



people on the move

Lin Fong-O'Neill

MAKING A DIFFERENCE
FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Many people have a passion for something deep within their souls but can't express it. That's not the case for author Lin Fong-O'Neill. This Colts Neck resident has "come a long way" in the most literal sense. Having moved from China to the "land of the free and the home of the brave" at the young age of 17, O'Neill learned very quickly how to adapt and deal with cultural diversity and life's challenges. First stop – Harlem in New York City. That was the first place she called home when she arrived in America, and two weeks later she landed her first job in the mailroom at J.P. Morgan Chase in Manhattan. O'Neill persevered and eventually worked her way up the corporate ladder, spearheading global projects. A special committee was formed at this large corporation, to deal with diversity issues in the workplace, and Lin was tapped to offer her assistance from the experience she had gained to promote awareness and help implement company policy.

In 2001, O'Neill decided to take a career turn. She embraced what she had learned dealing with cultural diversity in the corporate world and decided to embark on a different journey – contributing articles to newspapers and magazines and writing children's books. That is where Lin Fong-O'Neill has put her passion for teaching the world to "sing in perfect harmony" into words. Her first work, "Mommy, Why?," was published in 2005, and teaches young children the importance of living with people from all cultural backgrounds. Her next book, "Daddy, Why?," is a story about a family who takes part in a trans-racial adoption of a 7-year-old girl. This story teaches that we can always find room in our hearts for more love, regardless of age, appearance, or race. O'Neill's latest story is the first of her new 12-book series that will include

each animal of the Chinese Zodiac. "Tiger! Tiger! Tail on Fire!" offers children the chance to identify with their fears of taking on someone bigger and stronger than themselves. The

STATS

FAVORITE RESTAURANT: Ruth's Chris Steak House

FAVORITE MUSICIANS: I like too many...Bruce Springsteen, Ella Fitzgerald, Rod Stewart are just a few

FAVORITE MOVIE: The Wings of the Dove

PET PEEVE: People talking loud on cell phones in public places

THREE PEOPLE YOU WOULD LIKE TO HAVE DINNER WITH: Andrew Lloyd Webber, Stephen King, and Ellen DeGeneres

important lesson here is that you are as "big" as you feel; the young girl uses her "smarts" and learns that she can, indeed, conquer her challenge. A portion of the proceeds from Lin's book sales will benefit the Friends of the Colts Neck Library. She says she intends to complete one book a year, over the next 12 years; "Pig" is her next project. In the meantime, something she would really like to accomplish is to one day write a screenplay.

O'Neill is also true to her word on her personal commitment to the cause of bringing people together. As a frequent guest of Families with Children from China – Monmouth/Ocean divisions – and the Monmouth and Ocean County Adoption Support Group, she attends meetings to bathe herself in a sea of love for our future generations, which hopefully will be blind to

race and color. She's also a member of the International Women's Writing Guild, the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators, and the Association of Booksellers for Children. Her love of children and desire to do her part is what keeps her motivated. This ambitious writer often takes her books on the road, so to speak. She can be found in classrooms throughout New Jersey, sharing life's lessons and promoting the belief that "difference is good."

When this inspired lady isn't at home working on her latest literary project, she might be found anywhere around the globe. Whether it's snorkeling at the Great Barrier Reef in Australia or traipsing through the rain forests of Costa Rica, Lin takes it all in and draws from the diversity of the world to enhance the meaning in her works. She hopes to teach, through her writing, that we can all get along no matter our race, religion, disabilities, weaknesses, or appearance.

In her spare time, Lin also enjoys gardening and taking care of her koi pond, where she grows a type of lotus flower known as the water lily. She explains that, in Chinese, her name "Lin" means lotus flower – a white flower that is grown in black mud but stays pure; hence, she named her website www.lotuswriting.com.

O'Neill has three grown children and has called Colts Neck her home for 14 years, residing here with her hot rod enthusiast hubby, Ben, and their two beloved cats, Maxi and Tommy. *—by Gayle Davis*

Are you or someone you know in Colts Neck a "Person on the Move"? If you've got a story to tell this could be you! E-mail a brief description to us at info@livinginmedia.com and let us know who you are.