

# panda pöst

FEBRUARY 2007



## Chinese New Year

Of all the traditional Chinese festivals, the New Year is perhaps the most elaborate, colorful, and important. This is a time when people congratulate each other, and themselves on having passed through another year, a time to finish out the old, and to welcome in the new year.

Families gather on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day to celebrate, feast, and exchange gifts. Money, wrapped in red and gold envelopes, is given to the children to spend as they wish. The celebration continues for five full days during which stores and most businesses are closed. Starting on the third day and often continuing through the fifth there is much going on outdoors with dragon dancers, parades, firecrackers, lion dancers, and drumming. After the five "big" days of celebrating, things return more or less to normal. But Chinese New Year is not really over until the Lantern Festival takes place at the time of the first full moon on the New Year, about ten days later.

On the 15th day of the first month of the lunar calendar the Lantern Festival. This falls on the night of the first full moon of the year. The Lantern Festival dates back to the first century when Emperor Ming Di of the Han Dynasty, in an effort to promote the learning of Buddhist doctrines, ordered the lighting of lanterns as a symbolic means of paying homage to Buddha.

Modern day celebrations include fireworks, people walking on stilts, and folk dancing. Lanterns of all shapes and sizes are displayed. In some areas, it is popular to hang riddles from the lanterns and give prizes to those who guess the answers.



## Year of the Pig

1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, 2031

The pig personality is best described as self-fulfillment and achievement. They are driven by their inner strength and aspiration for completion and conclusion of any intentions. Furthermore, their ambitions lie in the finale of all ventures as opposed to the career itself. Pigs are very generous and caring, and home-life and family are usually priority. Therefore, careers for pigs usually lie in care-giving such as nursing or counseling. They are trusting and hospitable and usually have a wide circle of friends. Hard-working and very meticulous in detail, they are the ones to successfully complete a given assignment. Pigs delight themselves in the pleasures that life has to offer, and are far from lazy.





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## A Message from the President...

Welcome to the February edition of the Panda Post!! 2006 brought many changes to TRFCC. I first would like to thank our previous board members for all their time and dedication to TRFCC. Bill & Mary Anne Poutous (former Presidents), Chris DeNardo (former Treasurer), Jan Kinzler (former Director of Fund Raising), Jim Brodnick (Director of Communication) Betsy Hanna (Director of Events). I would also like to introduce you to our new board members: Mark Mechling, Treasurer, Susan Hernishin, Director of Communication, John Kuehn, Director of Fund Raising, Susan McCann, Director of Education.

And a big thanks to all the members that have decided to volunteer their time and effort for another term.

We have had a lot of first in 2006. We started off with our First joint picnic with the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) & friends. The picnic was catered by the Hong Kong Restaurant in Dormont (I have to say the food was wonderful) along with hotdogs and chips, cookies. We played limbo (not an easy game for us older members); we had a bubble table, toss games, etc. The most wonderful part of the picnic was seeing friendships form with the Chinese Community.

We also had our first Culture Camp in Olgbay, WV. TRFCC was blessed to have the Chinese Community teach our classes. We had Chinese crafts, cooking, dance, yo-yo, jump rope, and calligraphy, Paper cutting, games, a huge bonfire both nights (thanks Todd Krut). Another great part of the camp was that while children 6 and up were off taking classes we had adult classes for the parents. 2007 Culture Camp will be September 7, 8,9th. Don't miss out! Register early, space is limited.

We had 2 wonderful educational seminars, we participated in the Pittsburgh Dragon Boat festival, The Celebrate the Season parade, we worked with the Chinese Community in bring Semicom a vocal group from Taiwan to the Pittsburgh area. This was all done along with our Chinese New Year celebration, the monthly meetings of In-Waiting Families (A Huge THANKS TO Bernie & Jane McShea for opening their house up every month).

TRFCC belongs to you the members so get involved. The board would love to hear what you think about our events, classes, camp, CNY, picnic etc. Are there events you would like to see us do or get involved in? Just let us know. Please consider volunteering for events, if you can give us an hour or two at an event it would make such a difference.

Happy New Year to you and your family!!!!

Kim Kuehn  
TRFCC President



**[www.trfcc.org](http://www.trfcc.org)**  
Don't forget to check out the website  
for news, upcoming events, resources,  
photo galleries and more!

# TRFCC In Waiting & New Families

## Winter/Spring 2007 Support Group Meetings & Social Events

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Meetings are held on the last Tuesday of the month at the home of Bernie and Jane McShea (unless otherwise noted), meetings begin at 7:30 pm.

Bernie and Jane McShea  
7440 Trevanion Ave. • Pittsburgh, PA 15218  
email: bernjane@earthlink.net phone: 412-473-0183

### **Tuesday, January 30, 2007**

#### ***It's going to take HOW LONG???***

We will discuss the current wait times and discuss coping with the uncertainty of the wait

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### **Tuesday, February 27, 2007**

#### ***What do I take with me? What Can I buy in CHINA?***

We will discuss packing for the trip of a lifetime and shopping hints from those who have been there.

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### **Tuesday, March 27, 2007**

#### ***Do I really need that for the Baby?***

**\*\*FIELD TRIP TO BABY'S R US\*\*** Join us as we go through Babies R Us in Monroeville and discuss what is really needed for baby and what you can do without. We will meet at 7:00 PM this night!! Decompression afterwards at TGIFridays, Monroeville

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### **Tuesday, April 1, 2007**

#### ***Is this what I signed up for?***

We will discuss coping in the first six months of your return home, managing expectations and reality.

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### **Saturday, May 5, 2007**

#### ***ANNUAL MOTHERS DAY BRUNCH***

Location to be announced later! We are looking for help in organizing this great event. Please let Jane know if you are able to help.

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### **Tuesday, May 22, 2007**

#### ***Open Discussion***

Bring the topic you would like to discuss!

**We are looking for two vibrant volunteers to lead the waiting families group in 2007 and beyond!!**

**Please contact Jane if you are interested in this wonderful opportunity!!**

**bernjane@earthlink.net  
Phone: 412-473-0183**

***Please join us for information, friendship, and camaraderie as we wait for our referrals!***

## Event Wrap-up...

### Fall Educational Event – Bridges Back to China

#### **TRFCC Spring Educational Event**

**Sunday, April 22, 2007**

**Speaker: Diana Schwab**

Diana Schwab is a social worker with extensive experience in internationally adopted children's issues. Diana is affiliated with Pediatric Alliance, a physician's practice that also specializes in adopted children's special physical and emotional needs. Diana will present information on how adoptive parents can foster attachment and bonding throughout your child's development, from birth to adolescence and beyond!

**Watch for more information on this upcoming event!**

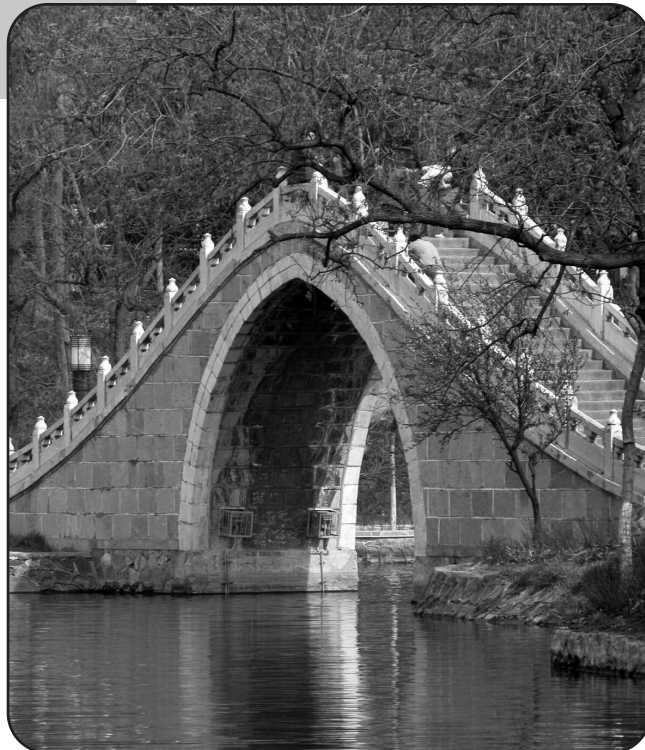
**On November 5, 2006, TRFCC hosted the Fall Educational Event at MaGee Women's Hospital Auditorium entitled "Half the Sky and Our Chinese Daughter's Foundation: Bridges Back to China." This was a very educational, inspiring, and personal event.**

This was educational, of course, because those in attendance learned so much about these two organizations that provide a bridge back to China. Half The Sky (HTS) is a foundation created to enrich and enhance the lives of orphaned Chinese children. The goal is to ensure that every orphaned child has a caring adult in their lives and a chance for a better, more hopeful future. Half the Sky is named for the Chinese adage "Women hold up half the sky," that some scholars attribute to Confucius. 95% of the healthy children living in China's welfare institutions are girls. Because the phrase was popularized by Mao ZeDong, the Chinese people recognize it right away and realize that we are committed to helping orphaned children hold up their "half of the sky."

Our Chinese Daughter's Foundation (OCDF) is a multifaceted organization that uses multiple venues to teach our children from China about their birth country and to help parents to cope with the questions that might arise following the adoption of their children. Even though OCDF began as a homeland tours program it is so much more. For example, OCDF provides not only homeland tours, but also offers adoption facilitators, a speakers' bureau, and fundraising for programs in China, to name just a few.

The event inspired those in attendance as we heard about all of the work being done to help provide our children with the opportunity to connect culturally and emotionally with their homeland as well as to enhance and improve the lives of children remaining in Chinese orphanages. This is critical, since it is estimated that there are over 150,000 orphaned children living in state run institutions in China. Despite increasing numbers of adoptions, many children will not be adopted and will grow up in an orphanage.

The event was also personal since it was co-presented by two of TRFCC's members. Carrie Mahoney (HTS) and Brenda Mellon (OCDF), have unique, personal experiences with HTS and OCDF. Each has returned to China to participate in the respective missions of these foundations. Attendees were treated during the presentations to personal stories and photographs about their return trips to China. TRFCC is so happy to help further the mission of HTS and OCDF by donating the proceeds from the event to HTS and OCDF.



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*To learn much more about this event, ways you can help without necessarily making a return trip to China "just yet", and to download copies of the handouts, please log on to our website: [www.trfcc.org](http://www.trfcc.org).*

# A Most Unusual Screening of Unlocking the Heart of Adoption

by: Sheila Ganz

I always preface this story with assuring people that I had nothing to do with arranging this screening of my documentary *Unlocking the Heart of Adoption*. Completed in 2003, I have circled the country screening the film at colleges and a variety of adoption conferences from Concerned United Birthparents to Korean Adoptee and Adoptive Parents Network. My goal for the film was to tell the adoption story from all three points-of-view of the adoption triad to encourage greater understanding about the lifelong impact of adoption among triad members and those who have connections with us. Making this a reality still leaves me in awe sometimes.

In the Spring of 2004, the screening at the Cantor Film Center, New York University was co-sponsored by Unsealed Initiative, Adoptive Families Magazine, Manhattan Birthparent's Support Group, NYU Adoptees United, NYU Asian Pacific American Studies and FCC, Families with Children from China-NY Chapter. It was posted on their website and two other FCC groups — one in Chicago and one in Pittsburgh, PA contacted me about doing a screening.

That is how I came to be invited to screen my film in the auditorium of the hospital where I gave birth to my daughter. Jane McShea, adoptive mom with a daughter from China, member of Three Rivers FCC and a social worker at Magee Women's Hospital in Pittsburgh contacted me. We hit it off right away and I lost no time in expressing my amazement at her contacting me.

After many months the screening was planned and arrangements made. I called my friend Nancy who lives in Pittsburgh. We became friends during our stay in the Booth Memorial Home for Unwed Mothers, where I spent the last two months of my pregnancy. It is very meaningful to both of us that we have remained friends all of these years. In fact, we were instructed by the people in charge not to tell anyone our true identity or where we were from. Officially, we were known by our first name and last initial. Nancy and I haven't seen each other in a number of years and I was happy to be able to stay with her for this memorable weekend.

I arrived on Friday. On Saturday, we went to see the home that I recall was surrounded by trees on a hill. I walked

down that hill once. I got about a half a block and felt so embarrassed, since I knew people would know "what" I was... that I immediately turned around and walked back up.

Nancy drove us up the hill and we saw an old age home. She said, "That's not it." She drove a little further and stopped. There in front of us were pieces of a foundation of another building. This was it. Overgrown with matted tall dead grass and edged by fallen trees it looked like something out of a scary movie. The kind I never go see.

I started to take some pictures of the place and suddenly thought to take a piece of the foundation as a memento. Walking through the "basement" of the building where the laundry room, a room for us to play cards and another with a television once stood, vines with thorns caught on our clothes trying to hold us there, again.

The day before I gave birth to my daughter I started to go into labor and the driver took me to the hospital. I wasn't in any real pain and sort of laughed to myself thinking, "Is that all there is." It was false labor and a few hours later he drove me back. They were mad at me, because they had to pay the driver twice. The next night was the real thing.

I awoke in half-light after it was all over. A nurse came in to check me and I asked about my baby. She told me it was a girl and gave me a choice of dry cereal with milk on the side for breakfast. Raisin bran is my favorite. Several hours later, I was brought back to the home. Some woman sat in the front holding my newborn, while I had to sit in the back.

On Sunday, one hundred people attended the screening. There were the Three Rivers Families with Children from China adoptive parents, and birthparents and adoptees from the large local support group. They were selling silk dresses and jackets from China. I spotted a gorgeous green jacket and tried it on. It looked great on me and so I decided to buy it and wear it for the screening.

I got a little choked up when I introduced the film and told the audience I had given birth to my daughter there almost 37 years ago. There was an audible gasp. The discussion and Q&A afterwards went really well. And the response from individuals who I talked to at the reception that followed was wonderful. Then, Jane came up to me and gave me my check back saying, "We want to give you the jacket."

It was really something for Nancy and I to retrace our steps. We have both reunited with our daughters. And the positive response to my film was uplifting. But, the crucial thing for me is that I had a chance to tell my daughter everything that happened and now she knows that even though I didn't keep her, I have always loved her and she was wanted. So the memories can stay just that.

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*Sheila Ganz is the recipient of the 2006 Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's Angels in Adoption Award. For more info about *Unlocking the Heart of Adoption* and to purchase the DVD visit – [www.unlockingtheheart.com](http://www.unlockingtheheart.com).*

## Upcoming TRFCC Events – Mark your calendars!

### **Sunday**

**April 22, 2007**

**Spring Educational Event  
Attachment & Bonding from  
throughout the years**

### **Summer**

**TRFCC/OCA Picnic (TBD)**

### **Friday**

**August 3, 2007**

**TRFCC Idlewild Picnic**

### **Saturday/Sunday**

**August 18-19, 2007**

**The Greater Pittsburgh Diversity  
Festival**

### **Saturday**

**September 22, 2007**

**Pittsburgh Dragon Boat Festival**

### **Friday/Saturday/Sunday**

**September 7-9, 2007**

**2nd Annual TRFCC Culture Camp**

## The many ways to get involved with TRFCC!!!!

**Newsletter:** Write an article, a book review, submit a recipe, tell a funny story, write about your trip to China, Etc.

– contact: [susieh@trfcc.org](mailto:susieh@trfcc.org)

**Annual Picnic:** Held on a Saturday in June or July (date TBA) Help with registration (only 30 minutes), Help with games for children (onsite or planning); Help serve food or drinks at the picnic.

– contact: [kimk@trfcc.org](mailto:kimk@trfcc.org) or [janem@trfcc.org](mailto:janem@trfcc.org)

**In-Waiting and New families Committee:** Host a monthly group support meeting in your home or at a local restaurant, plan a social event for this group such as a Mother's day brunch or Holiday party or be a resource for in-waiting families.

– contact: [janem@trfcc.org](mailto:janem@trfcc.org)

**The Greater Pittsburgh Diversity Festival:** To be held in the downtown Strip district on August 18th and 19th. You can volunteer for an hour or two in a variety of events.

– contact: [kimk@trfcc.org](mailto:kimk@trfcc.org)

**TRFCC Culture Camp:** Planning committee (monthly meetings starting in March), volunteer an hour or two at the camp. Submit ideas for activities.

– contact: [kimk@trfcc.org](mailto:kimk@trfcc.org) or [janem@trfcc.org](mailto:janem@trfcc.org)

**Dragon Boat Festival:** (9-22-07) Consider volunteering one hour at the Children's booth. This is a great way to work with the local community.

– contact: [judy1@trfcc.org](mailto:judy1@trfcc.org)

**OCA Free Medical Clinic:** Usually help in late October or early November from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. You must be in the medical profession to volunteer for this event.

– contact: [johnk@trfcc.org](mailto:johnk@trfcc.org)

**Fund Raising Committee:** Help organize a fundraising event, submit an idea, sponsor an upcoming event.


– contact: [johnk@trfcc.org](mailto:johnk@trfcc.org)

**Grant Writing committee:** You can do this from home. No meetings!!!

– contact: [johnk@trfcc.org](mailto:johnk@trfcc.org)

**Chinese New Year 2008:** Help plan our largest annual event (only 2 meetings), Setup the morning of the event, registration, Children's activities, market place, TRFCC booth, (only an hour of your time).

– contact: [janem@trfcc.org](mailto:janem@trfcc.org)



Don't forget to check your mail, email and [www.trfcc.org](http://www.trfcc.org) for more information on these and other upcoming events!

## Event Wrap-up...

### 1st Annual TRFCC Culture Camp — Celebrating Who We Are

We held our first Culture Camp, Celebrating Who We Are, September 8 to 10, 2006, and it was a great success. Planning began in January 2006 with the hard work of the Culture Camp Committee. Meeting monthly, this dedicated group of volunteers took charge of the entire weekend and helped insure a successful camp.



The camp began on Friday, September 8, 2006 with registration, deserts, and a fun bonfire. Saturday, September 9, 2006 began with a buffet breakfast cooked and served by TRFCC members, and then a Ti-Chi class for campers and their parents. After a refreshing class, campers were off to their activities. Counselors were Chinese teenagers from the Pittsburgh area as well as friends of TRFCC.

Campers were divided into groups by age with the breakdown of 2-3 years old, 4-5 years old, 6-7 years old, 8-9 years old, and 10 years old and above. Activities were geared towards each group's age and skill level and we believe this contributed to the success of the camp. Members of the local Chinese community, as well as some of our TRFCC member families taught activities. Activities included; traditional Chinese cooking, crafts, dancing, Chinese Yo-Yo, calligraphy, paper cutting, and song and dance. The children had three activities in the morning, a lunch break, and three activities in the afternoon. Parents were able to attend classes on Ti-Chi, cooking, Traditional Chinese Wedding Customs, and Calligraphy as well.

The day ended with a Kung-Fu demonstration, a Chinese dinner catered by a local Chinese restaurant, and a bonfire!

Families were able to stay in cabins on site and had the added fun of continuing their camp friendships into the night. Campers in the cabins worked on special artwork, which hung on the door of each cabin. Cabins were named for different provinces in China.

At the conclusion of the camp, each family completed an evaluation of the weekend. As a result of the overwhelming response, we are pleased to say, we will be holding our second annual Culture Camp this September!

Here is a sampling of what families had to say after the weekend was over:

*"THANK YOU ALL so much for your efforts this weekend for the FIRST (hopefully annual) Chinese Culture Camp! We had a wonderful time and can't stop singing its praises since we returned home today. Thank you"*

*"Many thanks to the organizers of the Culture Camp this weekend. We had a wonderful time and also hope that it becomes an annual event":*

*"I want to add my kudos to everyone who helped and attended. The weather was perfect; the kids all behaved and looked like they were having fun, the food great, and the activities entertaining and educational. I know my daughter had a blast and when I asked if she would want to go again, I got a resounding YES!!"*

*"Our girls and I had a wonderful time at the camp that was so well run and enjoyable. The facilities were excellent, food was great, and the activities were top notch."*

**We would also like to thank the following for their financial support of TRFCC Culture Camp:**

**Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA):** donation designated for family scholarships. As a result of this generous contribution, we were able to assist four families in attending Culture Camp.

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**Pittsburgh Chinese Restaurant Association**

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**Harrah's Adoption International Mission**

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### Mark your calendars and join us for the...

**Second Annual  
TRFCC Culture Camp**

**September 7-9, 2007**

**Camp Russell  
Olgebay, West Virginia**

Don't miss out on the fun and exciting weekend. Space is limited, register today!

If you would like to volunteer, please email Jane McShea: [janem@trfcc.org](mailto:janem@trfcc.org).

# Book Reviews

by: Sharon Daily

## Snowflower and the Secret Fan

by: Lisa See



See's engrossing novel set in remote 19th-century China details the deeply affecting story of lifelong, intimate friends (laotong, or "old sames") Lily and Snow Flower, their imprisonment by rigid codes of conduct for women and their betrayal by pride and love. While granting immediacy to Lily's voice, See (Flower Net) adroitly transmits historical background in graceful prose. Her in-depth research into women's ceremonies and duties in China's rural interior brings fascinating revelations about arranged marriages, women's inferior status in both their natal and married homes, and the Confucian proverbs and myriad superstitions that informed daily life. Beginning with a detailed and heartbreaking description of Lily and her sisters' foot binding ("Only through pain will you have beauty. Only through suffering will you have peace"), the story widens to a vivid portrait of family and village life. Most impressive is See's incorporation of nu shu, a secret written phonetic code among women — here between Lily and Snow Flower — that dates back 1,000 years in the southwestern Hunan province ("My writing is soaked with the tears of my heart, An invisible rebellion that no man can see"). As both a suspenseful and poignant story and an absorbing historical chronicle, this novel has bestseller potential and should become a reading group favorite as well.

## Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress: A Novel by Dai Sijie

The Cultural Revolution of Chairman Mao Zedong altered Chinese history in the 1960s and '70s, forcibly sending hundreds of thousands of Chinese intellectuals to peasant villages for "re-education." This moving, often wrenching short novel by a writer who was himself re-educated in the '70s tells how two young men weather years of banishment, emphasizing the power of literature to free the mind. Sijie's unnamed 17-year-old protagonist and his best friend, Luo, are bourgeois doctors' sons, and so condemned to serve four years in a remote mountain village, carrying pails of excrement daily up a hill. Only their ingenuity helps them to survive. The two friends are good at storytelling, and the village headman commands them to put on "oral cinema shows" for the villagers, reciting the plots and dialogue of movies. When another city boy leaves the mountains, the friends steal a suitcase full of forbidden books he has been hiding, knowing he will be afraid to call the authorities. Enchanted by the prose of a host of European writers, they dare to tell the story of The Count of Monte Cristo to the village tailor and to read Balzac to his shy and beautiful young daughter. Luo, who adores the Little Seamstress, dreams of transforming her from a simple country girl into a sophisticated lover with his foreign tales. He succeeds beyond his expectations, but the result is not what he might have hoped for, and leads to an unexpected, droll and poignant conclusion. The warmth and humor of Sijie's prose and the clarity of Rilke's translation distinguish this slim first novel, a wonderfully human tale

### Our Mission

To provide support to individuals who have adopted from China, as well as individuals who are preparing to adopt from China.

To encourage and support international adoption from China.

To establish and maintain social and cultural ties with the Asian community and incorporate these into our organization.

To provide regular educational programming on issues surrounding adoption, children, and parenting.



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