



Personal items are stored from floor to ceiling in many SRO apartments that average 8 x 10 feet. The hallways are used for storage, play space for the children, and for hanging clothes.

SRO FAMILIES MINISTRY

It's hard to imagine a family of four living in an 8 x 10-foot apartment and sharing a bathroom and kitchen with their neighbors, but there are over 400 families living in these small Chinatown/North Beach rooms. When Jeanette tried to describe the living conditions to her husband, she pointed at their 8' x 11' area rug in the dining room and said "this rug is larger than one of those apartments". They stood side by side on the rug and felt at that moment how crowded and frustrating it must be.

The high rents in San Francisco have forced many immigrant families to live in these SRO (single-room occupancy) buildings. There are high concentrations of these buildings in Chinatown, the Tenderloin, the Mission district, and South of Market. Most of the families are on waiting lists for affordable housing but the wait is long for an available unit. Section 8 subsidies are currently not being offered in the city of San Francisco.

Some things that we take for granted in our homes don't exist in many of these buildings – microwave ovens aren't allowed because the wiring is so old that they blow fuses; many kitchens only have a two-burner cooktop and no ovens – tenants wait in line to cook their dinner; these rooms are classified as hotel rooms so owners are not required to install mail boxes for the tenants and mail gets tossed around in the stairwell; the children come home from school and cannot find a quiet place to study.

And, what's even worse are the rents! If you were to move into one of these SRO buildings today, you will be charged at least \$600 a month.

Chinatown Community Development Center has been providing services to SRO families since 2006. They asked the Mission & Evangelism Committee of PCC for help with a large meeting space once a month and volunteers for childcare. The committee agreed, and recruited PCC members to volunteer.

On the first Tuesday of the month the families gather in Speer Hall and the Henry Tom Room for a light dinner. The children rush through eating so they can run downstairs to the basement to play, watch a movie or work on a craft project. The parents meet with CCDC staff and hear presentations on various topics related to health, safety, family care, and education. Their April meeting introduced the parents to yoga and stretching exercises. The mothers thoroughly enjoyed this time of respite.

The program initially included 12 families and childcare took place in the Mae Wong Room. The number of participants steadily increased and the childcare had to move downstairs to the basement. Our volunteers include Scott Barlow, Pat Chan, Marie Chin and Wayne Eng, Alton Chinn, Sharlene Hall, Jeanette Huie, Alena Ja, Damon Jang, Pamela Jang and Keith Jew, Terry and Lianne Leong, Marc Minemoto, Jeanne Quock, Susie Wong, George and Mei Yee. After a light dinner, volunteers work from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Susie Wong says "It's a real joy to see the kids' faces light up as they get started playing with all the toys and games. Mei is all kindness as she watches over the babies busying themselves with blocks and dolls. Pam and Marie always seem to have a new craft for the older kids. Everyone pitches in to play ping pong with one of the middle school boys because he speedily wears us all out! It's fun, and we know that their parents are trying hard to better their lives as we play with their kids downstairs."

The hospitality and friendship provided by PCC volunteers to immigrant families is an important mission of our church and demonstrates Christ's love and compassion to the world. This program could be strengthened if we had someone who can **lead an activity for the children** or **conduct a workshop for the parents**. *Can this be you?*

Contact any member of the Mission & Evangelism Committee: Scott Barlow, Rev. Norman Fong, Sharlene Hall, Jeanette Huie, Cynthia Joe, Gilbert Lee, Marc Minemoto, Irene Young Ng or one of the volunteers listed above if you can participate!

*A periodic publication of the Mission & Evangelism Committee - Irene Young Ng, chair
Written by Jeanette Huie.*