



# Sarasota Chinese Academy

a place for Chinese language and culture

Newsletter 2010 Issue 2

May 2010

## Enroll Now for 2010 Fall Semester!

This school year has gone by quickly, and it's time again to begin planning for Fall Semester. Starting April 25, Sarasota Chinese Academy opened enrollment for current families. Please register before May 23, 2010, to receive a 50% discount on the \$40 registration fee.

### Registration for Pre-K and Above

Fall Semester: August 22 – December 12, 2010

(Open House August 15)

2-hour classes

\$40 registration fee (only \$20 before May 23!)

\$150 tuition (non-refundable after the first class)



### **NEW!** Mommy & Me Class

**(Babies and toddlers attend with a parent)**

Fall Semester: October 3 – November 21, 2010

1-hour classes for an 8-week session

No registration fee (please register by August 1)

\$95 tuition (non-refundable)

By registering early, you not only save on your enrollment fee, you also help the school plan for the coming year. We look forward to having all of our current families return in the Fall, in addition to attracting new students to our school!

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## Q&A with Principal Barry Zhang

*As the school year winds down, Barry Zhang reflects on his first year as principal of Sarasota Chinese Academy and makes plans for the fall semester. Barry has a daughter (age 14) and a son (age 7) at Sarasota Chinese Academy. With an education and professional background in engineering, systems design, and programming, Barry is originally from Wuhan, China, and has lived in the United States for 15 years.*



*Sarasota Chinese Academy Principal Barry Zhang  
at the February 2010 Chinese New Year Celebration.*

**Q: What was the school's greatest accomplishment in the past year?**

**A:** We made great progress in a few areas. First, we tried to establish standard materials and textbooks for each level. We still have more work to do in this area, but we got a good start. Second, we have filed the paperwork to become a 501(c) non-profit organization, and that process is well under way. That means we can solicit financial support from individuals and corporations, and even seek funds at the government level. We also have a new marketing brochure, which is a great tool to promote the school. This year enrollment was down, but we are still surviving. In this economy, that's an accomplishment.

For the coming year, we plan to do more fundraising, and more work on class programming that will benefit the students and keep them engaged and interested in learning. We will continue to work on improving communication between the school, the teachers, and the parents.

**Q: What is your greatest challenge?**

**A:** Our main challenge is to attract and keep students by meeting their expectations and the expectations of their parents. We recognize that there is a gap between students from Chinese-speaking families and students from English-speaking families. We need to provide effective education for both groups, and maintain the same standards. To do that, we may need to separate classes, but that requires more teachers and more classroom space to accommodate more levels of students. So the real challenge is, how do we meet the expectations of everyone within our capacity? One way to help students and parents from English-speaking families is by offering things such as online textbook companions so parents can help continue their children's education at home.

I know it's tough for English-speaking parents, as well as a challenge for everyone who has the pressures of work and other activities during the week. But parents need to get involved and encourage their children to practice so they can see growth. We can't expect immediate results. But keep learning a little bit every week and you will be surprised how much they can learn.

**Q: What special events do you have planned for next year?**

**A:** We will continue to support the Gulfcoast Chinese American Association (GCAA) by co-hosting the Mid-Autumn Festival and Chinese New Year celebrations. This is a small community, so we want to collaborate and work together to create events rather than compete with other organizations.

**Q: Do you have any changes planned for next semester?**

**A:** We are adding a Mommy & Me class geared toward young children ages 18 months to 3 1/2 years old. Currently, we accept children starting at age 3. We are planning a play-and-learn type of environment, only one hour long instead of two. The idea is to expose kids to Chinese language at a very young age, while they have a natural capacity to learn. Studies show there is a window of opportunity in which it's easier to learn languages before age 16. After that, the window in the brain begins to close. We may need to take advantage of that to expose kids earlier.

We have a great group of people who are actively involved in managing the school and looking for ways to improve our students' experiences here. I am looking forward to working with our parents and teachers to build a great Chinese school here in Sarasota, where our students can learn and grow.

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*Parents and SCA Board members shared ideas at the Parent Teacher Organization meeting in February.*

## **News from the PTO**

The SCA Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) met on Sunday, February 28, 2010. All SCA parents are members of the PTO, and are invited and encouraged to attend the meetings. If you were unable to join us, here's what you missed.

PTO President Nancy Milholland kicked off the meeting with tea, dumplings, and egg rolls delivered from Uncle Wen's China Express. Everyone enjoyed the delicious food as Nancy outlined the meeting agenda and invited each person to introduce themselves to the group.

Then Board of Directors member Lyle Bullock gave an update on the status of SCA's 501(c) filing, which will give the school non-profit status and open up the

potential for numerous revenue-generating activities. From there, the meeting covered several topics:

**Curriculum planning** - Nancy announced the formation of a Curriculum Committee, and David Bright was nominated as the new committee's chairman. The group discussed several topics regarding the current curriculum. One difficulty is with English-speaking families' inability to help their children practice when textbooks are not used or when audio is not provided. Another challenge is how to meet the expectations of Chinese-speaking families and students. One person suggested having more advanced students help students in the beginning levels, or even provide after-class tutoring. Student evaluations were also recommended, so teachers can communicate student progress and parents can ask questions. More cultural classes such as dance and art were also discussed as being attractive to some families, and ideas were discussed about extracurricular activities that might be more engaging to students and keep their attention while building on their Chinese language skills. To volunteer for the Curriculum Committee, please contact David Bright at [brightdavid@yaho.com](mailto:brightdavid@yaho.com) or Nancy Milholland at [ClearlyCreative@aol.com](mailto:ClearlyCreative@aol.com).

**Fundraising** - Several possibilities were raised to generate revenue for the school, including a yard sale (which was subsequently held on April 10 and raised \$150), a silent auction, a Chinese cultural and film series, and the possibility of teaming with the U.S. China Peoples Friendship Association or the Ringling Museum to host special events.

**Parent volunteers** - SCA is founded on the strength of its volunteers. The volunteer teachers give their time generously each weekend, and parents are asked to help out as well. Some ideas were discussed to encourage more parents to assist with fundraising, the Curriculum Committee, and the Clean-Up Committee, including possibly requiring parents to commit to a certain amount of volunteer time each semester. The importance of supporting our teaching staff and the establishment of a contract for parental involvement was discussed.

**Parent survey** - To inform decisions about curriculum and gauge the expectations of parents, the group discussed creating a survey that would be sent via email to every SCA family.

**Board openings** - Starting next semester, there is an open seat on the Board of Directors and an opening for a new Co-President of the PTO (Nancy has agreed to stay on as PTO president with the addition of a Co-President. The descriptions of these positions are listed below. If you are interested in serving, please contact Jeff Harris at [harri633@msu.edu](mailto:harri633@msu.edu) regarding the board position, and Nancy Milholland at [ClearlyCreative@aol.com](mailto:ClearlyCreative@aol.com) or 362-4740 regarding the PTO position.

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## SCA Teachers Meeting

On March 14, our school's hard-working volunteer teachers met to share ideas and discuss areas for enriching the experience of everyone involved in Sarasota Chinese Academy.

One change was implemented immediately after the meeting. To improve communication between the school and SCA parents, the teachers agreed to implement a weekly classroom report providing a summary of what was taught in

class that week, as well as notes on student behavior. These Notes to Parents are filled out by teachers for each student to take home after class, and are designed to provide information to parents regarding class material and homework.

Please take a moment to review these informative notes, sign in the space provided, and get involved by talking to your children about what they are learning in class every Sunday!

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## **Celebrate Dragon Boat Festival!**

The Gulfcoast Chinese American Association (GCAA) and friends will celebrate Dragon Boat Festival in a relaxed, family-style pot luck beach picnic at Coquina Beach, at the southern tip of Anna Maria Island in Bradenton.

**Location:** Scenic Coquina Beach, Bay Side Pavilion.

**Date and Time:** May 8, 2010, 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Park Location and Directions:**

<http://www.bestbeaches.org/annamariaislandmap/>



*Coquina Beach is located at the southern tip of Anna Maria Island in Bradenton.*

Each family is encouraged to bring a dish of food large enough for at least six servings. You can bring fresh fruit, salad, or any food of any nationality. GCAA will also have a cookout at our pavilion, providing freshly grilled hot dogs and hamburgers. GCAA will also provide water and soft drinks.

For those who enjoy fun under the sun, please do not forget to bring beach chairs, beach towels, hats, bathing suits, and sunscreen lotion.

For those who prefer shade and cool air, there are plenty of areas shaded by tall pine trees. A mangrove sanctuary is within walking distance.

Due to strict park rules, there will be no entertainers or performances this year. However, kayaks and life preservers will be provided if parents personally supervise children for safety.

Please RSVP to: Crystal Zhang, Secretary, GCAA, at "Xia Zhang" [xiacrystalzhang@yahoo.com](mailto:xiacrystalzhang@yahoo.com). Please include the following information in your email:

- Family name
- Number of adults and teenagers
- Number of children under 12
- The pot luck dish you plan to bring

We look forward to seeing you at this Spring Picnic to celebrate the late arrival of warm weather this year.

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