



Inside ACCESS

Newsletter of Asian Christian Counseling & Educational Seminar Services, Inc. (ACCESS)

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2006

New Year's Resolutions and Extreme Makeovers

— By Rebekah Wang, LMFT



Do you make New Year's Resolutions? Many people make resolutions at the beginning of each year, the most common one being to lose weight.

We all know that those resolutions often don't make it very far into the year, so some people don't even bother to make them in the first place, but there is something about the start of a new year that prompts people to think, plan, and hope that things will be different and better in the new year to come. There is the idea that a new year brings a clean slate, which makes change possible.

Then, there is the ongoing obsession in American society for not only dieting and losing weight, but more recently, also for reality shows about makeovers, whether in the traditional sense of hairstyle, make-up, and new wardrobe, or more extreme makeovers including plastic surgery, or even of home and lifestyle. Many times with these shows or similar situations with makeovers, there is also the idea of starting over, with the hope that life will be

better after the change is made or that the changes will solve their problems.

Not that many of those people or their homes don't have legitimate needs for changes or improvements, or that New Year's resolutions are bad to make, but all those situations bring up a number of issues worth examining.

This is not an article about how to succeed at keeping your resolutions, since countless others have already written about how to set goals and achieve them, which also apply to keeping New Year's Resolutions.

You probably already know that you are more likely to meet your goals and keep your resolutions if you set more specific, achievable, realistic goals, and have a way to measure success and build in accountability. These practices can be applied to pretty much any self-improvement effort, and of course, those of us in the counseling field support efforts toward self-improvement!

Making New Year's Resolutions, changing your hairstyle, remodeling your home, and setting new goals can all be very good ways to improve yourself or your situation, but it is important to examine your motivations behind such goals and efforts. Actually, the process of making resolutions, or evaluating and setting goals to achieve or make changes is part of an important human developmental

task involving evaluation, re-evaluation/re-examination, renewal, and commitment.

The beginning of the year is a good marker for such a task. Birthdays are also a natural marker because people often think about their lives, looking back and anticipating the future, especially if they have certain thoughts and expectations about what their lives would be like by a particular age. Anniversaries of all kinds are also good markers, especially wedding anniversaries to reflect on and evaluate marriages.

I once worked with a couple who very proactively evaluated their marriage each year, and every several years or so, also intentionally worked toward marriage enrichment, whether by attending a marriage conference or taking tests and meeting with a counselor like me to find out how to improve their relationship. It is good to have these natural time markers to motivate and remind us to reflect, evaluate, re-examine, renew commitments, and set goals.

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Message From the Executive Director

It is my privilege to welcome you to this first newsletter issue for *Asian Christian Counseling & Educational Seminar Services, Inc. (ACCESS)*! We hope that this issue will give you a good idea of our beginnings, and perhaps how you and others can join us in this new venture.

On page 7, we introduce our counseling staff (who currently also double as our administrative staff!), including myself, and on page 4 there is an overview of the history of our development up to this point. Look for a list of our workshops and seminars also on page 7, and recent news about our grant from *Chopstix for Charity* on page 3.

If I were to choose a theme for this issue, it would be “beginnings,” not only because this is our first issue, and we talk about the development of this new counseling service, but also because the New Year is a good time to reflect on the past year, and look forward to the new one. In light of New Year’s and such reflections, I have written an article starting on the front page about some hopefully helpful thoughts and challenges to ponder with which to start of the new year.

Of course, what is better than premarital counseling at the *beginning* of a marriage (aside from perhaps the marriage proposal)? In light of that admittedly biased hypothetical question, we have an article

about our premarital counseling package and other options for couple counseling on page 3.

Since this issue is also a bit of an introduction of ourselves and our services to you, we also hope that this will be the *beginning* of a relationship with you. Our intention is for these newsletters not only to inform you of news from and about ACCESS, but also that it will be enjoyable and a helpful resource to you, so if there is anything you would like to see or particular topics you would like addressed, please feel free to give us your input.

Rebekah Wang, LMFT
Executive & Clinical Director

Open House a Success!



Presentation by Rebekah Wang

In September 2005, ACCESS moved from our temporary initial offices in Norcross to our new office in Doraville, in the heart of the Asian business area. We celebrated the opening of our first permanent location and welcomed the community with an Open House on Saturday, November 19, 2005, from 1-4pm, in our new office.

The *World Journal*, a major Chinese daily newspaper published two news articles about ACCESS in November to introduce our services to the

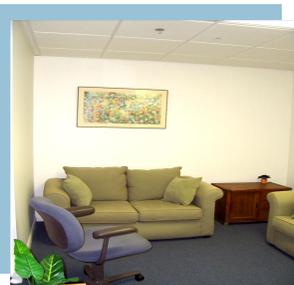
Asian community.

In response to our invitations, we were honored to have over 40 guests from different community groups come to our Open House. The Executive and Clinical Director Rebekah Wang gave a short presentation about ACCESS at 2pm.

Guests visited our offices before and after the presentation. At the conclusion of our Open House, we had a special time of Prayer & Blessings.

Pastors and members from various local churches gathered in each of the rooms of the office to give thanks to the Lord and to pray over the counseling rooms.

This joyous event ended with a Praise & Thanksgiving Dinner to honor those who facilitated ACCESS’s growth in various ways. Board members, staff, families, and volunteers gathered to give praise and thanks to the LORD who called us into this special ministry for His glory.



One of our counseling rooms



Open House guests



Our waiting room

ACCESS Receives Unprecedented *Chopstix for Charity* Grant



We are pleased to announce that ACCESS received a \$3,000.00 grant from *Chopstix for Charity* on December 10, 2005. The amount was the highest grant ever awarded to a first-time applicant.

Chopstix for Charity is an annual fundraising event that connects the corporate sector to the Asian American community in Atlanta. The event is hosted by the National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP) Atlanta Chapter and

Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) Georgia Chapter. This year, the Atlanta chapters of Korean American Coalition (KAC), Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), and Lao-tian American Society (LAS) were also support hosts for the fundraising event, held on October 18th.

Funds raised are intended for organizations that have specific programs which directly impact the Atlanta Asian American community.

Grant applications are judged by a program's ability to promote cultural awareness, to address advocacy issues, to promote education/academic scholarships, or to provide social services for the Atlanta Asian American Community. The grant committee was so excited to find out about us that they sent a committee member to visit our office and deliver the grant check to us in person.

Premarital Counseling

— By Lydia Teh, LAPC



Getting married is a huge decision. Despite all the odds against a happy marriage, many today are still courageous enough to make a vow to the love of their lives.

The high rate of failed marriages does not undermine the possibility or validity of successful ones. Marriage, when tenderly and skillfully cared for, can be the most beautiful and fulfilling relationship in one's life. Premarital counseling can provide a couple with tools and skills they need to overcome the challenges in marriage.

Recent research reviewed 23 studies on the effectiveness of premarital counseling and found that the average couple who participates in a premarital counseling and education program reports a 30% stronger marriage than other couples. Ninety-three percent of Americans believe "a happy marriage is one of the most important life objectives" (Family Relations, April 2003). Premarital counseling and education is one way to help people achieve that goal.

In helping couples to improve their relationships or marriages, ACCESS provides a variety of counseling options, including several premarital counseling and marital enrichment packages, currently at promotional discounted prices. You don't have to be engaged or married to take advantage of this opportunity. Call us to find out more.

Our professional staff utilizes different tests and

clinical skills to help a couple:

- Explore their relationship strengths and growth areas
- Strengthen their communication and conflict resolution skills
- Understand the effects of their family of origin on their current/future marriage
- Learn how their personalities affect their relationship dynamics
- Develop their personal, couple and family goals

Many couples might not be as ready for marriage as they think they are. The insight a couple can gain from premarital counseling will better equip them to deal with conflicts in the future and help establish a solid foundation for their lifelong commitment.

Premarital counseling is a great investment for couples who are serious about establishing for a lifelong bond. For couples who are experiencing difficulties and problems in their relationships, couples counseling can be another practical resource to improve their particular situations.

Take charge of your commitment. Build a love that lasts for a lifetime!

**Source: *Family Relations*, April 2003. Brigham Young University.

"Premarital counseling can provide a couple with tools and skills they need to overcome the challenges in marriage."



New Beginnings

The idea of starting this Asian Christian counseling service in the Atlanta area was conceived in 2003 when a group of brothers and sisters attending *Atlanta Chinese Christian Church (ACCC)* realized that they shared the same burden and vision for the needs of marriages and families in the church.

With the increase of counseling needs overwhelming the pastoral staff and church leaders at ACCC, as well as its church plant, *Atlanta Chinese Christian Church-North (ACCCN)*, and a seemingly opportune moment with the timing of new graduates in the counseling field attending the church, these brothers and sisters came together, initiated by Rev. and Mrs. Jeffrey Lu, and Mrs. Cecilia Shou. They recruited a former church member, Rebekah Wang, to return to the Atlanta area from California to become the counseling service's first Executive and Clinical Director.

In the Spring of 2004, a steering committee, including Rebekah, while still in California, and one of the counseling graduates, Tabitha Chee, began to work together by email and conference calls, to develop the mission and purposes of this new counseling service, taking a decisive step of faith to move forward as an independent entity.



Dedication ceremony on Nov 21, 2004. Board members and staff.

Left to right: Lydia Teh, Tabitha Chee, Stanton Singleton, Cecilia Shou, Rebekah Wang, Kenneth Wang, Joe Tai, Rev Chi.



First meeting of board members, staff, and family.

The steering committee consulted with the Board of Directors and Staff of *Asian American Christian Counseling Service, Inc. (AACCS)*, where Rebekah had been working in California, and with their supportiveness, modeled the new counseling service in Atlanta largely after AACCS.

July 24, 2004 marked both a welcoming party for Rebekah after her arrival from California, as well as the first gathering of the founding Board of Directors and future staff members and their spouses (see picture and list of Board Members). The steering committee, with help especially from Board Member and Legal Counsel Stanton Singleton, Jr., continued to meet to draft the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws until the new counseling service became incorporated as a non-profit organization called *Asian Christian Counseling & Educational Seminar Services, Inc. (ACCESS)* on August 12,

2004.

The Board of Directors held their first official meeting August 28, 2004 to adopt the Articles of Incorporation and approve Rebekah's employment as Executive and Clinical Director, authorizing her to run the day to day operations of ACCESS.

ACCESS began sharing its mission and vision with local Asian churches and Chinese churches in the Southeastern US, beginning in August 2004 with the Joint Board of Elders and Deacons at ACCCN. With the tremendous support of ACCCN, the initial offices of *Asian Christian Counseling & Educational Seminar Services, Inc. (ACCESS)* opened on the premises of the space ACCCN was renting in Norcross, GA while building their new church facilities.

ACCESS held their Dedication Ceremony on November 21, 2004, with the attendance of pastors, elders, and deacons from ACCC and ACCCN. The counseling service began with only the Executive and Clinical Director on staff, with the Board of Directors and the two counseling graduates, Tabitha Chee and Lydia Teh, as volunteer staff.

— by Rebekah Wang, LMFT

In March 2005, Lydia was able to join ACCESS staff on a full-time basis as a bilingual Chinese counselor. Also in March 2005, ACCESS obtained both IRS tax-exempt status and registration as a Georgia Charitable Organization. In September 2005, ACCESS set up their first permanent office in Doraville, Georgia.

On November 19, 2005 ACCESS hosted an Open House for the new offices. The goal, however, is to one day expand and offer services in different languages and locations to the larger Asian and Asian American community in the Metro Atlanta area and the Southeastern US.

“The journey of a thousand leagues begins with a single step.”

—Lao Tzu

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A New Year's resolution or personal goal can and should be the start of a long-term, and perhaps even life-long commitment to making a real change toward self-improvement. This is all vital to the process of growth and development as a person.

That being said, I again turn your attention to the importance of what underlies these resolutions, goals, and desires for change. Sometimes the longing for a change or clean start, or the hope that a change will make life better and solve one's problems is rooted in deep unhappiness and insecurity. Haircuts, new clothes, remodeled homes, or even more extreme makeovers may look and feel good for a time, but ultimately they cannot satisfy or solve problems that go far deeper, whether mental/emotional, psychological, or spiritual.

With these resolutions or changes, are you trying to be someone you are not? If you believe God created you, are you unhappy with whom God made you to be?

Our society, especially the media,

has set unrealistic pictures and standards of beauty, and everything from what we should wear and have to what we should look like. Changing our looks and buying all the "right things" will not take away deep unhappiness and insecurity. Neither will trying to be someone we are not meant to be.

Beware of pinning all your hopes on these changes. What is your hope in life based on? Changes in looks, clothes, home, or even more drastic measures usually do not last.

There is a Bible passage in 1 Peter 1:3-4a that talks about this hope which will last forever: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a *living hope* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade..."

Sometime a change or a clean slate and fresh start can be very healthy, especially if it is part of breaking out of a bad pattern or situation. As a Christian, my hope is ultimately in God and Jesus Christ, my Savior.

but make sure you know the difference between a healthy change and those that are less than healthy.

Do not confuse self-improvement with escape or looking for answers in the wrong places and thinking that certain changes will solve your problems. Sometimes there is only a very fine line between the two and the difference is very subtle. Much of the time, only you will know the difference, because only you know what your reasons and motivation are behind them. If you don't really know why or haven't really thought about it, I would encourage you to do so.

Sometimes people don't realize the real reason why they do what they do (which is why talking to someone else, like a friend or counselor, about it can be helpful!).

Self-improvement and changes which are motivated by a healthy desire to grow and mature into "all that you can be" and who God designed for you to be can be a very good thing.



How to use ACCESS Services

Counseling and Consultation

- Contact us at 770-986-0800 and talk to one of our counselors. You can also receive referral information pertaining to your specific needs regarding mental health issues.
- If no one is able to answer your phone call, please leave your phone number and a brief message on our 24-hour voicemail system. We will call you back as soon as possible. According to your needs, you can schedule a face-to-face appointment with your counselor over the phone.
- *Regular Office Hours:* Monday--Friday, 10am-6pm
Evening hours (6pm-8pm) can be arranged by appointment according to availability
- If the regular fee is not affordable, counseling fees will be determined by a sliding scale, according to the house-

hold income level, number of dependents, and ability to pay. We are committed to providing affordable professional counseling services to clients in need.

- Our services are provided in a culturally sensitive and confidential manner, according to the highest standard of professional guidelines and biblical principles.

Educational Seminars and Workshops

- We value preventive care and provide educational seminars and workshops on topics related to mental health, basic counseling skills, individual growth, marital relationships, parenting, etc.
- Call us or visit our website for our upcoming workshops. We can tailor seminars and workshops to meet the specific needs of your group.

**Counseling can
bring you
HOPE,
HEALING,
& CHANGE.**

Call us today!



How to Be Involved With ACCESS



We need your support in promoting the awareness of mental health issues among Asian communities

If you are as excited as we are about this new counseling service, there are a number of different ways you can be involved in what we are doing.



Help Promote Our Vision and Services

You can help to spread the word about ACCESS, especially referring people who may need help or can benefit from our services, whether it is counseling or our seminars and workshops. Referrals and encouraging people to seek help when needed is not only about spreading the word for us, but it can also be about helping to break through the stereotypes and stigma that is so prevalent of counseling.

Many Asians think that counseling is only for “crazy people” or that it is a shameful thing to go to counseling. You can help us with this major obstacle by talking to people about counseling as a helpful and valuable experience and investment in their well-being.



Help Refer Asian Mental Health Professionals

Since we are building our network of referral resources and hope to expand our services to include other Asian languages, you can also help us by referring any Asian mental health professionals you may know of who might be interested in joining us or partnering with us.

Although we do not have the funds yet to add any staff, we are already on the lookout

especially for a Korean bilingual counselor and/or a male counselor to join us in the hopefully not-so-distant future, in anticipation of the demographic needs of the area. Counseling staff must be licensed by the state of Georgia, or working toward licensure.



Make a Tax Exempt Donation to Us

As a new counseling service, one of the biggest and most obvious needs we have is financial. Now that we have set up our new offices, we need help with raising funds for start up and operational costs, including the funds for us to be able to hire more staff.

Although we have some seed money from a foundation to start, and we are already receiving some financial support from a couple local churches, we hope that other churches and groups, as well as individuals, will also join them in supporting this ministry.

In return for such financial support, we discount our fees for seminars or workshops given at our supporting churches and groups. We are also asking churches to consider subsidizing the cost of counseling for church members they refer who may have financial needs (i.e., scholarship/financial assistance).

For those who cannot afford even our sliding scale or minimum fee, we have started a special fund called the *Barnabas Fund* to help subsidize the cost of therapy. The *Barnabas Fund* is used to assist those with financial needs, such as single parents, those who are unem-

ployed, and students living on limited incomes. If you would like to contribute to this special fund, or to our general operations, all your donations are tax-deductible. We have flyers on the *Barnabas Fund* and donation envelopes available, if interested.



Pray for Us

Perhaps the most important way to help and be involved is through prayer. We believe that prayer is essential in this ministry and service. In addition to praying together as a staff, we have also been raising up prayer volunteers from the various churches for the counseling center.

We have already sent out our first prayer letter and two prayer & praise lists. If you are interested in praying for us, please let us know, and we will send you a copy of our prayer requests.



Introducing Our Clinical Staff...

Rebekah Wang, M.S., LMFT is the Clinical and Executive Director of ACCESS, and a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She is licensed by the state of California, as well as the state of Georgia, and previously worked at *Asian American Christian Counseling Service, Inc.* in the Los Angeles area for over eight years before relocating to the Atlanta area to help start ACCESS. A graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary with a M.S. in Marital and Family Therapy and a M.A. Theology in Multicultural Ministry, she specializes in bi-cultural identity issues and other cultural issues, couples counseling, and faith issues, but enjoys working with a wide range of ages, ethnicities, and life challenges.

Lydia Teh, M.A., LAPC is our bilingual Chinese counselor and a Licensed Associate Professional Counselor. She graduated from Psychological Studies Institute with a Master's degree in Professional Counseling. She was an intern at Metro Transitional Center, a facility of Georgia Department of Corrections, conducting individual and group therapy with female inmates whose problems range from adjustment issues and mood disturbances to abuse, addictions, PTSD, and eating disorders. Her professional interests include issues such as marital conflicts, interpersonal relationships, and family of origin. Born and raised in Malaysia, Lydia is fluent in Mandarin, Taiwanese and English.

Board of Directors

Cecilia Shou
Chairperson, President
Kenneth Wang,
Co- Vice President
Rev. Allen Chi,
Co- Vice President
Stanton Singleton, Jr., J.D.
Secretary
Joe Tai, CPA,
Treasurer

Clinical Staff

Rebekah Wang, LMFT
Executive and Clinical
Director
Lydia Teh, LAPC
Bilingual Chinese
Counselor

Presentations by ACCESS

March 12, 2005 - "Glorifying God in Our Relationships: Fellowship with a Purpose" (Atlanta Chinese Christian Church North Mark/Philippians English Joint Fellowship); Speaker: Rebekah Wang

April 3, 2005 - "Lay Counseling" (ACCCN Co-workers Training); Speaker: Lydia Teh; Rebekah Wang co-facilitator

April 10, 2005 - "Dealing with Burn-out" (ACCCN Co-workers Training); Speaker: Rebekah Wang

May 7, 2005 - "Cultural Issues in Parenting" and "Parent-Child Communication" (Atlanta Chinese Christian Church); Speakers: Rebekah Wang, Lydia Teh, Tabitha Chee

June 2, 2005 - "Cultivating Interpersonal Relationships" (ACCC Sisters Fellowship); Speaker: Lydia Teh

June 18, 2005 - "What's So Christian About Counseling?" (INDOSAFE); Speakers: Rebekah Wang, Lydia Teh

July 6, 2005 - "Balanced Parenting" (ACCC Emory Mothers Fellowship); Speaker: Lydia Teh

July 23, 2005 - "Assertiveness in Marriage" (Atlanta Taiwanese Presbyterian Church Retreat Workshop); Speakers: Lydia Teh (with presentation about ACCESS by Rebekah Wang)

August 20, 2005 - "Caring for Those in Crisis: Understanding Grief and Domestic Violence" (Cross-Church Seminar held at ACCC); Speakers: Rebekah Wang, Lydia Teh

September 30, 2005 - "Spiritual Parenting" (ACCC NW Region 5 Fellowship); Speaker: Lydia Teh

October 6, 2005 - "Cultivating Interpersonal Relationships" Part II (ACCC Sisters Fellowship); Speaker: Lydia Teh

October 22, 2005 - "Communicating With Your Teenager" (ACCCN Youth Parents); Speaker: Rebekah Wang



Aug 20, 05 "Caring for Those in Crisis" seminar.



Panel Discussion on Cultural Issues in Parenting



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Doraville, GA 30340
Phone: 770-986-0800
Fax: 770-980-0811

Visit our website:
www.asianchristiancounseling.org

Upcoming Events: Mark Your Calendars...

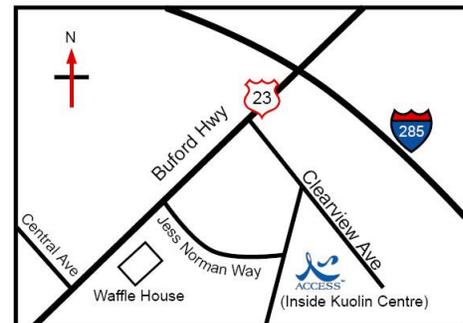
February 18, 2006—*“Healthy Families and the Challenges They Face”*
10am-4pm
(Atlanta Chinese Christian Church North)
Speakers: Rebekah Wang, Lydia Teh, Tabitha Chee

August 26, 2006 (Tentative)—
“Healthy Families and the Challenges They Face” II
(Atlanta Chinese Christian Church North)

Sep 30, 2006—*“Personal Growth and Dealing with Emotions”*
10am-4pm
(Atlanta Chinese Christian Church)

Marriage Enrichment Retreat
Date & Time TBA

Our New Office Location



We are located inside the perimeter right off Buford Highway (Hwy 23).

- Take I-285 exit 32 - Buford Highway
- Go left onto Buford hwy @ the end of the ramp
- Turn left at 2nd light (approx. 1/4 mile) onto Jess Norman Way (Waffle House on Corner)
- Turn left at STOP sign onto Stewart Ave.
- Turn right at STOP sign onto Clearview Ave.
- Turn right into the second driveway - (We are in the Kuolin Centre, Suite 205)