

FOUNDATION FOR **Health**

SUTTER
PALO ALTO
MEDICAL
FOUNDATION
EDITION
FALL 2024



Generosity Advances Innovation at Sutter Health

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“We want to find partners conducting meaningful work that shows impact over time.”

—PING CHAO

BUSINESS MINDS, GIVING HEARTS

Sitting down to speak with Ping and Amy Chao about their eponymous family foundation, you hear two slightly different versions of how their philanthropic legacy began. Both agree that when Ping retired in 2005 from a successful career in the electronic design automation (EDA) industry, his entrepreneurial spirit influenced what came next. But they disagree on how they selected their first grantee.

Ping says it was a “random encounter” that led them to start Little Red Scarf, a program that funds surgeries for children with congenital heart disease living in the poor, rural Gansu province in Northwest China, near Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia.

Amy sees it differently. “He says our philanthropy is by chance, but it is our calling,” she explains. “When Ping retired, I prayed that, together, we could do something meaningful. One day at our church we heard a mom’s story about the suffering of thousands of children in this one remote province in China.”

Amy knew right then that they’d found their first project and philanthropic focus: healthcare and educational opportunities for people in disadvantaged regions of the world. Although the mom from church had lost her child despite coming to the U.S. for surgery, her pleas for funding to help other families like hers were now being answered.

Two short weeks later, Ping and Amy travelled to Gansu. There, they began laying the groundwork for a successful partnership with three regional hospitals in Lanzhou to cover the entire cost of surgeries for underserved sick children.

Paul Kitagaki Photography





Ping and Amy Chao celebrate another successful surgery through their Little Red Scarf program.

On that first trip, Amy saw a 5-year-old child who had congenital heart disease. “She looked so frail because her family could not afford the surgery and had waited too long,” she says. “These children look purple because their circulation and cardiac function is so poor. Amazingly, right after surgery, they are back to a healthy pink—even that 5-year-old.”

Fifteen years later, the Ping and Amy Chao Family Foundation has helped 1,700 children receive surgery. Ping says it is very rewarding to see those who had been very sick now thriving, playing and having fun at the program’s annual summer camp for survivors.

But the Chaos’ impact doesn’t stop there. Along with training local physicians and building the Lanzhou hospital into a center of excellence for congenital heart disease, the foundation’s partnership with academia and government agencies has enhanced social welfare programs and farmers’ insurance for the children’s low-income rural families, which covers up to 80% of the cost.

This extended benefit satisfies Ping’s business objectives as well, making him feel comfortable turning the program over to local entities down the road.

Successful Career Informs Philanthropy

Ping started his first company at 30 years old, in the infancy of EDA, creating design automation tools that became essential for the semiconductor industry. After earning a master’s degree in electrical engineering and computer science from the University of California, Berkeley, he and Amy moved to the heart of Silicon Valley, where he started Cadence Design Systems and two other successful EDA companies.

Ping admits that when they launched the Ping and Amy Chao Family Foundation, philanthropy was foreign to them. But Amy’s decades of community service and volunteering paired with Ping’s high-tech business experience gave them a solid jumping-off spot. Every year since starting Little Red Scarf, Ping and Amy have tried to find 10 to 15 philanthropic projects that they can stick with for at least 10 years.

“We don’t give money and walk away,” Ping says. “We want to find partners conducting meaningful work that shows impact over time. I want a \$1 investment to have a \$10 impact.”

Another pivotal project is their foundation’s partnership with the Stanford Asian Liver Center. The center’s founding doctor, Samuel So, M.D., wanted to vaccinate 500,000 children in the Qinghai province of China against hepatitis B, the leading cause of liver cancer worldwide.

The group successfully completed those vaccinations by 2008. Since then, Dr. So has continued working with academia and the Chinese government, resulting in a new government policy to provide hepatitis B vaccinations nationwide.

Making an Impact Locally

After partnering on projects in Nepal, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, China and Vietnam, the Chaos are now focused on making an impact closer to home. Recently, Ping and Amy contributed a \$2 million gift to the Sutter Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF) infusion center expansion at the Michael and Judith Gaulke Center in Palo Alto.

“We have both received excellent care from PAMF physicians, so I asked my son, who is also a PAMF doctor, how we could show our appreciation,” Amy explains. “After methodically evaluating different philanthropic priorities at PAMF, we chose to support this project to help more patients receive infusion services close to home.”

Considering the family’s positive experiences with PAMF, plus the organization’s reputation for caring for our local communities, “it made good business sense for our foundation to become a philanthropic partner,” Ping adds.

The Chaos also want to promote a spirit of philanthropy and raise awareness of nonprofit and service opportunities for Asian Americans. Transparent Fish Fund, launched in Palo Alto in 2011 by the couple’s close friends, is a strategic partner to their family foundation. Jointly, the two teams have gathered resources and expertise from their community of first-generation Asian immigrants and friends to systematically select and fund meaningful philanthropic opportunities.

“Together, we can make a greater impact than if we stand alone,” Ping concludes.

If you are interested in supporting cancer care excellence at PAMF, contact Joni Block at joni.block@sutterhealth.org.

49%↑

annual cancer cases

PAMF Infusion Center Expansion Enhances Healing

The number of cancer cases in the U.S. will increase 49% by 2050, with the largest jump among adults aged 75 and older. At Sutter Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF), patient demand for infusion treatments is expected to climb 13% per year.

31%↑

PAMF patient treatments

The \$5.8 million infusion center expansion at PAMF’s Palo Alto campus will enable an estimated 31% more patient visits, cutting wait times in half. Additional infusion chairs and a redesigned space will create a more spacious, soothing environment for patients.