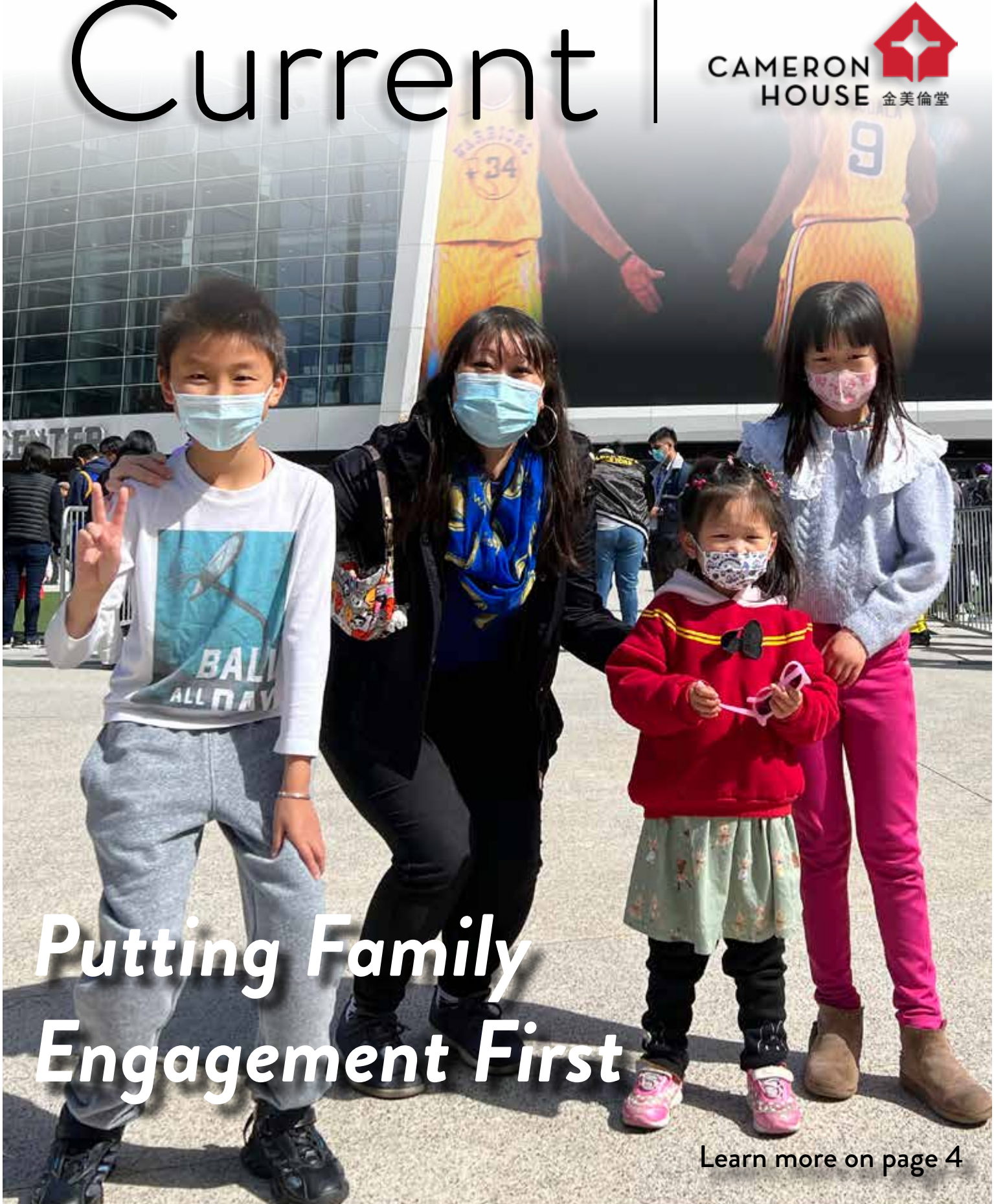


# Current



## *Putting Family Engagement First*

Learn more on page 4





# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

We hope this edition of the Current finds you healthy and welcoming this glorious spring season. As we persist in this lasting pandemic the verdant hills that surround our great City are flush with native poppies, goldfields, lupines, and palettes of pastel colors are a hopeful sign of renewal.

Our steadfast and mission-driven staff and volunteers continue to provide the essential services for nearly 1,000 individuals and their families. Case management, English and computer literacy, domestic violence intervention, and out-of-school time direct services are the mainstay of our impact. Our city agency partners financially support much of our ongoing services through contract agreements and donations that close the gap between these City reimbursements and the true cost of operating Cameron House.

Our 2021 Big Give fundraiser yielded \$327,000, surpassing our target of \$130,000. We thank all of you donors, funding partners, event sponsors, Cameron House and Foundation Boards, and our Legacy Society members for supporting Cameron House so generously. As you might imagine, our society's most vulnerable have sought access to our services that help people heal, learn and thrive in greater numbers.

Last winter the Board approved both our strategic road map and our first-year implementation plan priorities. One of our near-term priorities is to address organizational culture – a theme that emerged at last June's Community Forum for the need for safety, transparency and accountability. The Board approved a new Code of Conduct for all participants, volunteers (including Board) and staff recently and we will address how we hire/recruit, on-board, train and evaluate our board, staff and volunteers.

Our other first-year priority is to develop a family-centered approach to our services. We will evaluate programs/services in the context of our strategic direction; engage a consultant to research and develop viable family-centered models; and hire a senior program director with expertise and experience in our key strategic areas to design, integrate and market our services.

This past winter we took actions to improve safety. Besides our ongoing weekly COVID testing of our Bilingual After school youth we required employees and contractors to be vaccinated; we will continue to require face coverings

for anyone entering Cameron House, regardless of vaccination status. Thanks to community activists, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority installed new street lights, maintained roadway, sidewalk and the historic alphabet concrete tablets to improve nighttime safety on Joice Alley.

We're excited about what's ahead in the coming months. We will host several virtual events: a Legacy Society workshop in April; a second Community Forum and healing circles with Tsuru for Solidarity facilitators; and our annual Academic and Vocational Scholarship Awards in May.

We're continuing to expand our after school program into periodic family outings with the intent to nurture families through curiosity, discovery and shared experiences. With our recent designation as a Heritage School our team will continue to integrate culturally-appropriate elements into our out-of-school time curriculum celebrating Chinese culture and traditions, including a 6-week apprenticeship for high school students this summer. Our Summer Adventures program is fully enrolled with 90 elementary and middle school students. These highly subsidized camps will be taught by certified teachers and social workers and address learning loss and decline of social-emotional health sustained during the pandemic.

We are also excited and poised to engage the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, to manage the archival material of Donaldina Cameron House later this year.

Finally, as we emerge into the new normal and the desire to be social again we're planning several events at Cameron House this summer and fall – to celebrate our persistence through the pandemic, reunite old friends and new, and to engage you all with our exciting strategic opportunities.

Until we meet again, in person, we remain grateful for your ongoing support of our shared mission to empower the San Francisco Chinese community to build strength and resilience through family-centered programs. Thank you.



Michael Lee  
Executive Director



## A Journey of Love, Service, Leadership and Faith

Thomas "Tom" Pong's journey with Cameron House began at the age of 12, when his friend, Sherman Mo, first brought him to Friday Night Club. He felt nervous being in a new place for the first time and yet excited for what would ultimately become a 60-year relationship with the organization that shaped him into the person he is today.

Growing up, Tom felt a sense of loneliness. Junior high was filled with peer pressure and the need to fit in, and his home life wasn't any easier. Tom lived in a very traditional Chinese home with strict parents, he found acceptance and saw what it looked like to live life with love, service, leadership, and faith at Cameron House. Tom's first leaders were Landy Dong and Gordie Lam, he was instantly struck by their patience and care. "I soon saw them as my mentors and surrogate parents, and Cameron House as a second home. I felt accepted and supported."

He remembers a backpacking trip in Los Padres National Forest and his leaders, Gordie Lam and Phil Chin. Tom remembers reading the Boy Scout magazine Boys' Life and pictured himself as one of the scouts.

"My first trip wasn't quite like what was in the magazine! Since it was early spring, it was raining; at one point we crossed a river in chest-high water; we were soaked! Despite these unexpected challenges, I loved the experience. I learned the importance of teamwork, believing in yourself,

trusting your leaders, and having Faith."

Tom began his faith journey at Cameron House. His commission leaders, Sharon Quan and John Wichman, inspired Tom to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Tom attended church school at Cameron House Sunday mornings and attended worship at the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown Sunday evenings. Tom was baptized in his senior year of high school.

During his high school and college summers, he learned the importance of service and leadership as a Day Camp leader and director. Tom participated in Volunteers in Mission, a program of the national Presbyterian Church; served as an inner-city day camp leader in New Jersey, and as a volunteer for the Oregon Health Fair.

When questioned by his parents as to why he volunteered so much time at Cameron House rather than getting a job during those summers, Tom would tell them that these experiences were more important. These experiences had a huge impact and directed his values and goals in life. Tom decided that health was one of the most important factors in well-being; he became a dedicated cardiologist, providing health care in South San Francisco for 35 years.

Tom's relationship with Cameron House continues to this day. His fellow commission members are lifelong friends. He served on the Cameron House Board of Directors from 1993 to 2000 and as Board Chair from 2013 to 2020. One of Tom's favorite events is the Scholarship Awards dinner every summer. "When the youth share their stories of holistic transformation, I see myself."

**"Cameron House continues to provide opportunities and services to children, women and adults in Chinatown today. As we near our 150th anniversary, I want to do my part in ensuring the impact of the Cameron House mission endures. I have enthusiastically joined the Legacy Society and invite you to join me. To someone considering an estate gift, I encourage you to consider how Cameron House impacted your life? If the experience impacted your life as it did mine, I encourage you to commit to the Legacy Society."**

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).

Tom Pong speaking at the 2017 Cameron House 70s reunion







# Take a look at Cameron House's approach to Family Engagement

by *Laurene Chan, Director of Youth Ministries*

We choose not to do this alone. Raising a family, running a youth program, being in the work of transformation - we acknowledge that people are stronger together. So we seek partnerships so that Cameron House children and their families strengthen and develop the resilience they need to live in confidence in this unstable world. Every afternoon that the 60+ Bilingual Afterschool Program (BAP) students come through the doors of Cameron House, it is clear that they are not only students who deserve a clean and safe space to continue their learning and growing, but they are children who are members of family units who live in communities where their physical, social, emotional and mental health are influenced and shaped.

As youth workers, we put in our best to meet the needs of the children; and for many years it has been clear that a better way to meet the needs of the children is to also be aware of and better understand the needs of their caregivers and the dynamics of the relationships that exists in the home. Unemployment, unstable housing, violence, drug use, marital and intergenerational relationship challenges, single-parent households, and caregivers navigating their own disabilities are some of the real issues

*On March 17, 2022, Our Bilingual After school Program families had the best time watching the Santa Cruz Warriors win over the G League Ignite team! The next day in BAP, our students couldn't stop talking about it and we saw that more students than usual were eager to pick up a basketball in the yard! We're so lucky to have had this opportunity!*

**Lauren Mark  
Out of School Time Programs Director**

*Tickets to the game courtesy of the Golden Sate Warriors*

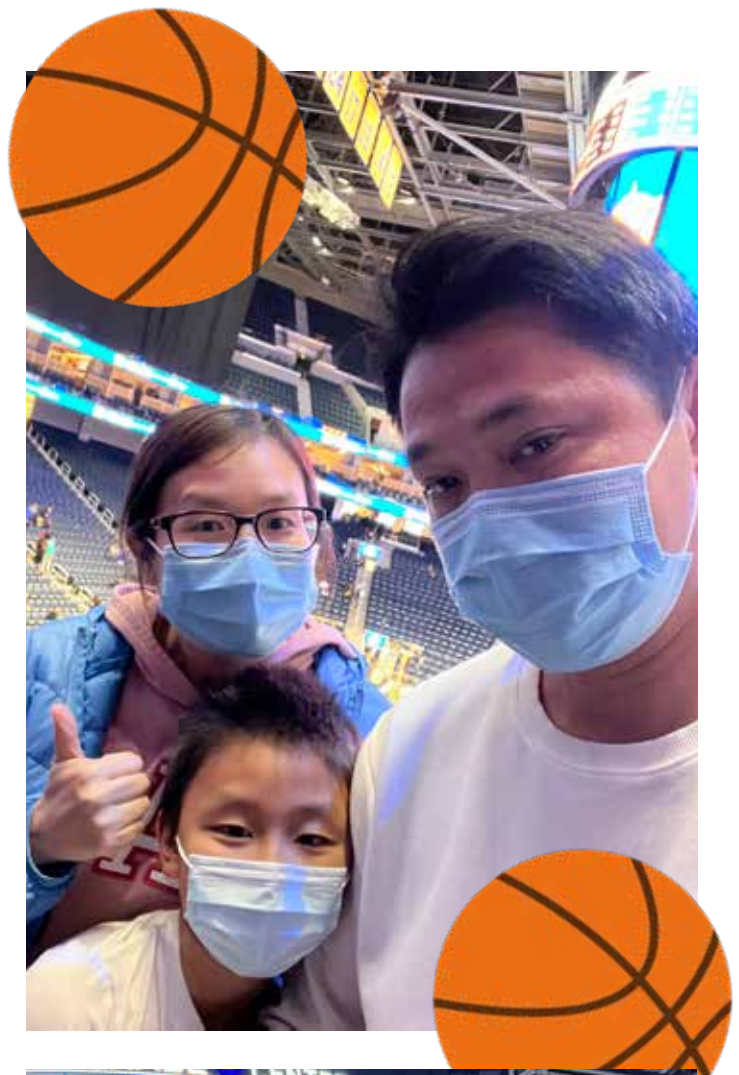


that Chinatown families face daily. As youth workers, we see the effects of these issues expressed by some of the children each afternoon. From angry tears and outbursts, sadness and timidity; through sketches and journal entries - the children express their stress. We also see how much the parents love their children, and how hard they are working to provide for their childhood and their future.

Three and a half years ago, we started a Parent Support Group for parents of high school youth in our programs. That consistent group of parents continued to meet through the COVID-19 pandemic over Zoom two to three times a month, and in the last six months have met in person three times at Cameron House. The group, with the help of Ada Lee, Youth Ministries' Family Engagement Counselor as of last September, is providing a safe space for the participants to share their familial and personal issues, their challenges, and their emotional state. Participants take turns sharing insights and support for each other in an environment that is non-judgmental.

With the ongoing success of this group, our Youth Ministries staff wanted to expand upon our support of parents and the nurture of the whole family unit. We envisioned "family engagement", and we knew it needed to start with our younger children. Our goal was to pilot 3 - 4 family engagement activities on a weekend afternoon, where BAP students and parents could enjoy an activity where the parent didn't need to be concerned with transportation, entrance fees or food. We wanted to create an environment where caregivers didn't have to worry about much of anything, except giving attention to their child and creating a really cool memory. Since November of 2021, we have hosted a BBQ in the Main Yard with a trip to the Aquarium by the Bay, Ice Skating in Union Square (canceled due to Omicron), Summer Adventures Enrollment Priority Launch with rice-plates to go, and a Santa Cruz Warriors vs. Ignite basketball game at the Chase Center!

Ada was able to expand her work with Cameron House families and one afternoon a week began connecting with the BAP parents and caregivers as they came to pick-up their children. By being physically present, available and welcoming, Ada quickly started learning the names of parents and which child or children were connected to them. A simple question of "How are you?" Became a bridge to parents who wanted a space to talk about how they're really doing. Their courage to become vulnerable in this space has led to change. By listening, we can better understand their home circumstances and then work together with our BAP staff to create a better environment here for their children's emotional development and well-being. (cont. on page 6)







(cont. from page 5) With our BAP Staff working directly with the children each afternoon, our Family Engagement Counselor greeting parents every Tuesday and being available to listen, and our enhanced daily communications through our front door reception staff around family engagement outings and summer program enrollment logistics, we are witnessing a growing strength and vitality.

Family-Centered Practice is based on the belief that the best way to meet a person's needs is within their families, and that the most effective way to ensure safety, permanency and well-being is to provide services that engage, involve, strengthen and support families. The four major components of the Family-Centered Practice are:

1. Safety of children is the first concern
2. Children have their right to their families
3. Family is the fundamental resource for the nurturing of children
4. Parents should be supported in their efforts to care for their children

BAP focuses on our students' needs and safety within the context of their families and builds on their strengths to achieve optimal outcome. As we explore what it means for Cameron House to do family-centered programming, we look forward to hearing from the students' parents and caregivers how these new BAP initiatives support their efforts to care for their children.

Our next BAP family engagement activity will take place Saturday, May 7th at the Sonoma TrainTown Railroad! All aboard!!



## Cameron House Town Hall Recap

On the evening of March 23rd, our Executive Director, Michael Lee, was joined by 40 members of our community for a Zoom Town Hall to introduce the priorities outlined in our new Strategy Roadmap. The town hall was followed by a Q&A session where attendees were invited to ask follow up questions.

Our strategy roadmap is a directional framework developed by the Cameron House Board and Senior Management Team and Mosaic Consultants. The process included consultant research, key external and internal stakeholder interviews, staff and customer surveys and focus groups, facilitated board self-assessment, program/ministries evaluation, and monthly engagement of the Strategy Committee and subcommittees comprised of board and community members and senior management. The draft strategy roadmap was developed at a board/staff retreat in recognition of the changing conditions affecting the Chinese community and exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. The draft Strategy Roadmap was tested with key external stakeholders, finalized, and approved by the Board of Directors in October 2021.

[Watch a recording of the Town Hall here](#)

[Read our Strategy Roadmap Here](#)

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## PAULINE CHIN *food pantry volunteer*

### How did you get involved volunteering at Cameron House?

Food pantry is my first volunteer activity with Cameron House. Three years ago I started helping with the food pantry because my two sisters were very involved in Cameron House since high school and they encouraged me to support the pantry. My sister Elizabeth Mark is on the Cameron House Board. I also am a member of the Chinatown Rotary Club of San Francisco and we have made it our mission to support Cameron House. I have also donated knitted caps to the Cancer Support Group. The Chinatown Rotary Club of SF also provided funds to plant and support a small garden on Sacramento Street outside of Cameron House. Each week before or after the food pantry, we weed and water the garden.

### What's your history with Cameron House?

Other than my sisters, Carol and Liz Poong, I have not previously been involved with Cameron House. While they were involved with camp programs and leadership activities, I volunteered at the Chinatown YMCA as a club leader and participated in several Chinese New Year Parades.

### What changes have you noticed since the transition to a contact-less pick up process?

I appreciated the transition to an outdoor food pantry program. Since we assemble food bags in advance of the food pantry in the Cameron House Parking Lot, we don't have exposure to the food pantry participants.

The advantages of our contact-less pick up process is that it decreases

our risk of exposure to potential infections such as COVID, colds, flu etc. Although the food pantry volunteers are outside, our temperature is checked and we wear masks and gloves to protect ourselves and others.

The challenge of the food pantry process is that it's a bit more physically demanding since we are filling and moving the bags instead of the participants coming around to each food station. I also acknowledge that we don't give the participants a choice to refuse an item so there's a chance that there could be waste if they toss out an item they don't want.

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

The Chinatown Rotary Club of SF has pledged to support the Cameron House Food Pantry every week and it is rewarding to participate. I appreciate the devotion of the people who volunteer. Nolan Chow does a great job as food pantry facilitator and leader.

### What are your hopes for the people you help serve?

I'm a retired UCSF nurse. My hope is that the people I serve remain healthy, safe, and lead good lives.

I'm grateful that Cameron House is demonstrating resilience during these challenging times. Cameron House is a pillar of the community and provides an essential service for the community. We should all do our best to support this essential organization.





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## *Maximizing Employee Benefits*

Hosted by the Cameron House Legacy Committee  
Saturday, April 16, 2022 10:30 AM PT

Stock options are designed to compensate employees for job performance rather than to provide retirement benefits. Therefore, most employee stock options will expire long before you retire. However, you may not need the cash now or might be in no hurry to pay the taxes on the option gains at exercise. Join the Cameron House Legacy Society for a morning of weighing stock options and evaluating your retirement plan.

Presented by



Gibran Le, CRPC®  
*Financial Planner*



Nancy Pyzel, EA  
*Financial Planner*

Register to attend at [our 2022 Events page](#)