



Manigong Bagong Taon sa lahat – Happy New Year to everyone!

It is with great excitement and anticipation to announce the first ever Filipino Adoptees Network Gathering (FANG), which will be held August 7-10, 2008 in the woodlands of Fraser, Colorado. This upcoming event is a collaboration between the Filipino Heritage Camp (FHC) and the Filipino Adoptees Network (FAN), and will be held simultaneously with FHC's annual camp. The goal of FANG is to bring together adult Filipino adoptees to create cultural connections, to meet families with children from the Philippines, to mentor younger adoptees, and to enjoy the beautiful views of the Rocky Mountains.

During the summer of 2000, a group of concerned parents developed a weekend-long camp to teach their adopted children and themselves about the culture and the traditions of the Philippines. In that year, FHC hosted its first cultural camp for adoptees ranging in ages from preschool through 16 years old. Between seventeen and twenty families have attended FHC each year and have continually sought to expand the camp's scope to deepen their children's connection to their country of origin. In 2002 FHC invited The Filipino American Community of Colorado (FACC) to assist in the planning process and provide a cultural backdrop that would otherwise be lacking. FACC has enriched the camp by giving workshops on traditional dances of the Philippines, cooking Filipino cuisine, and teaching about Filipino language and customs.

Another initiative from the very beginning of FHC was to give the campers an opportunity to interact with and learn from adult Filipino adoptees. Every year adult adoptees have volunteered at the camp and participated in all of its activities, including a separate discussion panel for the adoptive parents. Adult adoptees offer a bridge to the future for younger adoptees by giving them direct interaction with positive role models to whom they can relate. The parents also gain insight about challenges their children may

face in the future or may already be facing but are still too young too articulate. We are an integral part of understanding, embracing and creating a supportive setting at the camp.

Scott Grant has been the dedicated director of FHC for the last 3 years. He shared his thoughts about what makes the camp so unique: “FHC provides a forum to explore both cultural and adoption needs while offering personal growth and self awareness for campers ranging from pre-school through high school, and the parents as well.” He explains, “The intimate size of camp is a great opportunity for all attendees to establish lasting friendships and to benefit from the strong support from FACC, who have a special sensitivity and understanding of adoption issues.” Scott also feels that the presence of adult adoptees is extremely important because they offer their own personal experience and can be a guiding light to the campers.

Typical camp activities include hiking, recreation play (including basketball and rollerskating), and team building exercises. The theme for FHC '08 is Passport to the Philippines where a few regions of the country are selected and highlighted throughout the weekend. Activities will include learning about the specific festivals, cuisine, crafts and language of those regions. Throughout the weekend the campers 'earn' Filipino pesos through educational activities related to the theme of the camp. These pesos can be used throughout the weekend to buy items at the Filipino store and to play games at the carnival, which takes place on the last night of the camp. At the carnival there is karaoke, dance dance revolution, other children's games and Filipino foods. A silent auction is also held with donated prizes that are specialty items from the families' hometowns.

The Filipino Adoptees Network (FAN) was founded in January of 2005 by two fellow adoptees and is the only existing cyber community specifically for adult Filipino adoptees. To date FAN has 56 registered members; 30 adoptees and 26 adoptive parents/others. The website offers articles on many aspects of Filipino culture, personal stories of adoption written by members, an extensive list of Filipino/Asian links, news links, a chatroom/monthly chats, along with message boards to name a few. FAN is excited to bring the new element of the adult adoptee gathering to FHC and forge an everlasting community and extended family of people touched by adoption. For more information please visit: <http://www.heritagecamps.org/filipino.html> and <http://www.filipino-adoptees-network.org>. FHC may be able to offer a minimal scholarship to cover some expenses for room and board if you would like to volunteer as a counselor. For those who only want participate in the camp, regular camp fees will apply. Programming for FANG will be announced in May/June 2008, so please visit FAN for updates or contact: lcrowder@filipino-adoptees-network.org with any questions.

We look forward to hearing from you and hopefully to see you this August!