



Friends of Children with Special Needs

華人特殊兒童之友

# FCSN Dream Builders

January 2015



The most successful gala event ever!

Our new South Bay home project marching on with vigor

Supported Living Services energized with fun and care

Save the day for the first annual Special Needs' Got Talent competition

A child from the star inspires Mom !!

A unique child transforms a different me !!



Drama Camp Finding Nemo cast



FCSN Percussion Group



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## FCSN Dream Builders

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January 2015

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### FCSN

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### Reporter Wanted

FCSN newsletter team is currently recruiting volunteer reporters.

Qualifications:

- Good writing skill in either English or Chinese
- Able to attend FCSN events (dates are various)
- Contribute at least one article to each issue

(FCSN newsletter publishes two times per year)

Please contact Roger Leung at:  
[rogeryuleung@gmail.com](mailto:rogeryuleung@gmail.com) for more details.

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### Regular Family Support Gatherings –Spring 2015

Our family support gatherings are designed for the whole family. Special-needs children, their families, volunteers, and friends are gathered together for fun activities. Family Support Gatherings are held every Saturday alternately in Fremont and in Saratoga. Welcome to register on site during gathering time.

South Bay Dates: 2/7, 2/21, 3/7, 3/21, 4/18, 5/2, 5/23 (4:30pm – 8pm)

**Location: Westhope Presbyterian Church,  
12850 Saratoga Ave., Saratoga CA 95070**

Dates: 1/31, 2/14, 2/28, 3/28, 4/11, 4/25, 5/9 (4:30pm – 8pm)

**Location: FCSN Center,  
2300 Peralta Blvd., Fremont CA 94536**

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## Feature Article

# FCSN Fundraising Gala Brings Community Together

by **Kenneth Song**

FCSN Dream Builders Reporter

This year I had the great pleasure of attending the Friends of Children with Special Needs 2014 fundraising gala. The event marked a monumental milestone in the organization's history: its expansion into a new facility in the South Bay. With its already wide diversity of children and adult programs at full capacity--serving over 800 multi-ethnic families from every corner of the bay--FCSN will now acquire a second headquarters, a project that has been long in the works. Once remodeling has been completed, the South Bay branch is expected to serve many more special needs individuals. This year's gala, held last November, raised money for the remodeling and development of FCSN's new building into a genuine home with multiple classrooms, a kitchen,

and even a café for student training and work. Before I showed up to the gala at the Santa Clara convention center, I had never attended such an event and had only the faintest notion of what to expect. What I observed was nothing less than a testament to the value and continuing prosperity of an organization that has worked so hard and accomplished so much to better its community.

Before dinner started, the convention center lobby was filled with a sea of faces both new and familiar to the normal bustle of FCSN activities. Baskets of many shapes and sizes, all brimming with assorted items for the silent auction and raffle, were elegantly displayed on tables just outside the dining ballroom. The Lobby Musicians, a talented group of FCSN's own students, played a lively set of songs that set the tone brilliantly for the evening. I could hardly pull myself away from their talented musical performance, even as it was announced that the gala was commencing. With nearly a

thousand people gathered together that night, a sense of excitement began to fill the auditorium as guests filtered in. Rows upon rows of community-style round tables, beautifully set for the evening, patterned the ballroom, where an elevated stage was the centerpiece for the night's program. City council members, VIP guests from the Department of Economic Relations between Taipei and San Francisco (TECO), doctors, business owners, mayors, and regular FCSN members all sat together side-by-side for this momentous occasion. As delicious plates of food were brought, eaten and taken away from us by the convention staff, the lights eventually dimmed to signify that we were about to begin.

The master of ceremonies for the evening was Rick Quan, an award-winning sports anchor and field reporter for ABC7 news. After a spirited introduction of Friends of Children with Special Needs and a large round of applause for many local sponsors who donated time and resources to make the event possible, the festivities kicked off with the Fund-a-Need Auction. Open donations would be matched in equal by the event organizers for up to one hundred thousand dollars. Their generous proposal was not met with disappointment. To my great astonishment, as soon as the bidding opened up at \$25,000, two cards immediately shot up, and just like that the night was off to an explosive start. Donations of varying amounts flooded in as the momentum picked up, and the count soon topped more than \$150,000 from the audience alone. It was a humbling







experience to witness so many families and individuals give so freely to an organization that had grown close to their hearts. The level of integrated community involvement in the growth of FCSN shows how far the organization has come since its early beginnings as just 10 Chinese American families.

With the vivid memory of donation still fresh in our hearts and the formalities of the event out of the way, we settled back into our seats as the entertainment started off with a bang. The EBADP percussion ensemble led by Mrs. Daphne Devine shook the entire room with its performance of "The Power of Mother Nature". With each performer equipped with a unique instrument, music of the caliber expected from a professional orchestral symphony crashed over the audience in powerful waves that had me thoroughly impressed. After the ensemble's last notes faded into the night, the FCSN Chinese musical ensemble group, patched together from five different FCSN families, took the stage. With a dazzling variety of instruments that included the keyboard, flute, drums, cymbals, and even a traditional guzheng, they created their rendition of 高山青, surprisingly delicate with enchanting vocals. These students who trained diligently to master their instruments and the timing required by this music are nothing short of FCSN's very best.

These two spectacular performances were followed by several dance choreographies from FCSN classes of various age groups, starting with the children's co-ed group. Jumping around to the lively beat of "What Does the Fox Say," the kids on stage were dancing with a contagious energy that quickly spread to the audience. Their costumes of fox masks, tails, and the LED gloves that flashed bursts of colors from their fingertips captured the essence of the song's excitement. As the parade of foxes trotted off stage, they were replaced by their elder counterparts, the FCSN Dancin' Stars who would perform to "Do You Want to Build a Snowman" from the Disney movie Frozen. Gracefully spinning across the stage in icy white dresses for the

girls, the performers executed slow yet precise movements paired up perfectly with the chosen music. Halfway into the performance, they pulled out silken blue and white handkerchiefs that they twirled around, animating their well-rehearsed ballet. The FCSN Drama Camp also performed an amusing dance to the theme from Hawaii Five-O. Performers dressed as a school of fish and other denizens of the deep. To wrap the dance performances, the Dream Seekers team of students of all ages sang and danced to "You're the Sunshine of My Life" and "Happy." Each of these performances was uniquely delightful, offering different styles of music and dance, but they shared something in common, too. With smiles across their faces, these special needs performers found a stage to embrace and appreciate their talents, allowing their light to shine through their voices and movements to spread joy to everyone attending.



*Continue from page 5*



To conclude the night's festivities, the FCSN Father and Son Band, spearheaded by some of the oldest members of the organization: Uncles CK, Jason and Larry, topped it all off by serenading with an incredible string of 60s and 70s songs. With the Wilson and Wu families accompanying them as instrumentalists, the Father and Son band quickly had the audience dancing out of their seats and clapping to the music. Soon enough, a crowd of FCSN students and families had gathered in front of the stage, creating a makeshift dance floor that continued to grow and grow until the raffle prizes finally were given out. With generously donated prizes such as iPads, a Tahoe vacation, and even round trip flights to Taiwan, the audience held its breath as winning tickets were announced. The winners were congratulated as the official gala came to an end and merrymaking resumed with the Dream Achievers Band playing until the last dancers left the floor.

Afterwards, I had the privilege of speaking with one of FCSN's current vice presidents, Yee-Yeen Wang, about his thoughts on the event. He explained that although the first FCSN building was established in Fremont by the East Bay, many of the organization's early members were actually from the South Bay. With the huge success of the gala in raising more than \$500,000 for the remodeling of the San Jose building, we

can wait with excitement as construction will soon commence on the \$1.5 million building renovation. Finally able to cater to these loyal families at a closer location as well as other new families with special needs individuals, FCSN is living its dream of service to the special needs community.

In just 10 years, the rate of children with autism in America has risen significantly to an alarming level. The trend tells us that the demand for FCSN services that integrate special needs people into society will continue to grow. Mr. Wang tells me that the parents and students going through the programs right now are the pioneers for future generations of autism care. Hopefully in 10 to 15 years, FCSN can accumulate the knowledge and experience to empower any family to raise a special needs individual successfully from home. It is my delight to have been involved with such a meaningful and purpose-driven organization; the fundraising gala was a grand pleasure.





## President's Message

# Building Our Dream in South Bay

### FCSN Fund-raising Gala 2014

We held a very successful fund-raising gala "Build Our Dream in South Bay" on Nov. 2nd, 2014, at the San Jose Convention Center. The gala was well-attended by more than 900 members, friends, and guests. At the event, we announced that San Andreas Regional Center (SARC) had just selected FCSN as the "Service Provider of the Year". Later at the event, we held our first "Fund a Need" auction, which was enthusiastically participated in by our supporters. It was also announced that four of our board members had set up a \$100K matching fund to encourage more donations. Overall, our families and supporters clearly saw the need to build a community center in South Bay and helped our fund-raising drive to a great start.

### South Bay Center Plan

After several years of searching, in April of this year, FCSN finally acquired a commercial property located at S. Bascom

by **Jim Chiao**

President of FCSN

Avenue in San Jose. Our plan is to completely renovate the building to transform it to become our South Bay Center. Over the past few months, FCSN's design team has worked diligently with our architect on the design and interior layout. Inside the center, there will be a 1200 sq ft multi-purpose room, four classrooms, a workshop, a computer room, a kitchen, a store, and offices. Unique to our design is a workshop where students can learn basic living skills such as how to wash hands, how to make beds, how to operate a washing machine, etc. Other students can learn how to make soap, greeting cards, and other items with job-related skills. Another unique feature of the design is a small store, which will operate as a coffee/gift shop. The store could provide jobs and job training opportunities for many youths and adults.

### South Bay Center Development Teams

The South Bay Center renovation project is a huge undertaking for our organization. To help direct the effort, FCSN has formed several teams: the design team, the construction team, and the store team. We are very fortunate that many talented people have joined our teams as volunteers – despite their busy work schedules. Over the past few months, the design team has chosen to work with architect Sy-Cheng, who is also the architect for the second phase of our Dream Project. The renovation design has been submitted to the City of San Jose, and we are still working with the city to finalize the design. In the meantime, the construction team has chosen to work with the construction firm ACON, which is also working with the Dream Project. The store team has been working to define the business, including establishing store layout, the menu, and equipment.

### Looking Forward

With the purchase of the Bascom property, FCSN is on the way to building another Dream Center in San Jose. We will have a busy year ahead of us, we expect the construction to start in the spring and be completed before the end of this year. Once the South Bay Center is established, we can further expand our programs and provide more support to the families in Santa Clara County. This is another step in our journey to build a community, provide a village of support, and eventually deliver more happiness to special needs individuals, their families, and others in our community.



James Chiao  
FCSN president



# Supported Living Services - Learning and Growing While Having Fun

by **Claire Brady**

Supported Living  
Service Supervisor

For years, FCSN Supported Living Services (SLS) has been providing our consumers and their families support in important areas of their lives. We offer training and support in areas like living skills, socialization, and community integration. Some people have a misconception that SLS is all about training, household work, errands, etc. Some might not believe that SLS can also be about FUN and FUN-LEARNING. Please allow me

to give a clearer picture of how much fun we have in SLS. This past year (2014), the FCSN SLS family had fun and educational activities and outings that our consumers and staffing team enjoyed. I personally think that we had too many activities to mention in one article, so I will trim it down to some of our bigger activities.

## COOKING COMPETITION

Last October, FCSN SLS had a cooking contest. All of the apartments participated and each apartment was asked to prepare a dish without any help from staff. All of our consumers did their best and won prizes in the end. This event allowed our consumers to



showcase their talents and skills in the kitchen after years of training. The cooking competition was not only fun but it also taught everyone the value of team work. Thanks to the whole SLS support team, families, and especially Marie Cates for organizing this fun event!

Spring is usually the time for the majority of us to do a big cleaning in our homes. Our consumers do the same thing, and in the spring of 2014, a brilliant idea was brought up. Instead of throwing away, giving away, or storing things that owners do not need anymore, why not sell it for a very small price? So the Yard Sale plan was put together, thanks to our SLS parents especially Aunty Linmei. The Yard Sale was a huge success because not only did our consumers have much cleaner homes, they were also able to make some extra money. This event encouraged our consumers to go through their stuff and organize their belongings more efficiently.







### ART CLASS

Thanks to our very hardworking and selfless staff, friend, and case manager, Jenny, our consumers continue to enjoy going to a formal art class for free. A majority, if not all of our consumers, love art and find this activity very enjoyable. Consumers meet with Miss Jenny bi-weekly (two classes to accommodate all) and make very creative projects. These projects either end up being posted in their apartments, their parents' houses or sold for auction. Art class is a great example of fun-learning because through this activity, our consumers learn the value of discipline and following instructions.

This past year, the SLS group has gone to very fun and educational field trips. Aside from the usual parks and malls, big trips were scheduled for our consumers which were always well-attended. In FCSN SLS, we value our consumers' inputs so we leave it up to them to decide where they want to go. A planning committee (consisting of all our consumers) meeting is scheduled every three months to discuss activities that they want to do. Depending on the outcome of the meeting, our SLS management team works on scheduling the trips or activities. Some of the trips we had were to Great America, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Academy of Sciences, Alameda County Fair, etc.

### OUR TEAM

Our SLS family will not be as complete, happy, and successful without our devoted "direct support staff, trainers, or life coaches." Through their hard work and dedication, we are able to serve and provide support to our consumers and their families. A very big thank you is in order, so THANK YOU TO EVERYONE IN OUR SLS TEAM! Seeing all of our consumers' growth and progress makes me so proud to be part of SLS and, of course, FCSN. We had some challenges in 2014, but through everyone's (parents, Sylvia, accounting, and HR) support and guidance, we finished the year right. I am excited to see what 2015 has in store for us.



“Where are you going today?” I used to ask Chi-Ling on Mondays. “I am going to Skyline!” Chi-Ling would answer happily. Going to places always makes Chi-Ling excited, and that has also become a reward in itself for his hours of practicing music.

# Chi-Ling's Community Service

by **Sufen Wu**



Chi-Ling and I went to Skyline Health Center regularly during the time Chi-Ling was enrolled in his post-secondary program\*. The students engaged the seniors there every Monday afternoon: performing nail work for ladies, serving coffee or tea, playing dominoes or playing balloons with them, etc. Of course, the best job for Chi-Ling is to provide musical entertainment.

Many of the residents in Skyline are Chinese American. They are there due to needing intensive care after medical treatments, or other long-term care. As you may image, the daily routine can be fairly monotonous; as a result, even engaging them in simple communication would provide a great deal of comfort. If one could chat with them in their native tongues, this could spark an instant excitement, or even produce tears.

Sitting down on the piano bench, Chi-Ling started to play classics from Bach, Chopin, Mozart, or Gershwin. Usually, the classical pieces were interspersed with some soothing contemporary tunes like Richard Clayderman's ballads, or popular hits such as "My Heart Will Go On" from the movie *Titanic*, "Somewhere My Love" from *Dr. Zhivago*, and others. One song follows another: fortunately, Chi-Ling learns and plays his music by ear, saving us from carrying around bulky music binders.

Looking around the room, many are sleeping, reading or chatting; however, there are always some who are actively listening and giving their praise or opinions. I notice that Chi-Ling happily continues playing, regardless of whatever those responses might be. Playing music is an enjoyment to him all by itself.



Last winter, a friend forwarded me an advertisement from Kaiser Permanente: “Lobby musicians needed.” I quickly applied for the position for Chi-Ling. A few months later, Chi-Ling and I both became formal Kaiser Volunteers. Since then, every Monday afternoon, we put on our blue Kaiser uniforms and report to the Santa Teresa Kaiser Hospital. Stationed in the hospital lobby, Chi-Ling plays piano or keyboard for a straight one-and-a-half-hour session for the ICU patients, their relatives, and hospital staff. The uplifting notes of “Ave Maria” create a soothing atmosphere, and Michael Jackson’s “Beat it” inspires nurses and doctors to dance through the halls. His music is like a warm energy which flows through the cold, white rooms and touches every aching heart. Patients will walk out from their rooms with a smile, some with the aid of a walker, and thank Chi-Ling in person for making them feel better.

In June, Chi-Ling has expanded his volunteer work to the Santa Clara Kaiser, where he has the opportunity to play a grand piano in their main hall. At this location, there are many more people passing by because it is the common area linking the pharmacy, therapy, and appointment offices. When the people hear his music on the way through, they may slow down a bit, or maybe even sit down on the couches to enjoy a moment of relaxation. At this time, “Autumn Leaves” usually brings them a smile.

I never anticipated any return from Chi-Ling’s volunteer services. In my mind, we were simply providing what services Chi-Ling can do best for our

community—however, surprises do happen. A few weeks ago, a Kaiser volunteer manager forwarded me an opportunity from a retirement center in need of a pianist to play hymns for its Sunday Service, it is a permanent job with pay. Chi-Ling’s application is still in process at this moment; however, I can’t help imagining that 30 years from now, a middle-aged and (hopefully) good-looking man will be walking into the center as a regular staff member, going about his duty as he has been providing and enjoying all his life.

I feel like the girl in the fable who is carrying a milk bucket over her head and dreaming of a fancy future. Please let me know if you see the bucket is starting to leak...

\* Post-secondary program: An extended education program designed for the individuals with special needs after graduating from the high school. Normally the student can stay in the program until reaching the age of 22.







# Friends of Children with Special Needs

Presents

## Special Needs Got Talent – Discovering Talent in Unexpected Places Proudly Sponsored by Everybody is a Star and the Golden State Warriors

by **Anna Wang** FCSN Vice President of Local Programs

San Francisco, CA – You’ve heard of America’s Got Talent and American Idol? Get ready for the latest in talent show competition, Special Needs Got Talent (SNGT) – Discovering Talent in Unexpected Places, presented by Friends of Children with Special Needs (FCSN) and proudly sponsored by Everybody is a Star and the Golden State Warriors.

SNGT is currently recruiting adults and children from across California with developmental disabilities to showcase their talents. All types of performances are welcomed: musical acts, dancing, comedy, magic acts, martial arts, acrobatics, etc. Participation medals will be awarded to every contestant. Trophies and prizes will be awarded to all finalists at the Final Competition. All individuals with developmental disabilities are encouraged to try out and have the chance to enjoy an extraordinary experience!

Only 70 applicants will be accepted, and already more than 50 applicants have signed up to perform at the preliminary auditions. The Preliminary Auditions will be held on Feb. 8 at 1 p.m. at the Friends of Children with Special Needs Dream Center, 2300 Peralta Boulevard, Fremont, CA 94536. The final competition will be held March 14 at 7 p.m. at the Santa Clara Convention

Center at 5001 Great America Parkway, Santa Clara. Application deadline is January 31. From preliminary auditions, judges will whittle contestants down to 12 finalists, who will receive \$100 in prize money. The top three winners will each receive a \$500 cash prize and a recording session and a broadcast quality promotional video, valued at \$18,000, to submit to talent scouts, thanks to our sponsor, Everybody is a Star. Judges include Grammy and Golden Globes Award winning composer and performer, Kitaro; composer and worldwide performing pianist, Stephen Prutsman; as well as, other celebrity judges to be named. Other judges include the honorable Senator Jim Beall; Assembly member Kansen Chu; Executive Director of California’s Department of Developmental Services Santi Rogers; Executive Director of the Regional Center of the East Bay Jim Burton; Executive Director of the San Andreas Regional Center Javier Zaldivar, and founder of California Line Dance Association of America Kico Lin.

“This event is already attracting national attention,” says lead organizer, Auntie Anna, vice president of Local Programs and Community Relations and co-founder of FCSN, an organization begun in 1996 by 10 Chinese-American families. Today the organization

has grown to serve more than 800 multi-ethnic families with children and adults with special needs through multiple programs in the East Bay and South Bay. FCSN has garnered a number of awards, most recently as “Provider of the Year,” presented by the San Andrea Regional Center serving Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties.

“This is a great opportunity for some people to jumpstart a career of the very talented and create a goal that everyone in our community can strive for,” continued Auntie Anna, who envisions the event as an opportunity for developmentally disabled people to showcase talent. Employment rates for developmentally disabled people, she notes, are “pathetically low” due to stereotypes.

FCSN is well-known for dreaming big so expect this first year of the event to become the launch pad for a national Special Needs Got Talent in future years. “Actually, I think this can grow to become a world event like the Special Olympics,” says Auntie Anna. FCSN is in contact with television producers, hoping to convince them to create a reality series to showcase the raw talent “that may be a little awkward, but genuine, and not yet commercialized. I think American viewers are ready and interested in performers who are a little less packaged, but remarkable and marketable,” added Auntie Anna.

Auntie Anna is passionate about this event, in part, because of her own experience with her son, Lawrence, now age 25 and an accomplished saxophone soloist and vocalist in FCSN’s Dream Achievers band. Lawrence and other band members are autistic.

From a young age, Lawrence was afraid of sound and music. He covered his ears, ran away, and called out, “Stop! Stop! Stop!”

“Naturally, music was adverse to him. I didn’t know at the time that he was having a sensory overload reaction,” recalls Auntie Anna.

During one of the FCSN summer musical camps, an instructor taught the simple instrument, recorder. At the end of the four days, she asked students to play. When no one volunteered, she called on Lawrence, who again had sat in the corner each day with his back to the class and his ears covered. To everyone’s amazement, Lawrence stood, played each song perfectly and sat down.

The teacher offered Lawrence free flute lessons. Auntie Anna recalls, “I didn’t have to pay the flute teacher, but I had to pay Lawrence to go. He hated the high-pitch ‘noise’ of the flute.” Two months later, he was playing as a soloist in a flute ensemble. He joined a band. Drowned out by electrical guitars and drums, Lawrence was asked by the band leader to play a louder instrument. That’s when Lawrence turned to the saxophone. A month later, he was playing any tune on the radio.

“It was a miracle to discover that Lawrence had musical talent that now gives him immense pleasure. He’s performing every week. His friends are the band members. He has purpose,” says Auntie Anna, “and a way to contribute to society. How many more talents are out there with the talent still in them because developmental disability is so misunderstood?”

**For more information about registration and auditions,** contact Tiffany Tsai at [SNGotTalent@yahoo.com](mailto:SNGotTalent@yahoo.com) or call 510-739-6900 ext 3318. Registration fees include \$20 for solo acts, and \$10 per person in group acts.

**To purchase tickets to the Final Competition,** please contact Steve Tong or Judy Yi at [administration@fcsn1996.org](mailto:administration@fcsn1996.org) or 510-739-6900 ext 3305. Tickets are \$20 each.

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# Recipients of President's Volunteer Service Award

by **Roger Leung**, PVSA Program Coordinator

We are pleased to announce that nine FCSN young adults have received the Bronze level of the 2014 President's Volunteer Service Award. This prestigious nation-wide award program, organized by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, recognizes youth volunteers who have contributed more than 100 hours of service in FCSN activities during the year of 2014. The scope of their work includes one-to-one help, music tutoring, volunteer scheduling, and afterschool activity care.

## Recipients of the 2014 FCSN President's Volunteer Service Award are:

<b>Tiffany Chien</b>	(Monta Vista High School)
<b>Lee Hsieh</b>	(Leland High School)
<b>Jerry Huang</b>	(Mission San Jose High School)
<b>Kory Hui</b>	(Irvington High School)
<b>Jessica Lam</b>	(Leland High School)
<b>Xiedi Li</b>	(Ohlone College)
<b>William Su</b>	(Monta Vista High School)
<b>Alexandra Wei</b>	(Notre Dame San Jose High School)
<b>Megan Zou</b>	(Lynbrook High School)

Each student receives a personalized certificate of achievement and a congratulatory letter from U.S. President Barack Obama. Congratulations to all the awardees for their well-deserved recognition.

This is the first year that FCSN has undertaken the President's Volunteer Service Award program. While serving people with special needs, the participants

learn that it is a rewarding experience to gain understanding, passion and respect of differences. It is a valuable program that FCSN is committed to continue for the year 2015 and beyond. Recognizing and honoring volunteers inspire more people to serve and to shape a better world in which to live. FCSN thanks these students for their devotion to help our community.



At the Annual Meeting & Family Day on June 7, 2014, FCSN members gathered close friends and family for an evening of food, entertainment, and inauguration of FCSN's Chairman and President. Limin Hu and James Chiao agreed to continue to serve as FCSN's Chairman and President, respectively, for 2014-2015. Beyond the inauguration, FCSN also presented exciting news about future organization plans and goals, including purchase of a new South Bay center and its upcoming renovation.

Master of the Ceremony, Jennifer Li and Yumin Yeh, provided opening remarks ahead of a fantastic line-up of performances. Speakers Alison Kiang and Margaret Hu stepped onto the stage to tell their stories of FCSN involvement and how FCSN not only changed their own lives for the better, but also the lives of those around them.

Allison Kiang, a youth volunteer of FCSN for two years gave a speech on volunteering experience; participating in FCSN drastically changed her view of people with special needs. The experience helped her learn the importance of advocacy for and acceptance of people with differences.

# FCSN Family Day



by **Darice Wong**

**FCSN Dream Builders Reporter**

For parent sharing, Margaret Hu talked about the story of her special needs son, Raymond. Before joining FCSN, Raymond has tried independent living elsewhere, but it led him to develop unhealthy habits and a lonely lifestyle. Previously shy and afraid, he joined FCSN, and FCSN helped him to become the outgoing, bold, mature, artistic, and confident person he is today. He even has a job now; he feels proud of who he is.

Afterwards, President James Chiao took the stage to discuss the organization's 18-year history and continuous growth. He explained FCSN's long-time desire to realize the dream of a society where special needs people can expect and are given opportunities, including employment. During his presentation, Mr. Chiao revealed FCSN's new accomplishment: FCSN South Bay center purchased as an extension of available facilities and to further serve the Southbay, extending FCSN's presence in the community.

"Together, let's build a community of love, hope, respect, and support for our special children." This statement was, Mr. Chiao emphasized in his conclusion, what he wished to uphold for many years to come.

After the Special Guest Introduction and Award Ceremony, this year's chairman and president Limin Hu and James Chiao were inaugurated, both assuming the same roles as last year. They will continue serving as FCSN chairman and president, respectively.

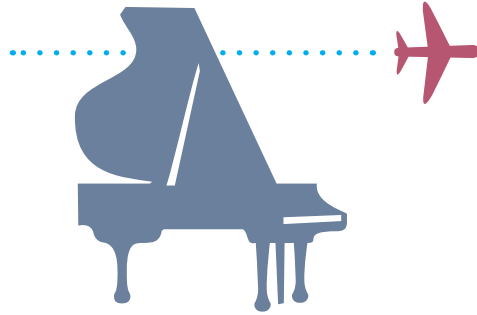
The specially-prepared buffet dinner soon led to the eagerly-awaited commencement of the night's entertainment. First, FCSN's Percussion Ensemble performed a dramatic, moving piece, "The Power of Mother Nature." Various young FCSN artists followed, displaying musical talents. Charming dance performers, a lively Kung Fu demonstration, and several other unique singing acts entertained the applauding audience, awed by the performers' skill, talent, and hard work. Both performers and audience seemed to enjoy themselves.

To the disappointment of many, the evening passed much too quickly. However, the FCSN Dream Achievers Band would not let the evening end without a Closing Live Dance Party! The band played wonderfully on stage, simultaneously serving a festive and heartwarming send-off for everyone who attended.

That evening, the FCSN family reminded everyone of the beauty of the dream to celebrate remarkable children and create unlimited possibilities for them.

by **Sufen Wu**

translated by Maria Kung



Being parents or friends of children with special needs, we thought our experiences were unique. Arriving at the Third International Festival by People with Disabilities in Vienna in 2013, our eyes were opened as young people competed in song writing and musical performance competitions.

Arriving from Japan, a young girl could only use her left hand; her right hand was limp on the side of her body. She was wearing a long floral dress and sat in front of the piano with confidence. She played beautifully her chosen song with only one hand. She won the championship.

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# TRIP TO VIENNA – CHI-LING'S PIANO COMPETITION

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A young visually-impaired gentleman from Taiwan came on stage with his hands around the arms of his seeing friend. He sat at the piano and began to mesmerize the audience by playing cascading notes. Without eyesight, he was in unison with the music he was playing.

Rie was sitting in a wheelchair, her legs unable to move the piano pedals. She had Systemic Lupus Erythematosus at age 20. I was planning to listen to her performance with sympathy, but to my surprise the pedals moved up and down without legs stepping on them. This was not meant to be eerie; it resulted from an ingenious, computerized mechanism designed by somebody to help her. She had a small tube in her mouth; she controlled the computer program by blowing the air through the tube. The pedals were monitored by the computer program which, in turn, were controlled by the strength of her air flow. She fluently played Charbrier's *Pittoresques Scherzo-valse* flawlessly.

David, from Mexico, had Miller Syndrome, leaving him with only four short, crooked fingers on each hand and severely deformed thumbs. He was also wearing a hearing aid at the same time. Together with his father's base and his sister's violin, he played "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" at a very fast pace, demonstrating the value of involvement and support of the family.

A young lad from Japan, who has no right hand, carried an air of confidence and a smile as he swiftly played his song impeccably, a song that had taken him two years of practice.

The less than three-foot tall Olga from the States was already 30 years old. She had Osteogenesis at age 10; she had broken more than 100 pieces of her bones. Wheelchair bound, she still had mobility in her upper body; music had become her only passion. Music had never failed her. She appeared so beautiful and confident in front of the piano.

Kaoru of Japanese descent from England was a Down Syndrome guy. His unwavering personality was exhibited in his music. He came on stage steadily holding song sheets, declining the help of others. He placed the song sheets carefully. He played each note of "Für Elise" at a rate three times slower than the original song. He received acclamation from the audience and everything was under his control.

This was part of the scenes at the Third International Festival by People with Disabilities at Vienna 2013. This festival, taking place every four years, was introduced by Dr. Sakoda from Japan, who studied in Austria and obtained a doctorate in music. Dr. Sakoda firmly believes that even a totally disabled person can still play music from the heart with only one functional index finger. With one hand, one can still project impeccable skills, just like the famous left-handed pianist who lost his right hand in World War I, Paul Wittgenstein. The hearing-impaired Beethoven demonstrated the soul of music by the rhythm of the body and the melody of the mind, composing one of his most famous works, his ninth symphony, when he was totally deaf.

Dr. Sakoda hoped this festival would encourage people to explore great musicians who have gone unnoticed. He has opened a new avenue for inspiring talents, encouraging people to lead more meaningful lives. Through the international exchange, it is hoped that world peace can be attained by our contribution.

In preparation for this competition, Chi Ling put a lot of effort into his practice, in order to take this opportunity of traveling abroad as Vienna was home to many great musicians. Group A was for free song writing contestants, based on Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." Chi Ling could not compose music, so he participated in Group B with his chosen song, Mozart's "Twinkle Variation."

The first day of the competition was elimination and took place in a 100-year-old Minoritenkirche, a church completed in 1350. The competition lasted until 10 pm from the sheer number of contestants. Apart from the mobility-impaired musicians, there was another group of "development delayed" contestants, the majority of which were autistic folks. Their piano skills were astounding and once they were on stage, they were like any other musician. But once off stage, their autistic symptoms returned. Compared to the physically-challenged people, I think they were more fortunate--their mobility was not limited, and they could be freer. Chi Ling was lucky and shone in the Development Delayed group and proceeded to the final the following day. He eventually received a Runner-up award.

To Chi Ling, no studies were more beneficial than traveling. He has been back home for more than a year now, but he still looks at the photos in Vienna, reminiscing of the good times he spent there. No matter what cognitive competence or incompetence a child has, it is important to let him get out of the house and experience different environments to learn how to adapt to different situations. This is one of his important missions in life. Chi-Ling traveled so far, met so many talented people and witnessed such a grand competition; I am sure he will become more mature, humble and hard working in his growing up.

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## Sex Education and Autistic Kids

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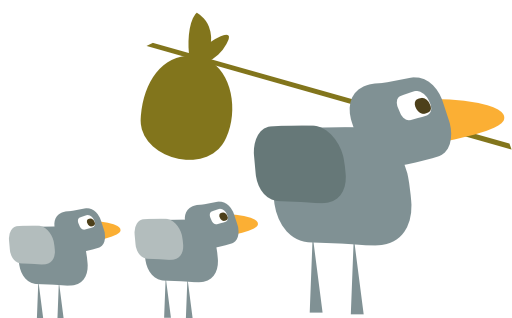
by **Anna Wang**

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Tommy is in high school and has to take Health. He came home one day and told his mom, "I know where babies come from now."

Mom, a little embarrassed, commented, "So, that's what you learned in Health today, huh?!"

Tommy replied, "Yep, and I know you and dad did it twice; that's why you have me and Tracey (little sister)."





# 維也納之行- 季齡的鋼琴比賽

by 葉淑芬 Sufen Wu

即使我們都是特殊兒童的父母或親友，自覺經歷了很多特殊事宜。但是，你可看過這樣的景象？

從日本來的她，只有左手能使力，右手則軟軟的垂在身旁。她穿著花朵繽紛的長禮服，慎重而自信的坐在鋼琴前面，不卑不亢，以單手優美的彈完自選曲，並得到第一名。

來自台灣的他是全盲的青年，挽著協助者的手走到鋼琴旁，一坐下來，他便操控了整個世界，手一舉，音樂便毫不遲疑的暢流而下。沒有眼睛的輔佐，他反而和音樂融合為一體。

來自日本的Rie坐在輪椅上，20歲時得了Systemic lupus erythematosus，雙腳完全無法行動，更別提踩鋼琴的paddle了。我本來以悲憫的心來聽她的演奏，卻很驚奇，幾乎是驚駭的發現，沒有腳踩著的踏板，竟然..隨著音樂而上下...無風自動！咋看還真有些恐怖的感覺。後來才發現，原來有心人為她設計了一套精細的儀器：在彈的時候，她口裏含著一條細細的管子，以吹氣的強弱來控制電腦軟體，電腦連接儀器來控制鋼琴踏板。就這樣流暢而無懈可擊的彈奏出Charbrier的Pittoresques Scherzo-valse。

David來自墨西哥，他患了Miller Symdrom，雙手各自只有短小而彎曲的4指，其中大拇指還嚴重畸形。同時，他還戴著助聽器。在爸爸的低音伴奏下，以飛快的速度彈奏”the Flight of the Bumble Bee”，姐姐

在旁以小提琴伴奏- 又是一個全家投入的例子。

來自日本的男孩，右手沒有手掌，卻帶著自信和微笑，流利而毫無瑕疵的彈出他花了兩年的時間才練成的曲子。

來自美國，只有不到三呎高的Olga已經30歲了，罹患了Osteogenesis的她，在她十歲時骨頭已經折裂了一百多根。坐在輪椅上，行動完全需要倚賴別人。幸好上半身尚能自主，音樂也成了她唯一的寄託。而音樂沒有辜負她，在鋼琴前面，她顯得自信而美麗。

來自英國，日裔的Kaoru 是唐氏兒，他的固執性格表現在音樂上卻是相得益彰：手拿著譜，穩健的走上台，還揮揮手謝絕幫助。小心的放好樂譜，他用比原曲慢上三倍的速度，不慌不忙，一個音都不漏的彈出”Fur Elise”。最後以一切在掌握中的態度謝幕。

這是去年十一月在奧國維也納舉行的第三屆國際特殊鋼琴比賽（the 3rd International Piano Festival by People with Disabilities - at Vienna 2013）的剪影。這個活動是由留學奧地利的日本音樂博士，Dr.Sakoda一手策劃發起的。每四年舉行一次。他堅信即使全身癱瘓，只剩唯一可以動的食指，也可以彈出發自肺腑的音樂；即使一隻手，也可以演繹出精湛的技藝。正如在第一次世界大戰失

去右手的鋼琴家p.偉特.斯坦恩，成為音樂史上有名的”左手的鋼琴家”。即使失聰如貝多芬，一樣可以運用微妙的體感去表現音樂的靈魂。Dr.Sakoda希望這個音樂活動可以啟發大家去發掘從未被發掘過的音樂家，而領略另一種創意。他更希望藉由這樣的活動來鼓勵我們走向更豐富的人生，通過國際交流，為世界和平做出我們應有的貢獻。

為了參加這次比賽，季齡卯足了全力在家苦練，只為了可以有機會出國。”出遊”成為他苦練鋼琴最大的獎賞。由於維也納是許多音樂家的家鄉，A組的指定曲是根據貝多芬的Ode Joy去發揮，自行作曲參賽。不覺得季齡會作曲，所以我們決定只參加B組，就是自由選曲，他選的是莫札特的Twinkle Variation。第一天是淘汰賽，地點在一座百年的教堂，Minoriten Church 由於參賽者多，比賽一直進行到晚上10點才結束。除了上述的肢障視障的鋼琴家以外，還有一組是”發展性遲緩組（Development Delay）”大部分是自閉症者，個個琴藝驚人，他們最顯著的特徵是，在台上像個十足正常的音樂家，一下了台，所有的自閉症狀都出現了。比起上述肢障者，我覺得他們幸運多了，至少行動不受限制，可以自由揮灑。季齡很幸運的由他的developmental Delay組裏脫穎而出，晉級到第二天的決賽。最終在決賽裏得到銀牌獎。

“行萬里路勝讀萬卷書”，這句話對季齡而言是最貼切不過了。即使回來一年多了，他仍時時翻閱者維也納的相簿，回味歐遊的一切。我總覺得，不管特殊孩子認知力如何，多讓他們走出家門，一面感受不同的情境，一面學習如何應變，這是他們此生重要的任務之一。季齡走過了山河，經歷了這麼大的場面，看到這麼多的人才，我相信他會更謙虛，更成熟，更加努力。

## Parent's Sharing

# My Son Raymond Hu

by Margaret Hu

This is a true story about my son, Raymond, who has been with the FCSN Supported Living Services (SLS) and Adult Day Program (ADP) since their inception eight years ago in Fremont.

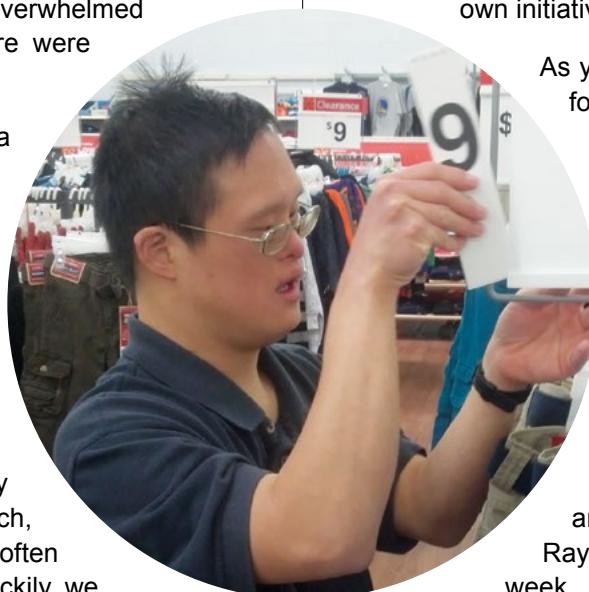
Today, Raymond is a friendly, outgoing and caring young man, interested in painting, movies, sports, history, and politics. However, when he was young, he used to be shy and was afraid of strangers. He felt uncomfortable going to unfamiliar places and felt overwhelmed entering a large room where there were many people.

Raymond grew up in Contra Costa County and attended special classes until high school when he was mainstreamed. After high school, he attended local day programs and activities. Later, he tried Independent Living Services offered by a local vendor and lived in his own apartment with limited staff supervision. Soon, we found that Raymond was lonely living by himself. He ate too much, forgot to take his medication, and often watched TV till 2 in the morning. Luckily, we were introduced to a new organization in which the parents were planning to build their own center and apartments for their disabled adult children. That was when we signed up to join FCSN.

After Raymond joined FCSN, he became happier because he had roommates and friends and more activities to attend. There was more staff supervision, and parents could play a stronger part in the management and development of their adult disabled child. Raymond became more outgoing and more confident of himself. He had fun participating in the multi-faceted activities arranged by the programs, e.g., the ADP Percussion Group, team dances and performances, Sports Day, July 4th parade, demonstrations at hearings in Sacramento, SLS cooking contests, Special Olympics swimming, basketball and bowling, and free baseball, basketball games or musical shows offered to the disabled community. In fact, Raymond has so much fun at his own

apartment at FCSN that sometimes he does not want to come home on weekends!

Raymond likes parties and has helped staff and other consumers plan and organize game nights and parties for SLS consumers and staff, for example, birthday/farewell parties, Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo, Mid-Autumn Festival, etc. Now Raymond is not afraid to stand up and make a speech. He often gives toasts at parties on his own initiative.



As you may know, finding employment for disabled adults is a challenge.

Before Raymond joined FCSN, he tried several job training programs in a pizza parlor, McDonalds, a thrift store, etc, but none of the jobs worked out. After Raymond joined the FCSN Adult Day Program, he got a part-time job at Walmart and has been working there for seven years, thanks to the tireless support of the ADP job coaches and Director Sylvia Yeh. Although Raymond only works 10 hours per week, he feels mighty proud when he receives his paycheck every two weeks. On

Raymond's recent Individual Service Program (ISP) meeting, I was happy to hear that one of Raymond's supervisors has commented that his work was up to par with regular employees.

To conclude, Raymond has blossomed into a more confident, outgoing, caring and mature young man because FCSN has provided a happy, fun and accepting environment for him and all its clients. On a more personal note, he has met a young lady at the SLS program who is now his fiancée.

I want to thank all the dedicated staff and volunteers at FCSN, and the management team which does such a wonderful job in keeping FCSN a happy, fun and nurturing place where all the clients are treated with care, love and respect. *(Based on a speech given on FCSN Family Day, June 7, 2014)*



# 不一樣的女兒， 不一樣的我

by 李宗琨 C.K. Lee



每次開車帶女兒均出門的時候，常看到她側面微笑的臉以及愉快的神情。她跟著收音機裡的歌聲，輕快地哼唱著，這一刻總是讓我覺得，世界是如此的美好。

一轉眼，女兒已經22歲了。過去這22年，因為有她，我的世界，也改變了非常多。有時候我會想，如果她是一個普通的小孩，我的世界會是什麼樣呢？有一件事，我可以確定，我一定會留在臺灣，而且我多半是一個工作狂。因為有了這個女兒，我們小家庭，四個人的人生，都有了非常大的改變。

從均身上學會了好多的東西。原本嚴厲的我，懂得了慈愛。原本急躁的我，學會了耐心。原本太在乎別人眼光的我，知道了生活是為了自己。所以現在如果均在超市裏頭大聲講話，甚至尖叫的時候，我只會輕聲提醒她一句，小聲一點，然後微笑著牽著她的手，繼續買我們的東西。

因為有比較好的特殊教育，所以我們來到了美國。發現這裡對均的福利好，這裡的人們對均也好。超市裏的工作人員，每一個都是均的朋友。均若是在購物中心或大街上，有一些特殊的舉動，路人也不會用異樣的眼光看著我們。在美國生活比回臺灣時還要自在許多，難怪我們也樂把他鄉當故鄉。

曾經在網路上看到一篇文章，叫做「歡迎來到荷蘭」，文章的作者是Emily Perl Kingsley。她分享了當一個特殊兒家長的經驗。這就好像你準備了多時去義大利的旅行，你準備去水鄉威尼斯，準備去看米開朗基羅的畫，你還準備了幾句義大利的問候語，但當幾小時的飛機抵達後，門一開你看到的是，歡迎來到荷蘭，你是如此的震驚及失望，這不是你夢想的義大利，可是很抱歉，你必須留下來。在收拾心情後，你買了新的旅遊書，學習新的語言，認識一群新的

人，漸漸你會發現，荷蘭有風車，荷蘭有鬱金香，荷蘭也不錯。若是你一直沉浸在不能去義大利的哀傷中，那你就不能真正享受荷蘭的美，瞭解荷蘭的好。

因為均，參加了華人特殊兒童之友。認識了好多其他特殊兒的家長以及義工。看到好多人為了同樣的目標而努力。也看到了好多人無私的奉獻。很高興在這個大家庭中，看到了人性的善良，也很自豪是這個大家庭中的一份子。我們在一起，有淚、有笑、有辛苦、有歡樂。我今天的人生可能跟我年輕時想像的人生非常的不同，但這是讓我感到非常滿足的人生。



# A SPECIAL DAUGHTER.... A DIFFERENT ME



by **C.K. Lee**  
translated by Maria Kung

Every time I took my daughter June out, seeing her smiling silhouette, happily humming to the tune of the music on the radio, I thought to myself, "What a wonderful world it is!"

Time flies, and my daughter is already 22. Because of her, my world has changed dramatically in two decades. If she had been an ordinary little girl, I wonder what my life would have been. One thing for sure: I would have stayed in Taiwan; most likely I would have been a workaholic. Because of her, the lives of our family of four have completely changed.

Being a demanding and stern dad by nature, I have learned to be kind. I used to be very impatient. Interacting with June, I have learned to remain calm, and I have become more patient. I have learned that I have to live for myself. I do not take to heart

as much as before of how others are viewing June. At times when June was talking loudly or even screaming in supermarkets, all I did was to remind her softly that she had to use her indoor voice. I would gently take her hand and continue our grocery shopping.

We came to the States because of the better education and benefits for children with special needs. The people here are very nice to June; the people working in the supermarkets are friendly with June. Passersby will not look at June strangely even when June makes some peculiar gestures. Life in the States is more relaxed than in Taiwan, no wonder we call this foreign land our home.

I came across an article on the web called "Welcome to Holland". The author Emily Perl Kingsley shared some of her experiences as the mother of a child with special needs by using a metaphor. She had been planning a trip to Italy for a long time, learning conversational words in Italian. She was looking forward to seeing the paintings of Michelangelo and to visiting Venice, the "City

of Water", but to her shock and disappointment, she saw the "Welcome to Holland" sign when the door of the aircraft opened. This was not Italy as she had been dreaming about. She had no choice but to stay, learn a new language, buy a new tour book, and meet a different group of people. Gradually, she noticed there were windmills and beautiful tulips in Holland. If she had been lamenting the fact that this was not Italy, she would have missed the beauty and better side of Holland.

We are "friends" of FCSN because of June. We have met a lot of parents of children with special needs and volunteers. We have witnessed the selfless contribution and the hard work of many people working toward the same goal. We have seen the kind humanity in this big family, and I am proud to be a family member. Laughter, tears, adversities and happiness permeate in our gatherings together. Even though life has been very different from what I had imagined in my younger days, I am leading a very fulfilling and rewarding life.

他原本快快樂樂的住在星星上，卻因一個不小心而失足跌入地球。畢竟不是個“平凡人”，一出生便血光連連——早產加血崩——害得媽媽——他是這麼叫她的一差點和他易位而居。

自從踏上地球，他頻頻注視著他的來時路——那飄浮在空氣中瑰麗而繽紛的亮光。他經常在這個陌生的環境裏，尋找那熟悉而美麗的光影，尤其會閃動的光更是令他興奮莫名。在他來自星星的記憶中，除了五彩光影還有美好的音樂。只有聽到音符時，他才會將眼睛自閃光移開而去追尋那來自家鄉的天籟。當媽媽唱歌時，他高興得笑了，——不是對媽媽，而是對音樂。但他眼角捕捉到媽媽的笑容，讓他有要溶化的感覺。

# 星星的孩子

by 葉淑芬 Sufen Wu

他就是這樣飄浮在這個世界裏。像是隔水看物，一切都是動的，閃爍的。音樂和浮動的光仍是他無所遁逃的誘惑，他眼角餘光所及有來來去去的頭，腳或衣服，忽遠忽近的眼睛，鼻子或嘴巴。這些都像水中游來游去的小魚一般，毫無關聯也漠不相干。他唯一認得的是媽媽的眼睛，他也只有在需要她的時候才會去尋找。

這個世界對他是陌生而動盪的，但他也無所謂，他反正也忙於找尋那來自星星的記憶：他翻倒三輪車，起勁地打轉輪子；或是手指一勾，塑膠碗即應聲而轉。然後他眯著眼睛享受那旋轉的韻律。他更喜歡電燈開關一上推則亮，下捺則熄，只有這光亮是不變的，是可預測的。長大一點，他更發現這個新世界的魅力：所有他喜歡的顏色居然都集中在紅綠燈上，燈光不但輪流閃動，而且到處都看得到他們，所以坐車上街是他最喜歡的活動。他快樂地沉浸在自己創造的天地裏，絲毫沒有注意到媽媽原本寧靜的眼神裏開始有了波瀾。

他開始注意到媽媽的臉是在餵飯的時間。媽媽總是拿一個小調羹出現在他眼前，小調羹像小橋般的連住了他倆的眼睛，讓他無所遁逃。只要他一開閤嘴巴吃飯，他便聽到媽媽“啊——，m——”鼓勵的聲音。他起初不以為意，但這些聲音逐漸嵌入他的腦海，也開始有了意義。終於，有一天，他定定地看著“小橋”另一端的眼睛，道出心中的話：“m——，啊——，媽——”。媽媽的眼睛突然變圓，變彎，而汪成一潭水。“媽媽”是他第一句話。那年，他四歲。

不久，他發現背上的小翅膀被悄悄地收起來了，他不能再遨遊太虛。接著，他的眼前開始出現許多面孔，雖然張張都是笑意盈然，可是他一點都不高興看到他們，甚至於一見到這些“臉孔”就裂嘴大哭。這些臉孔一進門就要他做這做那，“Come here”，“sit down”，“good job!”，“What is it?”他覺

得像一個折翼天使，再也飛不起來了，只好不甘不願地開始注意起這個陌生的世界。噢！原來這個叫microwave，他是Michael，這是boy，那是girl。學習對他是痛苦的，但學會後所得到的讚美也燃起他眼中的神采。

他永遠記得第一次表演鋼琴，突然聽到如雷的掌聲，一回頭他驚訝地看到好多好多晶亮的眼睛和向上揚成月形的嘴巴。感受到那股暖流，他開心的笑了！原來被稱讚是這般的美好，那是另一種“輕飄飄飛上天”的感覺。從此，學習變得比較不痛苦，偶爾也會有快樂——老師的讚美，媽咪的擁抱，姐姐的呵癢，和爸爸騎腳踏車去park，坐車陪大姐回Berkeley都是他快樂的泉源。

有一天，他悄悄地套回翅膀想遁去他的星星世界，但才到了半空卻發現怎麼飛也飛不上去。他往下一看，除了爸爸媽媽姐姐之外，他還意外地看到學校的老師和同學，也看到了教他鋼琴的蘇老師，珠算的許老師，中文學校的鄧老師，體操的Margaret，大提琴的Debbie，畫畫課的Cindy...，大家手上都拿著一根線的一端，臉上都掛著笑容。他看看自己才發現所有線的另一端正繫在自己的衣袖上。他往上看那逐漸遙遠的星星——他的家鄉，往下看那張張溫馨的笑臉，他想到表演後的掌聲，想到朋友用手語告訴他好棒，想到在媽媽柔軟的懷裏，想到晚上睡覺時將自己冰冰的腳趾放在媽媽暖暖的腳彎裏...

被一股暖流籠罩著，他的心飽滿得像個豐盈的信箱，每一封信都寫著愛。他不想飛了，雖然家鄉的音樂永遠縈繞心頭，星星上的五光十色仍是無可比擬的回憶。但，在他的星球裏，他只能在日昇日落中，孤寂地追逐自己的影子。想到這裏，他不禁放鬆翅膀，閉著眼睛任自己輕輕地掉落那細緻柔密的網子裏...

他不要做天上的麒麟（媽媽叫他Chi-Ling）他，要做季齡。

# A CHILD FROM THE STAR

by **Sufen Wu**

translated by Maria Kung

Originally he was living happily in a “star” and then accidentally slipped into our world. Not as a “normal” baby; he was born premature and with his mother hemorrhaging; he thinks of them as almost swapping places.

Ever since landing on this world, he set his gaze upon the lights in the air from his journey. He often tried to find the familiar lights in this strange environment, especially since the shimmering lights perk him up. Apart from his memory of the different kinds of lights from the star, music is also his awakening.

Every time he listened to a musical note, he diverted his attention from the shining lights to the notes from his homeland. He smiled happily every time his mom sang; he smiled not because of his mom, but because of the music. When he caught his mom’s smiling face in the corner of his eye, the music would melt his heart.

He has been floating in this world, like seeing through water, everything moving and shining. He cannot escape the music and shimmering lights. His eyes see numerous heads, legs, and clothing. The eyes, noses, and mouths—like tiny fishes swimming in the water—do not matter much to him anymore. All he recognized were his mom’s eyes; he would search for them when in need.

This world to him is unfamiliar and unsettling. To him, it does not matter much as he is still in search of the memories from the stars. He knocked over the tricycle, vigorously spinning the wheel. He would spin a plastic bowl with his finger, then he would squint his eyes to enjoy the rhythm of the spin.

He loves to play with the light switch, up the switch makes light, down is dark, this on and off switch will never change and is predictable.

When he grew older, he explored further the attraction of this world, all his favorite colors were found in traffic lights. These lights kept changing, and they were everywhere. That is why riding in the car is his favorite pastime. He happily indulges himself in the world he creates for himself, without noticing a disturbance in his mom’s serene-look, usually seen in her eyes.

The time when he does notice his mom’s face is feeding time. Mom was in front of him with a little spoon, like a little bridge connecting the eyes of both, and he had nowhere to escape. Every time he opens his mouth for food, he heard his mom say “Ah, M...” encouraging him to eat. He did not take any notice of those sounds in the beginning; those sounds did become meaningful to him as time went on. Eventually one day he stared at the eyes on the other side of the little bridge and said “M... Ah... Ma.” Mom’s eyes grew larger, then smaller, then teary. “Mama” was his first word, he was four that year.

Eventually, he noticed that the wings on his back had gradually disappeared. He could not wander into space any more. What followed was the appearance of many faces, all smiling faces, but he did not enjoy seeing them. He would burst out crying when he saw some of the faces. These faces, once in the door, would say to him “Come here,” “Sit down,” “Good job,” or “What is it?” He began to feel that he was an angel that could no longer fly. Gradually, he began to pay attention to this unfamiliar world, learning to name the

objects like microwave. “This was Michael. This is a boy. That is a girl.” Learning to him was painful, but one could see the sparkle in his eyes when he was commended on what he had learned.

The loud applause, together with the numerous eyes and smiling faces, made his first piano performance an event he would never forget. The audience’s response instilled a heartwarming current in him, making him laugh to his heart’s content. It was satisfying to be praised; this was another feeling of being on Cloud 9. From then onwards, learning was less painful to him. He enjoyed the praise of his teacher, the hugs from his mom, the tickling from his sister, cycling with his dad in the park, and riding with his sister to Berkeley. All these became his source of happiness.

One day he secretly put his wings back on in an attempt to go back to his “star world”. When he was half way up in the sky, he noticed he could not fly any higher. Looking down, apart from seeing his parents and sister, he also saw teachers and classmates. He also saw Ms. Su, the piano teacher; Ms. Tang, the Chinese teacher; Margaret, the gymnastic teacher; Debbie, the one who played the cello; Cindy in his drawing class. All their hands were tied to a thread, and they were smiling at him. The other end of the thread was tied to his sleeve. He looked up to the Star; his homeland was moving away. He looked down and saw these warm smiling faces. He thought of the applause he received after his performance. He thought of the “Good job” sign language his friends made to him. He thought of the soft embrace of his mom’s cuddling, and he thought of putting his cold feet on his mom’s warm thighs.

Folding up his wings, silently saying goodbye to the star, he let himself fall, as a light feather...

into his mom’s embrace.





## **“ To Dream the Impossible Dream”**

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