

Current



Summer Adventures middle school participants pose with Reverend Jackson after the Solidarity in the Struggle event that took place at Cameron House on Saturday, June 17th. Bottom left: Mabel Teng and Norman Fong watch as Helen Zia speaks. Bottom right: Scott Barlow and Mabel Teng watch as Executive Director, Mike Lee presents Rev. Jackson with a scroll from Cameron House. Photos by Ron Gin and our Digital Media Cohort



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Summer is here and it is thrilling – after months of sheltering in place and physical distancing – to see and hear the joyous sounds of (masked) young people participating in a six-week camp at Cameron House.

The summer camp program, made possible through major private funding, will help to close the learning gap and foster social-emotional health for area public school kids. We have hired credentialed teachers and social workers to ignite curiosity, enliven the joy of learning, and poise our young people for success in the coming school year – while facilitating fun, enriching, recreation and social time.

This return to campus activities is a hopeful sign that we are cautiously emerging from the grips of the pandemic and transitioning slowly into a new normal. Since our last issue of the Current our staff and volunteers have demonstrated our capacity to anticipate, create and deliver services under dynamic conditions.

We expanded our technological capacity in order to engage, connect, and serve our community through a slate of virtual events including Carnival, a Women in Retirement seminar, tour of Tie Sing Peak in Yosemite, Visual Performing Arts Festival, Alex Luu and Kyle Shin music and slam poetry benefit, the Mental Wellness at a Glance Series and the Academic and Vocational

Scholarship awards ceremony. Our staff demonstrated tremendous flexibility and dedication that allowed us to pivot and scale our efforts with these online offerings – and we even reached new audiences.

The annual Academic and Vocational Scholarship awards ceremony welcomed this year's award recipients and their families, past award recipients, generous donors, staff and board to celebrate the history of our scholarship program. Cameron House awarded \$43,000 to 17 deserving high school seniors and young adults in pursuit of their academic dreams.

In June, Cameron House welcomed the Rev. Jesse Jackson in a special private reunion with Rev. Norman Fong, Helen Zia, Henry Der, joined by special guests and activists to remember the murder of Vincent Chin in 1983 and how the event mobilized the Asian and African American communities to come together in solidarity around racial injustice. Rev. Jesse Jackson issued a clarion call for all of us to rise in solidarity in the struggle, to create a more just, equitable and inclusive society.

Our Social Services team continues to provide essential services to clients, currently managing 80 cases related to domestic violence and for those seeking economic relief, housing, and food. Additionally, 120 people have enrolled in computer and English-language literacy classes and have found support to expand their social and support networks.

The strategic planning process continues with the completion of a market scan, interviews with external stakeholders, a survey of staff and clients, and a facilitated board self-

assessment. We will present the findings to our board and senior staff in preparation for an August retreat to chart a strategic road map for the coming years.

These recent accomplishments would not be possible without the extraordinary, collective generosity and outpouring of philanthropic support from our individual donors, event sponsors, foundations, as well as funding from federal stimulus grants and City agencies. We are grateful for these critical resources that fuel the tireless efforts of our staff who continue to deliver essential services to our community members.

With you we celebrate the results of our collective passion, faith, and compassion in service to strengthening and building our community. We hope this summer will be for all of us a time of reuniting with our loved ones and safely returning to the activities we enjoy.

Take gentle care of yourselves. May we stand together in solidarity to root out hate in all forms and by our example love our neighbors as ourselves. And may we each strive to reach our highest and fullest potential to lift our communities, our nation, and our global family.



Responding to the “Call”: On Being a Good Shepherd

Virginia “Ginger” Smyly first heard the name Donaldina Cameron House at a recruitment meeting of would-be day camp leaders from the Oceanview-Merced Heights-Ingleside (OMI) neighborhood churches in 1966.

At 16, she remembers boarding the M street car, catching the cable car up Powell, walking down Sacramento Street to the mouth of Joice Alley, and opening the heavy brown doors. Inside Culbertson Hall, there were many kids her age already sitting on the floor looking up to the leader who commenced devotions prior to a full week of training.

At the time, Cameron House Summer Day Camp operated out of Ingleside Presbyterian Church, Potrero Hill Neighborhood House, as well as on-site in Chinatown. Ginger worked at each of these sites during her summers; she was a summer day camp leader for several years, then became a day camp director. Ginger recalls fondly, “These years were quite memorable and inspirational. I made fast and lifelong friends, learned leadership and supervisory skills and decided to join the church.”

She remembers days of meeting at The International Hotel in Manilatown and marching for housing rights with Chinese grannies in front of the federal building, where HUD had offices. Eventually, Mei Lun Yuen Apartments across the street from Cameron House was built as a result of years of organizing. After serving in the Peace Corps and finishing graduate school, she returned to the States in 1986 and was invited to join the Cameron House Board of Directors soon after. The Board at the time undertook “long range planning” and began to consider changing some long-held traditions. Ginger was also a frequent volunteer at Carnival in those days. As an ex-officio to the hiring committee, she helped identify Doreen Der as a candidate for Executive Director. During her 12 year span she served on the Foundation Board and contributed to the building fund which helped retrofit Cameron House from 1999 - 2003.

The friendships Ginger made as well as the moments of inspiration when the feeling of the Spirit moved among them as they worked or gathered together, have made the most lasting impacts on her.



Following each of her sister and parents’ deaths, Ginger had to make sense of their estates. In appraising her own situation: single, without children, and aging; she decided that she needed to prepare her final wishes. A trust and will were prepared in which Cameron House and other community based organizations were included in bequests. This has been recently revised with additional “causes” recognized. The bequest to Cameron House reflects the value put on the institution, the work it does, and for whom it works. Ginger says she has always been drawn to the outstanding and pioneering work of the Cameron House Social Services Department, addressing domestic violence and other related problems among immigrant women.

Her gift is given with no strings attached and she trusts in the ability of Cameron House staff and Board to make appropriate decisions about the disposition of funds. “I hope that in some way my gift supports women and their children to get safety and stability, or immigrant kids get help with homework and English learning, or someone sees a friendly face at a club meeting. Additionally, if funds are used for Cameron Ventures, Cancer Support Group, or Food Pantry, I will be pleased.”

“If you are able, willing and trusting in the Cameron House staff and Board, and if you believe in its mission and program, then give and give freely and abundantly.”

To learn more about including Cameron House in your will or trust, please visit cameronhouse.org/give/plannedgiving or contact Bill Vigna, Director of Finance and Operations, at bill@cameronhouse.org.

SOLIDARITY IN THE STRUGGLE

On June 17th, 2021, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Helen Zia, Henry Der, Butch Wing, and Mabel Teng reunited at Cameron House. Together they reflected on Reverend Jackson's visit to Cameron House in 1983 and his show of solidarity to the Asian American community after the murder of Vincent Chin that shook the nation. Later that afternoon, Rev. Jackson also spoke at a Youth Summit at the Chinese Cultural Center which CH youth, Bibiane Huang, was able to attend.

Special thanks to Reverend Jesse Jackson, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, Chinatown Community Development Center, and Reverend Norman Fong for making this timely reunion possible.

Watch the full event at our YouTube channel at youtube.com/cameronhousesf

Meeting Rev. Jesse Jackson

by Bibiane Huang

I can't express how fortunate I am to have been part of the Solidarity in the Struggle Youth Summit. Not only was I able to meet Rev. Jesse Jackson and take a selfie with him, but I also got to meet other Asian Groups and African American students who shared the same interest as me in building solidarity between Asian and Black communities. We started the seminar by talking about what solidarity means to us and why it is so important to have right now.

Solidarity to me means having an understanding of each other's oppression in America. Instead of comparing our oppression, we should come together to combat it. Multiple voices are stronger than one and we are definitely stronger together.

We talked about what happened to Vincent Chin and George Floyd and how similar their experiences were. In small groups, we were asked to give examples of how we would immediately respond to their attacks if we were present. I said that we can't be bystanders, this means we try to distract, intervene, or deescalate the situation, anything that would stop the attacker from attacking the victim. We were also asked how we can stop attacks on these communities. I said we should educate each of our communities about our past and the oppression we have faced in America. We have a lot in common but we fail to realize this.

Soon after, Rev. Jackson gave his speech and talked about the racism he experienced and seen, how he tried to bring justice to people who have been wronged, and the organization he helped found with the assistance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called The Rainbow Push Coalition which aims "to improve the economic conditions of black communities across the United States."

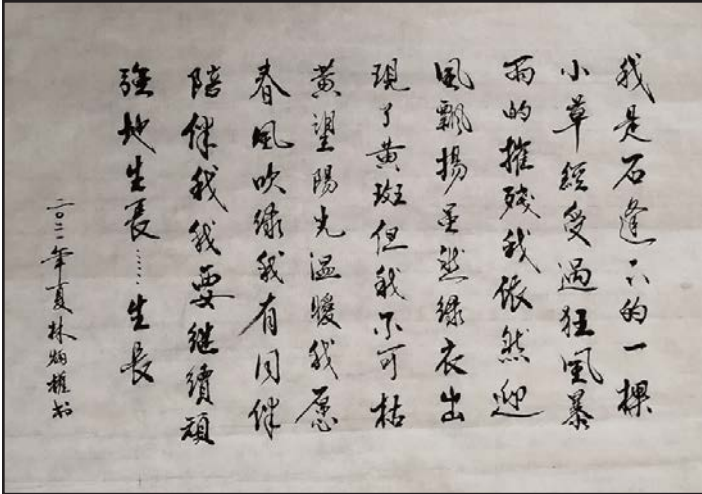


I met a lot of people who were just as passionate as I am about bringing the Asian and Black communities together. It was so enlightening and encouraging to hear people speak up because it makes me hopeful for the future. We are the change and we will be united one day. This seminar really showed me that this is possible. No matter what skin color we are at the end of the day, we are all human. We are the future and we will be better. SOLIDARITY FOREVER! Thank you Rev. Jackson for your work, you inspire us to be the change.



Cancer Support Group Celebrates 27 Years!

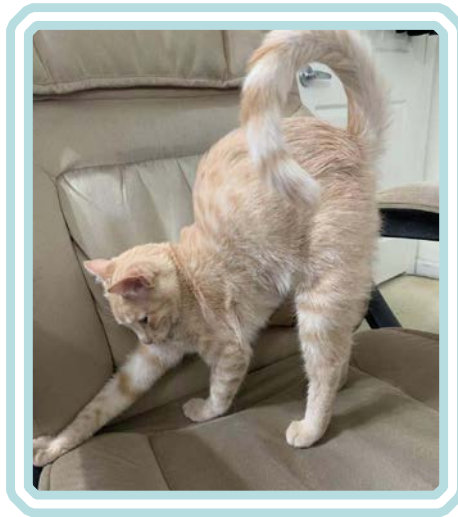
On Saturday, May 22, Cancer Support Group members gathered virtually to explore the power of storytelling. Inspired by the Cantonese TV series, *House of 72 Tenants* 七十二家房客, members composed writings that would entice a friend to visit their home. Thank you, Bing Quan Lin and Zi Chang Cai, for sharing your creative and joyful writings (translated from Chinese).



*I am a tiny grass living under stone crevice,
After the devastation of the storm,
I still wave in the wind.
Although my green skin
produces yellow spots,
I do not let myself become
withered.
There are hopes for the
sunshine to warm me,
there are wishes for the
breeze to blow me into green,
there are friends to keep me
company,
I need to continue to grow and grow
tenaciously*
Bing Quan Lin

My name is Zi Chang Cai, and I live with a very beautiful, cute, smart, and small animal that makes people reluctant to leave her. Her name is Mimi, and she is a nine-month-old cat that weighs about ten pounds. Her coat is very special and rare: white with light golden stripes as thick as a finger, making her appearance very gentle and noble. Although she is female, she looks like a male cat because of her thin stature and long tail, longer than the common cat's tail. Her performance is not gentle at all, she's always jumping around, her sleeping posture is ever-changing; in short, it is funny to watch her. She is very smart and agile. When we are bored, we like to play games with her. Her favorite toy is a ball, we toss it and ask her to "pick it up", and she flies over like an arrow to retrieve it.

Even though she hides, sometimes under the bed, and sometimes hidden in her comfortable nest of cartons—the moment we call on her, Mimi will respond by running in front of us, making us feel like we are always welcome. When we eat without feeding her, she kneels next to us obediently, looking pitiful, her eyes saying, "Where's my share?" She licks her mouth, as if she's drooling. It makes it difficult to forget to feed her, it may be late but cannot be missed, nor can it be sparing, it must be nutritious and delicious. It is not only rice and fish or exclusive canned cat food, we often look for delicacies. Cured quail is her favorite. We give Mimi the greatest love, and she brings us endless joy. Friends, if you come to my house, you will be stuck with my cat. Let us live a life with cats together. Maybe you can learn a way of life from cats. Best wishes for the 27th anniversary of the establishment of the CSG at Cameron House!





Lauren Wong

4th/5th Grade

Lead Teacher

I heard about Cameron House through Angie Ichiyasu, the 2nd/3rd grade cohort lead teacher. Angie and I met through the Multiple Subject

Credential Program at SF State. My team consists of one teaching assistant, two teaching aides, and one volunteer overseeing 14 students. One thing I am looking forward to the most this summer is helping kids learn new things while also having fun! I believe that kids learn the most when they do fun activities while not even realizing that they are learning. Some activities that we have already done as a cohort were a Cup Tower Challenge, an Egg Drop contest, and a cooking lesson. I look forward to continuing to incorporate fun ways to teach kids about Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics as well as language arts so they can see these subjects are relevant to the real world, not just an academic setting!

Rene Kamm

Behavioral and Mental Health Specialist

Growing up in Nob Hill/Chinatown my family used to always walk past CH. I never participated in programs but my older brother was a camp leader for a year. Later, my wife, a CH alumna, suggested I apply to be a teacher for the after school program. I taught fifth grade that year, and the next. From 2015 to 2018, I helped run the after school and summer programs before leaving to get my master's in social work. I currently work as a social worker in SFUSD. This summer, I'm teaching a course to the middle school cohort on identity, community, and social justice. I'll also be running social skills groups with the younger students and supporting classrooms with social-emotional lessons. I'm looking forward to being in community with the adults and youth of Cameron House in person again!



meet our **SUMMER STAFF** and **SUMMER COHORT PARTICIPANTS**



Kevin Woo

Incoming 9th Grader, Digital Media Cohort

I joined this program because I am interested in photography and film. Other aspects of the class include live podcasting and digital marketing. It feels nice to leave the house and participate in a cohort where I can learn a lot and connect with peers who share the same interests.

Hailey Moi

Incoming 9th Grader, Be the Change: Peace Pans and Palms Cohort



For most of 2020 and 2021, I was at home distance learning. As San Francisco was opening back up, I began looking for an in-person summer camp and found Cameron House, who offered a six-week program that partners kitchen medicine and martial arts. I joined this program to further improve my cooking and develop cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, and self defense skills. Being out of the house and around peers offers me new experiences and friendships at Cameron House!

Cameron House Events

The Annual Scholarship Awards Ceremony took place this year on Friday, June 4th and what a night it was! We celebrated our outgoing Friday Night Club seniors and caught up with past recipients about where their paths after high school took them and provided our senior commission, FATE, with some words of wisdom. This year's celebration also featured awards to our Youth Development Leaders (YDLs) who volunteered their time so graciously throughout the pandemic year. The ceremony closed with a heartfelt video from FATE's own YDLs, Andrea Ye and Justin Huie, as well as some very proud parents with messages to their graduates.

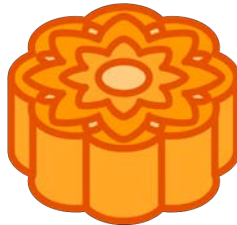
Thank you to our 2021 Scholarship Donors

Anonymous
David and Pauline Chan
Micah Chu and Foy White-Chu
Gary and Lynette Hom
InspirASIAN chapter president June Tom and Scholarship Director Anh Le
Kenneth and Josephine Kwong
Beverly Lee and Family
Clovis and Pat Shem
Mary Lou Tong

If you'd like to watch the full Awards Ceremony, please visit Cameron House's YouTube channel at youtube.com/cameronhousesf

COMING UP

Stay tuned for our next virtual Community Event, the Mid-Autumn Festival on Saturday, September 18 at 4:00 PM PST. Gather the family to celebrate the Autumn Moon Festival with Cameron House! We will light lanterns, learn how to make moon cakes, and more!



cameronhouse.org/news/2021-events



Thank you to our Event Sponsors

GOLD

Minami Tamaki LLP
Tom Pong and Joan Li
Virginia Smyly

SILVER

Anonymous
Doreen and Bruce Der-McLeod
Carol Dolezal, Grace and Jeremy Dolezal-Ng
Richard Kwan
Terry and Lianne Leong
Jeanine Lim and the Rev. Gregory L. Chan
David Sakamoto and Ivy Yee-Sakamoto
Susie Wong and Scott Barlow



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When you make a gift to Cameron House you provide access to compassionate services that help our community heal and thrive.

Your contributions also help our organization keep pace in a highly competitive environment to retain and attract talent, spark innovation in our programs and services, meet emergent and compelling unmet needs in our community, and improve our building, grounds, technology, and equipment.

We will be holding our Spring fundraiser – Bee the Change – through July 15. Your generous contribution will provide resources for our ongoing work to support the growing needs of families in Chinatown.



Bee the Change

Scan the QR code on the remit envelope enclosed or visit
cameronhouse.org/give/BeeTheChange