



Friends of Children with Special Needs

華人特殊兒童之友

FCSN Dream Builders

June 2018

A must visit in South Bay *Friends* COFFEE & TEA



Grand opening celebration of Friends Coffee & Tea on April 19



Pre-employment training for Supported Employment Program clients at Friends Coffee & Tea

Exploring San Francisco's hidden gems during FCSN's family day trip

Impressive first-year report card of FCSN's Supported Employment Program

A most memorable night with The Muppets

Front-yard community concert 社區音樂會



FCSN Dream Builders

June 2018



Friends of Children with Special Needs

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Feature Stories

Friends Coffee & Tea

Provides Employment Opportunities for Special Needs

By Vivian Chiang | FCSN Dream Builders Reporter

The first thing you see when you enter Friends Coffee & Tea is a smiling cashier, waiting to take your order. Behind her, a few special needs clients are busy working, preparing coffee and tea or taking a freshly-baked croissant out of the oven. To the far right, a brightly-lit display of pottery, soaps, and LEGO candy dispensers cover the two walls, advertising endless talents of FCSN's students. Friends Coffee & Tea shop opened unofficially early this year; it was already bustling with customers sipping coffee and conversing with the clients, busy at work, prior to the shop's grand opening in April.

Auntie Roxana Chiu became involved in the making of the



Roxana Chiu, store manager of Friends Coffee & Tea

coffee shop in September 2016. Auntie Roxana, involved with FCSN for more than seven years, teaches the kids and organizes bus trips for families. She is the parent of a special needs adult as well, so she understands this different and exciting opportunity for the special needs children to showcase their skill sets.

As an avid baker and coffee drinker herself, Auntie Roxana was excited to put her creativity to work. She carefully crafted the menu

for the shop, with all the drinks unique, one of a kind.

"I just know which one has the right taste, so I just do it," explains Auntie Roxana about her ability to create delicious drinks and baked goods.

Besides the menu, Auntie Roxana and her team designed everything from the logo to the mission statement to the shop name. However, since she's never operated a business before, Auntie Roxana gathered inspiration and advice from many sources. For a coffee shop, a most important





resource is the coffee beans. Fortunately, the local, freshly-roasted coffee bean company, SoDol Coffee, graciously provided coffee beans for FCSN. The coffee company offered Auntie Roxana and her team consultation on hardware and physical machines needed for the shop.

The coffee shop offers a skill training site for the Adult Day Program at FCSN. Clients started training a couple of months prior to the shop opening, learning everything from measuring with teaspoons to taking orders to cleaning the shop. Much of the shop equipment accommodates to special needs clients. For example, unlike traditional coffee shops that use high pressurized espresso machines, Friends Coffee & Tea uses freshly-brewed coffee so it is easier for clients to access the machines. The recipe for drinks was also revised to allow clients to be comfortable while maintaining drink quality. Auntie Roxana understands the challenge that teachers and special needs clients face as they train since clients need more practice to remember all the steps and

procedures to serve the public.

“Even though you teach them right now, they forget the next step,” Auntie Roxana said. “It’s very difficult for them – something that we take for granted, but in their [head] it’s not [easy].”

Friends Coffee & Tea is a community for all FCSN students to gather and participate – not just for the coffee shop team who takes orders, makes the drinks, and cleans the shop. Many of the ingredients in the drinks, such as mint, are grown in the garden next to the FCSN center, which the gardening group maintains and assists the shop by picking fresh mint leaves. Displays on the walls showcase the wide range of talents FCSN students possess.

Auntie Roxana smiles as she imagines the different events that can be held in the coffee shop.

“Probably later on, we’ll have Saturday Jazz Time,” Auntie Roxana said. “All the kids who can play music can sign up and have five minutes to play some

music.”

Auntie Roxana emphasizes that the main purpose of the shop is to offer a skill training site for FCSN students. The Adult Day Program coffee shop team works from 10 a.m. to noon, Monday through Thursday. But at other times, the coffee shop is open for all other FCSN students to come help and learn new skill sets.

Ultimately, Auntie Roxana wants Friends Coffee & Tea to attract customers not only because the shop has a special needs label, but also because of its delicious tasting drinks and friendly service.

“Other than supporting FCSN, I wish our customers would visit our coffee shop again and again because of our irresistible, tasty drinks,” Auntie Roxana said. “We want to express a big appreciation for people who support FCSN and our dreams, but, honestly speaking, a tasty drink usually is the main factor to keep our customers coming back again and again.”

Check out the website, stop by, and bring a friend!



Friends Coffee & Tea Wins Innovation Award Even Before Serving Its First Cup of Brew

By James Chiao | FCSN Co-President

On Nov 4, 2017, FCSN's "Friends Coffee & Tea" received an Innovation Award at the 19th Annual Service Above Self Awards Dinner. The award came from SACR (San Andreas Regional Center) and recognized our approach to provide job training opportunities for people with special needs. We were a bit surprised at the early arrival of the award, because the coffee shop was still in the training mode.

The idea of creating a coffee shop first came up in the design committee meetings for the South Bay Center in 2014. The Bascom Center is a commercial property with 8000 square feet, which is significantly larger than our Fremont Center facility. The additional space provided us the luxury of adding a store to provide job training opportunities. Actually, operating a store is not entirely a new idea at FCSN. Back in 2004, FCSN opened a small gift shop, "FCSN Booth," in West San Jose. The "FCSN Booth" doubled as a training site for our clients. Even though the "FCSN Booth" closed a few years later, it gave us confidence that a store can work together with our adult day program.

In 2015 after we decided to operate the store space at the Bascom Center as a coffee shop, we set up a coffee shop team to create a more detailed design. For the interior design, we were fortunate to have the service of Mandy Chang, a principal designer of MGI Interior Design. She volunteered many hours and designed everything from the floor tile to the color of the ceiling. The construction of the Bascom Center was completed at the



end of 2016, and the Center opened its doors in March 2017. However, the coffee shop remained only a shell and needed a lot of work.

We also received help from the business side. Vivian Chung, manager of our South Bay Day Program, connected us with SoDol Coffee, a well-established Berkeley coffee shop. The CEO, Jae Chung, shared his experience with us and taught us not only how to make coffee but also how to run the business. As a result of his help, we now serve SoDol coffee at our coffee shop. The coffee shop team was also in need of a manager. That's when we approached Roxana, parent of a special needs adult and a part-time FCSN staff member. It turns out that Roxana has an interest in culinary arts, having once written a thesis

about a coffee shop business – in other words, she was a perfect fit for the job. In turn, Roxana recruited other staff and volunteers to join the team. Her team decided on the menu, finished the decor, and finalized all the operational details, working with Vivian to define the training program.

We have all heard that it is not easy to run a small business, such as Friends Coffee & Tea. The fact was laid bare when the cafe across the street from the Bascom Center closed its doors last year. Yet we know we are not here to compete with Starbucks or even to make much of a profit. With our coffee shop's "soft opening" in February 2018, we simply wanted to provide a unique place for people to enjoy a good cup of coffee, and at the same time learn a little bit about people with special needs.

Friends Coffee & Tea Features Its First Artist: Austin Chen

By Linmei Chiao | FCSN Parent

(Austin's mother was interviewed for this article)

Friends Coffee & Tea, having opened this spring, is showcasing the work of special needs artists, starting with Austin Chen, a 17-year-old student at Dublin High School, who is skilled in pottery.

"The purpose of the coffee shop is to showcase people with special needs, providing them with opportunities," says Jim Chiao, FCSN's Co-President who oversaw the development of Friends Coffee & Tea. "Everything in our coffee shop is about people with special needs. Decorating our coffee shop with artworks of people with special needs fits well with our purpose."

Gilead Sciences Inc., a research-based biopharmaceutical company focused on the discovery, development, and commercialization of innovative medicines, is funding a grant to FCSN for artists, allowing Friends Coffee & Tea to identify four special needs artists over the course of a year and display their works.

Austin's pottery of colorful cups,

bowls, and plates as well as vases and candle holders can be seen on Friends Coffee & Tea's back wall shelves. In the center cube, a video of Austin plays, showing him at work making his pottery.

Diagnosed with autism at the age of two, Austin was unable to make eye contact, and he experienced speech delays, recalls his mother, Emily. As a child, Austin was extremely sensitive to wet clothes, but he loved wet mud and clays. By age four, besides making trains and toys from Play-Doh, Austin was concocting his own creations from mud in the backyard.

At about age seven, Austin attended a ceramics class. The teacher, however, deemed him too young to use the pottery wheel. This caused Austin's pursuit of creating pottery to be interrupted. Not until he was 12 years old when Austin joined an FCSN East Bay Chinese class and met Auntie Sally did he find a pottery teacher. Auntie Sally connected Austin with Mr. Lin.

Austin found it very difficult to sit still and listen to Mr. Lin's instructions. He wanted to just play with clay or run around. His mother, Emily Lin, bought a pottery wheel so Austin could practice daily at home. Later on, she even bought a clay mixer and a kiln. Unable to afford a work studio, Emily says Austin creates all his pottery at home which has



made the whole house extremely dusty and messy. In addition, since the failure rate is high due to breakage or mistakes, Austin often gets very frustrated. At times, he has insisted on impossible repairs to his work. Over the years, however, his work has gotten better and better. He now enjoys coming up with his own designs and is usually calm and focused while working on his projects.

Emily really appreciates that FCSN provides Austin a platform to showcase his art pieces. She recalled when Austin first saw the display of his work at Friends Coffee & Tea, she said, with a slight choke in her voice, "It's like every cell in his body is energized, he was so proud and happy! It made years of struggles worthwhile."

Recently, a customer at Friends Coffee & Tea admired one of Austin's ceramic works and brought the cup to the cashier's counter to pay for it. That day, Austin was working as a cashier trainee. The expression on Austin's face when he realized that someone was actually buying his work is a look that this reporter will never forget. I believe that with loving support from us in the FCSN community that our special needs artists like Austin will blossom into productive members, recognized both within and outside our community for their talents and their work.



FCSN Spotlights

Exploring San Francisco's Hidden Gems

Our FCSN Family Day Trip

By Richard Chiu, FCSN Parent

The East Bay and South Bay FCSN families took a walking tour of San Francisco on Sunday, March 4, 2018, and we got a glimpse of some local artwork, enjoyed some good eats, and exercised a bit along the way.

Moraga Steps in the Sunset District was our first destination. As we looked up the hill at the steps from afar, we could see a beautiful, colorful stairway leading up to the top of the hill. As we approached the steps, we discovered intricate, little pieces of ceramic tiles that make up the big picture. We stopped to admire the artwork and to take photos. We could see water creatures like shellfish, turtles, and fish of all shapes, sizes and colors that appear to flow down the steps. Next to the fish, along the banks, we could see mushrooms, butterflies, birds, leaves, and flowers

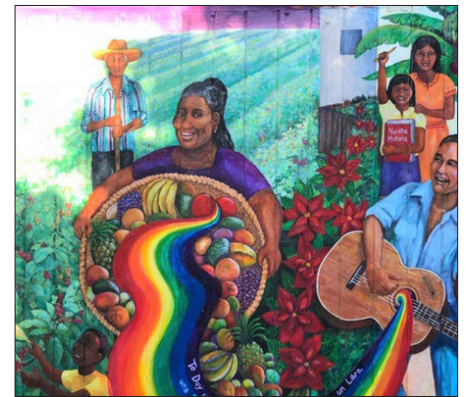


that make this picture complete. As we made our way up farther, we could see a mosaic, crescent moon and finally a sparkling golden sun at the very top. After 163 steep steps up this stairway, we reached the top and some of us were a little winded, but then we were rewarded with a panoramic view of the City. Some people pulled out smartphones to take selfies, and others took pictures of the city view with their friends and families.

Now that we had worked up an appetite, we were ready for lunch. Our tour bus dropped us off on Irving Street with an abundance of restaurants to choose from, everything from Chinese, Japanese, Indian, to Italian cuisines. And of course, Roxana, as always, showed us where to find good desserts.

Coincidentally, our tour bus dropped us off right in front of a gourmet ice creamery, Let's Roll Ice Cream. After lunch as we walked down Irving Street, Roxana suggested Pineapple King Bakery as a must try. Too bad my son and I were too full from lunch to eat dessert, but we saw others enjoying theirs and we wished we had room for some.

Our next destination inside Golden Gate Park led many of



us to take a stroll around Stow Lake. It was perfect weather for a walk as we soaked up the warm sun and the sights around the lake. We saw ducks and boaters alike paddling carefreely and mothers, fathers, and children frolicking around the lake. It was a great opportunity for some of us to walk to burn off calories from lunch and dessert eaten earlier.

For our final destination to see the Latino murals in the Mission District, we walked along Balmy Alley and Lilac Street to see beautiful murals adorning the walls and garage doors in bright, vibrant colors, typical of Mexican wall paintings. Again, we took a lot of pictures, and some of us had a chance to talk to some of the artists to learn more about them and their artwork. We found out that most of the labor and material is donated by these artists to brighten up the neighborhood and to share their culture with others. As we left, we expressed our appreciation for their talent and generosity.

We had a wonderful day, blessed with good weather. We discovered two hidden gems in this city, the Moraga Steps and the Latino murals in the Mission, ate some good desserts, and logged in more than 17,000 steps from this walking tour. It was a full and satisfying day.

Everyone is a Winner

Fourth Annual FCSN Talent Showcase

By Jasmine Hsia | FCSN Dream Builders Reporter

Excitement in the air was almost tangible as more than 600 people made their way into the Santa Clara Convention Center for the fourth annual Special Needs Talent Showcase on March 24. This year's talent showcase became one to remember, featuring performers in categories of instrumental, piano, vocal, and dance. More than 40 contestants performed in preliminary auditions, hoping for the chance to compete and shine on stage.

San Francisco Bay Area's ABC7 News reporter and anchor Matt Keller, emcee for the talent showcase for its first three years, returned this year. He entertained the crowd with quick humor and conversation with the contestants. With Matt came his two charming daughters who stole the spotlight as they showed the audience how to properly wave their festive, glowing rings and glow sticks.

This year's show featured an impressive panel of judges, each with an admirable set of qualifications. The judging panel included California's 25th Assembly District Representative Kansen Chu; KGO-TV's Vice President of Community Affairs Mimi Kwan; Composer and Co-founder of the "Autism Fun Bay Area" organization Stephen Prutsman; Hollywood actor and *George of the Jungle* 2 star Christopher Showerman; accomplished singer and former ED of Morgan Autism Center Jennifer Sullivan, and Rollettes Wheelchair Dance Team member Maria Rabaino.

The annual talent show offered the special needs performers a chance to showcase their talents and personalities. The genuine smiles on performers' faces gave away how much fun they were having, and the

audience cheered right along with them. It was heartwarming to see how enlivened everyone was as they sang cheerfully along with the performers on stage.

As Matt Keller said perfectly, "One of the things highlighting this year is how important it is for [special needs people] to get out into the workforce. We get to see them perform, and what they do out there on stage is amazing."

The evening featured all different types of acts, from rapping to exotic instruments. The show began with honorable mentions performances from 10 talented performers. Leading the series of performances was Carleen Bohlin, dressed in a beautiful pink dress, singing "Someone to Watch Over Me;" followed by Lauren Meager dancing the "Chocolate Spanish Dance." Luis Castilla had the audience dancing in their seats as

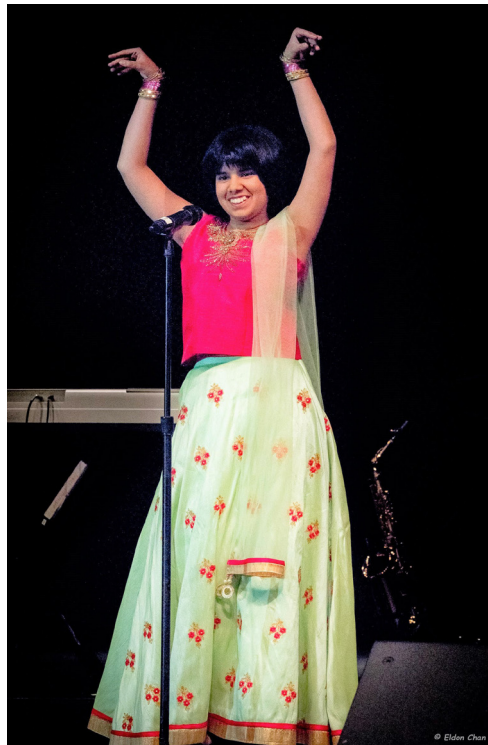


he sang "In the Name of Love," and Julian Huang wowed the crowd with "Dance Rustique" on his cello. John Ambrosio-Garcia looked sharp in a suit and shiny shoes as he performed "My Girl;" Darren Ko was completely focused as he played "Toccatina" flawlessly on the piano; and Gregory Hebert had the audience singing along with him as he sang "Sweet Caroline." Michael Erhardt gave a sassy, vocal performance, putting his hand on his hip as he sang "You're Welcome" from *Moana*; and Tyrone Johnson performed his favorite song, George Michael's "Father Figure."



Following the honorable mentions performances, the 11 finalists stunned the crowd with their talent. Included in the 11 finalists were Frank Prenot, performing an impressive rendition of "Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da;" Paul John Enriquez looked festive as he sang "Ang Pasko ay Sumapit;" Rod Gomez and Kristin O'Rourke gave an adorable performance to a remix of "Time of My Life" and "Party Rock Anthem;" Alice Jen and Neel Dhingra, in matching outfits, played a duet to "Hall of the Mountain King;" Spencer White sang an original song and rap called "Distorted Reflection;" the Dream Seekers pumped up the audience with their energy-filled dance of "Kung Fu" and "Jai Ho;" and Carlos Guillen sang "Ave Maria."

Judges chose three finalist winners, each receiving a cash prize of \$500 along with a stunning crystal trophy and three, paid-performance opportunities. Taking home the prizes were: Erin Spradley, a new performer at the talent show, who stunned the crowd with her beautiful voice and her performance of "A Dream Worth Keeping;" Tony Nakamoto who gave an incredible performance of "Czardas" on the marimba; and Music Camp Band who had the entire



audience cheering as they performed a rendition of "Take on Me."

This year, a new prize was included in the awards to recognize a performer who demonstrated incredible showmanship during the performance. The "Showmanship Award," presented by Judge Maria Rabaino, was given to Ria

Sachdev for her unwavering smile and bubbly performance of "Lalia." Ria's enthusiasm was contagious, creating waves of smiles throughout the audience. As the final winners were announced and the prizes were handed out, a last, standing ovation was given to the performers on stage.

The night was full of fun, and there was never a dull moment as the performers put their full effort into entertaining the audience and the judges. Each of the performers was given a certificate and trophy to recognize the courage and talent that it took to participate in the show and to perform in front of hundreds of people. "It's moving, it's beautiful, it's inspiring...they're really special people," Stephen Prutsman said of the performers.

With a final congratulation to all of the talent show contestants, FCSN's Vice President of Enrichment Programs and Community Relations Anna Wang ended the night, saying: "Anyone who has performed on this stage is a winner." Turning to the contestants, she smiled: "You are all winners."



Gong Xi Gong Xi! Red Envelope Please!

FCSN South Bay Lunar New Year Celebration

By Jasmine Hsia | FCSN Dream Builders Reporter

FCSN's South Bay Saturday Family Gathering on February 24 stands out as a significant event. The gathering marks the first Lunar New Year's celebration at the newly-opened center.

Within minutes the center packed with excited people, and the center bustled with activity. The center was transformed with Chinese calligraphy, red lanterns, intricate Chinese knots and all sorts of festive, colorful crafts hung from the ceiling and around the walls to celebrate Lunar New Year. Traditional Chinese music filled the multipurpose room with cheerful sounds, adding to a festive mood.

Fun games with prizes, such as basketball, ring toss, disk drop, bean



bag, and a wheel of fortune, were setup inside classrooms and hosted by youth volunteers.

This free event, jointly-sponsored by FCSN and San Andreas Regional Center, attracted nearly 300 participants, including adults, children, and youth volunteers.

San Andreas Regional Center Director Javier Zaldivar, along with Francisco Valenzuela and Rosa Linda Ogas, started the celebration. They participated in the

festivities, handing out red envelopes in the Chinese New Year tradition, and also provided information about new programs and services.

For Francisco and Rosa Linda, involved with FCSN from the start of its journey with San Andreas Regional Center, the experience of celebrating a Lunar New Year in a new center was gratifying. In a heartwarming speech, they described their joy in seeing FCSN's growth over the years and commended FCSN for the important role it has played in creating meaningful activities for children with special needs.

A drumming performance by FCSN students enlivened the audience. Performers used drums to resemble clanking pots and crackling firecrackers, part of the New Year's tradition to keep people awake on New Year's Eve and to symbolize the youth of a new year.

Music from an exotic Chinese string instrument, the Yang Chin, transported the audience back to China for a few beautiful minutes. Singing of "Gong Xi Gong Xi," a traditional Chinese New Year



greeting, seemed to unify the audience into one, happy family for the night. Parents, children, and staff members all participated in the singing and dancing in front of the room.

CK Lee, known to most in the FCSN community as Uncle CK, sang "You Raise Me Up," and the audience was visibly moved with the uplifting words and the emotion of the singer. Numbers of people moved to the front to join him in singing this beautiful song.

Entertainment lasted the entire night, followed by a bountiful dinner at the end. A Chinese New Year's celebration would not be complete without Chinese food and red envelopes.

After all the music, singing, and dancing, plus fun games, the children attending could hardly contain their excitement. They had worked up hearty appetites for the delicious meal, followed by fortune cookies.

As the Lunar New Year's celebration concluded and participants walked out to leave for the night, they seemed to carry a festive, hopeful spirit, a renewal for the New Year.



FCSN Client Services

Let's GO SEP!

By: **Claire Go** | SEP Manager

Supported Employment Program Empowering FCSN

In early 2017, FCSN started applications with Regional Center of East Bay and the Department of Rehabilitation to become a Supported Employment Program (SEP) provider. SEP is aimed toward helping clients obtain and retain competitive employment in the community. When the idea and program were introduced to me by our Executive Director, Sylvia Yeh, I was sure that it would be a huge challenge to not only establish a solid foundation for the program but also to find employment for clients in the community. Along with my feeling of uncertainty in starting the new program came the excitement and desire to do more for our clients. It didn't take long before Sylvia and I buried ourselves in the development and certification of FCSN SEP.

After becoming vendorized by the Regional Center (March 2017) and then certified by the Department of Rehabilitation (July 2017), FCSN Supported Employment Program officially started Job Clubs and pre-employment trainings for a handful of clients with goals of finding employment. We found the first employment for a client at TJ Maxx in September 2017. We continue all efforts to build employment with local business. Fast forward to March 2018: I am very proud, happy and excited to share that we have achieved job placements for seven clients. We have partnered with businesses like Panera Bread, TJ Maxx, Home Goods, Safeway and Michaels.

FCSN's SEP focuses on Six Steps to Employment:

1. **Career Planning:** FCSN SEP works with clients and their circle of support to identify skills, interests, and career goals. Together, a Person-Centered Plan is developed for clients' employment success.
2. **Job Club:** FCSN SEP works with clients and conducts pre-employment trainings in the form of Job Clubs. Job Club focuses on resume development, job applications, the interview process, and etiquette and skill set specific curriculum (such as receptionist, retail, janitorial, grocery, customer service and more).
3. **Job Search:** FCSN SEP searches for competitive employment based on clients' Person-Centered Planning. We assist with job applications, interview preparation, and advocate for clients to employers.
4. **Job Placement:** FCSN has partnered with major U.S. retailers, local small business, parents and community resources to broaden clients' employment opportunities.
5. **Job Coaching:** Once a client is hired, FCSN SEP provides 1:1 onsite and/or offsite job coaching to clients. Job coaching starts at 100% until task familiarity is established. Job coaching is then gradually reduced to up to 20% for job retention support.

6. **Job Retention:** FCSN SEP will continue to provide 20%-30% job coaching throughout the client's employment to ensure job quality and retention.

In order for FCSN Supported Employment Program to be successful, we need to enlist help from FCSN parents and supporters to network with small business, restaurants, chain stores, retails, etc. so we can broaden job opportunities for our special needs clients.

I also want to share that at the moment, we are working on getting FCSN South Bay vendorized with San Andres Regional Center and certified with Department of Rehabilitation San Jose region so we can start providing services to our clients residing in Santa Clara County. If everything goes according to our timeline, we should be ready to start providing services to our first South Bay SEP client by the fourth quarter of this year.

There were a few bumps along the way but looking back, I am glad I jumped in. With the unending support of people like Sylvia, Auntie Anna, the FCSN Board of Directors, Management Team and FCSN families, FCSN's Supported Employment Program is running full-speed ahead! Let's GO SEP!



Living More Independently with FCSN Services

Moving out on your own is a hard process for anyone. There are so many skills to learn, bills to pay, and, most importantly, so many changes to face. It is such a huge milestone in an adult's life, and many times we do not realize how much preparation it truly involves.

FCSN's Independent Living Service (ILS) is highly individualized and developed around the specific needs and goals of each individual. ILS provides individuals with functional-skill training to assist them in achieving greater independence while living in the home of a parent, family member, or other person. ILS helps with the anticipation of what is to come, gaining knowledge and experience in all aspects of life and the assurance of receiving the needed supports to successfully transition into a home of one's own. During ILS training, individuals experience working 1:1, hand-by-hand with a trainer to gain experience in the many skills needed for living independently. Individuals practice how to plan for meals, make purchases, take public transportation, set up appointments, manage their health, keep a clean and organized space, care for their own hygiene, and every other skill needed to stay healthy, happy, and safe.

Besides ILS, FCSN also offers Supported Living Services (SLS). SLS is a concept, which creates opportunities for people to choose where they live, with whom they live, and how they lead their lives. Clients learn to build their own space, create relationships, learn skills, and grow in independence daily. Every day at SLS is a new



learning opportunity for a client to experience a sense of accomplishment, whether by chopping vegetables for the first time or learning to measure detergent for laundry day. Clients experience life in independence with all the supports and training needed.

FCSN Living Services is rooted in the belief that all persons are entitled to live their lives with dignity and respect and should be supported as a valuable, contributing, productive and accepted member of the community. FCSN Living Services focuses primarily on interdependence, encouraging and supporting its clients to integrate with their non-disabled peers in the community through recreational/leisure, vocational experiences, and educational fields. FCSN Living Services focuses on independence in self-care; health and medication management; problem solving; use of community transportation and facilities; behavioral, emotional, cognitive, communication and interpersonal skills. Person-centered planning and self-advocacy are encouraged and supported in all environments.



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“Shining Star” Provides FCSN Clients Happiness

East Bay Weekend Enrichment Programs

By Mallory Ensminger | FCSN Dream Builders Reporter

FCSN’s programs are focused on the education and social well-being of their clients. One such program is the East Bay’s Saturday school. Named Special Shine Chinese School, this program is coordinated by Sally Wu. The current classes offered include Chinese, art, and dance. To maintain eligibility for this program, each student must take at least two of the three classes offered.

The Chinese program started with four students in the fall of 2013. This program started after no school in the area seemed willing to teach Chinese to special needs children. After two years, students not only learned to read and sing songs in Chinese, but they also improved their social skills dramatically. This realization led to the creation of the Special Shine Chinese School to teach Chinese culture and language in 2015. The school only accepts students once a year, starting in the fall semester.

For the 2018 spring semester, Special Shine Chinese School

enrolled 30 students and enlisted support from 18 volunteers. Most students range in age from kindergarten through fourth grade. Sally says she gets her biggest joy from seeing the students learn and seeing how happy they are. When an individual observes this program, there are several things to notice:

Laughter can be heard as one enters a classroom. Students seem happy and eager to learn. In Chinese class, students dance and sing along to videos. In art class, students follow along, attempting to copy what the teacher draws. With each lesson, students explore different drawing skills. Dance class finds both students and their parents dancing, exercising, and having fun.

Two dance classes were offered in the spring 2018 semester. These classes have become popular, with a total of 26 students between the two classes. The two art classes have also attracted 26 students. There are multiple Chinese classes, with eight



students per class and levels ranging from kindergarten to fourth grade. Sally expects to maintain the same class curriculum in fall 2018.

Parents of children who attend the Saturday school seem pleased with their children’s progress. Parent Jane Guo says, “I feel the Chinese creates a great opportunity for our special needs children to learn Chinese. My child was able to learn counting in Chinese in a short month.”

Pei, another parent, said, “Chinese school program in FCSN provides kids with special needs a fun, learning, and nurturing environment.”

Sally’s initiative to launch the Special Shine Chinese School has filled a vital need, demonstrating yet again the importance of creating opportunities for special needs individuals to learn, grow, and shine.



FCSN Staff of the Year



Ana Theresa Adriano

won the **EBADP* Staff of the Year 2017 Award** as she is a very hard working, upbeat, positive and valuable member of the FCSN EBADP team. Since coming onboard in 2016 as an instructor, Ana Theresa has addressed each day and new challenge with a smile, a positive attitude and can be counted on to give more than 100% of her heart and effort. She is well- loved by FCSN clients and staff alike for her gentle and effective communication strategies and her problem-solving abilities. She takes into consideration the needs of clients as well as the staff around her to make everyone's experience a positive one, where people feel good about themselves.

Positive Attitude & Inspirational Role Model

Ana Theresa is bubbly and can be seen with her presence to bring smiles to everyone's faces. Ana is respectful, compassionate, and friendly. Ana Theresa goes above and beyond to seek ways to communicate with her clients at the job site as well as at program. She helps manage each client's schedule as well as communicate with appropriate personnel. The management at TJX expressed nothing but praises about Ana Theresa's attention to her clients and work ethics as well as how happy they, TJX managers, are to have Ana Theresa supporting our clients at their job location. Many other staff have successfully faced new challenges and assignments following Ana Theresa as a role model. Ana Theresa models lifelong learning, seeking ways to improve. She accepts constructive criticism and suggestions with a positive attitude, taking these as an opportunity to improve rather than focus on the negative. She corrects mistakes, seeing them as learning opportunities, and continues to work with enthusiasm.

Extraordinary Work Performance & Initiative

Reliable and supportive of all her ADP family of staff and clients, Ana Theresa looks for innovative ways to work with each of her clients. She develops new approaches and strategies for each individual. Ana Theresa maintains a special bond with each of her assigned clients, but all students become excited when they have an opportunity to work alongside Ana Theresa. Students usually exclaim how lucky they are! They even go out of their way to request Ana Theresa as their substitute instructor if their primary instructor is unavailable.

*EBADP: East Bay Adult Day Program

FCSN Staff of the Year

Bella Del Rosario

won the SLS* Staff of the Year 2017 Award. Her presence within our East Bay SLS family is noticeable and often praised by clients and team members. She is a VALUABLE person within many of our clients' lives because she's made a great effort to be as involved as possible. Her persona is helpful, attentive, trustworthy, and encouraging but most of all understanding. She is always seeking to learn more about our clients and applies different approaches to help our clients achieve their goals. She helps our clients better express themselves by helping them plan, celebrate holidays, or work on areas that are important to them. As a result, our clients feel comfortable and motivated in their environment. It is evident that Bella strives to fulfill her job duties with excellent quality and effort.

Innovative & Proactive Practices

Bella is very consistent and diligent in working with clients' goals and in areas she sees where improvement is needed. She often seeks to apply different approaches that work well with our clients' style and, as a result, is able to help clients accomplish goals that in the past seemed too difficult to attain. Bella has also managed to apply her beloved hobby, gardening, to the lives of our clients and bring LIFE to their homes. She dedicates a lot of her free time to beautifying the Peralta Dream Apartments. Bella donates not only her time but her HEART to make the apartment complex look full of vitality and color.

Positive Attitude & Going the Extra Mile

Bella's positive & ENCOURAGING SPIRIT can be felt all throughout the Peralta Dream complex. Her organization, attention to detail, and diligent labor is often recognized and pointed out by other staff, families, and clients. Bella offers endless support & motivation to our clients, and they all know they can count on her for ongoing support. She has made the SLS team feel like a family because of her dedication, positive example, the hope and encouragement she radiates, and her commitment to go above and beyond to make the lives of our clients a little bit brighter every day.



*SLS: Supported Living Services

FCSN Staff of the Year

Jupei Shih

won the L.I.F.E.* Staff of the Year 2017 Award as she is a great role model and support to FCSN East Bay's L.I.F.E. Program. Jupei is known for going out of her way to find innovative approaches to work with each one of her clients.

When faced with difficulties, Jupei works to resolve issues before asking for assistance from supervisors. Jupei takes time to get to know each and every one of her clients as well as those around her.

She is attentive to all their needs and adjusts her approaches as situations arise. Jupei is extremely detailed and organized. Her work is considered outstanding.



Positive Attitude, Strong Work Performance, and Creativity

Jupei is always prepared for the classes she leads. She is creative in finding new and exciting art projects to teach. When she prepares curriculum, she keeps in mind the different functioning levels, interests, and accessibility of clients and the needs of the program. She is resourceful and utilizes supplies and available resources at FCSN. Her creativity in figuring out new ways to approach art projects and activities for clients is a great example of the dedication she brings to promoting FCSN's mission and the clients' well beings. Even if a client appears disinterested, she engages the client to see how he or she is doing and what could lead the client to enjoy participating. She uses positive encouragement to gain interest and aids clients in a variety of ways to engage them in activities.

Jupei is always positive and diligent when it comes to getting a job done. What is even more impressive is her attitude during stressful times. Jupei can always be seen with a smile on her face even when in the midst of a difficult situation.

Strong Team Builder and Role Model

Jupei is a great role model and her actions--how she interacts and cares for her clients--truly show how great a person she is and how she excels as an instructor. Jupei also excels in communicating well with her colleagues and supervisors. She provides professional suggestions and analyzes situations to assist her coordinators in making informed decisions.

Jupei is an instructor who truly invests in her clients. Even when assisting a difficult client, who is not responding well, she perseveres and develops alternate approaches, as many different approaches as needed to best engage the client. For two years she worked with a very challenging client. Only after two years did she write a letter to her supervisor suggesting reassignment to benefit the client. Jupei detailed different strategies performed and the client's response. Supervisors saw Jupei as caring for the client, going the extra mile and doing her job to the best of her ability. Jupei as caring for the client, going the extra mile and doing her job to the best of her ability.

***L.I.F.E.: Learning, Intergration, Friendship, Empowerment**

FCSN Staff of the Year

Tania Viana

won the W.I.L.L.* Staff of the Year 2017 Award as she is an exemplary worker and always willing to take extra miles to make FCSN South Bay W.I.L.L. a better program. Tania initiates to extend her help whenever she sees a need especially in times of urgent calls. She would volunteer or assume work responsibilities when no one else is willing to take on. She is very resourceful and will find the most economic materials with high quality for our program to use. Tania's humbling attitude and willingness to help out builds a cohesive and strong south bay ADP team.



Positive attitude, strong work performance & Creativity

Tania offers new and practical ideas that elicit positive responds to be implemented. She painstakingly designed and executed an attractive starboard for the students. She contributes her innovative ideas for curriculum development. Her loving motherly nature has helped one of our clients overcome her challenging behaviors. The aforementioned client has increased her flexibility and decreased aggressive behaviors using functional communication.

Tania takes good care of her assigned clients and works closely with them and their families to achieve their ISP goals. When there is a new assignment, she is always enthusiastic about it and never back down from challenges. She will not get discouraged and willing to work extra miles. She would openly discuss her concerns with her supervisors and gladly accept suggestions.

One of Tania's best personality traits is her positive mindset. Tania believes in our clients' abilities and motivates them to do their best so they can achieve their goals when given the opportunities and resources.

Strong team builder and role model

Tania is always open to communication, she does not wither even when her opinion is not heard or accepted. She abides and cooperates with the majority rules. She willingly shares her experiences with others to promote resolutions and encouragement. Tania guides and supports the new hires to adapt themselves to the new environment and to make them feel more comfortable. She willing stays behind even after work hours to assist her co-workers in their assigned tasks.

*W.I.L.L.: Work, Integrate, Learn, Live



The President's Volunteer Service Awards

2017 FCSN recipients

Aysushi Ambekar (Bronze Award, Young Adults Group)
Andrew Chiang (Gold Award, Teens Group)
Vivian Chiang (Silver Award, Young Adults Group)
Andrew Lam (Bronze Award, Young Adults Group)
Allison Liu (Bronze Award, Teens Group)
Matthew Wang (Bronze Award, Young Adults Group)
Matthew Wu (Bronze Award, Young Adults Group)
Jason Yang (Bronze Award, Young Adults Group)
Joy Zhang (Bronze Award, Young Adults Group)

FCSN's Influence on Youth Volunteers

Past PVSA Award Recipient Found Passion for Community Services at FCSN

By Meggie Li

好巧，特殊兒童咖啡茗茶開幕，剛巧老大昨晚來電提到他高中在FCSN做義工的快樂往事。他說，這些經驗讓他在大學裡，找到自己有passion的活動。他加入一個很有意義的社團，負責做籌款。上周辦了年度活動，邀請當地六百名弱勢的高中生。上午安排了課程，他還教生物，下午辦講座。讓這些孩子們感受什麼是大學，也讓他們了解「上大學」絕對是他們人生中的一個選項！高中生們個個都好興奮。然而，我從對話中，充份感受到，這群大學生可能改變了這些孩子的一生。在他們廿歲上下的年輕歲月裡，已懂得付出和幫助社區，怎不該為此而驕傲？而FCSN影響了許許多多像我兒子這樣的孩子，她不僅造福了特殊兒童家庭，她讓這世界更美

FCSN's Friends Coffee & Tea had its grand opening today; it's a lovely cafe! Coincidentally, my son just called and shared with me the memories of when he volunteered at FCSN. He was so happy to teach special need kids piano, cooking, kung-fu, and other skills at summer camp. This wonderful experience led him to activities and more volunteering opportunities that he is passionate about in college. Last weekend, he and his team held a special event and invited 600 high school kids who are underprivileged and never thought that studying in college would be a choice in their lives. All these high school students were invited to take classes taught by big brothers and big sisters and to learn about the excitement of college life. These college students really make a difference in these kids' lives. And, I would say, FCSN has influenced many youths like my son to care about the communities and to give back to the communities; FCSN is making the world more beautiful!

(Meggie's son, Lee Hsieh, was a recipient of the President's Volunteer Service Award through volunteering with FCSN. Lee is now a sophomore at Rice University.)

Volunteer Sharing

Volunteering with FCSN

A Learning Experience I Seek in Every Aspect of Life

By Ella Gunady

FCSN Youth Volunteer

"Imagine it less like popcorn and more like cotton candy," I advise. "Wispy. Light. Really sweet."

Kevin's brow furrows in concentration as his small hands hover over the black and white keys. I can practically feel strands of sugar melting in my mouth as he delivers the opening chords of Debussy's "Clair de Lune."

Communication hadn't always been this simple. When I sat down to teach Kevin piano for the first time two years ago, I had no idea the obstacles we would face. It was only when he opened a notebook filled with giant, colorful letters that I realized Kevin's centimeter-thick glasses weren't enough for him to read normal sheet music. I would have to set aside the language I had spent 10 years learning--a language of tiny notes suspended on black and white grids--to learn one of the letters printed in colorful ABCs.

Lesson after lesson, I realized that Kevin and I came from fundamentally different worlds. A native Chinese speaker, Kevin struggled to interpret my English translations of musical terms. How could I explain staccato and legato to a child who never associated the words "sharp" and "flowing" with sounds on a keyboard? How could I teach Kevin to play cantabile, in a singing style, when singing, to him, was just a product of the human voice? Demonstration could only go so far; after all, true music evolves not from physical movement but from emotions and thoughts.

For Kevin to understand my world, I knew I would have to understand his. I began by learning Kevin's system of color codes, each hue representing a volume or speed. Before every lesson, I transcribed normal notes to colorful letters, venturing beyond a familiar black and white world and exploring Kevin's universe of color. There, I learned that music itself is a language, one we see in different ways but one we both can understand. Though there were times I grew frustrated by the limitations of Kevin's sheet music, no limitation was permanent when faced with a new color, symbol, and perspective.

As I continued to explore Kevin's language, I struggled to teach him mine. When Kevin learned "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy," I explained that notes played dolce, sweetly, could not just be quiet; they needed to dance, a description which drew a confused tilt of Kevin's head. Through patient experimentation, I discovered that Kevin connected best with food analogies. He translated the sound of popcorn dancing in the microwave to dolce, sweet melodies; the crunch of potato chips to staccato, piercing chords; and the ooze of a Lindor truffle to legato, flowing scales. Together, we developed a world where music and food collided in

unexpectedly perfect harmony, and we became authors of a language that allowed us to connect in ways neither English nor Chinese could make possible. We challenged each other to dream beyond the boundaries of convention, a learning experience I seek in every aspect of life.

Last year, I watched Kevin perform "Silent Night" at his first recital. Cheering with pride at the end of his performance, I recalled Kevin's victories, from mastering the art of making notes "dance" to gaining the confidence to play with loud power, milestones made possible by our willingness to explore one another's perspectives. My journey of discovery with Kevin, a child with special needs, has profoundly changed the way I experience music and deepened my appreciation for diversity. Kevin reminds me that our differences should never act as barriers but as opportunities to learn together, to become better people, and to connect through conversation and friendship.

I seek these connections everywhere I go, knowing that meaning in life comes from the ways we touch the lives of those around us and the ways our own lives are touched.

Every Friday, we sit on the piano bench and continue our exploration: two vastly different people, celebrating music as the language that unites us.

(Ella began volunteering with FCSN because she thought she thought FCSN offered a "cool opportunity" to combine her love of piano with a desire to serve her community.

"High school requires community service," she said, "but I really wanted to make sure that the community service I did was meaningful to me, which was why I chose FCSN."

Ella graduates from Washington High School in Fremont and enters Duke University in North Carolina as a freshman in the fall. She wrote about the triumphs she and Kevin experienced for her college application to illustrate a situation with obstacles that turned into a success.)



Volunteer Sharing



Muppets Take The Bowl!

Andrew Chiang, SLS Client

On September 9th, 2017, my mother and I took a trip to the Hollywood Bowl. My all-time favorite band, The Muppets, was performing live there. I've been following The Muppets ever since I was a little kid, and I have seen every Muppet movie ever made. I have also watched every episode of *The Muppet Show* when it used to be on television. *The Muppet Show* and movies really got me hooked on their hilarious lyrics, sense of humor, and fine music produced by Jim Hanson. This show at the Hollywood Bowl was different, because I have never seen them live before.

When we got to the Bowl entrance, I saw tons of Muppet fans from all over the world. There were so many fans! I told my mom, "I feel like this is a professional sporting event." As we moved along to the main concourse, we saw a couple of little booths selling Muppet shirts and Muppet posters. I asked my mother if I could buy one, because I really love the Muppets and also because I have a collection of puzzles, DVDs, CDs, lanyards, water bottles, lunch boxes, and books containing Jim Henson's Muppets. When we walked up the hill to our seats, we grabbed two orange seat cushions along the way; other people were doing the same thing.

On our way to our seats, the center stage of the Bowl came into our sight. Wow! The oval edge was decorated in colors of the rainbow; my mother took a picture of me with the center stage in the background. I saw the Hollywood Symphony Orchestra and props from the original Muppet show on the stage setting. The Bowl has 18,000 seats and was jam packed! Tickets were sold out, with many people purchasing food and drinks on site. There were two bright lights across the sky that intersected in the middle. The air was sizzling hot and exciting. People were talking, eating, and walking.

Every time the Muppets put on a show, they have a guest star perform some funny tricks or sing some songs. The Muppet guest star at the Bowl was Mr. Bobby Moynihan. All main characters appeared in the show including Kermit, Piggy Gonzo, Fozzie, Rowlf, Swedish Chef, and the Electric Mayhem Band of Janice, Zoot, Floyd, and Dr. Teeth. The only missing characters that did not appear were Statler and Waldorf. The characters performed some very funny acts. I kept dancing and singing with their songs since I knew most of their lyrics. My favorite sketch was where Kermit and Gonzo were

floating in thin air, then they switched heads with each other. Some of the songs that they performed were: "Happy Feet," "Can you Picture That," "Suffragette City," "Home, Bohemian Rhapsody," and "With a Little Help From My Friends."

The grand finale was a hit. Paul Williams sang "Rainbow Connection," bringing the show to its climax; everybody cheered out loud! Then there were fireworks which closed the show. This was the most memorable experience I have ever had in my whole entire life, and I will never forget it.



Parent Sharing

Greg Hebert: Energized and Living a Purpose-filled Life, Thanks to FCSN

By Kathy Hebert | FCSN Parent



I was attending the 2018 Special Needs Talent Show when asked to write a story about my experience as a mom of a special needs child. I thought: "Why me?" I looked around the room and saw my son, Greg, and thought, "He's why!"

Greg's story is one of success but not without sadness, fear, and ups and downs. I know many parents have similar stories to mine, having a child with a disability and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs.) Since the age of three, Greg has had an IEP. He did not attend a full day of school until fifth grade, and I was told by his third grade teacher "that no one can effectively teach your son." Those were hurtful and harsh words to hear and from that moment, I vowed to stay strong and be Greg's advocate, knowing he had full potential.

In 2012, Greg graduated from Mission San Jose High School with a diploma. He was one who did not stay in school until age 22. In the fall of 2012, Greg did something he had not done in 15

years; he did not go back to school. Instead, he found himself waking up every day with nowhere to go, missing his social life, and friends. I observed Greg becoming sadder as each day went by and realized my role was now to keep him in good spirits and feeling good about himself. I would come home from my job and get him out of the house everyday, so he would be among people. I knew he was depressed and missed being at school. Greg would ask if he could go see his friends at school, and it was hard to explain that part of his life was over. He didn't understand and would often cry.

Fast forward one year later when we got the call from FCSN that Greg would join their program! I was so happy and knew this was just what Greg needed. In June of 2013, Greg began attending the Community Integration Day program (CIDP), now the Learning, Integration, Friendship, Empowerment (L.I.F.E.) program. Land from that day his life has been filled with purpose. Greg gets up everyday full of energy, ready to attend his program, and constantly talks about his friends at FCSN. Some of his favorite activities are Zumba, bowling, sharing, and vocational training.

Anyone who attended the FCSN Special Needs talent show in 2017 may have heard Greg say these words before he performed: "Somewhere in time or somewhere down the line I will still have a family; one at home and one at FCSN who I consider my brothers and sisters." Those words were his own, spoken from the heart. My heart was full of love and pride as I listened to him speak with such meaning.

FCSN means the world to Greg, and we will forever be grateful and humbled to be a small part of the family.



社區音樂會

葉淑芬 Sufen Wu

才兩年前吧！加州水荒嚴重，我們早就放棄澆草的習慣，任由草地自荒蕪至乾死，乾到連雜草都生不出來，就是一片又乾又黑又硬的焦土，貧瘠不討喜到連狗都不去撒尿。

那可是前院耶！雖說左鄰右舍也不乏放棄耕植土地的人家，多數人還是維持著草地或是種些沙漠植物，可是我實在無法喜歡那種堆著一大堆白色鵝卵石假裝是湖泊或水流的景觀！小橋流水人家的氛圍可不是這樣堆積出來的。

逐漸的，人工草皮的廣告出現了！從來看到乾燥花就覺得要窒息的我，此時卻覺得突然看到一線生機！YES！why not？當做一片舞台如何？一片綠油油亮晃晃乾乾淨淨可躺可坐可臥的空間？

老公本來不同意我這天馬行空的主意，（多少活兒在其中啊！）我二話不說，拿起鋤頭就開始挖地，要先埋空心磚以劃出舞台的界限。看出我的堅持，老爺嘆了一口氣就接手了。（苦肉計有用耶！）

早就在 HomeDepot 物色了成捲的

綠色假草皮，一個平方呎不到一塊錢。如果連工帶料的買下來，包括整地挖土鋪石填沙，則價錢高出十倍！想想這錢就給家裡的長工賺吧！於是心動不如行動！我請 Home Deport 送貨，（後來又學到，有些店裡可以出租貨車，自己買好貨開回家更省錢！）於是一大捲人工草皮，十幾包的mulch，和兩卷塑料的 weed blocker 很快的就躺在家門口了！數不清這是第幾project了？我向來點子多，常常有些“what if...”的主意，幸好老爺也愛動手做事，所以我們兩人手腦並用，互補有無。

我們避開了深挖土再填沙填石的工序，就直接整土，確定地面的平整，然後鋪上mulch增加地面的彈性，再鋪上weed blocker，如此讓水可以滲透下去而雜草不會長上來。最後，裁剪人工草皮，再用長釘子一片片的固定在土上，在這時候要注意的一點是，在拼接草皮時要注意草紋的走向必須一致，否則很容易洩露出拼接的痕跡。

前後大約三天的時間，前院的不毛之

地脫胎換骨的已變成一個乾淨的綠色舞台！放上一套輕便的桌椅，我們在微風裏喝茶談天。老爺看著他親手做的 project，又珍愛又無限驕傲！每天清掃草上的落葉，甚至搬出吸塵器不讓塵土落地！至此前院已然起死回生！

有了這麼有親和力的舞台，這才展開序曲之後的第一個樂章：社區音樂會。

接觸社會，服務社會，是我給季齡的大課題。

從小的時候，我知道自閉症的孩子特點之一就是不注意周遭的人事物，只知尋求聲光等對感官造成的刺激。所以帶他走出家門就成為生活目標。當時我常講的就是，「如果他看不到世界，我就把世界帶到他的眼前。」在社區裡彈琴是個兩全其美的活動，既發揮所長，又服務人群。

現在，我們也算是為他製造了一個小小世界，就在自己家門前。

社區音樂會的概念是從許多咖啡館來的。每個禮拜總有一個晚上，有的



cafe 會辦一個Open mic night, 很多音樂家會帶著自己的樂器來表演, 順便和別人切磋交流。在音樂的環繞中, 小小的咖啡館極美極真極善。正如 Andre Rieu 所说的, "music bring us together"。最近也參加了一個由 City of San Jose 辦的 San Jose Neighbor Night, 每個月一次的免費活動, 讓社區人士免費表演或展示自己才藝。吾道不孤!

家裡的樂器很多, 由鋼琴電子琴到揚琴木琴爵士鼓到所有的弦樂器一應俱全, 應在自己的綠色舞台既方便又省事, 只需推到門外就萬事俱備, 只需東風。

為了要引起社區的注意和迴響, 我寫了一個邀請函發佈在社區的網站上, 邀請鄰居們一起來做音樂的交流。也在家門口釘上公告牌子, 過路行人看一遍, 採集消息如蜂傳。我的目的只有一個: 讓我們的社區成為一個大家庭。

音樂會那天, 除了遠遠近近的朋友或鄰居外, 一位 80 歲的老先生更是興奮的帶著小提琴來以樂會友。同時我們FCSN的唱將如Jason, Jennifer 高歌數曲, 還有 percussion group,



ukulele group, 小朋友們在草地上趁興唱歌玩耍, 讓院子充滿快樂的氣氛。

猶如曾哲所形容的:

“莫春者, 春服既成, 冠者五六人, 童子六七人, 浴乎沂, 風乎舞雩, 詠而歸。”

或如陶潛所創造的世界:

“土地平曠, 屋舍儼然, 有良田美池

桑竹之屬, 阡陌交通, 雞犬相聞....黃髮垂髫, 並怡然自樂。”

我也期望著這樣的畫面:

在溫暖而和風徐徐的午後, 我的街坊鄰居朋友信步而來, 在乾淨的綠地毯上或坐或臥, 一邊喝茶一邊聆聽輕柔的音樂, 隨興或和聲或表演, 小兒歡笑嬉戲於其中。

在這個以科技為主軸的時代, 讓我們不要忘記彼此的存在, 聚聚聊聊彈彈唱唱吧! 透過心靈的交流, 「人」的價值才會顯現。別讓科技冰凍了我們的心!

請注意下一次的社區音樂會, 免費!

Enjoy the English version of this article in the online version of the Dream Builders newsletter: <http://fcsn1996.org/newsletters>



ChiLing's First Community Concert

By Sufen Wu | FCSN Parent

About two years ago, the drought in California made my family decide not to water our lawn in order to save water. The color of our front yard gradually changed from green to brown. At the end of the summer, not even weeds could grow in that dry, dark, and ugly yard! It was so bad that even my dog did not want to pee on it.

But it is our front yard! It is supposed to be our "face" to the community! I knew that the water company had been encouraging people to replace their front gardens with desert type of plants. I began to see many families use white rocks to be decorated as ponds or creeks, but I just did not have that kind of imagination myself.

A while later, commercials of artificial grass started to appear. I have never wanted to use any fake flowers in my house, as it makes me feel suffocated, but this product actually gave me a way out. Why not? A piece of clean and green stage!

I finally convinced my husband, my handyman, to work on this project ourselves. We paid a very reasonable price to buy the necessary materials from Home Depot. If we hired someone to do the project, we would have to spend about 10 times more.



To avoid a heavy workload, we made sure the yard was flat and leveled. Next, we spread a layer of mulch on top of the dirt, to act as a cushion. Then, we put a layer of weed blocker over the mulch. Finally, we spread on top with measured and cut pieces of turf and pinned the turf down with long nails.

Three days later, the "bad land" had turned into a green carpeted stage. In addition, I planted a row of flowers at the edge. We put a set of light furniture at the green, and it became our open family room! This project makes Tsaiwei very proud and he has been taking care of it every day including sweeping the fallen leaves. It was just the prelude of our symphony, and now let us go to the first chapter: from family to community.

To be in touch with the community and to serve the communities are ChiLing's missions. I believe that no matter how disabled a person may be, he or she has to do something to give back to this community that has been supporting them. Since ChiLing's autism makes him isolated from the community, I have been making sure that he has to do something that he is good at for people. His music ability thus comes to the front line. As I have always said, "If you are not able to go into the community, I will bring the community to you!"

This little green stage was just one

of the projects; next the idea of "community concert" was born!

Since ChiLing owns many, and I mean, MANY, instruments at home, making a concert happen at his own home is very reasonable and easy to do. Also, he gets to share his instruments with other musicians; just like many cafés who organized open-mic night. People share their instruments; learn from each other, exactly like Andre Rieu has said, "Music brings us together."

That was how and why we hosted the first community concert a few months ago. It brought many of my friends and neighbors together. Young children also had fun playing music with percussion instruments. It truly made for a beautiful day!

This is my dream:

On a warm and breezy afternoon, my neighbors and my friends stop by randomly. They may sit or lie on green, sip coffee or tea, and chat gently. They can pick up an instrument and play along, or just listen to the music. Everything is presented with an easy feeling, and nothing but music!

So what do you say? Won't you come and join me next time?

Just as what Mr. Rogers said, "Would you be my neighbor?"





“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.



Congratulations to FCSN for receiving the Asian Pacific Islander (API) Community Service Hero award on May 17, 2018



FCSN team participated at the Bunnies & Bonnets Parade in Campbell on March 31



Alice Jen performed at Carnegie Hall, New York City, during the International Music Competition in February 2018

Friends of Children with Special Needs

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