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## IFE celebrates 8th West Coast Civic Tech Brunch

*Spotted: Mary Anne Cook, Robert Cook, Eric Daimler, Ross Dakin, John Paul Farmer, Joshua Di Frances, Amy Geng, Coach Kathy Kemper, Johnny Martin, Kimberly McManus, Todd Park, Clara Tsao, Kimberly Twombly-Wu, Christina Kemper Valentine, Huiming Wen, Scott Wu, Pia Zaragoza*

On February 12, 2022, IFE returned to Silicon Valley for the first time since the pandemic for its 8th Annual IFE West Coast Brunch. The event was safely held with a guest list capped to an intimate group of new local PIFs and close IFE friends, and everyone self-tested prior to entry. Long-time IFE friends Kimberly Twombly-Wu and Scott Wu, former PIF '13, and their gorgeous Bernese mountain dog Z, graciously welcomed guests to their beautiful, newly renovated contemporary home with spectacular rooftop views of Fort Mason, the Golden Gate Bridge, and sparkling San Francisco Bay.

KT Wu kicked off the event by asking everyone to introduce themselves, give their (previous) affiliation with civic tech, and state what they were currently doing. The co-founders of the Presidential Innovation Fellows program, Todd Park, former US-CTO and current Devoted Health chairman, and John Paul Farmer, former senior advisor to the White House and NYC-CTO, together expressed happiness and gratitude that civic tech has continued to grow exponentially over the past decade, to include those present who are still serving today.

Scott Wu thanked IFE and Coach Kathy Kemper for their work in Washington, saying that the events that he attended with the group were among the most memorable during his tenure in D.C. Wu also thanked Park and Farmer for bringing "not only the vision but unparalleled inspiration" and reinventing civic tech in the government. Wu then spoke from the heart and gave a moving tribute to Jim Valentine, co-founder of IFE and a strong believer of the values of civic discourse and collaboration, who passed away close to one year ago. Wu related to the audience that Valentine had served in the Vietnam War and was later stationed at Fort Mason. On that sunny day with clear blue skies, this was especially poignant as Fort Mason is situated directly next to their home, and from the rooftop, the views spanned its historic buildings and verdant lawns clear to the San Francisco Bay and beyond.

Amy Geng, IFE Innovation Steward, gave a brief history of the special relationship between the PIF program and civic tech, and the Institute for Education, explaining that it all began when her spouse, Todd Park, was tapped to work on healthcare.gov and the Affordable Care Act during the Obama administration. The new 2013 PIF class needed to be onboarded, and Coach Kemper, living up to the name Mayor of Civic Tech, stepped in to welcome them to Washington D.C., introducing the group of tech and innovation fellows to the D.C. and diplomatic community.

Touched by the kind words, Coach Kemper expressed her appreciation, but then went on to say, "I'd like to flip the sentiments to say thank \*you\* for all that you have brought to me, the Institute for Education, and D.C. Prior to this, technology and innovation were not prominent discussion material. You all have created such a vibrant community and have really been among the first to bring to the table leading-edge, groundbreaking subjects such as IoT and AI to the Washington D.C. and international community."

The civic tech group later expanded to include Wu's former USAID coworkers, and the afternoon was filled with laughter and animated conversation. Looking forward, a new cohort of PIFs will be joining in the Spring of 2022, when the U.S. government will begin to transition out of remote work. IFE will be busy welcoming them, including hosting a dinner in March to introduce incoming to former PIFs, other civic tech officials, and the diplomatic community, all of whom are excited by the tantalizing prospect of being in-person again.

IFE is grateful to Scott and Kimberly for graciously opening their home and providing a gourmet spread of delicious homemade vegetarian strata made with Beyond Meat, acclaimed Dim Sum, and fresh local fruits.

~Contributed by Abby Tcheng | IFE Civic Tech Intern