



Friends of Children with Special Needs

華人特殊兒童之友

FCSN Dream Builders

June 2014



3rd annual FCSN Talent Show

Property purchased for South Bay Center

Dare to dream the impossible dream with us again?

Summer fun and events for the whole family!





FCSN in Sacramento for Statewide Legislative Day for Autism (April 30, 2014) Over sixty FCSN members and supporters went to the state capital to let our voices be heard for our special needs loved ones.



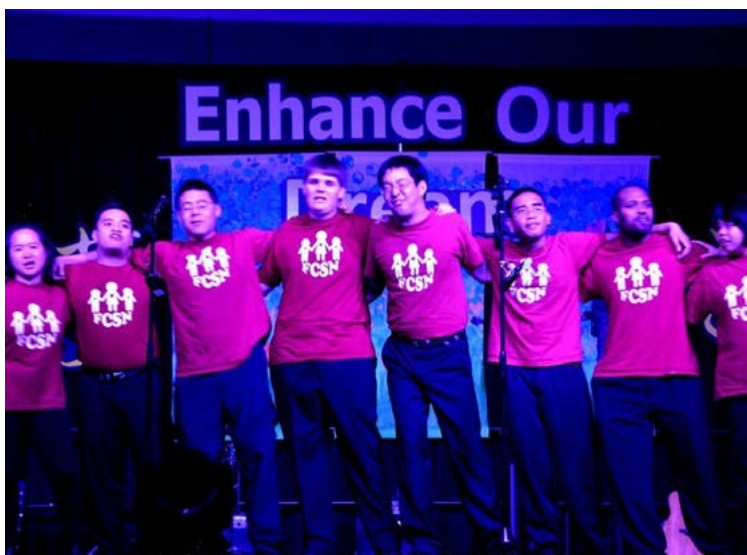
Rally for Autism at Sacramento Signs of "Stand Up", "Speak Out" and "Support Autism" stated loudly our desire and appeal.



FCSN's Got Talent Show (March 22, 2014) Participants exhibited jubilation and enthusiasm in award ceremony.



"Enhance Our Dream" Gala (November 2, 2013) Group picture of staff, board members and honorable guests on stage



Gala Performance Programs Dancing and Music brought out the amazing talent of our special needs.



Musical Drama Camp (August 11, 2013) Campers performed "Wizard of Oz with a Twist", while the entire family became involved and be casted.

Content



FCSN Dream Builders

June 2014



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-
- | | | |
|--|--------------|---|
| • FCSN's Got Talent
30 Amazing performance and new talents! | Kenneth Song | 4 |
|--|--------------|---|

President's Message

-
- | | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| • A Time to Reflect & Look Forward
South Bay Center site purchase Accomplished | Jim Chiao | 6 |
|---|-----------|---|

FCSN Services

-
- | | | |
|--|------------|----|
| • Introduction of FCSN
Vendorized Programs | Sylvia Yeh | 8 |
| • Dream Project 2
Preparing for the work force and providing
job opportunity | Anna Wang | 10 |

Activity Calendar

-
- | | | |
|--|-------------|----|
| • FCSN Upcoming Events &
Summer Activities
Mark your calendar and join us for tons of
summer fun! | Anna Wang | 10 |
| • President's Volunteer Service
Award (PVSA) Program | Roger Leung | 12 |

Past Events

-
- | | | |
|--|-----------|----|
| • Dream Achievers Sends Message
of Hope | Anna Wang | 13 |
|--|-----------|----|

Volunteer's Voices

-
- | | | |
|---|----------------|----|
| • Understanding and Passion of
Serving Special Needs Community | James Zhang | 14 |
| • Inspiration to Change for the Better | Aorta Rajanala | 15 |
| • Respect for Facing Difficult Challenges | Wilson Zhao | 16 |

Parent's Sharing

-
- | | | |
|---|----------------|----|
| • 季齡上大學 Chi-Ling Going to College | 葉淑芬 Su-Fen Yeh | 17 |
| • Funny Story -Stage Fright | Anna Wang | 18 |
| • Fashion was in Style at Mission
San Jose High School | Kathy Hebert | 18 |

FCSN's Got Talent

by **Kenneth Song**

Reporter for Special Events

It is a wondrous and heart-warming sight indeed to watch an entire community come together to celebrate individuals—both young and old—whose talents are so often forgotten. The annual FCSN's Got Talent show on Saturday, March 22, displayed a string of spectacular performances that exceeded expectation, led by the FCSN program participants.

Program Coordinator Auntie Anna Wang, the mother of a contestant and the beloved FCSN vice president in charge of local programs, danced around the room before the show, making sure every detail was perfect. She had invested a great deal of time setting up the performance. She didn't have time, yet she graciously answered my

questions as she took a breath: "[That] it has been delightful to see the talent show grow over the last three years. More people show up every time, and it is a big event for the FCSN students."

Several hundred people at the FCSN headquarters in Fremont buzzed with excitement as instruments and speakers were hastily assembled on stage. The contestants themselves were scattered throughout the room, distinguishable by the mixed looks of excitement and anxiety across their faces.

Although they represented diverse backgrounds and nationalities, audience members united in common celebration of people with special needs. This year's talent show was judged by familiar FCSN faces—Chen-Ming Hu, vice chair of the board; Sylvia Yeh, business director; and Jim Chiao, president of the organization. Once the three judges arrived and took their places at the awards table, the show began.

Most contestants chose to enact their own rendition of popular songs with their instruments or their voices. Still, there was an astounding variety of talents ranging from kung fu to dance. The main talent show was divided into two groups with the local program participants taking the stage before the adult day program participants. Each set brought a uniqueness from brothers Ilyas and Zacharia who performed magic tricks with the lovely assistance of their mother to a spectacular alto saxophone performance by Lawrence who played "Besame Mucho". There were plenty of brave souls who took the opportunity to strut their stuff on stage such as Laurie who danced to "The Cup of Life" and Jean to Justin "Beiber's Baby"; there were even two group dances by the local program kids and the Dream Achievers. Greg sang and played guitar for one of his favorite tunes "Rawhide" while the audience clapped along to the catchy melody. Alice gave one of my personal favorite performances; she played such a beautiful and frantic version of "Tango" that would have put me—a 12-year piano player myself—to absolute shame. I've only mentioned a few of the 29 performances here, but every performer had great stage presence and demonstrated passion.

The three best performances as selected by the judges were Andrew, who nailed the classic American rock song "Burnin' for You" on the bass; Darren who charmed the audience with a melodious vocal and piano solo of "What a Wonderful World"; and





did an astounding job setting up sound equipment and cameras to capture every moment of the talent show. From preparing each contestant's music to hooking up the amplifier and microphones, the technical and video crew made for a seamless and fast-paced show.

After a tasty dinner, the parents took their turn to show off. The adult talent show opened with a wonderfully, relaxing and healing melody on the harp; Laurie and her dad followed by performing a hot dance to Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean". The next group's comedy jokes brought great laughs; we all learned lots of good lawyer jokes. Zacharia's mom performed a number of great magic acts. The audience also gained tips on how to grow beautiful flowers in pots. Finally the shows concluded with Uncle CK's beautiful singing and a group dance of Taiwan's famous song, 高山青, with everyone singing!

I had a wonderful evening attending the third annual FCSN's Got Talent. Completely taken aback and blown away by all of the stellar performances, I certainly look forward to attending in future years. Friends of Children with Special Needs has a powerful directive that never ceases to impress with its strong sense of community and network of support.

PJ who sang his heart out to Commodore's "Just to be Close to You". Personally, one of the most touching moments of the entire talent show happened when I saw PJ's face and the welling tears in the corner of his eye that showed just how much the award meant to him. Andrew and Darren seemed equally surprised at having placed in the top three; the beaming faces of their parents in the audience set the moment. Every contestant was given a medal and goodies in the true fashion of good sportsmanship; all the performers seemed to have a blast showcasing their talents.

Auntie Sylvia, a judge for the second year in a row, explained to me that winners were chosen based on three criteria: creativity, authenticity, and artistic interpretation. "We tried to focus on individuals who improved the most, excluding the Dream Achievers who perform throughout the Bay Area and have traveled twice to China to perform. We also tried to factor age into the equation since performers ranged from children to young adults." Winning contestants were chosen by more than just pure skill; hard work and improvement from prior years were also considered. The judges certainly had a difficult and

painstaking time narrowing their choices to three winners out of so many young, talented individuals.

Following the performance, Andrew's parents explained that Andrew has taken guitar and bass lessons for the past 18 months prior to the talent show to "complement his skills on the drums." His father seemed very proud of Andrew who clutched the trophy to his chest tightly. Another parent commented, "It is always wonderful to see how much talent lies within the FCSN community. Each year brings new faces and new performances." The amount of hard work and dedication invested by some of these young individuals in mastering these difficult talents is awe inspiring.

The technical and video crew, working behind the scenes, also



A Time to Reflect & Look Forward - FCSN South Bay Center Property Purchased!

by **Jim Chiao**

President of FCSN

A Word about Our Newsletter

As president this year, I set as one of my goals to bring the FCSN Newsletter back to our members and friends. I have a fond memory of the very first issue of the FCSN newsletter: it was published in late 1996, when FCSN was just formed and registered as a business entity. We only had a small core group of member families and a volunteer-based planning committee. We did not have a president, board of directors, or staff of any kind. Nonetheless, we decided to publish a newsletter, and everyone chipped in to write articles, edit, print, collate, and bind. Sure enough, in February of 1997, we distributed the first issue to our loyal members. The publication continued for many years; however, in 2009, the publication came to a halt after our then chief editor Ma Li passed away after a bout with cancer. During the last few years, there was no shortage of other FCSN publications. For example, from 2010 to 2013, we

had a publication from our ADP (Adult Day Program), with a limited distribution to ADP families. Today our Supported Living Service still publishes an SLS newsletter every six months. Additionally, Anna Wang has continued to make her regular email announcements. What has been missing is a publication that represents a cross-section of our community where we can hear voices from our members, staff, volunteers, and people with special needs – exactly what the FCSN newsletter was meant to provide. Publishing the newsletter was not a big task back then, yet it has always been one of those projects that bring families together.

Developing Our Culture

This year, we have seen relatively little growth except in the ILS (Independent Living Service) program. This comes after seven years of fast growth since the center was built in 2006. Why so little growth this past year, you may be wondering. There are several reasons: most of our vendorized programs are capacity limited and



the restricted funding from Regional Center did not help. FCSN has grown so fast these last seven years; there are some growing pains that needs to be addressed. Luckily, this year is turning out to be a good time for us to take stock in our organization. At the board level, we embarked on a journey of soul searching; we wonder how best to state our mission. We pondered our direction. We realized that beyond setting business goals and objectives, we also need to establish our culture. We spent a lot of time in the board room, discussing our culture and how to develop it. One thing that shapes our culture and reflects FCSN is our core values - this is why we initiated a core value survey among our staff and members. It is important to look at all these factors to emerge a cohesive view before we expand and enter into the next phase of our development.

Over the past six months, FCSN board and key managers have discussed and selected a list of seven possible core values which we believe best fit our organization. These core

values were not chosen at random; in fact, they were chosen based on what we believe and from our many years of experience working within this organization. For example, the first core value “Dare to Dream” can be traced directly to our experience in the Dream Project. In 2000, when the Dream Project was first proposed, very few people believed in our dreams of building a community center for our children and adults with special needs. I still remember the moment when we first visited the open lot on Peralta Boulevard, and three managers - Albert Wang, Linmei Chiao, and Peter Hsia - made the decision to purchase the property. At the time I thought the plan was outrageous and risky. However, within two weeks, over 20 FCSN families joined in to make it happen. Eventually, part of the land was donated to FCSN to build our community center which is now the cornerstone of our community. The bottom line underscoring this core value is this: “If we don’t dream for our children with special needs, who will?”

South Bay Center Site Search Accomplished!

When FCSN started in the South Bay in 1996, we moved our meeting location from place to place over the years. In 2010, FCSN moved our main South Bay operation to the rented facility at TAPC church which became our SB Center. However, it has always been our desire to find a permanent home in the South Bay. The reason is simple. One of our goals is to build a permanent community center, and we cannot build a community center on borrowed land. Once a community center is created, many adults and families with special needs can find permanent housing near the center. However, finding the right site is no easy task given the constraints of location, zoning, and cost. Within FCSN, this task is the responsibility of the site search committee, led by Dr. Albert Wang. After searching for the last three to four years, we expanded our search criteria this year and

doubled our efforts. Luckily, with the help from board member Stanley Woo, we finally found a property on South Bascom Avenue that met our requirements: it is conveniently located, near the center of San Jose, and easily accessible from all directions in the South Bay. It is close to the new Bascom Community Center and San Jose City College where many of our ADP students attend school. In addition, it’s in close proximity to a nice neighborhood, where housing may be available to our special adults. After the search committee conducted a few weeks of due diligence, I am proud to announce escrow closed on April 7th, 2014, and FCSN has become the new owner of the property. Now, the team is working with architect Sy Chai to start the design process. Within a few months, we will have a better idea of the design and construction timeline.

Looking Ahead:

By strengthening the infrastructure for volunteer and family support, we can build a stronger foundation for the FCSN community. With a strong foundation, we can add more programs to provide a village of support for our children with special needs. With the purchase of the South Bascom property, we are poised for a new chapter in FCSN. We expect to replicate and expand upon the successful Dream Center/Community model we established in the East Bay. Our vision of building a dream community is clear and resonates with our members and families. With everyone’s support, I am sure we can realize our vision of a better tomorrow for our children and families.



James Chiao
FCSN president 2013-2014



Introduction of FCSN Vendorized Programs

by **Sylvia Yeh**
FCSN Executive
Business Director

FCSN parents pondered what their children with special needs would do after exiting the educational system. How could parents insure that their children would continue to learn and grow more independent and productive without the structure of an educational system? Parents wondered how FCSN could support and enrich their lives continuously. These questions and the Dare-to-Dream mentality resulted in FCSN pursuing adult services with California Regional Centers. In 2004, FCSN started an Adult Day Program (ADP) in South Bay. In 2006, after FCSN launched its headquarter in Fremont, FCSN expanded our service programs, becoming a vendor of Adult Day Program and Supported Living Services (SLS) with both San Andreas Regional Center (SARC) and Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB). FCSN further pursued vendorization for respite services in 2011.

Adult Day Program

FCSN currently operates three adult day programs: East Bay Adult Day Program (EBADP), Community Integrated Day Program (CIDP), and South Bay Adult Day Program (SBADP). EBADP and CIDP are located in Fremont and SBADP in San Jose. With the goal of promoting independence and personal growth, FCSN adult day programs are set to provide holistic training in the areas of:

- Vocational Skills/Job Readiness
- Academic Remediation
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Independent Living Skills
- Emotional Adaptability
- Communication
- Social/Leisure Skills
- Community Integration
- Safety Awareness



Community Integrated Day Program in Fremont Area



Supported Living Services Program

Each ADP participant has her/his own individualized service plan (ISP) which is reviewed semi-annually or annually with the interdisciplinary (ID) team (the consumer, parents/conservators, social worker, and FCSN staff). FCSN ADP operates from 8:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., Monday through Friday, year-round with a staff ratio of 1:3 or 1:4.

Staff and students work hard together to build a full life and caring rapport with each other. "Miss Lena is like my boss," comments Cindy Anderson, an EBADP student, about her FCSN instructor. "She takes care of me and tells me how to be healthy, which is good." Caring for each other also means students reaching out to staff, to make them laugh, show compassion and empathy helping other students. "I [am] helping Karina with her seat belt," Renee Wu mentions proudly.

Come visit us to see how ADP participants spend their day and learn how the program has changed their lives. "I feel like I'm improving in many things - like reading, math...learning to be a better person and more social around people...I feel lucky to have a job at Walmart", says Cindy C. FCSN has helped ten students find a job at Walmart since 2006. This is a happy and energetic environment where participants enjoy learning and living through their daily activities.



South Bay Adult Day Program

Living Services

FCSN currently operates two types of living services: Supported Living Services (SLS) and Independent Living Service (ILS) in Fremont and San Jose. Moving out of the family home for the first time can be overwhelming for both the consumer and his/her parents. Our philosophy - We Meet You Where You Are. FCSN Living Services are set to guide the participants through all aspects of living. SLS reviews the individualized service plan (ISP) quarterly with the interdisciplinary (ID) team. ILS reviews the ISP on a semi-annually or annually basis.

Supported Living Services (SLS)

Participants live in a home of his/her choice, with 24/7 services and live-in staff if needed. FCSN SLS locates affordable housing in the community, finds roommate(s), and provides support and training to consumers.

Independent Living Services (ILS)

FCSN provides two types of ILS:

a) Getting Ready -

Intensive 1:1 ILS training is provided to consumers who are still residing with parents. The goal of this 2-year intensive training is to prepare them to move out of the family home either to live independently or in an SLS setting.

b) Living Independently in the Community -

For those who live independently in the community, FCSN ILS provides ongoing support and training to ensure the success of consumers' independent living arrangement.

Our team provides individualized support and living skills training in the areas of

- Self-care/Hygiene
- Balanced Meal Planning & Preparation
- Budgeting/Financial Responsibility
- Household Maintenance
- Optimal Health & Wellness
- Safety/Emergency Handling
- Social/Leisure Skills
- Community Integration

Respite Services

FCSN values the power of families nurturing their children at home. However, family members need to take good care of themselves before they can provide care, supervision, and love to the disabled. If there is a need for parents to take a break, FCSN offers in-home respite services based on parents' requests and ensures that the disabled child or adult is supervised, assisted with self-care tasks when needed, and participates in his/her choice of activities at home.

FCSN Respite program offers varied schedules (seven days a week, flexible hours, minimum of 3-hour respite service each time) to meet families' needs.

FCSN is very blessed to have a pioneering board of directors guiding FCSN directions as well as many dedicated staff and volunteers contributing their intelligence, talents, love, and care to the special needs. We continue to make an effort to improve our staff and program quality, develop new programs, build a community for children and adults with special needs, and provide a village of support to them.



East Bay Adult Day Program

DREAM PROJECT 2

Dare to Dream the Impossible Dream Again?!

by **Anna Wang**

FCSN Vice President of Local Programs



Organic Bath and Beauty Products



High-End Chocolate Project



Performance Contracts

The FCSN community wants our special needs loved ones to have happy, healthy and fulfilled lives. In the year 2000, FCSN embarked upon the first Dream Project, uniting FCSN families and supporters to achieve our dream of building a visual model of a supportive village. This system was comprised of our center for programs, with nearby housing for living and support services. Today, we are looking at the fruits of the labor of Dream Project team members. FCSN has two centers, one in Fremont and one in San Jose, serving more than 800 families through over 40 programs / services, with more than 200 volunteers and 100 staff members. The power of love for our loved ones is behind the success of our Project. We are humbled that many Bay Area organizations look to FCSN to learn from our model of support.

As more of our children have become adults or are approaching adulthood, family members are beginning to worry about their children's prospect of finding work in the community. National reports indicate that merely 12.5 % of our population with developmental disabilities has any kind of job and only 1% has full-time employment with competitive wages. Are we

going to accept this? ARE WE GOING TO ACCEPT THIS? NO. The FCSN community will NOT stand for this. We have to do something about it!

In November 2012, Dream Project 2 was launched. It's all about "Building a Brighter Future for Our Loved Ones with Special Needs" by preparing them for the work force and providing them job opportunities.

The objectives of Dream Project 2 are:

- Explore Talent, Interests and Abilities
- Promote Self-Esteem by Setting Them Up for Success
- Provide Competitive Wages
- Ensure Protection from Bullying and Abuse
- Offer Job Security and Satisfaction
- Engage in Scheduled Positive Productive Behavior

Strategies

- a) Train children at home and at FCSN programs so they are prepared
- b) Assess their Abilities and Talents

c) Create Career Opportunities by:

- Finding employment through the parents' network with businesses
- Parents forming businesses to offer tailor-made job for their own adult children
- FCSN acting as Fiscal Managers to create business entrepreneurship
- FCSN collaborating with businesses to offer jobs to our adult day program students

Current projects in progress are:

- 1) Senior Community Housing Project
- 2) Organic Bath & Beauty Products
- 3) High-End Chocolate Project
- 4) Special Needs Entrepreneurship and Business Service Contract
- 5) Computer-Related Employment

Things won't happen unless we make them happen. We are family members and friends, the stakeholders who have vested interest in the success of the project(s). It's not too late to join us. Please contact Auntie Anna and sign on.

Together, we can make all our Dreams Come True!

Activity Calendar

FCSN's program goal is to provide fun, affordable and empowering social and learning opportunities for our special needs individuals and families. We have seen many positive results from the participation in our programs, including discovering talents and abilities, building permanent friendships and offering a supportive community, improving health (both physical and mentally), and living a happier life.

FCSN Upcoming Events and Summer Camp Activities

by **Anna Wang**

Hurry!! Enroll in all the camps before space runs out!!
All info and registration forms can be found on our website at www.fcsn1996.org.

1) FCSN – WBSS Summer Swim Camp

Date/Time: 6/23-8/22 (Monday – Thursday)
1:45-4:00 (in 45 min timeslots)
Place: Club Sport Fremont

2) FCSN Badminton Camp

Date/Time: 6/16-6/27, M-F, 4-6pm
Place: FCSN Fremont Center

3) FCSN Basketball Camp

Date/Time: 6/30-7/10, M-Th, 3:30-4:30pm
Place: Club Sport Fremont

4) FCSN Soccer Camp

Date/Time: 7/14-7/24, M-Th, 3:30-4:30pm
Place: Club Sport Fremont



FCSN Basketball camp

5) South Bay Full Time Summer Camp

Date/Time: 7/21-8/1, M-F, 9am-3pm
Place: FCSN South Bay Center: 3675 Payne Ave., San Jose.

6) FCSN Sports Day at Taiwanese Chinese American Athletic Tournament

Date/Time: Sunday 8/3, 9:30am – 1:30pm
Place: Fremont High School, Sunnyvale.

7) Musical Drama Camp -- “Finding Nemo”

Date/Time: 8/14-8/17, 10-11:30am for younger campers, 2:30-4pm for older campers.
Place: FCSN Fremont Center & New Hope Church
FREE family show on Sunday 8/17 at 7pm at New Hope Church (2190 Peralta Blvd., next to FCSN Center).

8) East Bay Family Gathering: 8/30, 9/13, 9/27, 10/11, 10/25, 11/22, 12/13, 4:30-8:00pm at FCSN Fremont Center

9) South Bay Family Gathering: 9/6, 9/22, 10/4, 10/18, 11/1, 11/15, 12/6, at 4:30-8pm at Westhope Presbyterian Church, Saratoga.

10) Annual Fundraising Gala

Date/Time: 11/8/2014 (Saturday), 6:30-10pm
Place: Santa Clara Convention Center, Santa Clara, CA



President's Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) Program

by **Roger Leung**, PVSA Program Coordinator

The President's Volunteer Service Award is coming to FCSN. FCSN recently became a Certifying Organization for this prestigious, nation-wide award. Begun in 2003, the President's Volunteer Service Award was designed to encourage Americans to volunteer and provide service to their communities. With the award, the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation wanted to encourage more people to serve. Recognition often inspires others to take positive action to bring change to the world.

FCSN is proud to partner with The Council to honor FCSN youth volunteers for their work; FCSN will issue the first President's Volunteer awards to qualified young adults for 2014.

Award criteria are listed below:

- US citizens or lawfully admitted permanent residents of USA
- Meet minimum service hours for a period of 12 months
- Tracked service hours recorded in FCSN log

Award recipients can choose one among the different options for award recognition:

- The official President's Volunteer Service Award pin
- A personalized certificate of achievement
- A congratulatory letter from the president of the United States

At present, FCSN will initiate the award program for young adults (ages 15 -25) only. Service hours for each award level are shown in the following table.

Age of Young Adult	Period of Volunteer Work	Bronze Level	Silver Level	Gold Level
15 to 25	1st January to 31st December for each year	100 – 174 hours	175 – 249 hours	250 hours or more

Cumulated service hours will be recorded in our youth program service log in the period of 1/1/2014 to 12/31/2014 and will be tallied by FCSN at the end of this year. Qualified youth volunteer will then be eligible to apply for the award. Deadline for

award application is January 31, 2015. Detailed procedures and application forms will be available later. For more information, please contact program coordinator Roger Leung at rogeryuleung@gmail.com.

Dream Achievers Sends Message of Hope

by **Anna Wang**



The Dream Achievers is a music ensemble made up of talented young musicians with autism who have participated in Friends of Children with Special Needs (FCSN) music program. Founded two year ago, Dream Achievers members are Lawrence Wang, age 24, saxophonist/flutist; Alice Jen, age 15, pianist; Gregory Hebert, age 19, guitarist; and Chris Koraltan, age 22, drummer/percussionist. Their repertoire includes over 120 songs that range from classical music to jazz/hip hop, Latin, kid-songs, and traditional cultural music. Due to autism, each one of the band members has an inspirational story of hope and amazing encouragement behind their music.

Even though Dream Achievers was formed two year ago, the ensemble has already performed in front of thousands and thousands of people. Some of the venues where they have performed include the California State Capitol, universities, convention centers, performing arts theaters, schools, companies, churches and private events.

Last year, the band made a concert tour to Shanghai and Hong Kong. The entire trip was funded by a Chinese businessman and educator, Mr. Fang, who visited FCSN's music camp with his autistic son three years ago. Seeing the accomplishments of special needs children at FCSN, he returned home inspired and opened a school for children of day workers, denied enrollment in public schools, and included his son in the educational program.

In the Asian culture, shame and stigma can be associated with having a child with special needs. We traveled thousands of miles so people could see the talent of individuals with autism. The band became the ambassador of hope and a shining example that people with "disabilities" can have many special "abilities". The concerts touched people's hearts. Tears of hope and smiles of joy characterized the events. Special needs individuals gained encouragement to show everyone their own strength and abilities. The sponsors made videos of the concerts and the reaction of the audience to the beautiful music delivered by the Dream Achievers. Some of these videos are uploaded on Youtube. Search "Dream Achievers Concert of Hope" to locate them. The story of FCSN's pride and joy is still being written. These young people are going places and carrying out FCSN's mission: to give love, hope, respect and support to the special needs community. For the past six months, the band has averaged more than one performance per week. Be sure to join Dream Achievers at their next concert or performance.

Volunteer's Voice

Retrospectively, FCSN has helped develop and shape me to become the person that I am, with each volunteer session contributing to my overall experience.

Volunteering at FCSN has had some obvious benefits to my own personal life including an improved sense of responsibility, patience, and commitment. At FCSN, I worked every other week with a special needs student and had the responsibility of guiding my student to learn and participate in activities such as life skills, physical education, and arts & crafts. At each activity, I would exhibit patience and provide encouragement, two skills that are necessary and important for any teaching, helping, or even teamwork position.

My volunteering experiences not only allowed me to utilize these skills but also helped improve and build upon the foundations I already have. Most of all, they helped develop a sense of community and compassion that I feel everyone should have. As I interacted with my student, I began to learn more about him, what he likes to do and how his week was. I began to build a bond comparable to that of siblings, one in which volunteering with him no longer became a responsibility but a time I happily share with him during the busy, hectic times of high school. All the teachers, family members, and volunteers became a community that I knew; we were united with the same vision of helping each other become stronger and more successful. And just by taking a little bit of time away from my studies and activities, I was able to become part of this energetic, enthusiastic, and inspiring community that is relatively unknown.

Understanding and Passion Gained from Serving the Special Needs Community

by **James Zhang**

Sophomore at Columbia University

Lynbrook High School graduate, summer camp volunteers leader

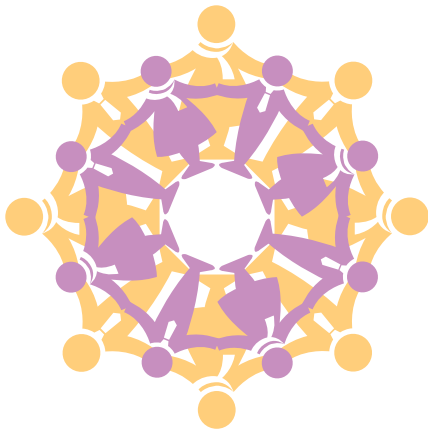
From my time at FCSN as a volunteer, volunteer coordinator, summer camp instructor and more, I believe I have become a much more compassionate person. My interactions with this wonderful community helped me understand some of the difficulties people undergo, the fun experiences they have, and the lifestyle they live that can be both so similar and so different from my own. It taught me the joys of helping other people and seeing the happiness that my contributions have caused. It gave me the sense of empowerment to reach out to other people who may need help, to contribute to a greater cause that has helped me grow as a person.

FCSN has taught me many life lessons of being compassionate and patient while also being thoughtful and responsible. It has brought me into a community of support and inspired me to continue taking time out of my busy college life to give back to the community in any way, shape, or form. I am now very active in another community, Camp Kesem, at my university which is so far away in New York. Yet I still hope to have opportunities when I am back in California to come visit everyone at FCSN and see how they are doing. I am thankful for the opportunities of helping others and making a difference in people's lives, and I hope more students will share my experience to create an even better and stronger community.

Inspiration to Change for the Better

by **Apoorva Rajanala**

Sophomore at
Mission San Jose
High School Youth Volunteer



When I started as a volunteer at FCSN as an eighth grader, I felt pretty intimidated. However, after a couple of gatherings, my fear subsided. The fact that I was able to entertain and create happiness for these children was enough reward to dissipate any inhibitions. As the rest of that year went by, I worked as a singing teacher and I struggled to connect with my classes. I was still staying in my own box as a volunteer.

I continued with FCSN for a second year; I was determined this year to make an impact on these kids on a more personal level. Ultimately, I was able to meet my goal. I made sure to listen to the kids' requests and soon I was able to remember what each student liked or disliked about an activity. If a specific student especially liked a song that was playing, I noted the student's preference and tried to incorporate it into class. It was extremely rewarding to see their faces light up with a smile as they swayed or clapped along with the music.



As my freshman year went by, I grew closer to these kids and developed a passion toward helping them learn and succeed. Through our interactions, my passion continued to grow, and I aspired to become the leader and teacher that would take them to greater heights. This year I have gotten the opportunity to focus on one child each week, getting to know each on a personal level. The children greet me with a smile or hug and the effort they make to address me by name fills me with immense joy.

Each and every one of these amazing kids is special in his or her own way. I feel so very blessed to be able to work with these children one-on-one, and to be able to see how bright they truly are. I am there to share in their successes as well as their failures, and I thank FCSN for giving me the opportunity to do so. As a volunteer, I hope that I have made a difference in the lives of my students, and now my friends. To me they are all brilliant inspirations who motivate me to take another step toward changing the world for the better.

I have been volunteering with FCSN for the past two years, and I am currently a team lead in the East Bay Regular Gathering. When I decided to start volunteering, I had hoped the experience would extend beyond just fulfilling my service hour requirements. Surprisingly, even I could not have anticipated the profound impact that working with special needs children has had on my life.

Respect for Facing Difficult Challenges

by **Wilson Zhao**

Junior at Mission San Jose High School Volunteer Team Lead

When I first began volunteering, I was intimidated by the prospect of the job. What if the students threw a temper tantrum? What if they hate me? What if I cannot communicate with them? Even before the first class, all of these questions occupied my thoughts. My concerns could most likely have been attributed to my limited experience. Before volunteering at FCSN, my sole experience was limited to a single, special needs individual in my after-school program when I was six years old. At that time, I could see the challenges that she faced and knew that she was different. However, being ignorant of developmental disabilities, I did not understand why she was different or the extent of her disability.

Eight years later, I had the opportunity to once again work with special needs students through FCSN. As a volunteer, I worked with different students and realized that everyone's challenges and concerns were unique. One student liked to follow routines. Disruptions like her name tag falling off would be enough to agitate her and cause her to panic and cry. Another student repeatedly asked the same questions—like asking me for my name. I learned that special needs are not always identified through appearances. One student who went to the same high school as I, did not appear any different than other high school students, but he had

difficulty constructing sentences. I also noticed that age did not determine ability, as a 60-year-old woman needed my help with drawing an elephant and coloring within the lines. Over time I realized that the volunteering experience was not limited to just spending hours helping others, it also changed my views and helped me grow. I have matured into a person with greater empathy and gained a better understanding of developmental disabilities.

Sometimes, working with special needs individuals can be extremely difficult. I try my best to address their concerns, to reassure students if they are worried, and to make sure that I do not offend or unintentionally hurt feelings. Even if I try my best, it seems like the occasional miscommunication is unavoidable. Then I realize that any inconveniences that I experience during my short time with them pales in comparison to the challenges that they and their parents face on a daily basis. At that moment, I have an epiphany—I am touched by the human condition and the struggle between morality and convenience. My experiences not only help me develop a sense of respect for the challenges that different people face, but it also inspires me to work towards helping others. I want to enrich people's lives and to reduce their suffering. While I might not be able to accomplish everything that I want to do during my lifetime, I hope to make meaningful contributions toward helping others.

Parent's Sharing

一轉眼，季齡已經22歲了！一路走過了高中，和 post secondary program，可算是一個成熟的青年。

早在高中畢業（應說是 completion）之後，開始上 postsecondary program 時，就想讓他在大學選課，可是在這 program 裡，一個老師要帶3到4個學生，除非這些學生都要去大學選課，老師一起帶去才能成行。可是季齡想上的課，不是時間不對，就是別的學生沒興趣，結果兩年下來，一堂課也沒上到，對此，我們也只有徒乎奈何。

季齡上大學 Chi-Ling Going to College !!

by 葉淑芬 Su-Feng Yeh

22歲一到，便正式和學區說bye bye。鑒於過去的經驗，我決定”求人不如求己”，自己帶他上學，正如過去的十二年裡，從一年級到十二年級，在學校當他的aide 一樣。

心意已定，我們便高高興興的往 West Valley College 去。研究了半天，我們選了禮拜一和禮拜三的課，其他時間則到 FCSN 的 Day program 上學。

我們一起註冊，從此，我們不但是母子，更是同學。第一堂選的是PE，上的是 golf，這當然也是我想學的，同時對季齡也比較適合，因為不必和別人對打。我們從完全的門外漢開始，揮了幾次桿以後，我居然發現自己是個左撇子--至少在 golf 的領域裡，我用左手揮桿很順手。季齡雖然打得還像是在打 field hockey，不過老師也很鼓勵他，我覺得媽媽在場，多少起了一點作用，從一開始就昭告他的特殊需求，反倒使同學因瞭解而體諒他。

第二堂則是College choir，本來不敢想季齡可以進去的，因為這門課需要 audition，沒想到第一天正好坐在教室裡旁聽，教授二話不說便要我們下課找他，還中規中矩的考驗過季齡，決定他可以加入tenor，我則進入 alto。教授還告訴我說，他有兩個非常成功的自閉症學生，讓我一則以喜，一則以憂。

第三堂課還是和音樂有關的 Voice。老師注重的不是如何唱得好，而是如何呼吸，她的重點是，只要呼吸得法，讓聲帶自然振動，歌聲才會厚實。這也給我很大的鼓勵。唱歌，除了天賦的條件以外，畢竟還是有”法”可循的。上了近一個學期，覺得我和季齡唱得比以前輕鬆。

自從兒子被診斷出自閉症以來，我堅持和他一起學習。雖然辛苦，可是好處是，和學校的溝通比較直接，減少誤解。同時，兒子的存在也改變了我的人生觀。現在的我對生命的定位是：人生是一個學習的過程。既然生命的終點都是一樣的，我們也無法決定它的長度，那麼，能掌握的就是寬度了。只要抱持學習的心態，享受學習的喜悅而不預設目標，功夫至則水到渠成。在兩岸夾樹的桃花林中，”緣溪行，忘路之遠近”，其中自有桃花源，又何假外求？

陪兒子上大學對我來說是一舉兩得的事。除了陪他，讓老師無法忽視他，（我的存在

的確讓別人比較肯定他，也讓他學得更紮實）我也經由學習中找到自己的潛力，在生命的彩虹裡繼續揮灑。你說，這豈不是一件雙贏的事嗎？

很快的，一學期即將結束，下學期要上什麼課呢？敬請拭目以待。

附：今年季齡23歲，上的是 South Bay Day Program，真的有老師陪他上City College！由於老師的認真負責，季齡結結實實的上PE和吉他，看著他的身材變挺拔，還可以獨奏古典吉他，我這個挑剔的媽媽終於可以放心，放下手了。由衷的感謝老師們，這就是我十幾年來一直可望不可求的品質。

Stage Fright? What is that?

by **Anna Wang**

After years of working with students with special needs, I have found that almost all of our students are without stage fright. They love the audience and enjoy the attention. Many of them tell me that they feel like SUPERSTARS!

During FCSN Dream Achievers Band's concert tour to Shanghai and Hong Kong last September, Lawrence was asked to accompany one of the local special needs musicians on the flute recorder to the song "My Heart Will Go On". Since he can play by ear and transpose readily, he didn't have any problems with it. This famous theme song from "Titanic" has flute music at the beginning, middle, and the end. Usually when Lawrence is performing a song with the Dream Achievers, he is occupied with his instrument or singing throughout the entire song, but this was not the case with the Titanic song.

When the performance began, the piano soloist and Lawrence both took a bow. Immediately Lawrence played the intro with the recorder, then there was a long stretch of time where the soloist was playing the main melody. Lawrence had nothing to do. All of a sudden,

he put his recorder under his arm-pit, and took off his eye-glasses. He opened his mouth and puffed steam on the lenses and then rubbed them on his nice dress shirt to clean them. The audience was all laughing. I was worried that he was so occupied with cleaning his glasses and would forget to come in with his recorder for the middle part of the song. But before I knew it, he put his glasses back on and started playing again. Right after that, he squeezed the recorder under his arm-pit again and proceeded to clean his nails by digging one nail with nails from his other hand and flicking it out. After he cleaned all 10 nails, it was time to play the ending flute accompaniment. He never missed a beat and occupied his time throughout the song. The audience burst out into laughter and thoroughly enjoyed the music plus the little unintended sideshow that Lawrence put on.

How I wish we can all be like children/adults with special needs when we go on stage! Relaxed, Be Ourselves, and Deliver the Best Performance!!

Fashion was in Style at Mission San Jose High School

by **Kathy Hebert**

The Dream Achievers rocked the house on the night of April 17 at Mission San Jose (MSJ) High School's fashion show! You could feel the energy and excitement in the air as the students transformed from t-shirts and jeans into tuxedos and formal gowns! FCSN was honored to be chosen as the recipient of this noteworthy fundraiser, and having the Dream Achievers play at this event was icing on the cake.

Two of the band members, Lawrence and Greg, are alumnus of MSJ and were proud to go back and show this room of enthusiastic kids their accomplishments since graduating. Our pianist, Alice, currently in 9th grade at Mission's special day class, had a chance to show her very special abilities to her school.

As Greg's mom on the sidelines that night, I do not have words to express how satisfying it was watching the audience show their support of the band. Hearing them yell out my son's name and clap wildly for him brought tears to my eyes. At that point of time, it didn't matter that the Dream Achiever are young adults born with a disability because when the Dream Achievers play....they are simply a band with talented musicians who just happen to have autism.

Thank you Mission San Jose for inviting the Dream Achievers to play and what an honor it was for them to be chosen as the recipient of your fundraiser. Music and fashion were definitely in style!



TCAAT Sports Day (August 4, 2013)

FCSN team paraded in the opening ceremony, kicking off the event with vigor.



Sports Day group picture in front of the FCSN tent



Annual Meeting & Family Day (June 8, 2013)

Recipients of FCSN Volunteer Award



Family Day Performance Program

One of the performances was Hawaiian dancing with dancers dressed in colorful Hawaiian costume with flower lei.



Musical Drama Actors



Summer Swim Camp



“ To Dream the Impossible Dream”

Mission Statement

FCSN’s mission is to help individuals with special needs and their families to find love, hope, respect, and support through integrated community involvement.

Since 1996, FCSN has rapidly increased its membership to over 800 multi-ethnic families. FCSN now provides 44 comprehensive programs for thousands of special need individuals of all ages and their families.



Join our regular family gatherings at two locations

Educational – learn social skill, job skill and life skill

Enjoyable – make friends; enjoy music, dancing and arts

Parallel session for parents – professional seminar, support group and experience sharing

East Bay Family Gathering: 8/30, 9/13, 9/27, 10/11, 10/25, 11/22, 12/13, 4:30-8:00pm at
FCSN Fremont Cente, 2300 Peralta Blvd., Fremont, CA 94536

South Bay Family Gathering: 9/6, 9/22, 10/4, 10/18, 11/1, 11/15, 12/6, 4:30-8pm at
Westhope Presbyterian Church, 12850 Saratoga Ave., Saratoga, CA 95070.

Friends of Children with Special Needs

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