. Many years passed, and Liz lost touch with Cameron House while she lived in Alameda raising two children who are now in their 30s. In 2012, Liz moved back to San Francisco and joined the Rotary Club of SF Chinatown. This Rotary connection brought Liz back to Cameron House.

One of the Rotary projects included painting and furnishing two rooms where youth programming took place. “Our Rotary Club values our wonderful community partnership with Cameron House and donates yearly to different programs. Through Rotary, I became more confident and learned public speaking and other leadership skills. These skills have also enabled me to contribute more in my current role as the chair of our Fund Development committee on the Cameron House Board.” Liz is a past Rotary Club President and a current Assistant Governor.

In 2016, Tom Pong approached Liz to join the Cameron House board. She is now completing her 5th year on the Board and is the chair of the Fund Development Committee. Liz has also volunteered on and off at the Cameron House Food Pantry prior to shelter in place, but when COVID hit, most of the volunteers who were over 65 no longer felt comfortable volunteering. So early

on in the pandemic, Liz committed to going every Thursday to help pack food bags.

“I honestly contribute the success I had in my profession to the basic principles I learned from Cameron House. I would love to see future generations benefit from our programs. There is a tremendous ongoing need in our Chinatown community and beyond for these services. Your donation will be serving countless youth and people in need that will make a positive impact on their lives for years to come.”

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



Eirenikos commission 2014 reunion  
Liz at bottom right corner



# Meet Our New Board Members!

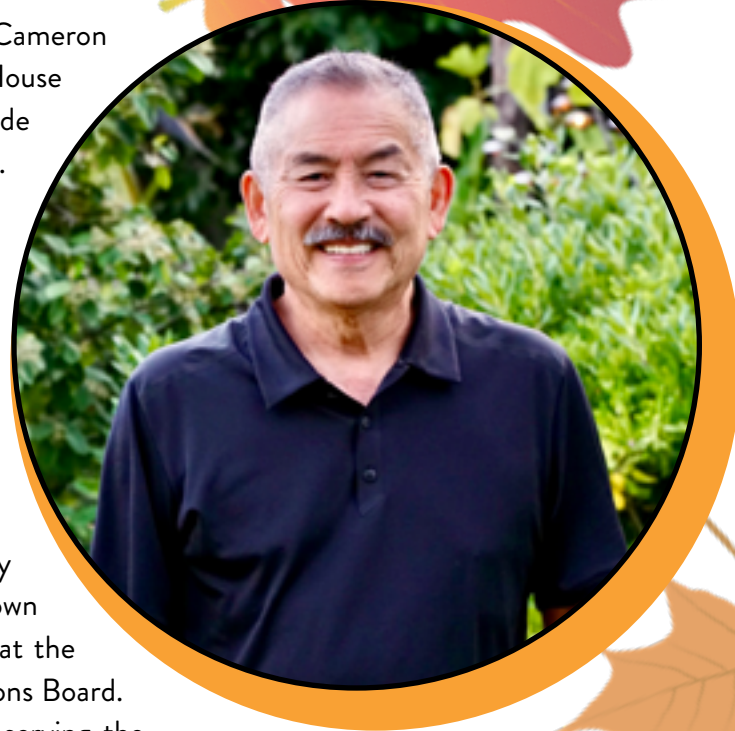


**Dylan Chow** grew up at Cameron House starting in first grade in the Ventures Day Camp program. He eventually volunteered as a Day Camp leader and attended Friday Night Club until he graduated high school in 2012. Some of his fondest memories include Westminster Woods, Cameron Carnival, a mission trip to New Mexico, and foggy summer days in Golden Gate Park.

Dylan joined the Cameron House Board to give back to the community that taught him so many invaluable lessons growing up. Dylan currently works at Google Fiber, where he helps deliver high-speed internet solutions to businesses and properties across the Bay Area. In his free time you can find him reading a book or staying active by running or hiking.

**Tommy Lim** would be the first to tell you that Cameron House changed his life. He was introduced to Cameron House his junior year of high school. The time he spent as a 3rd grade Day Camp leader at the age of 18 was a powerful experience. From that role he eventually became a Friday Night Club leader for the Apostles. He is most proud of the fact that many of the original members of that club group grew up to hold key leadership roles at Cameron House and the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown.

Tommy is married with two adult children. He was an optometrist that started his own practice, and retired in 2020. Even though he has lived in San Jose since 1977, San Francisco has always been special to him, especially Chinatown. He has served on the board of the Chinatown Community Development Center and currently worships at the First Chinese Baptist Church, having served on their Deacons Board. Now on the Cameron House Board, he looks forward to serving the organization that has most impacted his life.



We bid farewell to Board members Wayne Eng and Mark Chung and thank them for their service!

# Meet Our New Staff!



**Abbi Leong**

*Youth Ministries Program Assistant*

Abbi Leong was born and raised in San Francisco and has joined the Cameron House Youth Ministries team to support summer programming, the Bilingual After school Program, and Friday Night Club. She came to Cameron House because she wants to serve the Bay Area community.

Abbi earned a BA in psychology from Biola University which has helped her become a better communicator in this role.

Outside of work, she loves spending time with family and friends, as well as arranging medleys and covers of popular songs on the piano. She is thrilled to join the Youth Ministries team!

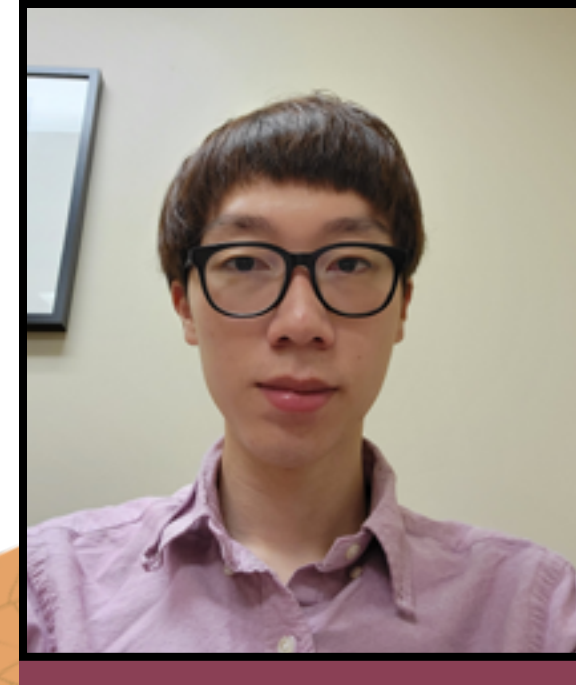


**Harry Wong**

*Individual and Family Counselor*

Harry Wong was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to the United States in 2016. He attended San Francisco State University where he earned a BA in Psychology with a minor in Counseling. When Harry learned about the opportunity to work with Cameron House he was excited about putting his skills to work for the community.

Harry would like to become a social worker in the future. He regularly visits, cares, and distributes essential services through his church to Chinese residents who need help around San Francisco's Chinatown, Richmond, and Sunset districts. During his free time, he likes to ride his road bike, cook, and play the guitar at his church.



We bid farewell to Joshua Chau as he moves to the San Francisco YMCA as an Administrative Specialist.



# Cameron House Events

## Mid-Autumn Festival Recap

On September 18th, the Cameron House community gathered to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival. We were joined by friends, family, alumni, and community members for a mouth-watering moon cake demonstration led by Chinatown's AA Bakery owner, Henry Chen, and our Executive Director, Mike Lee. In addition to moon cakes, it wouldn't have been a Mid-Autumn Festival without lanterns! Artist Jenifer L. Jay showed us how to create three beautiful DIY lanterns. Alex Sun Luu read us original poetry about the AAPI experience. We were also joined by special guests Gordon J. Lau Elementary School Principal, Gloria Choy, and our Social Services Team Manager, Ming Quan, who informed us of the traditions of the Festival. It was a night to remember!

You can watch a recording of the event at our YouTube page at [www.youtube.com/cameronhousesf](http://www.youtube.com/cameronhousesf)

### THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS

**GOLD** • Minami Tamaki • Virginia Smyly • Tom Pong and Joan Li

**SILVER** • Anonymous (2) • Doreen and Bruce Der-McLeod • Carol Dolezal, Grace and Jeremy Dolezal-Ng • Byron and Karen Ho • Richard Kwan • Terry and Lianne Leong • Jeanine Lim and the Rev. Gregory L. Chan • David Sakamoto and Ivy Yee-Sakamoto • Susie Wong and Scott Barlow

## Cantonese Zoom Computer Class

Free ESL/Computer Class

October 20, 2021 – November 19, 2021

Wednesdays & Fridays from 10:30 AM to 12 PM

"After attending the Cameron House ESL/Computer Class, you can keep in touch with your family, friends, and the community through Zoom. You can also enhance your skills, be active, and keep your mind sharp!"

To register, please contact Flora Lok at (415) 781-0401 extension 130

Email: [flora@cameronhouse.org](mailto:flora@cameronhouse.org)

## Legacy Event

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, December 11, 2021

12:00- 1:30 pm / Cameron House lower deck

Legacy Society members will be invited to the annual "members only" luncheon at Cameron House in December. The socially distanced event will be held outdoors, and guests will be asked to sign a vaccination verification waiver.

The Legacy Society at Cameron House is composed of a group of visionary alumni and friends who have chosen to include Cameron House in their estate plans. To learn more, please visit our website [cameronhouse.org/give/planned-giving](http://cameronhouse.org/give/planned-giving)

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## HOWARD LAI *food pantry volunteer*

**How did you first get involved with the food pantry?**

I've been volunteering at Cameron House's Food Pantry since 2018. Jeanine Lim-Chan, one of my best friends and former college roommate, invited me to join her as she knew that I had some extra time on my hands.

**What is your history with Cameron House?**

My mother was a new immigrant when she was invited to Cameron House for English and Citizenship classes. As a child I attended youth programs here, and later I was employed by Cameron House to run youth programs. My sister and I participated in the year-round weekend Best Day of the Week program for Chinatown youth. We attended Day Camp every summer, went to Westminster Woods, participated in the Friday Night Club program, Carnival, and multiple mini caravan trips.

As a young adult, I was provided with leadership opportunities such as Cabin Crew and Day Camp

Director. Immediately after receiving my graduate degree, then Cameron House Director, Rev. Harry Chuck offered me a job on the staff of Cameron House to work on developing an after school program for immigrant youth. I was the Director of Bilingual After school Program (BAP) before becoming the Children's Program Director in the late '70s.

To further understand the immigrant experience and language, I spent two years working in Hong Kong through the Presbyterian Church's Volunteers in Mission program before returning to the states in the early '80s.

I subsequently worked with youth in East Bay schools before ultimately landing in a job working with the elderly for the remainder of my career.

**What keeps you coming back to the food pantry?**

My history with Cameron House keeps me coming back, I like being able to volunteer weekly where

I know it will have a direct impact and result in a tangible benefit for the elderly in Chinatown. I enjoy the conversation and camaraderie with other volunteers and the opportunity to interact with the seniors in Chinese. Also, assembling bags of food can be a rigorous workout which can be a way to get in some exercise.

**What are your hopes for the food pantry and Cameron House community?**

Food insecurity is a very real prospect that seniors and low-income families face every day. I hope the services that Food Pantry offers helps to alleviate some of that uncertainty and stress.

Being a part of the Food Pantry crew that distributes food to feed the elderly in my home community is a "full circle" opportunity for me to continue in service and to have an occasional chance to maintain my language skills. Working alongside with younger volunteers makes for lively conversation and exchange of ideas, keeping me young at heart while having fun doing something that hopefully makes a difference in the lives of the people we are serving.





DONALDINA CAMERON HOUSE  
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Our Big Give campaign has begun! Support of our annual fundraiser is your chance to help provide critical services the Chinese American community in the Bay Area.

Visit our website at  
[cameronhouse.org/give/donate](http://cameronhouse.org/give/donate) to learn more!

You can also join over 40 volunteers who help spread the word on social media. Last year we raised over \$40,000 through social networking efforts towards our goal of \$125,000, with the help of our volunteers! This two-week social media campaign will begin on November 15 and lead up to Giving Tuesday on November 30.

Please email [communications@cameronhouse.org](mailto:communications@cameronhouse.org) today to join our volunteer group.

