

Subject: Interested in Chinese Language? Culture? Dance? Register by 9/2



The FCC-LI Chinese Heritage and Language Program invites you to join in the fun.

Registrations due by Sept 2

**Now Registering for the 2008-2009 Term
Signing up is easier than ever.**



Contact Us

heritageprogram@fccli.org

Danielle Gallagher
631-587-8239

Program Fees

\$375* / year for 1st Child
\$ 319* /year each additional
(%15 off)

\$ 325* / year - 1 hr
Toddler Class

Final Balance of Tuition for all students is due no later than Sept. 2nd, (*Cost includes 1 or both parents. One parent is REQUIRED, both are welcome.*)

Payments can be made by credit card online at www.fccny.org

[fccny.org](http://www.fccny.org)

(follow prompts for event registration)

- OR-

by check made payable to "FCCLI CH & LP" and submitted by mail to:

FCCLI -CH & LP

c/o Tobi Scherpich, Treasurer
2270 Elm Ave.
Ronkonkoma, NY

Register online at www.fccny.org and pay by credit card (in full)

OR

Print out our registration form and mail it in with a \$50 deposit

(Final balance due by Sept 2.)

About the Program

Since 1999, this group of dedicated adoptive families has gathered on Saturdays to help encourage an appreciation of Chinese Language, Heritage and Dance and Culture for their adopted, (and biological) children.

The program is unique in that is geared specifically for the needs of our community of families - - families who do not speak Mandarin at home, nor have extensive knowledge of Chinese culture and language. Another distinctive feature exclusive to our meetings is that children and their parents attend and participate together. As a result, our program fosters an environment that also functions as a support group for both parents and children alike.

Language skills are quickly acquired through songs, dance and games, and then as children gain experience, we progress to character recognition, reading, and writing. Stroke order is soon understood through an innovative approach of cutting and piecing together characters; a technique developed by our mentor, Ms. Man-Li Lin (which has since been implemented in programs and schools across the US and in China .)

Our program also provides an exposure to many cultural elements as well. Among these are Tai Chi, Shaolin Kung Fu and various styles of traditional dance. Our families are occasionally exposed to a variety of Chinese foods, and traditions not often found on Long Island . We encourage a positive connection to the Flushing Chinese-American Community and schedule seasonal visits to the many cultural opportunities available in the area. In short, our program provides a very unique and important opportunity for enrichment for our very unique and important families.

11779

Our Class Calendar

We will be posting a calendar of all scheduled classes next week.

We currently meet Saturdays at the Academy at St. Joseph's in Brentwood , NY . For more information please read this year's registration form or e-mail questions to us at heritageprogram@fccli.org.

[PRINT OUT REGISTRATION FORM PDF File \(requires Adobe\)](#)

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To learn more about Academy of St. Joseph visit them online at www.asjli.org

The following article was published in Newsday on August 24, 2008

The complete article can be viewed at:

http://www.newsday.com/services/newspaper/printedition/sunday/lilife/ny-lfmain5811011aug24_0,2433932.story

BRENTWOOD'S WELL-KEPT SECRET

The struggling Academy of St. Joseph looks for ways to continue its 152-year mission

BY BART JONES | bart.jones@newsday.com

August 24, 2008 Just a half-mile from some of Brentwood's gritty money-wiring shops, Latino bodegas and storefront churches, the Academy of St. Joseph has the feel of an elite New England prep school.

Tucked behind pine trees off Brentwood Road, the only all-girls high school in Suffolk County rises majestically amid a grassy 211-acre property whose long, winding entrance is graced by dogwoods. The four-story, European pale-brick-style academy boasts tall arches on each end and a red Spanish-style roof, crowned by a towering copper cupola holding a statue of St. Joseph.

The impressive architecture reflects the academy's rich history and what for decades was its "finishing school" aspect. Boarders from wealthy families in South America used to ride horses on the grounds to hone their equestrian skills. Inside, they descended winding staircases with plates on their heads to practice good posture. Paradoxically, the academy also took in orphans.

Adjacent to the school is an equally striking chapel with carved alabaster windows, marble floors and religious statues of women. Connected to that is the expansive Mother House, headquarters for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood - the largest order of sisters on Long Island.

Now this hidden gem - many people even in Brentwood are unaware of its existence - is struggling to stay open. The order says

declining numbers of sisters and the need to pay growing numbers of lay teachers sufficient salaries make operating the school increasingly difficult financially.

"We take it a year at a time," said Sister Eileen Kelly, the school's president. Closing "is always a possibility. It's always a question that the board is addressing" as it has been for a decade or so.

She said the school - founded in Brooklyn in 1856 and operating in Brentwood since 1903 - will remain open this academic year. After that, anything could happen. Ideally, she said, the sisters need a \$20-million endowment to keep it afloat into the near future, yet they have raised only a small fraction of that - \$300,000 in the last year, for instance.

The complex also includes a coed K-8 elementary school with 150 students. The school survives financially on fund-raising and tuition, which this year will be \$7,150 at the high school. The school's annual operating budget is \$2.3 million, although it receives some donated services.

No more boarding students

The academy, with its towering buildings and Old World atmosphere, has a storied past. In addition to the daughters of affluent families who sent them here from South America and Asia decades ago, it also has educated the offspring of some of Long Island's elites. They include the daughter of former Suffolk County executive Robert Gaffney.

Decades ago, the academy also was something of a sister school to all-male LaSalle Military Academy in Oakdale, whose students served as prom dates for the St. Joseph girls. LaSalle closed in 2001.

The number of boarding students from overseas began to decline at St. Joseph as the home countries erected more quality schools of their own. By the late 1970s the boarding operation shut down, and the academy turned into a day school only. Rows of partitioned sleeping areas remain on a dusty fourth floor, like a would-be museum exhibit.

Today, the academy's student body still includes the children of doctors and lawyers, as well as a small number of international students who left their families behind in Korea.

But increasingly the school is drawing students from less affluent, mainly black and Latino, families in Brentwood, Central Islip, Bay Shore and Wyandanch who want an alternative to public schools.

The transformation has created a diverse student body that is 28 percent black, 20 percent Latino, 44 percent white and 8 percent Asian. Many students speak warmly of the school, saying the single-gender atmosphere gives them the freedom to be themselves and not

worry about impressing boys.

"I wouldn't want to raise my hand and ask a stupid question" in a coed high school, said Megan Hamill, 18, of Bayport, who graduated in June and is headed to Juniata College in Pennsylvania.

Academically, the sisters contend, the school is holding its own. Everyone in last year's graduating class of 55 was accepted to college. They won \$4.5 million in scholarships, and were accepted to institutions including Bryn Mawr, the U.S. Air Force Academy and New York University.

One graduate from the class of 2007, Yoke-Mun Sung, now 19, won a full scholarship to Harvard University and will be a sophomore this fall.

"We are thriving spiritually and educationally, but we are struggling financially," Kelly said. "Catholic schools are closing everywhere ... and without some real intervention, I don't see how we could survive."

A friend indeed

The academy's diversity and reputation as a place where special relationships are forged is captured by the story of Eunjie Lee. Two years ago she arrived from Korea and spoke "some English," she recalls, "but nobody could understand me." When other students asked her name, she would say, "Yes."

Early in the school year, one of the nuns asked in class if she had any friends. The sophomore said she didn't.

Liza Copla, a Brentwood native who had attended the academy since pre-K, decided to act. She told Lee to sit next to her.

Now, as they enter their senior year, the two girls remain best friends. In May, Lee, who goes by "Angela" at the school, was elected senior class president for the upcoming school year. She and Copla do musical duets together, with Copla singing and Lee playing the piano.

Lee is part of a new program at the academy that has brought about a dozen students directly from Korea to study and live here. The program was started two years ago after a private Korean organization looking for an all-girls school where its students could learn English saw the St. Joseph Web site.

Most of the students live in a house in Dix Hills rented by the Korean organization and study during the day at St. Joseph. The initiative is the latest development in an institution that has often had an international flavor - but which also had a humble beginning.

After a request from the bishop of Brooklyn looking for help in



educating poor children in his diocese, two nuns moved there from Philadelphia and one from Buffalo. A week after they arrived in 1856, they opened the school in the same building where they lived. At night, they rolled out cots in the classrooms to sleep.

They later moved the school to Flushing, and by the turn of the century the order bought the sprawling piece of land in Brentwood. At the time, it was home to the Austral Hotel used by wealthy vacationers.

Construction on the school started in 1901. The adjacent chapel and Mother House were completed by 1930.

For decades, the academy thrived. But the declining numbers of sisters in the order - from a peak of about 2,000 in the 1960s to 700 today - is making it harder to keep afloat.

Sisters once made up the entire staff. Now, they account for only 18 of the 60 full- and part-time workers, academy president Kelly said. The rest are lay people, many with families to support.

Need for more lay teachers

The situation is unlikely to reverse itself. The median age of sisters in the order is 73. Just one novice has entered in the past five years, said Sister Jean Amore, the head of the congregation.

The academy must struggle for its share of the order's financial resources, which are devoted to a variety of ministries ranging from lawyers who work with immigrants to missionaries who labor in Brazil and the Dominican Republic.

The school is trying various tactics to raise money to keep itself afloat. The sisters sponsor a fundraising golf outing each year, and have started consulting marketing experts on how to raise far more.

The academy's elementary school is getting assistance from the Tomorrow's Hope Foundation, a private group that dispenses scholarships of up to \$2,000 a year to students in Catholic elementary schools to help offset tuition costs. But the program does not extend to high schools.

Even as the academy brainstorms its financial future, the sisters who lead it are philosophical. They feel they and their order have done good work - and God's work - for more than a century and half, and that is an accomplishment regardless of the academy's fate.

Amore said the congregation's goal "isn't to maintain ourselves or even survive. Our purpose is to live in the time we are in as fully as we can and as faithfully as we can."

Meanwhile, the academy, poised to start its 153rd year, remains a powerful influence on the generations of women who passed through its halls.

One recent alumna, Rachel Ferrara, 19, of North Babylon, strolled those wide hallways last May for a return visit - her second of the year.

"I miss it," said Ferrara, now a sophomore at Farmingdale State College. "This school is like no other school. It's an easy place to love."

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