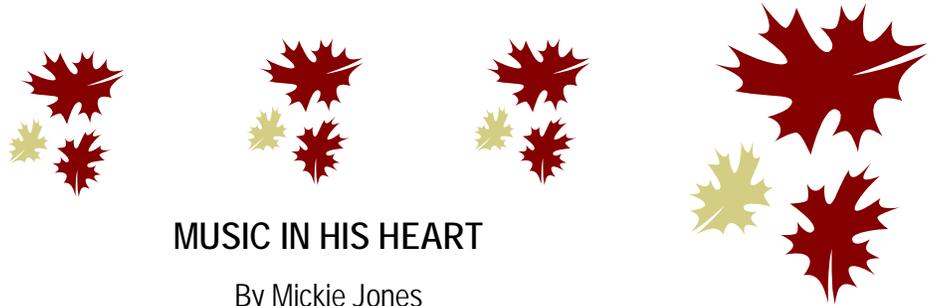




## NOVEMBER 2012 FAMILY CONNECTIONS CHRISTIAN ADOPTIONS E-HEARTBEAT



Brian and Mickie Jones with their children (clockwise starting in front) Zackary, 7, Sierra, 12, Jacob, 11, Steven, 13, and Savannah, 10.



### MUSIC IN HIS HEART

By Mickie Jones

Steven joined our family through adoption on October 28, 2004. He was five at the time and his brother Jacob was three. They were full of energy and quite quickly, made each day an adventure. Jacob was enjoying the transition, but Steven seemed to have many lingering concerns. He just was not ready to commit to our family, especially to us as Mom and Dad.

After only three days in our family, we attended a Harvest Carnival at our church. Steven was torn between excitement and insecurity. That night, at the end of the carnival, there was a drawing for four bicycles. Steven just knew he was going to win one. As he sat on my sister's lap, with his fingers crossed, he repeated over and over, "I am gonna win." My sister calmly tried to prepare him for disappointment, to no avail. He continued to insist that the last bike was his. The next thing we hear, to our surprise, "Steven, whose mom's name is Mickie." My first thought was not about his winning, but, "Oh my, he's going to scream, "She's not my mom!" Instead he stood with the biggest grin on his face and ran to the front to claim his prize.

Once the evening was over, we loaded the bike into the car and prepared to leave. As we began to pull away, our Pastor came over to the car to say goodbye to the boys. While my husband rolled down the window, Steven grabbed my arm and asked, "Will you tell him that God put His hand on my name so I would know this is where I belong?" It took all of me not to cry as I looked into his five year old eyes. I was so overwhelmed that God allowed me to experience His voice in our precious son's life.

Not long after Steven and Jacob's adoption finalized, they asked for sisters. On December 18, 2006, we brought home three more children, Sierra, age 6, Savannah, age 4, and Zackary, age 1. With five children now, our life really took on a new meaning. We worked hard to grow together as a family and also to grow into who God planned for us to be. Early on, we encouraged our children to seek God's gift and ask Him, "What would you have me do with my life?" In our hearts, we knew that music was key to what God had in store for Steven.

My husband comes from a very musically talented family. His mother sang in a band; his father played sixteen different instruments and was a regular guest artist on the old TV show, "Hee Haw." My husband's parents passed away many years ago, before the children joined our family, but we have numerous recording of them singing. We play them quite often and Steven early on loved to sit and listen to his papa Michael sing and play. He also enjoyed listening to my husband and me sing at church and special events. Singing became a passion for Steven.



Last year, Steven decided to take a basic guitar lesson at our Charter School. He learned to pick out a few notes but did not really get into playing songs. He had not figured out how to make a connection between his musical instrument and his voice. At the end of the year, we attended a graduation ceremony where Steven heard a young lady sing and play the guitar. He said, "Mom, I wish I could do that, but graduation is only a year away." I reminded him that with God, you can do anything. So, Steven began to practice. At first, it did not come together. But then he began working on a Christian song he really liked. After four days, he said, Mom, I have a song I can play." As I listened, I was once again overwhelmed at God's voice speaking through our son.

Now that the passion was there, Steven began searching for another song, one he could sing at his eighth grade graduation. One day we were listening to the radio and the song, "All This Time" came on. I knew right then that this was the song. That night, Steven found the sheet music on the Internet and began to practice. After thirty minutes, he came to me and said, "I can play the song." With some disbelief, I said, "Play it" and out of Steven's heart flowed a song that truly told the story of his life. I still cry as I hear the words because I know where he has been and what he has been through.



Steven Jones

#### ALL THIS TIME

I remember the moment, I remember the pain. I was only a boy, but I grew up that day.  
Tears were falling, I know You saw me Hiding there in my bedroom, so alone I was doing my best to be strong  
No one to turn to, that's when I met You.  
All this time, from the first tear cried 'til today's sunrise and every moment in between  
You were there, You were always there. It was You and I. You've been walking with me all this time.  
Ohh, oh, oohh Ooh, oh, oohh. You've been walking with me all this time.  
Ever since that day, it's been clear to me that no matter what comes, You will never leave.  
I know You're for me and You're restoring every heartache and failure, every broken dream,  
You're the God who sees, the God who rescued me.  
This is my story. This is my story.

Each word in this song expresses Steven's story. From the first day he was placed in foster care to the day he entered our home, unsure of where he belonged, from moments of being bullied and lots of self doubt, he has learned that God never leaves. God was there with him all along. Through every hurt, trial, transition or pain, God has always been walking with him, helping him to see who he is meant to be in spite of what the world had planned for him. This song he is going to sing at his graduation has allowed Steven a voice. It is God's voice through him, speaking life and acceptance, not only to himself, but others facing similar hurts and pains.

That day so long ago when Steven won the bicycle was only the beginning of the many times God spoke to him through the simplest of ways. Steven, like everyone, just wanted to feel he belonged. He wanted to be not only a part of our family, but like our family. He wanted to truly know in every aspect that this was the family God intended for him. With the gift of music being a huge part of our families, it was the most precious thing Steven could desire. He may not have our blood running through his veins, but he has the very same spirit of God that has gifted our families musically for generations.

Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Because Steven put God first and looked for God's plans for his life, God opened a door no man can close. Whether it is a good day or bad day, Steven has learned to look for God in it, knowing that God has never left him, even in the darkest moment in his young life. God has truly given Steven to desires of his heart.



## WELL WORTH THE WAIT

By Ellen Yin-Wycoff

Our family recently celebrated the two year anniversary of the “Gotcha” date for our 3-1/2 year old daughter, Elaine Chan Wycoff, who joined our family on June 20, 2010. My husband, Larry, and I fondly remembered our trip to Guangzhou, China and the first day we met and picked up Elaine at the Chinese Adoption Ministry’s offices. Elaine was only 18 months old when she was placed with us and when Larry and I first held her in our arms, we were overwhelmed with such emotion that our daughter was finally here. Of course, in our opinion, Elaine was the most beautiful and precious baby we’ve ever seen! During the three weeks we spent in China finalizing our adoption, we spent a lot of time with Elaine in the special children’s playroom at our hotel where she learned how to walk on her own in the first week with us, so we were able to record her first steps and many other exciting “firsts” as parents of a new child, such as her first laugh, her first word, etc.

Since then, we have been celebrating a lot of other “firsts” with her, such as her first Christmas, her first time at Church, her first day of pre-school, her first time riding a tricycle, her first birthday cake, and a lot of other family celebrations, such as her baptism, birthday parties, Chinese New Year, and other holidays.

During the past summer, we also had another “first” with Elaine, where she was able to go to her first State Fair at Cal Expo. Although my husband and I have been to the State Fair almost every year, we were able to experience it through Elaine’s eyes where she “oohed and aahed” at the animals in the livestock exhibits, enjoyed the fair food (especially barbecued corn on the cob and kettle corn which she loves) and marvel at the fun exhibits, such as Toyotopia, the Wizard, and the Sun Maid Raisins.

We have been so blessed with Elaine joining our family. We know it has been a very long journey for us where we spent almost five years waiting for Elaine (even as an expedited application to the Chinese Adoption Ministry due to my family’s Chinese ancestry.) We have heard it can now take more years for new families waiting to adopt a child from China. However, we believe it was well worth the wait! Our daughter, Elaine, has grown and flourished each day despite the challenges from her early life in the Chinese orphanage. We can see in her face how she’s learning and growing each day. She is such a happy, healthy, and remarkable little girl. We know we could not have been more prepared or supported for this journey without the help from our social worker, Veronica Franklin, at Family Connections throughout this long process with the home studies (and the renewals during the wait) and the fantastic staff with our primary adoption agency, Chinese Children Adoptions International (CCAI), who helped us navigate through the entire adoption process with the Chinese government.

From time to time, I hear from people that they think our daughter, Elaine, is a very lucky girl but actually, Larry and I believe we’re the lucky ones. We are so thankful and blessed to have Elaine as part of our family.



Elaine Chan Wycoff

# Adoption Nutrition

Thanksgiving is a holiday that emphasizes our appreciation for the bountiful food we enjoy in this blessed country. It is a good time to let you know about a resource that is being offered at no charge by the combined efforts of SPOON Foundation and the Joint Council on International Children's Services.

**AdoptionNutrition.org** is a comprehensive and FREE resource for adoptive families. Parents of children of any age who are born here in the U.S. or across the world will find information to guide them. Topics include: overcoming feeding challenges, tips for transitioning the diet, lab tests for identifying common deficiencies, country specific nutrition information and recipes, special needs feeding practices and much more.

You can download a free Global Cookbook of kid-friendly recipes or look into nutrition issues by country name. The site also serves as a venue for adoptive families to share their nutrition related experiences and ask questions of an expert team.

CHECK IT OUT!



## Coming Events

**Ventura Branch:** Christmas Party on Sunday, December 2, 2012, from 1 to 3:30 at the Barranca Vista Center at 7050 Ralston St., Ventura, . (at Ralston and Johnson). Please RSVP to (805) 477-7400 or [gaddison@fcaoptions.org](mailto:gaddison@fcaoptions.org) Bring your favorite entrée, appetizer, salad or dessert, 10 servings please.

**Fresno Branch:** Christmas Open House on Sunday, December 9, from 12 to 3:00 p.m. at the Fresno Office, 7257 N. Maple #101, Fresno, CA 93720 Phone (559) 325-9388.

**Modesto Branch:** Christmas Open House on Sunday, December 9 from 2 to 4:00 p.m. at the Modesto Office, 1120 Tully Rd., Modesto, CA 95350 Phone: (209) 524-8844.

**Carlsbad Branch** (formerly Oceanside): Holiday Event on Saturday, December 15, from 11 to 2:00 p.m. Please contact the office for location and more details. Phone (760) 730-9576.



**Have a Happy Thanksgiving!**

