



Friends of Children with Special Needs

華人特殊兒童之友

FCSN Dream Builders

December 2016



Harvest Academy Program – empowering students with job skills

Check out FCSN's new website; blog your ideas and story

Watch for South Bay Center's grand opening

FCSN children inspire youth volunteers to reach for more

Dr. Albert Wang's personal, family story shared at 2016 Fundraising Gala



FCSN Chinese Music Ensemble performed "Tumbling Walnuts"
at the 2016 Fundraising Gala



FCSN Dream Builders

December 2016



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The third annual Special Needs Talent Showcase, promising an evening of uplifting entertainment, is scheduled for Saturday, **March 18, 2017**, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. at the Santa Clara Convention Center Theatre in Santa Clara.

A preliminary audition is scheduled for Sunday, **January 22** from 1 to 5 p.m. at the new FCSN South Bay Center, 1029 S. Bascom Ave., San Jose.

Special Needs Talent Showcase is open this year to 60 competitors from throughout California, with 10 finalists competing for prizes. In each of the past two years, 600 people have packed the theatre to watch the performances. For 2017, there will be eight honorable mentions, and the event will showcase past winners.

The event, launched by FCSN, provides a platform for special needs individuals to perform before a live audience, showcasing their talents and helping erode stigma around the special needs community.

Family Seminar Series and Family Supporting Gathering – Spring 2017

Our Family Seminar Series is restructuring a bit to bring back a family feeling. The seminars, held on alternating Saturdays at 4:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:30 p.m., have developed a new format. Following a 35-minute presentation, attendees meet in smaller groups, sometimes by the age of their children. To provide better service, FCSN is also providing groups in Chinese and in English.

“To help our own family members, we need to be more bonded. With the change, people are getting to know each other better,” says Anna Wang, Vice President of Local Programs and Community Relations.

Family Seminars will be held every Saturday, alternating between Fremont and San Jose. Dinner is served following the meeting, with games and dancing ending the evening.

South Bay Dates: 2/4, 2/18, 3/4, 3/25, 4/8, 4/22, 5/6 (4:30pm – 8pm)

Location: FCSN South Bay Center

1029 S. Bascom Avenue, San Jose CA 95128

East Bay Dates: 2/11, 2/25, 3/11, 4/1, 4/15, 4/29, 5/13 (4:30pm - 8pm)

Location: FCSN East Bay Center

2300 Peralta Blvd., Fremont CA 94536

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Feature Story

Empowering Students Toward Employment Harvest Academy Program Opens in South Bay

by **Kenneth Song**

FCSN Dream Builders Reporter

Over the past 20 years, Friends of Children with Special Needs has worked relentlessly to carve a place in the community for those with special needs to create a place of belonging as well as provide a sense of identity. While many special needs individuals have the functional skill set to work in advanced, even technical workplaces, it is often the twin barriers of communication and an educational degree which discourage them from reaching their full potential. Such is the case within our own local Bay Area, flourishing with job opportunities for those with the right talents, yet even exceptional special needs individuals such as those with high-functioning autism (HFA) and Asperger's Syndrome (AS) are finding it difficult to compete in a system with which they are unfamiliar. Started this past June by Mrs. Hsin Huei Liao, Ms. Sherry Meng, and Ms. Teresa Yu, the Harvest Academy Program aims to develop the skills that individuals with high functioning autism or Asperger's syndrome require to perform in a college or workplace environment. They hope to empower individuals with high functioning autism to have confidence in themselves to succeed, even when society presents barriers.

Offering a diverse curriculum ranging from computer applications and accounting to social etiquette and drama courses, the Harvest Academy Program aims to build a

strong academic foundation with critical communication and social training integrated into every class. Ultimately, the skills which students develop over the course of the quarter will build toward three distinct goals: academic tutoring toward a college level of education; job training for a career in the tech industry; and community skill development to represent the special needs population positively. The program's highly-qualified team of enthusiastic instructors who come from top universities around the country including UC Davis, Berkeley, and Columbia University work closely with the students in small class sizes with flexible curriculums to meet each student's unique needs. Several teachers also have extensive backgrounds working with special needs individuals and have the essential qualities of patience and empathy needed to bring out the best in their students.



Functional English Class

I had the privilege of sitting through several, different classes including Functional English, Communications, and Drama during the Fall 2016 quarter. While each class focused on a different aspect of a student's growth, such as learning how to use computers, how to interact in public, and how

to write out their thoughts, all classes built upon a common theme of expanding students' confidence and ability to perform in social settings. Speaking with the various instructors, I learned that the teaching staff actually creates each weekly lesson plan from scratch, an arduous but rewarding process that involves integrating feedback from the students and their parents. By constantly adjusting and tweaking the curriculum on a class-by-class basis, instructors are able to emphasize the challenge areas and help each individual student work through their struggle. This fluidity in the speed and topics covered by each course is what truly gives the Harvest Academy Program an edge over traditional classes that mechanically aim to complete a preset amount of materials before the last day of class.



Students working on stage decoration for their play

Prospective students who wish to apply for the Harvest Academy Program need to undergo an interview process to assess their strengths and weaknesses before determining whether they are a good fit for the current level of the class. The program committee, consisting of the program founders and

teachers, then separates the students based on their level and preferred schedule into the appropriate classes. Each course has a maximum class size of four to six students to allow each instructor to tailor the curriculum to each student's own pace. Between the instructors and helpful volunteers who assist throughout each class, students are given the one-on-one attention they need to stay focused and excel throughout the hour. Teresa Yu, Program Manager of Harvest Academy Program, also spends much of her time reaching out to both local and global organizations, including Specialisterne and Expandability, to arrange potential job partnerships with graduates from the Harvest Academy Program. In recent years, such companies have shown a widening interest in looking toward the unique temperament and skillset of the special needs community for employees in accounting, programming, and much more. As the program continues to produce well-prepared graduates who are trained to handle a work environment, Teresa anticipates that more companies will become interested in partnering up with the Harvest Academy Program.



Mrs. Liao's (Teacher Chai) art work

With only two quarters under the organization's belt so far, the progress many of its students have made in such a short period of time looks extremely

promising for the future of special needs education. Throughout the course of these first two quarters, Mrs. Liao reports that she has seen an impressive shift in the mentality of her students who have become much more serious and responsible regarding their own education.

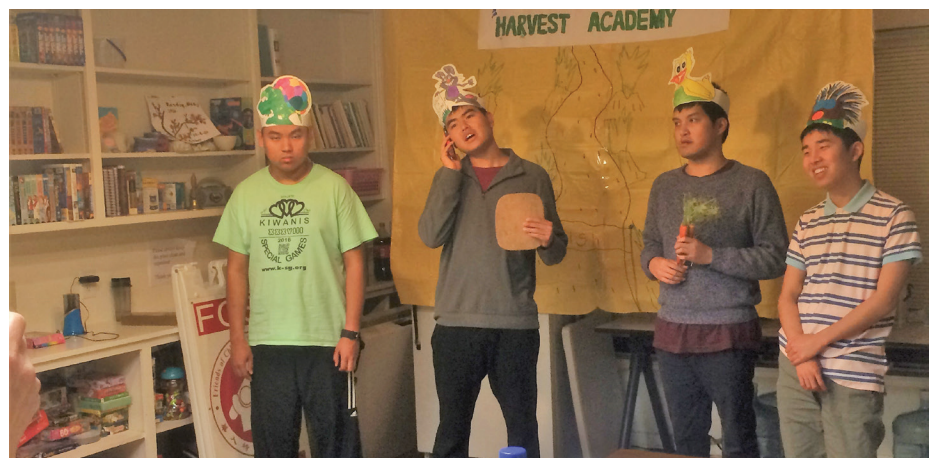
I recently had the pleasure of attending the fall graduation ceremony and open house where students showcased their achievements over the past quarter. Between the spectacular performance of *The Tortoise and the Hare*, which drama instructor Valerie Peterson brought to life with five students who once would have never dared to perform in front of an audience, and massive binders of Excel, math, English, and communications exercises the students had completed throughout the quarter, it was an impressive display of learning and progress to say the least.

With each quarter that passes, the Harvest Academy Program not only builds upon its past experiences to optimize student education but also continues to broaden its class catalog to offer courses for special needs individuals of all backgrounds and interests. Expanded functional English



Open House for Fall 2016 program

and math courses for a wider range of skill levels, one-on-one tutoring sessions, cheerleading classes, and a core drama team are among the exciting elements already integrated into the program. Mrs. Liao encourages parents who may not believe that their special needs child are capable of attaining a college degree or full time employment to have faith in their children and to never give up. Only by driving such individuals on a daily basis and giving them the independence to pursue their own careers can individuals truly recognize their capabilities and full potential. Parents interested in learning more about the program schedule or how to sign up should visit the Harvest Academy website at www.harvestacademy.org.



The Tortoise and the Hare performance by the drama class in the fall graduation ceremony

Weaving Our Dream

A Successful 2016 FCSN Fundraising Gala

by **Johnna M. Laird**

FCSN Dream Builders
Reporter & Parent

FCSN's 20th Anniversary *Weaving Our Dream* Fundraising Gala attracted more than 1,000 people from throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. A celebratory evening of dinner, entertainment, and dancing on November 5, 2016, at the Convention Center in Santa Clara raised more than \$400,000, vital for FCSN programs.

Performers from FCSN's Fremont and South Bay programs moved into the limelight with a glistening backdrop and became the highlight of the evening. Their performances followed a rousing fundraiser as attendees lifted numbered programs, offering donations

ranging from tens of thousands to hundreds of dollars. This year's fundraiser brought in technology, allowing donations via smart phones to send the goal-setting thermometer on stage rising.

South Bay Adult Day Program performed "Take the Samba Train;" Summer Music Camp Band played "We Are the World;" Summer Drama Camp gyrated to a *Madagascar* Dance Medley; the Co-ed Dance Zumba and Line Group's moved to "Most Dazzling Folk Style;" Dream Seekers Dance Team sang "I Want It That Way" and kicked up their heels to "Can't Stop the Feeling;" and Chinese Music Ensemblers' "Tumbling Walnuts" left the audience shaking their heads in amazement.

FCSN's Dream Achievers Band,



The FCSN Co-Ed Group

which performs regularly in the San Francisco Bay Area, accompanied Hollywood's Chris Showerman, known for his roles in Disney's *George of the Jungle 2*, television's *Supergirl*, and *Radio America*, a production he wrote and directed. Chris sang "Wind Beneath My Wings" and "Impossible Dream." The band returned at the end of the evening to close the night and get attendees on their feet dancing.

Chris Showerman also chose to debut an original song he wrote with the artist SEAL in mind. Chris performed "Anyway" because it fit FCSN's "inspiring theme...and the spirit of FCSN." "All Things Possible" is Chris's motto; Chris noted the verses address fears and stories "we tell ourselves that stifle action toward our dream." The chorus reminds: "Do It Anyway."

A number of state and regional dignitaries attended the event that began as guests arrived in flowing gowns and dark suits to first peruse dozens of raffle and auction prizes before entering the banquet hall for dinner. Raffle prizes ranged from an iPhone 7 to a trip for four to Disneyland to baskets with gift cards, and auction prizes of a five-day ocean resort stay in Cancun to box seats for a Golden State Warriors game, donated by Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty.



ABC7-TV General Assignment Reporter Matt Keller, emcee for the evening who has also emceed FCSN's Special Needs Talent Showcase, kept the evening lively with heartfelt and witty remarks.

Usually seen as a master of ceremonies, Dr. Albert Wang, an FCSN founder and Chairman of the Board of Palo Alto Medical Foundation, provided a different perspective, telling a parent's story of how FCSN has changed his and his family's lives (see Parent Sharing article).

Crystal awards were handed out by FCSN Board Chairman Professor Chenming Hu and FCSN President Yee-Yee Wang to long-time supporters of FCSN, who provided help to the organization's pioneers as they took steps to transform a vision into reality. Those recognized included: China Airlines, Eva Airlines, New York Life Insurance Company, ASI Corp., Bizlink Technology, Inc., Club Sport, Henkel Corporation, Mission Peak Homes, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, J & V Foundation, and Kaiser Permanente. T. J. Maxx and Walmart were also recognized as corporations that have hired and continue to employ FCSN



Chris Showerman and FCSN's Dream Achievers Band

consumers. In addition, individuals receiving crystal awards for long-time support included: Sandy and Ruth Chau, CC and Regina Yin, E. Wang and R. Busher, Chenming and Margaret Hu, Limin Hu, Albert and Anna Wang, Jim and Linmei Chiao, CC Shih, LS and RT Huang Foundation.

"I look forward to this event every year, joining this community for an evening of entertainment, inspiration and togetherness," remarked special education teacher Lisa Hillman of Glankler School in Fremont afterward.

California State Assembly Assistant Majority Whip Evan Low described the evening as celebrating FCSN's "unwavering dedication to building a strong, caring, and respectful community for individuals with special needs."

He commended FCSN for its "years of hard work" and applauded its "success over the past two decades." He thanked FCSN for promoting "values of love, hope and respect in our community."



Crystal Awards for many long-time supporters of FCSN

Coming Soon! Grand Opening

FCSN South Bay Center

by **Johnna M. Laird**

FCSN Dream Builders Reporter & Parent

There's no place like home! No more moving equipment back-and-forth. No more having to think where to go. FCSN South Bay now has a place of its own, following an 18-month renovation that has transformed a commercial building into a permanent community center.

"We've been renting a church facility for our South Bay Center up until now. We have run our biweekly family gatherings in a separate location. As of January 2017, we will bring all our South Bay operations under one roof with rooms to grow for the foreseeable future," explains Jim Chiao, FCSN's Vice President of Operations & Volunteers, who organized project volunteers and headed some design teams.

The project was a group effort by many within FCSN, both management team and volunteers. Finding the right location took the site search committee two years. In 2014, after the Bascom property was purchased, a functional design



team worked with an architect to determine the building's most functional layout. A store team determined coffee shop requirements. By late 2014, the renovation project was approved by the San Jose city planning department. Construction and interior design teams were formed to support the project until building completion. One volunteer, Mandy Chang a designer from MGI, spent more than 800 hours on the building's interior design.

Building features include a workshop where FCSN clients can learn arts and crafts, participate in job training, and become involved in small business ventures, like soap-



making. A coffee shop and store will provide an opportunity for clients to gain skills in serving the public. In addition to a multipurpose room, the center includes four classrooms, two offices, a conference room, and a computer room. As with any homeowner moving into a new location, FCSN South Bay has needs, including therapy equipment, computers and related peripherals as well as some furnishings and a television. Donations are needed.

The new facility will also become home to the Harvest Academy which provides training for higher functioning clients in skills aimed at employment.

"South Bay Center is another milestone in our journey to build a community for our children and adults with special needs and their families. Our South Bay families have been longing for and have held this dream for some time, and now we are finally able to fulfill that need," says Jim.

"And we are proud of the community support we received for the South Bay Center," says Dr. Albert Wang, who headed a construction team that included Stanley Wu and David Tu.

"With community support, we raised \$1.5 million in three galas to cover renovation, furniture, and equipment costs. It shows FCSN's reputation out there as a trustworthy and efficient organization with strong leadership."

FCSN opened its first community center in 2006, having built the 6,000 square-foot Dream Center on Peralta Boulevard in Fremont.

About three-and-one half times bigger than the former rental space, the new South Bay location is expected

to lead to expanded programs. Its central location on South Bascom, within blocks of San Jose City College, is expected to help FCSN gain name recognition and develop more collaborative programs with other organizations and businesses.

In late October 2016, the contractor for the South Bay project, ACON, completed construction which began in April 2015. By November 6, 2016, the City of San Jose completed inspections and issued an occupancy permit for 140 people. South Bay held its first Family Seminar Series in the new center on November 19. By mid-November a Community Care Licensing preliminary permit was issued, clearing the way for programs serving consumers to be held at the site.

Grand opening of the single-story, 8,000 square foot building located at 1029 South Bascom Ave., is slated for early 2017.



South Bay held its first family gathering at the new center on November 19

Proud Supporters of FCSN

by **Johnna M. Laird**

FCSN Dream Builders Reporter & Parent

The eBay Foundation recently awarded FCSN a \$10,000 grant to encourage entrepreneurship among special needs individuals.

Unemployment among special needs individuals is high, and many special needs adults and teens want a job.

Employers face hiring challenges, especially if special needs individuals work less than 32 to 40 hours a week. Minimum wage can also be challenging if meeting work standards requires more time.

Friends of Children with Special Needs is exploring work alternatives

that provide employment, confidence, and some income.

“We want our kids to feel good about themselves,” explains Anna Wang, Vice President of Enrichment Programs and Community Relations, who applied for and received the grant in late fall 2016. “It’s devastating to our kids to have a job and then be fired or bullied.”

Not all workplaces are as friendly to special needs individuals as T.J. Maxx and Walmart, which have hired several FCSN consumers and retained them for 10 years in positions working one day a week.

Starting their own business or business venture can offer opportunities for special needs individuals to work for themselves, creating a product and then selling it

or providing a service.

“This is our Dream Project 2--the Work Dream,” says Anna.

“We don’t want to leave any stone unturned. We need parents to get creative about what their special needs loved ones can do and help them create an income stream, however small.”

Social Security provides that individuals can earn money and then invest that money back into their business venture without jeopardizing Social Security benefits.

A seminar to help parents think differently about work for their special needs loved ones and to network with each other was held Thanksgiving weekend in Fremont, with follow-up seminars planned.

eBay

Walmart

T.J. Maxx

A Trip You Don't Want to Miss

FCSN Families Explore California

by **Roxana Chiu**

FCSN Parent

The tradition of the FCSN biannual family bus trip started four years ago. Many of our children loved to go on trips with their friends and families; therefore, we started this family bus trip activity to allow our families the opportunity to enjoy a fun day in a relaxing setting.

Our bus trips cover many different activities including: ferries, trains, and boat rides, national parks, and museums. We have travelled to Carmel, Napa, Santa Cruz, Monterey, Sausalito, Tiburon, and many other exciting locations. To accommodate families from the East Bay and South Bay, we offer two pick up/drop off sites for our families. Families enjoy a hot breakfast in the bus while we drive to our first destination. Most trips will include up to three destinations with a three-hour lunch break so that families can take some time to explore the town and get lunch based on their own preferences. We always include lots



Santa Cruz Roaring Camp Train Ride

of walking activity in our trips since our children have a strong motivation to walk longer when they travel with their peers. Walking through these beautiful, natural settings is a main reason for the bus trip.

As our children love the bus trip dearly, it almost seems that twice a year seems not enough for the occasion. Many families over the years have asked for additional trips; therefore, we added a Walking Around Town program this year to meet that

request. The purpose of Walking Around Town is to explore different towns by taking public transportation like Caltrain or BART. Walking Around Town offers a less stressful, shorter trip that everyone can enjoy. Families can join the group on trip day by meeting with everyone at the Caltrain station. Walking Around Town usually ends in the afternoon around 2 - 3pm while the longer bus trip usually takes the whole day from 8:00 am to 6:30 pm.



Seymour Marine Center



Walking Around Town - Caltrain ride from Mountain View to Atherton

The New Face of FCSN

by **Johnna M. Laird**

FCSN Dream Builders Reporter & Parent

Friends of Children with Special Needs is presenting a new face on the Internet, as of last September. FCSN's digital platform was overhauled last fall, revised and updated.

The result? FCSN's new website provides a cleaner, more modern digital presentation, allowing users access to the site with smart phones. The website also features a blog. The blog allows direct communication from FCSN's staff, parents, volunteers, clients, and supporters - all stakeholders. Over the years, FCSN has found that parent-to-parent communication can provide invaluable support

"We want to get direct input and feedback from staff, parents, volunteers, and supporters," says Jim Chiao, Vice President of Center Operations and Volunteer Support. Jim served on the team overseeing the innovations along with Chief Financial Officer Lillian Lin; Vice President of Local Programs and Community Relations Anna Wang; Executive Business Director Sylvia Yeh; and Information Technology adviser Deepak Wilson.

Funded with an anonymous grant, the new website features an easier-to-use format, more interaction, and the ability to be easily modified and updated by different FCSN groups, according to Jim.

During October, the website received about 8,000 visitors. Much easier to update, the website is expected to be a source for ever-changing information. Two FCSN parents, Yvonne Liu and James Gong, are serving as volunteer web masters, helping to add new features, fixing any glitches and writing user instructions. Photo albums and newsletters will be added to the site over the next two months.

Consider contributing your story or experience to the website blog. To write for the blog, please contact: website@fcsn1996.org



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Welcome

Friends of Children with Special Needs

FCSN is an organization founded by parents of children with special needs and their friends. We are the first to develop a dream community with programs, support, and housing for individuals with special needs and their families.

Be part of our community, join us!

Volunteers' Voices

Turning Special Needs into Athleticism

Guardian Basketball League

by **Kenneth Song**

FCSN Dream Builders Reporter

When four local high school students noticed how few opportunities there were in the Bay Area for special needs individuals to participate in team sports activities, they took it upon themselves to form the Guardian Basketball League. Through their high school community program, Kaushal Rao, Aditya Simha, Aaron Le and Aditya Mohan had volunteered for various special needs organizations including FCSN. During their time volunteering, the friends took note that while there were a plethora of arts and crafts activities, life skills training, and even weekly dance classes for the students to get exercise, there were no consistent opportunities for the teenagers to be involved in sports. Driven by their long-standing backgrounds in sports and a desire to share those passions, the four decided to create a basketball program for teenagers with special needs.

Having previously volunteered at Organization of Special Needs Families (OSF), an organization supporting community integration for individuals with special needs and providing them with enrichment programs, the group decided to present their proposal for starting an informal basketball camp for special needs children to Jeena, a parent self-help group for raising children with disabilities; they were soon approved to begin their first session. Building from their previous experiences working with special needs individuals, the four focused on creating an environment where their students could participate in team sports, developing critical communication and interpersonal skills, without the looming pressure of competition. The early beginnings of the basketball camp involved much trial and error, experimenting with different ways to encourage students to not only participate in the exercises but also most importantly have fun. The coaches focused on drills that helped to establish important life skills such as sharing, taking turns, and

interacting with others. After receiving plenty of positive feedback from both the students and parents, Aditya Simha and Aaron Le decided to move their program closer to home and started their first South Bay session of the Guardian Basketball League at FCSN in the Winter of 2015.

I had the opportunity to attend a Guardian Basketball League session this past summer and speak with the coaches regarding their experiences working with the students. During the scrimmage, the players passed the ball frequently to ensure that everyone had their turn dribbling and shooting. As the coaches moderated the game, volunteers were also present to help make sure each student was given ample time on the court and with the ball. In the true spirit of team sports, everyone involved seemed to be having an exhilarating time, and I could see the tired, yet happy, faces of the students as they raced around the court. After practice, Aditya told me that the program has been immensely rewarding, and that the joy of seeing their students confidently interacting with each other is what has motivated them to continue the program. As Aditya S., Aditya M., Kaushal, and Aaron are graduating from high school soon, they hope that some of their dedicated volunteers will take over the program.

“We would like other enthusiastic volunteers to join us and help expand our program which we believe will in turn increase the awareness and acceptance of children with special needs.”

Even in college, the four promise to continue pursuing opportunities to open avenues of expression and communication for individuals with special needs. As evidenced through the success of the Guardian Basketball League, all students are able to benefit from the exercise, energy release, and the pure enjoyment of playing sports with their peers.



One Step at a Time into the Technology World

by **Vivian Chiang**
FCSN Youth Volunteer

I was first introduced to FCSN through the 2012 Summer Music Program. Participating in FCSN programs has benefited me tremendously ever since. Even though the children I've worked with lack certain skills, they excel far beyond the rest of us in other respects. I distinctly remember one student who could play the exact song just by listening to a recording. Another student could shoot free throws while facing the opposite direction from the hoop. I realized that every single child has hidden talents, and it just takes time and a little exploring to uncover them.

Last summer, my brother and I formed the Junior Robotics Program at FCSN. We were always passionate about robotics and engineering, but we also wanted to share our passion with others. After seeing how FCSN music and art programs brightened the kids, we hoped that robotics could bring FCSN kids as much joy as music and art.



The Junior Robotics Program aims to give FCSN students an opportunity to be immersed in building and programming robots. There are four to five students per class, and we

currently have two sets of curriculum with four, hour-long lessons in each set. For every lesson, there is an overall topic and goal, such as helicopters saving houses or an earthquake simulator. All students build the robot using LEGO WeDo kits, and then they program the robots with our specialized curriculum.

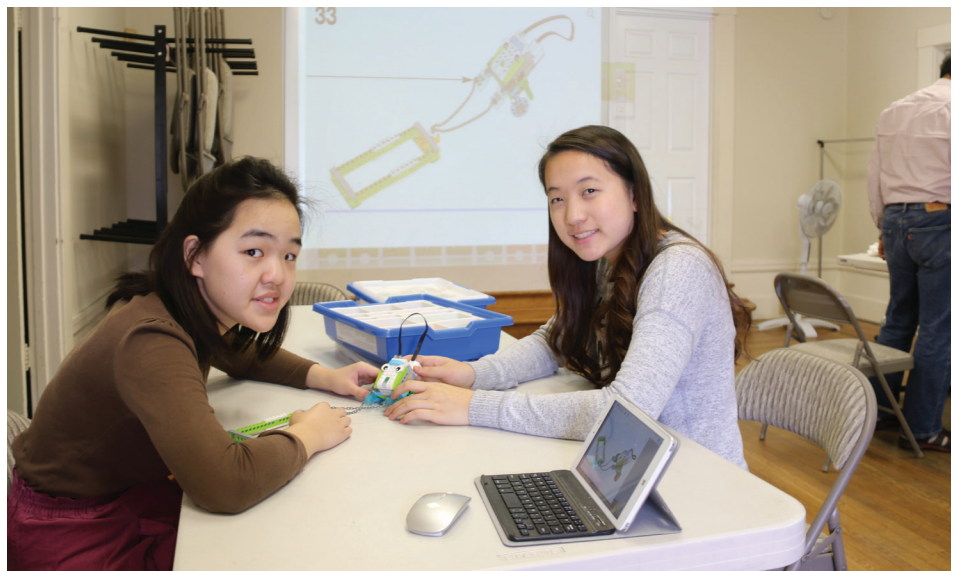


It has already been a few months since we started the program. We look forward to Saturday mornings, excited to bring new concepts and work with the kids, but most of all, we look forward to learning from the kids. We have learned how to communicate differently with each child, how to give more guidance at certain times, and how to think on



the spot when things don't go as we planned. To us, our students are not "kids with special needs." They are children who are passionate about learning, and we are more than eager to guide them through the material.

At each and every class, we always learn something new from the students, about their talents and interest for robotics. Seeing the kids focusing on the creations, jumping up and down, and cheering when the robot picks up the right thing or pulls a heavy book makes us proud and encouraged. Robotics requires different physical and mental skills from music or art, and how intricately and carefully the children address and carry out each task still surprises us every time. We encourage all FCSN students to try out our program, regardless of how much interest or experience they have at the beginning. We sincerely hope this Junior Robotics Program can open up another channel for FCSN students to interact with the world.



Redefining Expectations

FCSN children teach a volunteer to reach for more

by **Virginia Xie**

FCSN East Bay Youth Volunteer

I was a sophomore in high school when I first followed my friend into FCSN. Babies usually cried whenever I held them; so naturally, I was apprehensive about volunteering with special needs children at the East Bay Family Gatherings.

My worries melted away when I met four-year-old Ethan, one of the first of his age who didn't cry in my vicinity. To my delight, I soon realized that I didn't need to know the perfect words to say or give the best piggyback rides to bond with him. I was astounded by the young boy's boundless energy reserves and did my best to keep up with his hyper movements as he literally ran circles around me. Most of my time was spent chasing after him and attempting to bring him to sit still in a chair.

He was an unmatched dancer who even shared many of his own invented moves with the class, but he was much slower than some of his peers during arts and crafts classes. Although he struggled to assemble the pieces, he took his time with the artwork and never failed to point out all the different animals in the pictures as he worked and made sure that I knew the name of every color on the paper.

Ethan knew his own shortcomings but chose to embrace his passion for music and dance, remaining optimistic in his situation. His ability to focus on his strengths and stay cheerful in a situation that should have been filled with disappointment inspired me to utilize my every talent and ability to pursue my passion for the medical field as well.

When I first started volunteering, I was determined to make a difference in a child's life by teaching him communication and motor skills, but Ethan blessed me with a new perspective in return, something that was far more valuable than any skill I could've taught him.

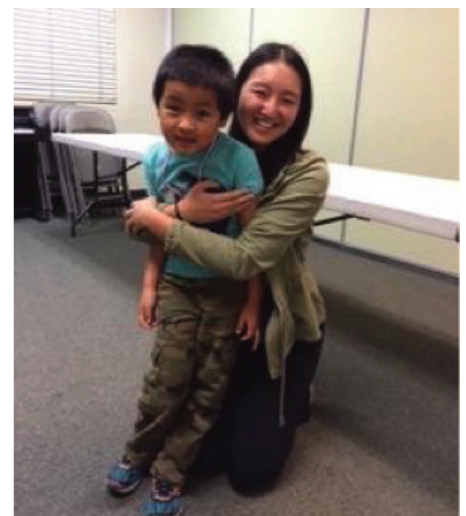
He inspired me to take advantage of every educational opportunity available to me and to view my capacity to learn as a blessing that many are denied. Instead of hanging back on the sidelines and allowing opportunities to slip by, I felt inspired to take advantage of all the resources around me.

Two more children I had the opportunity to work with were Janet and Mark. Janet was a young girl who had a passion for music but a simultaneous dislike for repetition. She enthusiastically and flawlessly executed every move of the "Hokey Pokey" song but the moment the teacher hit the replay button, she would stand as still as a statue in silent protest until we changed the song. We took note of her inclination for change and made sure to never replay a song during dance class.

Mark had a radiant personality and was always the first in his class to initiate greetings and give his classmates high fives. His joy and eagerness to include his classmates in activities made it extremely rewarding for me to help him further develop his interactions with his peers.

As a high school student, I tend to follow a similar routine day to day, and it's very easy for me to fall into the trap of doing what comes easily and naturally instead of pushing myself to take more action for my community. Modeling myself after Janet, I began to stand up for a change, a break in routine, starting within my school community. Following Mark's example, I rallied students in my Medical Leaders of Tomorrow to increase awareness and funding for Alzheimer's Disease and fought for the approval of our very first Homecoming alongside my fellow Student Council members.

Although done unknowingly, Ethan, Mark, and Janet inspired me to take action to make a difference in my community and to make use of the abundance of resources and educational opportunities around me to make a positive impact on the lives of others.



Virginia and Mark

Clients' and Parents' Sharing

My 10th Anniversary with FCSN

by **Raymond Hu**

FCSN Supported Living
Services Client

On August 1st, 2016, I, Raymond Hu, one of the original gang members at FCSN's Supported Living Services (SLS), celebrated my 10th anniversary living in my own apartment. On the day I first moved into FCSN supported living program, I was only 29 years old.

At first I didn't like it one bit AT ALL. When I first moved into Apt B2, I had a tough time adjusting to my new environment and letting go of my past. I describe my first year at SLS as a roller coaster ride of mixed emotions. At first I had a lot of negative and bad feelings; but my staff and family helped me to overcome these barriers. Over time, I managed to forge friendships as well as discover new interests, and



I continue to create new memories with my friends and staff. I feel very fortunate now that I have a place that I can claim as "home" and many people around me to enrich my life.

At FCSN SLS, I have learned various independent living skills to make my living successful. My staff has helped me learn about cooking, shopping, good housekeeping, personal hygiene, money management and budgeting. Also, they have taught me how to plan parties and anniversaries. I have hosted numerous celebrations and events at the apartment complex during the past 10 years.

Besides being successful with my independent living, I want to brag about my employment- another triumph of my milestone. This is the first job I have held onto for 10 LONG years and hopefully many more. Starting from October 3, 2006, I have been working at Wal-Mart with the help of a job coach from FCSN Adult Day Program (ADP). In fact, I received a plaque from Wal-Mart for my 10 years of employment celebration just a few weeks ago

I also restarted painting which I had stopped for quite a few years. I receive lots of encouragement and support from my staff. Now I have a small art studio and an art teacher, Miss Daphne, who has helped me create many masterpieces.

To make my independent living lifestyle happy, a healthy relationship is very important to me. About five years ago, a new era began for me. I was no longer single. My staff has been very helpful to give me tips in dating or encouraging me



Raymond and his significant other, Cindy

when I am down or struggling. My staff helped with some tough love problems, taught me to be more patient, and to understand what love is, and how to work out a loving relationship. I listened to their advice and support and, as a result, I have had a successful relationship for many years. In midsummer 2011, I got engaged and moved in with my fiancée, Cindy. She has been a huge part of my life. This was not an easy transition; there are many gender differences and relationship issues we have to work through, but we have a lot in common, like our love for the fine arts and performing arts.

I turned 40 years old in December 2016, and SLS plays a very important role in my life. The last 10 years of my life have not been easy, but I have learned a lot. I am now here, Raymond Hu, the painter, the student of FCSN ADP, the Wal-Mart employee, the friend, the fiancé, sometimes the chef. I am very happy with my life today. I thank all FCSN staff, and of course my mom and dad. If it weren't for them, I wouldn't be the man I am today.

📌 Disney Cruise With My Family

by **Jessica Montecinos**

FCSN Supported Living
Services Client

My family drove to San Diego on May 14 for our Disney Cruise the next day. It took us about eight to nine hours to get there. We had seven people traveling together: my mom, dad, sister, niece, two nephews, and me. We had to stop quite a few times to stretch our legs and for restroom breaks. We stayed at a hotel in San Diego a night before our cruise. The next morning, we anxiously got ready and called a cab to take us to the docks, where the ship was. Oh my, it was gigantic! I couldn't believe my eyes. Although the check-in line was long, having our papers checked went quite smoothly. My dad took me for a picture with Mickey Mouse before we went to our cabins.



I was very excited that night we saw Goofy and Minnie Mouse; my nephews, niece and I took pictures with them. We also saw Daisy, Pluto, Donald, Mickey and Chip and Dale. We had dinner in one of the three restaurants on the cruise.

The next day we went to Ensenada, Mexico, so the Disney Wonder Ship was docked in Ensenada. After we walked around the market, my mom bought me a Mexican dress. The most exciting part was when my nephew, Julio, got to hold a baby tiger, and I was sitting next to him.

I also went to one of five pools. They had games gallery and free games. In the afternoon, I saw Goofy doing exercise. We watched two shows in the theater - *Toy Story* and *Dreams Can Come True*. Both shows were beautiful.



The last day was the best; we got to get pictures with princesses, such as Bell, Cinderella, Ariel and Tiana. In the evening, we watched a show - *Pirates*. It was a lot fun. All characters came on stage to dance. My nephew, Julio, was chosen to go up on stage to dance with other kids and the pirates. At the end they had firecrackers. I enjoyed and had a lot of fun on the cruise. The only thing I don't like was--- my vacation was too short!!



Volleyball



by **Kendra Laird**

FCSN Supported Living
Services Client

The volleyball tournament was held on Saturday, April 30, 2016, in Pleasanton. Our Special Olympic team practiced once a week at Horner Junior High School. Coach Cathy was really nice to us. Whenever she gives feedback on your game, she is very proud of you for trying to hit the ball. If you try hard during practice, you might be surprised that this really improves your game.

On the day of the tournament, all the teams were called to the football field. A 49er football player gave the opening speech. They sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." Everyone was thanked for coming to the game. Then the referee announced, "Let the games begin."

Our team won second place, and the coach thanked all teams for trying. I am planning on joining volleyball again. Remember it is important to have fun.





The Presidential Election

by **Laurie Chu**

FCSN Supported Living Services Client

This year we had an important election. For the primaries I worked on my ballot with my staff Gizella and my Case Manager Claudia and some of my friends. The presidential candidates were Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. This election was so important because of some issues being discussed. For instance, the gun control situation must be resolved once and for all, by finding ways to settle. If a license

or permit is given, then it should be handled properly. I think weapons and firearms should be used for military and law procedures only. For example, during the Olympics people should get an approval from the authorities and the summer games. Also, the government can make plans to bring better regulations in economic procedures whether it's local or abroad. Other than that, the environment could also use new and improved technology to bring about clean water. The most important step in voting is to choose the candidate using facts.



Traveling Man: Track and Field, San Francisco

by **Andrew Chiang**

FCSN Supported Living Services Client

On Saturday April 30, 2016, I attended a Special Olympics tournament for track and field and then took a special trip to San Francisco. Some athletes had a volleyball tournament at the same location as well. The tournament was being held at Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton. I competed in 400m, 1500m and 800m. I won two gold medals and one silver medal. After the tournament, I went home to shower and then headed to the FCSN center to get ready to go to SF. After I got to the center, Laurie, Gideon, Kristin, Shannon, and I went to the Fremont BART station. We got on BART in Fremont and got off the BART at Powell Street in SF. From the Powell station we took an Uber to St. Cyprian Episcopal Church. I went to the church for a performance. It was my first time ever riding Uber. After we had dinner, we were getting ready to practice for our own performance. After practicing we were getting ready to watch other people practice. I was performing "My Heart Will Go On" with the Dream Seekers group. Some of the other performances were Glenn Hua singing opera, Dream Seekers dance performing evolution of FCSN dance, Laurie dancing, and also my friend PJ singing "You Raise Me Up." There were a few piano performances. Some people who performed piano were Ting Ting and Alice. My favorite piano performance was by Badal, because he was playing some themes from my favorite 007 movies.



Lawrence and FCSN – A Story of Destiny

Dr. Albert Wang's Speech at the 2016 FCSN Gala

by **Johnna M. Laird**
FCSN Dream Builders Reporter & Parent

For FCSN's 20th anniversary Weaving Our Dream Fundraising Gala, Dr. Albert Wang—a founder of FCSN and Palo Alto Medical Foundation's Chairman of the Board of Directors—took to the stage to tell a personal story of his own family's struggle that ultimately led to a bright future for his son, born with autism.

Showing a slide of Lawrence at an age of less than a year old, Albert looked at the picture and said: "Cute as could be."

He then reflected upon that time and the years that have intervened. Below are excerpts from Albert's speech:

"I had a loving wife, a beautiful daughter, and Lawrence. My practice was growing at a prestigious medical group. Life seemed so perfect.



"Three years later, however, when Lawrence did not develop language and was diagnosed with autism, we were in shock. I remember vividly what the doctor said when I desperately asked about treatment, asking for anything that could help. The answer was -- 'If you' meaning I and Anna, 'need any help, we can refer you to someone.'

"There were no good treatments available for autism in 1993. It affected our family in tremendous ways.

"Not willing to give up, we went into overdrive.

"I searched medical literature and asked colleagues. Anna

went back to school to study behavioral psychiatry. We set up a home behavior program. We even tried alternative treatments - diet, sensory integration, and auditory training.

"It was during this search that we met Shiouw, a special education teacher, who put us together with other Chinese-American families facing the same situation. We were mostly well-educated professionals who had such a difficult time trying to find the right treatment, the right doctors, and to learn to navigate the school system and the social services, while facing the social stigma embedded in the Chinese culture of guilt and shame.

"Now think about what this means to immigrant families with limited English, both parents working, little financial resources, and have no clue how the system here works in the U.S. We decided we could help...and FCSN was born.

"In 2006, FCSN had grown to hundreds of families and completed its center in Fremont. We saw the lack of summer camp opportunities for children with special needs. My older daughter was a music major in college and started a music summer camp for our families.

"Naturally, Lawrence participated. Like many autistic children, he had severe sensitivity to high pitched sound. So he mostly tried to plug his ears. But by the third year, even with his ears plugged, he could play the recorder flute perfectly during the music concert. Judy Lam, the flute teacher, felt he had musical talent and insisted that we send him for lessons with her.

"Within six months, he was playing in the concert. He later progressed to playing saxophone, drums and singing as part of the Dream Achievers' band, performing all over the world. He has found his talent and lives a happy and productive life.

"Why do I tell this story? There are two points I want to make.

"Number One: You never know what you do today may lead to tomorrow.

"We joined others to start and build FCSN, thinking we are helping others. But at the end, it helped us more than anyone else. Lawrence's musical talent would not have been discovered without FCSN, without his sister's effort



to run the music camp. It's hard to imagine what his life would be like without music today. There is destiny for him, and for us, his family.

"Number Two: Don't give up!

"If someone had said six years ago that Lawrence had musical talent, I would not have believed it for a moment. Yet, he can play some 200 songs by memory, pick up a tune and play any time, and sing harmony without much practice. He was 19 years old when he found his destiny.

"So, despite the disabilities you may see in your loved ones, all the behavioral problems you see, the difficulty in learning the most basic skills, you never know what is around the corner.

"Never give up hope! God has a destiny for your children and for your family."

Albert closed by inviting attendees at the Gala to "join us and support FCSN to help the next Lawrence, the next 100, the next 1,000 Lawrences find meaning in their lives."



Lawrence, Dr. Albert Wang, and his wife Anna

Kendra's First Art Sale Experience

by **Johnna M. Laird**

FCSN Dream Builders Reporter & Parent



Inspired by the lotion and soap business set up by FCSN South Bay parents, I wanted to help my daughter gain a business focus. The easiest place to start seemed to be Kendra's art. Jenny, an FCSN case manager, had sparked Kendra's interest and nurtured a love for art. Kendra has also gained skills in working with FCSN artist Daphne Devine.

On a November Saturday in 2016, Kendra had her first experience selling her work at the Abilities Expo at the San Jose Convention Center, as part of College of the Adaptive Arts, a program in the South Bay that Kendra attended one-day a week years ago when it was in Redwood City.

The money didn't come rolling in for the four hours she sat at her table, but the compliments did. Expo attendees stopped and commented, offering encouraging words. And yes, some people even bought her art, now on postcards and greeting cards.

As Anna Wang reminds me: "Besides offering a source of income, having their own business helps our special loved ones feel a sense of pride, of being a member of the work force in the community and free from fear of being fired. As parents, we are constantly looking for ways to help our children lead a happy life. Entrepreneurship is definitely one of the possibilities. Let's be mentors for developing and matching our children's abilities with business opportunities!"



“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.



Donor Appreciation Day with special guests Samson Shih (施孝榮) and State Assemblymember Kansen Chu



FCSN participated in TCAAT event on July 10, 2016, at Cupertino High School in Cupertino



Summer drama camp- FCSN’s adaptation of *Madagascar*



FCSN participated in July 4th parade in Fremont together with Citizens for Better Community



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