

Australia China Friendship Society

ACT Branch Inc

澳中友好协会

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President's report for 2017

We have had a good year in terms of activities for members and promoting Chinese culture to Canberrans however our membership continues to decline (it is now 89) and as I have said before we need to attract more younger members.

Our functions during the year were quite varied. We had 2 film evenings : 'The Queen of Cooking' at the Jamison Southern Cross Club and 'Still Life' at a new venue the Canberra Labor Club in Belconnen; three interesting talks: Alex Olah on 'Teaching English in China' and 'Chinese Culture'; Minister-Counsellor Yang on China's Intangible Cultural heritage; a tour of the Chinese Collection at the National Gallery and a mid-day tour of the 'Waving the Red Flag' Exhibition at the National Library. We helped with arrangements for the ANU Chinese Classical Music Ensemble's concert 'Hear the Harmony' which was a joint performance with the Sydney Conservatorium of Music Chinese Music Ensemble and was well attended. We held dinners at Chinese New Year and Christmas and re-instituted the Society's June dinner as a yum cha lunch.

Our major event for the year was the Lantern Festival – the last activity for the celebration of Chinese New Year. The lantern-making workshop at the Cook Community Hub was held on the day of floods and torrential rain with all residents being advised to stay home so our attendance was down to 15. However we had over 500 attend the Festival which included 7 performance groups of both adults and children and for the first time a ringing of the Peace Bell which was newly installed in Lennox Gardens. The Lantern Parade was one of the longest we have ever had. The Beijing Garden is the ideal venue and it well and truly fulfilled our aim of promoting Chinese Festivals to the Canberra community.

An important aspect of the Society's work is the promotion of Chinese culture in schools. The Panda competition was again held for primary schools with the topic this year being

'Chinese Costume through time'. We had entries from 7 schools and 60 prizes and certificates plus 21 special acknowledgement certificates, which were for students who put in extra effort but did not win one of the prizes, were presented by Minister Cai, Minister-Counsellor Yang and Consellor Cao at a ceremony at the Chinese Embassy which was attended by Principals, teachers, students, parents and Society members who helped with the organisation of the day. This was the second time the presentation was held at the Embassy and it was a most rewarding and memorable day for all who attended.

Awards for the best and most improved students of mandarin were again presented to students from 12 High Schools and Colleges, at a lunch attended by 66 members, students, parents and teachers.

We continue to support Project Hope students: 3 girls and 1 boy at Labagoumen primary and 1 girl at Labagoumen middle school and 2 girls and 1 boy at high school with the boy at the Best middle school. Two trash 'n treasure stalls at the Fyshwick Markets raised over \$1600 to support these students. Special thanks to Angela Wydeveld who has taken on the role of organizing these stalls most ably assisted by John Corcoran, Siew-Gim McGregor, Eliza Ngan and Mark Fraser. The concert by the ANUCCME also raised enough to support one of the students for 1 year and a special fund-raising lunch held by Siew-Gim's sister in Adelaide raised sufficient funds for us to support 2 additional students for 3 years and they are a boy and a girl at Labagoumen primary school.

We obtained a grant from the ACT Government for the Lantern Festival for \$1330. We also applied for another grant to replace our data projector but were unsuccessful. For the first time in many years we have revised the content of our membership form and made a modest increase in membership fees.

Chinese conversation evenings continue to be held each month and the Society extends its thanks and appreciation to Shirley Johns for arranging and hosting these evenings.

The newsletter, which continues to report on our activities and provide items of interest, plays an important role for the Society as for many members this is the only contact they have. Thanks go to Jean, who is the editor, and to Roger Arnold for his regular and most interesting contributions on living in China and also to Teck who mailed the newsletter out each month. We now email the newsletter to nearly all recipients.

Our website which helps us to maintain our profile is most capably managed by Siew-Gim McGregor.

We have enjoyed close contact with and received considerable support from the Chinese Embassy and in particular the Cultural Office. We received literature, prizes and gifts for the Lantern Festival, Panda competition and School Awards; the Embassy hosted the Panda competition presentation and their representatives attended all these events. The committee was invited to a special dinner at the Embassy hosted by Minister Cai Wei and also to China Day. We greatly value and appreciate the Embassy's support and extend our sincere thanks and look forward to continuing our very close relationship.

There were some changes to the committee during the year: Geoff and Agnes Miller resigned in September and Alex Olah joined shortly thereafter. The Society places great reliance on the committee: Tanja Naeher – secretary and co-ordinator of performers for the Lantern Festival, Neil Birch - treasurer, Jean Norman - editor and lantern-workshop co-ordinator, Teck Lee - newsletter despatcher and functions co-ordinator, Suzie Michaelis – who did a magnificent job as schools liaison, Geoff Miller and Alex Olah – publicity, Shirley Johns - convenor of conversation evenings, Agnes Miller and John Wong. Our committee worked together very harmoniously and I would like to thank all the members for their support and hard work. I would also like to thank the Society members who have helped at our events during the year. And as a final note it would be heartening to see more members attend and help out at our various events.

Carol Keil

President

28 March 2018