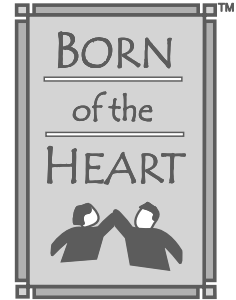


Families with Children from China—NW Presents:

Little Treasures



September-2009

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Letter from FCC President Lara Peterson:



It's back to school time, and I'm already trying to remember the great summer activities I enjoyed with my daughters. Sometimes we move too fast to remember where we have been. For my family, it was our annual trip to Wyoming, with hiking, finding new hot springs, rafting, reading, and enjoying time together.

FCC NW also had an amazing summer. We had another successful year at our annual Heritage Camp, led by Terri Jaensen and Stacy Choi. Camp was outstanding once again, with great speakers, great performances, and always good fellowship with fellow FCC families.

This summer we had our first Teen Tour to China, organized by Tian Kitsch, Julia Tombari and Deb Tombari. I want to brag about our teens – not only our two board members – but all who were involved. Both teens and parents worked tirelessly in order to pull the trip together. I really hope that you take the time to read in depth about the trip, and the great work that was done by our teens and parents. Our goal is for this trip to be offered every other year, so we are already working at a 2011 Teen Trip group kickoff early next year. If you want more information, would like to assist with the program, or have ideas, feel free to contact me or Deb Tombari.

This fall we have our Autumn Moon Festival celebration in October. I encourage everyone who can attend to come enjoy the dinner, time with families, and entertainment for the night. We plan on moving this event each year to different parts of the Seattle area to encourage broader attendance. This year we will be hosting on the Eastside and you will be able to preorder your tickets. Please visit our website at www.fcc-nw.com for complete information.

Looking further ahead, Chinese New Year is around the corner. With it comes the new fiscal year for FCC NW. We are a volunteer led organization, and we are always seeking members with enthusiasm, ideas and a willingness to share their talents to join our board of directors – either in a formal or informal manner. Anyone who is interested should contact me.

Enjoy the fall, and I look forward to seeing you at the Autumn Moon Festival!

Next

Issue Deadline:

January 1, 2010

Please send in any
submissions to
Newsletter Editor

Gemma Alexander at
gemma2003@yahoo.com



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Find even more information by checking out our website!

www.fcc-nw.com

UPCOMING FCC EVENTS

Movie Screening—Adopted

Tuesday, September 22 at 7 pm at Wallingford Presbyterian church. 1414 N. 42nd St. Seattle 98103

Moon Festival Celebration—October 3, 2009

This year's Moon Festival Celebration will be held on Saturday, **October 3rd** at Cascade Garden restaurant, conveniently located off of I-90 at 1580 NW Gilman Blvd. in Issaquah. We are planning for another fun-filled evening of great food and fabulous entertainment. Tickets are available in advance through Brown Paper Ticket online, \$20 adult/\$15 child. Visit FCC-NW online for details.

<http://www.fcc-nw.com/>

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL at ECKSTEIN MIDDLE SCHOOL FEBRUARY 7, 2010

Celebrate the Year of the Tiger with FCC-NW! There will be lots of activities and fun to share with friends and family. Information about the festival will be mailed to all FCC members in January. ■



The Youth Board Members and teens who participated in the China Trip would like to extend



Special Thanks

to:

Lara Peterson and the Board of FCC Northwest
Debra Tombari and Ken Kisch

OCDF [Our Chinese Daughters Foundation]

Laurie Robinson, Roger Talkov, Linda Cooper,
Jean Engelhardt, Julie Johnson, Nancy Joseph,
Judith Pierce, John Walter, Laurie Robinson
[chaperones]

Our Chinese Daughters Foundation

Youth Board Members Julia Tombari and Tian Kisch drew from many resources to put the Teen China Trip together. Our Chinese Daughters Foundation (OCDF) helped them make the trip arrangements.

OCDF was founded in 1995 by Dr. Jane Liedtke, a professor at Illinois State University and mother of an adopted Chinese daughter (1994 from Jiangmen Social Welfare Institute).

OCDF, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with offices in Beijing and the U.S., provides Chinese culture programs for children, families, and the wider community, as well as travel programs and orphan support projects throughout China.

*Find out more about OCDF from
their web page*

<http://www.ocdf.org/>

TEEN CHINA TRIP DIARIES

Tian Kisch & Julia Tombari



As our Boeing 777 soared over the Pacific Ocean, all we could do was stare out the window at the beautiful collage of white and blue. We couldn't believe that the day was finally here. After almost two years of planning, we were on our way to China!

Back to China.

The opportunity for this trip did not exactly land at our feet. We had emailed Lara Peterson, the President of FCC-NW, inquiring about volunteering for the organization. She emailed us back, saying that she would love to have us as Youth Board Members. In November of 2007, we met for the first time at a Starbucks in Bellevue, before our very first Board meeting. We talked over lattes and mochas, and found that we had a lot in common. We'd both taken Mandarin classes, were highly motivated students, and aspired to one day attend a school that offered a strong international relations program. We also wanted to go back to China one day.

We took this idea to the Board at our very first meeting, and they absolutely loved it. It was a very radical idea for FCC-NW, and they were impressed that two girls, 12 and 15, were suggesting such an ambitious venture. We would not be going to China if it were not for the support and guidance of the Board.

Of course, it took more than just us announcing that we wanted to go to China. This trip took extensive planning, countless meetings, and innumerable hours of hammering out details. In the early months of 2009, it looked like the trip was well on its way as a group of Chinese-adopted teens and parents slowly took shape. Eleven teenage girls and nine of their parents began to pack their bags as summer approached, and none of us could wait for the day our flight departed.

Now that the trip is over, the four Youth Board Members who went on the first FCC-NW China Trip have quite a bit to say. We kept journals that we wrote in as we traveled through China, and we've decided to share our thoughts and feelings about each city.

(Continued on page 4)



Leaving San Francisco

TEEN CHINA TRIP DIARIES

(Continued from page 3)



First Half of Beijing

Mai Burke

Saturday, July 18th, 2009

Amazingly fast, the FCC-NW teen volunteer trip to China, organized through Our Chinese Daughters Foundation (OCDF) has arrived after months of anticipation. Driving to the airport at 4:00 a.m. felt surreal as my apprehension grew. It's unbelievable that after sixteen years, I am finally returning to my birthplace. I am thrilled to go to a foreign country and view the culture and daily life there. Traveling without my parents adds to the excitement. I cannot wait to play with and hold the children. This experience will definitely be a memorable one, and I hope I take a lot from it.

At Seatac, we exchanged our secret buddy gifts, which was a cool idea. While sitting tight until boarding time, every volunteer got to know each other better. Everyone seemed really excited and fun to be around. We were flying to San Francisco first, about a two hour flight, and then from there, flying to Beijing.

We arrived in San Francisco around 8:00 in the morning. I bonded more with the girls during the down time between flights. All the teens are sweet and rooming with them will be entertaining. Several of us bought food to keep us content on the next plane. At about 10:00 a.m., we all boarded the long flight that would take us to our final destination.

On the plane, everyone got comfortable. Some people switched seats so that the teens were sitting relatively close together. After a couple of pre-trip events plus five traveling hours, all the girls had connected on different levels - even with ages ranging from 13 to 17 years old. We already were pretty close friends.

Once settled in, I had conversations with several people on the trip. It was interesting hearing their stories. In addition, movies played on repeat during the flight. Most girls watched one movie multiple times. By the end, we had memorized lines and scenes. We were served meals that lived up to airplane food standards. However, for a majority of the time, everybody slept.

After ten extensive hours, I was able to look out the window and see my homeland. Then at 1:55 p.m. Beijing

time, the plane landed. Our twelve hour flight had finally ended.

At the airport, our group went through a temperature screening because of the threat of H1N1. One of the girls got taken behind curtains to be individually screened. We then went through customs and met up with our OCDF guide, Li Bing. She will be our guide for the whole trip. The group followed her through the airport, and as soon as I stepped outside of the air-conditioned airport, I was hit with hot, humid air. I was in China! However, I strangely did not feel like I was in a completely different country. I guess I was there physically, but not mentally; my mind just needed time to catch up.

We got onto our tour bus and drove through the city to our hotel. Beijing looks very Western and modernized. Skyscrapers line the horizon and cars fill the streets. Although it's very urban, parks and trees are left. And unfortunately, a haze hangs in the air most of the time due to the pollution problem.

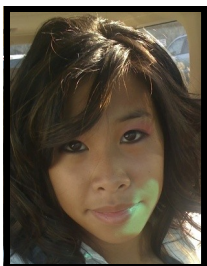
We drove down streets lined with shops, which are most likely individually owned. Our driver dropped us off on the side of a busy street and we followed Bing down a hutong, or alley. Our hotel was located in a local area, not some tourist place, so we walked past living areas and small shops. It was interesting to see the contrast in living styles between people in America and people in China. Houses are quite small and tightly built next to each other. There are community bathrooms with a toilet known as a pit. I've learned that people here are used to tight proximities and small personal bubbles. Not much is kept private when your underwear is hung outside for the world to see and individual bathrooms do not have doors on them.

Today has been fun but exhausting. It's amazing being here, and everything is new and fascinating.



Arriving in Beijing

Second Half of Beijing



Emily Talkov

Tuesday, July 21st, 2009

It is finally July 21st and we all went to Agape Foster Home which fosters brittle bone children. We were greeted with big smiles and kindness from Keith and Cheryl Wyse, the founders of Agape. They had adopted two twin daughters who have brittle bone disease and decided to open a foster home. Recently they adopted another little girl named Lydia who also has brittle bone disease. I immediately connected with her. During the first day at the foster home Lydia showed me around the complex while the others got a tour from Keith. She is very talkative and not once did she stop for a long breath of air between sentences.

When I joined back up with the group they were at the foster home's bakery called "Bread of Life." Keith and Sherrill set up the bakery for the older orphans to gain work experience prior to leaving the foster home. Personally I thought the idea was genius. I never would have even thought of something that smart. Keith explained how these teens would have something to put onto their resume if they ever want another job, which is brilliant. Anyway, after the tour we split up into two groups, yard work and playing with the children. I went to play with the children. Lydia really wanted me to push her in her toy bike so I did. She kept saying faster, faster, faster so I pushed her faster not wanting to make her unhappy. But when we passed her mom she told me to push her slower because she is more fragile than other children her age. That is when it finally hit me that all those children are so fragile and it must be hard. So we continued to walk around the yard, much slower, back to the old home.

When I first walked into the old home I sat down in this big arm chair looking around. After a few minutes this little boy named Gino smiled at me with a chess set in his hand and put it on the table. I unfolded it and we separated the black and white pieces together. After a few games I realized that he always wanted to use the white pieces and that he was a very smart little boy. I

never won one game. Either he beat me right away or it ended up with me moving my king around the board as he chased it with all his pieces. Then we said our good-byes to the children and told them we would see them tomorrow.

We headed to lunch at a local restaurant. As we all walked in the doors we saw cooked snakes and other interesting foods that seemed foreign to us. When we



Hutong alley where the group stayed in Beijing

finished lunch we drove to Philip Hayden Foster Home. There were kittens all around the buildings hiding in bushes and playing in the grass. This foster home was really nice and colorful with many buildings/houses full of children. The children at this foster home ranged from really severe and less severe diseases. First we were told the story of how the foster home was started and we toured the grounds. After our tour we split up on our own going in 3 different houses of orphans. In the first house I visited there was this one little boy with disease that gave him a really big head. Maybe you would think its odd but he was one of the cutest little boys and he even was able to have conversations with Tian in Chinese.

Since this foster home was so big and there were so many volunteers and children it was harder to connect with specifically one kid in a short amount of time, especially because I wanted to see everything and spend equal time in each place.

When we got outside there were some kids out in the grass on blankets. We sat with them and played. One little boy grabbed me as I was sitting down and Mai and I walked with him around the Hands



Rachelle and Rebekah Wyse

(Continued on page 6)

TEEN CHINA TRIP DIARIES

(Continued from page 5)

Second Half of Beijing



Lanfen Kaplan with baby Justin

of Hope wall, tiles that have hand prints of past orphans and some even have little messages on them with their adopted parents messages. Some of those hands were so tiny it was adorable and we would go around finding all the tiny hands and reading messages. When we left Philip Hayden Foster home I felt that it was a really nice and caring place for the kids to live and they were really lucky to be raised in such a fortunate

foster home. Well that's all for today, I can't wait to go back to Agape tomorrow for the full day!

Wednesday, July 22nd, 2009

Today we went to Agape for the whole day and accomplished a lot of work. When I got there it was time to get down to business. We split into work groups. Lanfen, Amy, Tian, Nancy Joseph, and I were in the kitchen group. So we walked to the new house's kitchen in our blue and yellow gloves with rags, buckets and mop and were ready to work. Well I thought that the kitchen wouldn't be that hard but I was definitely mistaken. The silver steel cabinets on the wall and on the ground were really hard to wash on the inside since they had sharp corners and sides. After washing and drying the cabinets for some time I decided it would be fun to pick up the mop and wash the walls. That was way more fun and less painful since I didn't have to awkwardly bend over. During this hard long job the buckets had to keep being refilled since the water would turn grey really fast. Since we weren't exactly water conservative the floor was soaked. Then finally it was time for lunch so we dropped our rags took a look at what we had accomplished. I thought it was amazing how much cleaner the kitchen was and I was proud.

For lunch we ordered pizza from their bakery which was delicious. YUMMY!!! Oh and the carrot cake was the best ever and the brownies were great too!

After lunch we changed jobs and I was off to play with

the kids. When I walked in, all the kids were folding paper stars. So I attempted to make one and that failed. Then I watched Gino play chess with Amy. In the middle of the game Lydia walked in and pulled me away to walk around outside with her. After our walk she showed me how she checks her email on the computer. It was so cute and she really was into everything she was saying. So if I turned around for even one second she would tell me to pay attention and show me how to type with her! She is really smart for her age and knew anything and everything if anyone wanted to know where something was or how to do something around the foster home. One time when a group of us were on the swing she went behind and tried to push 5 of us and we laughed because we thought it was adorable. But apparently she did not like the laughing so she would tell us to stop laughing and that it wasn't funny. It was adorable.

While we went back in to check her email the other teens were helping the children practice writing, spelling and speaking English. Leaving Lydia at the computer focused on her "email" I went to help the others teach English, correcting little spelling mistakes the others didn't see. I felt useful and after talking with the others they felt really good about it too. But overall I feel that bonding with Lydia was the highlight of the day for me and that we really had a connection. I will always remember that little girl with her big personality.



Emily Talkov with Lydia Photo by Roger Talkov

Thursday, July 23rd, 2009

It is the day we have all been waiting for... MAKEOVER DAY! When we arrived at the studio, right away we asked where the dresses were being kept and it was like a stampede. Luckily for me being so small I could fit into some of the kid dresses. I went first for pictures and some of the poses were really interesting, like the ones where I had to bend backwards. After my individuals other people did theirs and then some of us did group photos. When it was time to pick and choose on the computer I did not like my individuals. The group pic-



A banquet in Beijing

tures were so funny and amazing though. I ended up getting 2 individuals and 2 group pictures. The photo shoot ended right before lunch and we headed over to a place that had noodles and dumplings. Most of us got noodles and they were sooooo good! Like chow fun from PF Changs in Bellevue. Lol.

After lunch we went back to the hotel to rest. I don't really know why we were resting since we didn't do so much but we rested for a little bit. Today was parents' free day and they weren't back yet, so some of us went to explore. Since we had never turned left out of our hotel we decided it would be a good time to see what is down there. Well nothing really except some homes. So it was not as exciting as some of us were hoping it would be, since we wanted to go shopping. But after our adventure we were tired and ended up resting again in the air conditioning, waiting for dinner time.

After dinner it was time to go to the Kung Fu show. OMG it was amazing. All the actors were so talented and the sets were so creative and colorful. I didn't really understand every second of the story so Lanfen narrated some of the scenes for me. But overall I understood the moral and loved the show!

When we got back to the hotel we all packed up and got ready for tomorrow in the early morning. Then we will be off to the knock off market which we have all been waiting for!

Friday, July 24th, 2009

In the early morning we went to Tiananmen Square and waited in line to see Chairman Mao's tomb. As we walked into the tomb we noticed his face was glowing and thought that was interesting and were wondering what made it glow. We were only in the tomb for a short period of time and the long line before seemed really bizarre since the exhibit was so short.

Since it was so hot we got these interesting pop-sicles. Then we were off to the Hall of the People which was fancy and just a big building with different rooms. Finally we went to the knock off market which we have all been asking about. This place was a real experience. Bing, our guide, had told us to be aggressive but I didn't realize how aggressive until we got to the bag section. In the bag section we were pulled in, cornered and grabbed by the workers trying to persuade us to buy from them. It was crazy and the bargaining was a real job but we got it done. I purchased my first knock offs. I bought so much I had way more things to carry on the bus as we drove to Xuanhua and off the bus into the Xuanhua hotel. It was really tiring since it was like 9pm and I was exhausted from all the shopping. If you don't believe me go to a knock off market in China and experience it for yourself. Good night!



Laurie Robinson cleaning toys

(Continued on page 13)

FCC-NW Teen China Trip: Impressions



John Walter

My most memorable impression of China is a gestalt. The effect of moving through the streets is one of being part of a giant organism where the people are part of a chaotic ballet where everyone is separated by an invisible force field that protects them from being run over by all manner of moving objects.



Anna Joseph Climbing the Great Wall. Also going to Agape & cleaning/playing with all the kids.



Lily Johnson

My most memorable moment happened in the foster home in Xian. I held a young boy named Joseph for two days. I begged my mom to adopt him because I felt a special connection to him.

Leah Engelhardt

It's amazing what you can learn in just 2 ½ weeks. My favorite orphanage was in Xuanhua because I could see the difference in just 2 days.



Julie Johnson

The trip brought China alive in a new way for us. We'll never forget the memories and friends we made.

Fei Cooper

Best Memory: On July 21, a week after I turned 16. I had one heck of a birthday. It started with a cake with roses and my name and fruit inside. Next I got a card with something written by each girl. We went to see Mao's body. That was cool, and Tiananmen Square. We also went shopping at a knock-off market. I bought a purse. 😊 One great day.



Amy Pumputis

Most memorable moment:

Running up the Great Wall

Going to the bathroom in a toilet (not a hole!)

The entire trip

Judith Pierce

Memorable moments:

- Holding a 10 ½ lb 5 ½ month old baby and remembering Emily 14 years ago!
- Being thankful that the orphanages opened up to us as we volunteered
- Madame Ren and Amanda did so much with so little money and so much love. They are inspirational women devoted to helping disabled babies!



Emily Walter

Seeing the happy faces of the kids when we played with them

Running up the Great Wall, learning about the history of China, and seeing the ways of Chinese life.

Nancy Joseph

It's impossible to come up with one favorite memory from the trip. It was heartening to see people—both Chinese and foreign—stepping up to care for special needs children. It was wonderful to see China through my daughter's eyes. Most of all, I enjoyed sharing the experience with her and the rest of our terrific group of parents and teens.



FCC-NW Teen China Trip: Impressions

Roger Talkov

I am amazed by the selfless work against great odds done by the founders of the foster homes. The great love they showed for the children made my eyes misty. I was glad to be able to still make it all the way up the Great Wall.

Jean Engelhardt:

I will always remember how hard our teens worked sorting clothes, cleaning, scraping walls, moving bricks, burning garbage, and much more. For myself it was very special to be able to adjust a wheelchair using foam floor puzzle pieces so a child could sit up straight in his wheelchair.



Laurie Robinson:

The most memorable and rewarding experience was being with the children at the foster homes we visited and seeing the girls in our own group interact with the children was very heartening to see. It was amazing to see the people that are doing great things for special needs children. I am so happy to have been a part of it.

Lanfen Kaplan

My favorite memory was just playing/holding all these different kids who were special needs. I forgot that they were special because I saw how much care/affection goes to them, and the kids are really incredible. Also, I just really enjoyed ALL the orphanages. For example, the Xuanhua director—her story was amazing, and just watching the kids helping that one teenage girl really get to watch a role model that I actually may have had an impact on her life. I felt I now know why I came to these orphanages, to really help the ayis see all of us being successful.



Ken Kisch

It was a real eye-opener about orphanages in China. It leaves me wondering what more I can do. I feel pretty helpless. We gave a lot but it was such a drop in the bucket. They need so much. China has a significant problem. All in all it was the best trip I have ever had!

Linda Cooper

I am amazed by the selflessness of everyday people who take on the seemingly impossible task of nurturing special needs children. Whether we were playing with babies, cleaning refrigerators, or digging garden space, each group was sincerely grateful for any help we gave. From pushcarts to subways, Chinese progress in 20 years stretches the imagination and its children are enjoying better lives each day.



Half the Sky Foundation Volunteer Build Joyce Hoffman

The call notifying our family that we had been invited to participate in the 2008 Half the Sky (HTS) Foundation Volunteer Orphanage Build Project came in early June from HTS coordinator, Carol Kemble. I was ecstatic! I knew that many folks applied to these builds and felt privileged that our family had been invited to join the volunteer crew in Harbin (Heilongjiang Province) and Xi'an (Shaanxi Province).

For those of you unfamiliar with the foundation, HTS was started over 11 yrs ago by the Bowens, adoptive parents of Chinese children who wanted to help the kids that remained in the institutions of China. They recognized that although most of the social welfare institutions provided adequate basic care (food, clothes, shelter) important developmental care was lacking.

After consulting with child development professionals, HTS created four programs to address the needs of kids in China's institutions:

- Baby Sisters Infant Nurture Centers employ HTS-trained nannies,
- In the Little Sisters Preschools, HTS-trained teachers use a unique and progressive curriculum
- Half the Sky's Big Sisters Program provides young people with individualized learning opportunities, according to their own interests, talents and aspirations
- Half the Sky's Family Villages provide an alternative to institutions —the loving care of permanent family—to those whose medical and developmental challenges preclude them from finding adoptive families



Babies in Xi'an with a HTS volunteer

Today HTS operates 43 centers in 18 Provinces in social welfare institutions all over China and brings one-on-one, nurturing care to more than 4,600 children enrolled in its four programs. Despite the names of the programs, they serve both boys and girls equally.

Each year, HTS selects volunteers from a competitive pool of applicants to participate in Volunteer Orphanage Build Projects.

These projects take place in two different social welfare institutions that have a physical need for program space, and whose directors (and probably local governments) are committed to incorporating the ideals of HTS programs. The "builds" prepare specific rooms or areas in the institutions to house newly initiated programs - baby sisters, little sisters or big sisters. These facilities are actually a small part of the overall goals. The focus is on training of the teachers (who are brought in from outside the orphanage, so they are in addition to the regular workers there) and the child learning/developmental philosophies and feedback reports that the teachers give on each of the kids. But the builds offer volunteers a chance to participate in the expansion of HTS programs, as well as see firsthand the impact that HTS has.

Our family consisted of: myself, AKA Mom; Dad, Bill Ralph; our 11 year old daughter, Song Mei, adopted from Jiang Xi Province in 1998; and our 7 year old daughter, Jing, adopted from Liaoning Province in 2005. We were curious to learn who the other volunteers would be on the trip. There were twenty of us counting our family. Not all of us were adoptive families or necessarily connected to China in any obvious ways. There were six kids counting our own. All of the kids except one toddler participated in some of the work. We had a great group of folks!

We were told we'd be required to carry some specially selected, developmental toys to China for the programs. We weren't prepared for the number of boxes that arrived at our door before the trip, however.

(Continued on page 12)



Teacher trainee with kids in Harbin

HALF THE SKY FOUNDATION VOLUNTEER BUILD

(Continued from page 11)



Painting the room (and herself)

They easily exceeded the height of my 5' 11" husband. Fortunately, when we re-packed the contents of the boxes without the packing material, everything fit into two humongous boxes.

We met the group the first time at dinner the first night in Harbin. In

the morning, on the bus ride to the SWI, we heard the rules: no personal cameras or video cameras (there was a crew camera that we could use), no wandering around unescorted, and no identifying particular children for adoption were the main ones.

When we arrived that morning at the large facility, about 20 kids were outside to greet us! We then had a meeting with the director. Jenny Bowen was with us that first day, as well, but later had to fly off to a meeting in Taiwan. We were given a tour of the facility. It was heartbreaking to see the number of severely disabled children, boys and girls. There were kids with severe craniofacial problems, hydrocephalus and muscular dystrophy. There were some healthy looking kids too, but they were all shy.

Believe it or not, the water was not working at the orphanage for a lot of the time we were there. We were told this was because of work being done on the local water system. So there was no water for washing or flushing for an institution that had about 300 children living there!

After our meeting and tour, we set to work. The rooms already had flooring and dry walling accomplished before we arrived. Some of us began sanding and taping in preparation for painting the rooms. The rest of us began assembling about 40 sets of child sized tables with chairs. Our foreman was the ever handy and thrifty (to a fault perhaps), Mr. G, a Chinese employee of HTS. I make this comment based on the fact that towards the end of the room painting, we were all running around asking "Who's got the blue? Who's got the lilac?" because there was so little of each color left. But darned if we didn't finish with about 5 drops of each left!

We also painted some of the hallways and the tables and chairs. Then there were boxes of Radio Flyer bikes, trikes, wagons to assemble. It should be noted that this stuff was all shipped to China and in storage before we arrived, so we didn't have to schlep it along with the boxes, thank goodness.

For three days the twenty of us worked alongside of our four translators, who were permanent HTS employees living in China. Then a number of pre-school teacher trainees arrived at Harbin for training in the HTS teaching methods (a combination of progressive Western methods adjusted to Eastern sensibilities). We were allowed to observe some of the training. Most of the trainees were young women, and all seemed genuinely enthusiastic.

On the last day, it was time to unpack half of the boxes we had brought with us and set up the pre-school rooms that we had painted. There were dolls and play cribs, kitchen sets, toy foods, balls, building toys, art supplies, puzzles, books, a large keyboard. There were also dress up clothes that were donated by our families and friends. When the kids came in, each of them got a Half the Sky T-shirt. Then, of course, it was bedlam. All types of candy, rice crackers, yogurt drinks and lollipops were on just about every flat surface. Many of them had a hard time hanging onto the candy and trying the new toys at the same time. I'm not sure the regular caretakers thought the candy was such a hot idea after the kids returned from the party with sugar buzzes! All too soon, it was time for us to leave for Xi'an.



Assembling a bike in Harbin

The day after we arrived in Xi'an, we all went on a field trip to see the famed Terra Cotta Warriors. Xi'an is also interesting in that it retains much of a medieval period city wall—it can even be bicycled upon.

We toured the orphanage in Xi'an, which consisted of several buildings designed to look like a fairy tale castle. The babies room was particularly heart wrenching,

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TEEN CHINA TRIP DIARIES

(Continued from page 7)

Xuanhua



Tian Kisch

Saturday, July 25th, 2009

Hello from Xuanhua! We arrived late last night after a long two hours of driving. Xuanhua's quite different from Beijing. There are practically no foreigners here—we got a lot of stares on the streets because we converse fluently in English with Caucasians.

Our hotel is quite a bit nicer than the one in Beijing. Granted, the one in Beijing had an awesome location, but I really enjoy using flushable toilets now. This is a four-star hotel, complete with mountain views, a minibar, and bathrobes. Hooray!

We spent our whole day at Xuanhua Orphanage. It's about half an hour from our hotel, and in a bit of a rural location. The story behind the Xuanhua Orphanage is really interesting.

The orphanage is located on farmland belonging to a Chinese woman named Madame Ren. She and her husband started the orphanage after the death of their son. They built the entire foundation by hand, and her husband passed away from a heart attack while setting the stone. Madame Ren, a wonderful woman with a kind heart and a strong sense of perseverance, was determined to keep building. She finished the orphanage by herself, and now has eleven children in her care.

We donated carbon monoxide detectors, fans, lights, and a big teddy bear to the orphanage. When we first arrived, village officials came out to greet us. Although our Mandarin skills aren't the best, it was easy to tell that they were really happy we were there.

I painted cribs, sorted clothes, and played with the kids. The orphanage is split up into several rooms, and some in the back are filled with donated clothing and toys. I spent the first half of my day folding these clothes and sorting them into different sizes. They wanted us to burn the clothes they rejected, and so Emily, Mai and I burned a pile of clothes outside. (Now we all smell like smoke...lovely!)

After a lunch break, we went back and I played with the kids. There was a little girl in a wheelchair named Ma Li who had cerebral palsy, and I had fun wheeling her around the orphanage.

Overall, I had a pretty good day. We go back tomorrow for a full day. I'll write more then.

Monday, July 27th, 2009

I'm writing with a new pen I purchased from the Xuanhua Supermarket. I absolutely love it—it's so tiny! And it was really cheap—1.5 yuan— about 23 cents.

We left Xuanhua early this morning, around 9:30 AM. Yesterday we spent the entire day at the Xuanhua



Taking waste from a foster home to the dump

Orphanage. I volunteered to spend most of my day working outside with a few others; I wanted to work on my tan (just kidding)! My group worked in the front field, clearing the area of wood and bricks. Then we moved to a garden in the front of the orphanage. We weeded out the tomato patch and then turned up all of the dirt in the garden. I was so proud when we were done! The garden looked amazing when we finished—there were

no weeds, and the soil was moist and a beautiful dark brown. I loved how our efforts were visible in a tangible product. You could see how much we had done, and how much work we had put into it. Usually I hate yardwork or anything like that, but the smiles and approving looks we were receiving from Madame Ren and the other caretakers made it worth it.

(Continued on page 14)

TEEN CHINA TRIP DIARIES

(Continued from page 13)

Xuanhua



Eating watermelon at the Xuanhua orphanage

While I was working outside, other people in our group were working with the kids. Jean, a physical therapist, really used her talents to help a little girl who couldn't walk, and Lanfen showed another girl how to work the muscles in her deformed arm. Judith Pierce, Emily Walter's mom, fell in love with the same little girl that Jean worked with, and they had fun playing together.

We took a break with locally grown watermelon (delicious, but seedy!) right before lunch. My group, who had been moving wood from the garden to the back field, wanted to keep working until we finished. It was so funny—as I was moving wood, these local Chinese men were staring at me as I walked by them. It must have been odd for them to see a teenage girl who looked Chinese wearing American clothes and speaking to others in English. I just smiled politely and kept working, but they didn't stop staring! Eventually, things got awkward enough that I set my wood down and started up a conversation with them. They didn't speak English, but my Mandarin was passable, and we talked for a little while. They wanted to know where I was from, how old I was, and why I was here. I kept up as best as I could (I forgot how to say "Washington" in Chinese) but I went back to work after things got lost in translation.

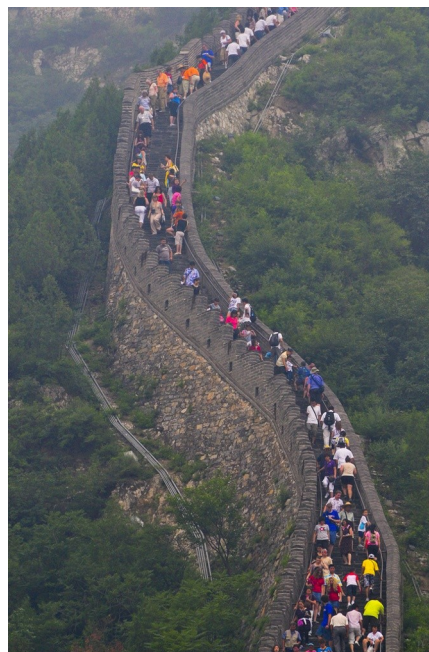
We wrapped up our afternoon after we picked fruit from the orphanage's orchard. The orphanage director had saved fruit on the trees for our group! Our

bags are now filled with fresh plums, peaches, and pears from the orchard.

Madame Ren and some of the children from the orphanage waved goodbye to all of us as we left the orphanage, and we were all really sad to leave. It's amazing what two days can do. We painted at least ten cribs, did extensive work in their garden, and I hope that we left a positive impact on the children in the orphanage.

That evening, we explored Xuanhua, and the Talkovs and my dad and I went grocery shopping. Grocery shopping, I admit, is probably one of my favorite parts of the trip so far. I know that grocery shopping sounds really lame, but I really like spending time looking at the different Chinese food and talking to the salespeople in Mandarin. We're all pretty desperate for American food at this point, and it often takes at least half an hour to locate decent potato chips. My dad was overjoyed when he found Cornflakes in the cereal aisle!

After we left our hotel in Xuanhua, we took the bus to the Great Wall! We visited Juyongguan Pass. It was just as steep as I remember, and definitely as



Climbing the Great Wall

crowded. It took a considerable amount of time to climb to the highest tower on our section of the wall, and we were all sweating pretty badly. Getting to the top was worth it. Although we could only see fog, we all felt really accomplished.

I continue to be amazed at the cultural diversity I see in China. Climbing the wall, I heard people speaking French, Italian, Hebrew, and English! Gosh, it was good to hear English again.

After the Great Wall, we drove back into urban Beijing and toured the Olympic Green. It was really cool! We wanted to swim in the Water Cube, but it was closed for some reason. It didn't matter too much to

TEEN CHINA TRIP DIARIES

Xuanhua & Beijing



Anna Joseph & Fei Cooper race inside Bird's Nest Stadium

me—I was pretty content to take a lap around the Bird's Nest, which was awesome. The place is huge, and the exterior of the building does look exactly like a bird's nest. Amy and I, track athletes, ran around and took pictures on the track.

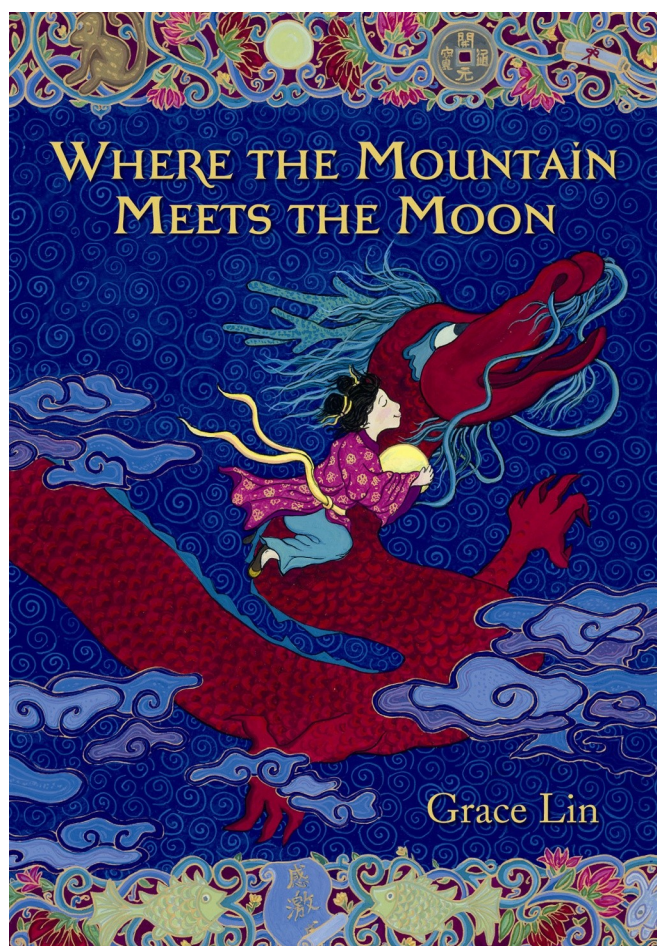
For dinner, we went to a Beijing supermarket/food court and purchased some groceries for breakfast. Our dinner consisted of Chicken McNuggets and Fries. **Thank god.** True American food at last!

That evening we caught the 9:30 PM train out of Beijing to Xi'an.



Sunset on the drive from Beijing to Xuanhua

(Continued on page 16)



Grace Lin, author of the beloved "Year of the Dog" and "Year of the Rat", returns with a wondrous story of adventure, faith, and friendship. A fantasy crossed with Chinese folklore, "Where the Mountain Meets the Moon" is a timeless story reminiscent of "The Wizard of Oz."

In the valley of Fruitless Mountain, a young girl named Minli lives in a ramshackle hut with her parents. In the evenings, her father regales her with old folktales of the Jade Dragon and the Old Man on the Moon, who knows the answers to all of life's questions. Inspired by these stories, Minli sets off on an extraordinary journey to find the Old Man on the Moon to ask him how she can change her family's fortune. She encounters an assorted cast of characters and magical creatures along the way, including a dragon who accompanies her on her quest for the ultimate answer.

An excerpt from the book follows:

(Continued on page 19)

TEEN CHINA TRIP DIARIES

(Continued from page 15)

Xi'an

Julia Tombari*

July 28th, 2009

After our 2 day excursion in rural Xuanhua, we hopped onto the overnight train and arrived eleven hours later in the ancient city of Xi'an, the capitol of China over ten dynasties. I remember walking out into the sunlit train station,

inhaling the familiar smells of China- sweat, cigarettes, and pollution, as well as the humid and hot air. Wiping the sleep from my eyes, I followed our group leader as we headed on the 10 minute walk to our bus.

Arriving at our hotel about 30 minutes later, we checked in and ate a huge breakfast, and then had some down time before piling back into the bus to begin our day full of sightseeing. Bing introduced us to our guide for Xi'an sightseeing-her name was Michelle, and she did a fabulous job at giving us a great detailed history of Xi'an. She explained many aspects of city history, and gave us a background on the emperor Qin Shih Huang Di, the man who ordered the building of the Great Wall and Terra Cotta Warriors for his tomb. After about an hour in the bus, we all arrived at the Terra Cotta Warriors Museum. It was so amazing to see how many warriors had been excavated, considering the time it takes to refurbish and recreate and repiece each soldier. I had been to the museum before, but it was still amazing to see the exhibitions again. After seeing an IMAX movie and grabbing some ice cream, I went to join the rest of the group for the hour ride back to our hotel. I

The girls learn papercrafts in Xi'an



was so tired; I could hardly keep my eyes open for the rest of the bus ride. Thankfully, the traffic was bad-giving me more time to sleep. When we got back to the hotel, all of us were eager to get to bed, so we could function for the next full day of sightseeing.

July 29th, 2009

The next morning, we got back into the bus and drove an hour to the Hu Xian Farmer's Painting Village. Hu Xian is a style of Chinese watercolor that usually depicts scenes of agricultural or natural images. We met one of the most famous Hu Xian painters in China, and an even bigger treat was to learn how to do traditional Chinese papercuts taught personally by her! The artist has really dedicated her life to expressing her thoughts and emotions through her works. In fact, her art work has gone beyond China-its gone universal, all the way to Los Angeles. She is the first Chinese Hu Xian artist to have achieved this feat. Not only does she make paintings, her works have been featured on postage stamps and post-cards! All of the girls, including me, were in awe with her work and perseverance to achieve such beautiful art.

Later that afternoon, we found ourselves at a famous jade factory and learned about the many types of jade. I didn't know the difference between qualities and types of jade, and it was interesting to hear the man talk about the different types and grades of jade. It was so cool to hear about the supposed "magical properties" of jade. I never knew how much Jade was incorporated into society. People exchange jade to those they love, and they also compare someone to jade when they talk about their beauty or looks. In the end, I bought a lavender jadeite pendant for myself and afterwards, sipped some tea to pass the time. When everyone had their fill of jade browsing, we all got back into the bus for you guessed it-more shopping!!

The next place we went to was a Muslim Market. The Hui Minority of China encompass the main Muslim population of the Chinese people. Just by walking into the market by a few feet, I already noticed the difference. The Hui people looked different from the Han Chinese, and the food and living quarters were unique. Bing had told us that features of the Hui included curly hair, darker skin, and a more defined, large, nose. Some of the women even wore head scarves. The mosque, which was at the heart of the market, is where the Hui pray 5 times a day. Some of the men even wore head caps, a symbol of the pilgrimage to Mecca. It was really amazing to turn a corner from a typical Xi'an street and find yourself in a completely new culture and lifestyle.

Next we ate a 16 course dumpling banquet. I remember coming to the same restaurant the last time I was in China and I specifically remembered how many dumplings I got in the soup-I got the lucky number 8, which is one of the most lucky numbers in China. The Beijing Olympics last year even began on 8.8.08 because of this lucky numeral. This time I wasn't so lucky though-I got one dumpling, but it meant a safe journey home. Hopefully, I will return to the USA safely..haha! After a huge dinner, we went over to see the Large Wild Goose Pagoda, which is one of the most famous monuments in Xi'an history. We saw a spectacular fountain show, and then headed back to the hotel for a good night's sleep. I was so excited that the next two days would be spent playing with children at our next site.

Pagoda in Xi'an



July 30th, 2009

Our second to last day in Xi'an was spent at another orphanage called the Starfish Foster Home. This foster home receives young babies with all kinds of health problems and physical malformations like cleft palate, heart conditions, or brain conditions. The group was divided into two groups-one would stay on the first floor with most of the heart and cleft palate babies, while I went with the other group up to the fifth floor to play with the older babies who were recovering or about to receive a cleft palate or heart surgery. It was so surprising and eye opening to me to see how well the babies turned so strong from being so weak. It was fun to play with the kids because not only did I get experience with babies, I felt an emotional bond to them as I did with the babies at my orphanage.

After a long day of playing with babies, I was exhausted and ready to eat dinner. Thankfully, we were taking a Chinese food break by going to...SUBWAY!!! Amanda Lange, the owner and founder of Starfish Foster Home came with us to answer any questions we had. Listening to her talk really made all of us realize how one person who started out as one of us could become such



Lily Johnson holds a baby at the Starfish Foster Home

a life saver and role model for others. Amanda, who cares for 49 babies attended to by 29 ays or caretakers, has really made a difference in the adoption world. Seeing all of the love and care her and the caregivers allow the babies to experience really made me feel good inside. The love and affection given to these babies really showed us how people can help give others a better life. After hours and hours with the babies, watching them grow each minute, it became clear to us that these babies really can have a successful future and make an impact on a family, just how all of us adopted teens made a huge impact on ours. We were eager return to the foster home the next day.

July 31st 2009

Sadly, time was going too fast and it was time to say goodbye to the kids. Our last day was spent at the orphanage caring for the kids like yesterday, but it was hard for me to end the bonds I had made with the babies from the previous day. After a day of goodbye hugs and kisses for all of the kids, we left the facility and went to dinner. We ended up having to say two goodbyes-our second was to bid a bon voyage to the Johnsons and the Josephs, which for me was hard. We all drove near the train station and repeated the same ten minute walk to the waiting room. After getting past hordes of people, we all got onto the train at 8:30 and departed for Beijing, and home.

With sadness, our service trip was coming to an end. We had all grown closer and learned about ourselves. I personally have seen and believe that any individual is capable of making a profound impact on the lives of others. ■

*Julia thanks Lanfen Kaplan for her assistance with this article. Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are by Ken Kisch.

Half the Sky Foundation
 半边天基金会
 Nurturing care for China's orphaned children

Half the Sky Foundation was founded in 1998 to enrich the lives and enhance the prospects for orphaned children in China. The organization is based in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Berkeley, California, and it establishes and operates infant nurture and preschool programs for institutionalized children, personalized learning programs for older children, and permanent family care for children with special needs who are not eligible for adoption. In addition, the organization is working with the Chinese government to develop a nation-wide system of training programs and model child development centers. The programs have tremendous impact, currently benefiting children residing in state-run orphanages in multiple locations across China.



HTS volunteer and a friend in Xi'an

<http://www.halfthesky.org/>

(Continued from page 12)

as some of the infants had to share a crib and it was obvious that a number of them had serious health issues: recent operations, cleft lips/palates, etc. The kids here were more outgoing, and that was a happy difference from Harbin. Many of the older kids joined in helping to assemble and paint. Ironically, one morning an abandoned infant was brought in by the police. The very next day, family from Iowa arrived to adopt their 3 year old daughter.

At the end of the week, it was time for another party hardly over-stimulation extravaganza. However, I was deeply touched when one of the girls, about 7 years old,

The group flew back en masse to Shanghai the next day. Some of us still had paint in our hair (which we were reluctant to wash out as it was a fond remembrance, plus the enamel was really stuck in there but good)! I think most of us finished with the resolve to help this organization that is already benefiting so many kids. ■



Preparing treats for the party in Xi'an

motioned for me to bend down, whereupon she hugged me.

One more group shot with the whole gang, and it was time to say, "Zai Jian."



Institute kids helping set up in Xi'an

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

(Continued from page 15)

“Ba, tell me the story about Fruitless Mountain again,” Minli would say as her mother spooned their plain rice into bowls, “Tell me again why nothing grows on it.”

“Ah,” Minli’s father said, “You’ve heard this so many times. You know.”

“Tell me again, Ba,” Minli begged, “Please.”

“Okay,” he said, and as he set down his chopsticks his smile twinkled in a way that Minli loved,

The Story of Fruitless Mountain

Once when there were no rivers on the earth, the Jade Dragon was in charge of clouds. She decided when and where the clouds would rain upon the land and when they would stop. She was very proud of her power and of the reverence the people of earth paid her. Jade Dragon had four dragon children: Pearl, Yellow, Long and Black. They were strong and good and kind. They helped Jade Dragon with her work and whenever they flew in the sky she was overwhelmed with love and pride.

However, one day, as Jade Dragon ended the rain and moved the clouds away from the land, she overheard some villager’s conversation.

“Ah, thank goodness the rain is gone,” one man said.

“Yes,” another said, “I’m so tired of the rain. I’m glad the clouds are gone and the sun is finally shining.”

Those words filled Jade Dragon with anger. Tired of rain! Glad the clouds were gone! Jade Dragon was indignant. How dare the villagers dishonor her that way!

Jade Dragon was so offended that she decided that she would never let it rain again. “The people can enjoy the sun forever,” Jade Dragon thought resentfully.

Of course, that meant despair for the people on earth. As the sun beat overhead and the rain never came, drought and famine spread over the land. Animals and trees withered and died

and the people begged for rain, but Jade Dragon ignored them

But their suffering did not go unnoticed by Jade Dragon’s children.

They were horrified at the anguish and misery on earth. One by one, they went to their mother and pleaded forgiveness for the humans—but even their words did not soften their mother’s cold heart. “We will never make it rain for the people again,” Jade Dragon vowed.

Pearl, Yellow, Long and Black met in secret.

“We must do something to help the people,” Black said, “If they do not get water soon, they will all die.”

“Yes,” Yellow said, “But what can we do? We cannot make it rain. We cannot dishonor Mother with disobedience.”

Long looked down at the earth. “I will sacrifice myself for the people of earth,” he said, “I will lie on the land and transform myself into water for them to drink.”

The other looked at him in astonishment, but one by one they nodded.

“I will do the same,” Yellow said.

(Continued on page 21)



WACAP CALL TO ACTION—PROTEST NEW CDC REQUIREMENT FOR TB TESTING OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTEES

Dear Adoptive Families,

In our 33 years of aiding children through international adoption, we've seen government requirements come and go. Many of the children we serve are foreign-born, and the immigration visa regulations they must follow tend to mirror those required of regular immigrant populations that are mostly adults. In the past, the international adoption community has had to educate the government on how their overall immigration policies impact children adopted by American families. We are at that point again today.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has implemented new tuberculosis (TB) testing requirements. Previously, the CDC required TB testing only for immigrants 15 years of age or older. In 2007, this requirement was changed to immigrants 2 years of age or older from specific countries. This requirement is now being implemented in two countries in which WACAP works: China and Ethiopia.

This newly-required testing and treatment can create SIGNIFICANT delays for adopted children. They may be forced to remain in-country for additional weeks or months until the treatment is complete. Up to this point, this same population of children have instead been tested and treated once they arrived in the United States without additional concern.

As you know, any delays in a child's ability to come home with his or her family can negatively impact the child's physical or developmental progress. The new CDC requirements will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the health and welfare of many children.

In addition, the requirement in and of itself is not equitable. A child who is *born* to an American living in China, for example, is not required to have the TB testing, but a child *adopted* by an American must be tested. A Chinese tourist may board a plane to travel to the United States *without* TB testing, but a child from the same country, who is now the adopted child of a U.S. citizen, cannot board the plane without these tests.

Please join us in signing the Build Families Not Barriers petition written by the Joint Council on International Children's Services (JCICS), of which WACAP is a member. The petition asks the CDC to eliminate the new TB protocol for adopted children.

To sign the petition, go to www.gopetition.com and type "Build Families, Not Barriers" in the Quick Search box.
Sincerely,

Mary Moo
Vice President, International Adoption
WACAP

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

(Continued from page 19)

"As will we," Pearl and Black said.

So Jade Dragon's children went down to earth and turned themselves into water, saving the people on the earth. They became the four great rivers of land, stopping the drought and death of all those on earth.

But when Jade Dragon saw what her children had done, she cursed herself for her pride. No longer would her dragon children fly in the air with her or call her Mother. Her heart broke in grief and sadness; she fell from the sky and turned herself into the Jade River in hopes that she could somehow be reunited with her children.

Fruitless Mountain is the broken heart of Jade Dragon. Nothing grows or lives on the mountain, the land around it is hard and the water of the river is dark because Jade Dragon's sad spirit is still here. Until Jade Dragon is no longer lonely and reunited with at least one of her children, Fruitless Mountain will remain bare."

"So how will Fruitless Mountain ever grow green again?" Minli asked.

"Ah," her father said, "That is a question you will have to ask the Old Man of the Moon."

"Oh, tell that story next!" Minli begged, "Whenever I ask something important, people say, 'That is a question you have to ask the Old Man of the Moon.' Someday, I will ask him."

Ba smiled, but Ma made an impatient noise.



An Idea Becomes Reality- The Adults' Perspective

Debra Tombari

The teens, Julia Tombari and Tian Kisch, were notified in October 2007 that they had been selected as the first Youth Board members to FCC. Prior to the first Board meeting, the teens got together and at the first meeting announced their goal of taking other Chinese Adoptee teens to China to do service in orphanages. Even though the focus was getting ready for the upcoming Chinese New Year, Joe Rockne, past treasurer said, "The Board will support you."

After the whirlwind of planning a new program for teens at Chinese New Year (the Teen Room) the teens began seriously researching and developing ideas for a service trip. Initial discussions began with Lara Peterson, Board President. The enormous task and details really required the expertise of a professional tour operator who could take the teen's ideas and develop a tour that would meet service and interest goals. I began working with the teens, the tour operator OCDF and a travel agent to coordinate transportation issues at that time.

A travel itinerary was set, and the teens began holding meetings for families to hear and be able to ask questions about the service trip. Tian and Julia did a remarkable job of presenting the material and their enthusiasm generated a great deal of interest with 11 teens and 9 parents eventually signing up for the first Chinese Adoptee Teen Service Trip!

As the trip drew closer, the teens held several gathering including dim sum, an evening gathering, and a sleepover so that parents and teens could get to know each other prior to the trip.

The teens had a vision, a Board who took them seriously, and after a year and a half of hard work, their idea became a reality. But Julia and Tian are now planning more events for teens and will soon start planning for the 2011 Chinese Adoptee Teen Service Trip!

Laurie Robinson

In July I had the pleasure of accompanying the FCC-NW Teen Group as a chaperone on their volunteer trip to China. As many may already know this was a teen generated idea, the goal being for the teens to give back to their birth country and have

(Continued on page 22)

An Idea Becomes Reality- The Adults' Perspective

(Continued from page 21)

some fun and cultural experiences mixed in. A big thank you to Tian Kisch, and Julia Tombari who were brave enough to step into the positions of board members and explain their plan to the board. What a great feeling to see it through to it's fruition. Our Chinese Daughters Foundation, (OCDF) organized the logistics of our trip.

As previously mentioned, the trip was volunteer focused. But we also had our share of fun. From my observations, the main "fun" parts of the trip for the girls were; shopping, swimming in the pool at the Water Cube, where Michael Phelps won all those Olympic Gold medals (there is rumor that some of the water from the pool may have escaped!), running around the track at the Birds Nest, the Great Wall, shopping, seeing a beautiful sunset as we crossed the hills from Beijing to Xuanhua, shopping, witnessing the eclipse, the train ride to Xi'an, finding "American" snacks in the grocery store, oh! and did I mention shopping?!

During the course of the trip we volunteered at foster homes around Beijing and Xi'an. All of the foster homes served children with disabilities. All of the foster homes were privately run and privately supported through donations.

Our volunteer work consisted of cleaning, gardening, moving furniture, painting, sorting, and scraping walls for painting, one day a whole kitchen was moved, and much more. We all had fun playing with the children as well.

We visited 5 foster homes during our stay, here I have described 3. The other 2 not described were New Day Creations in Daxing, and the Philip Hayden Foundation in Langfang.

Mrs. Ren and her deceased husband started a foster home in their home after their son was killed in a tragic accident. This home was outside of Xuanhua, about 2 hours drive from Beijing on what used to be the Ren's farm. Mrs. Ren still has a big veggie garden, and numerous fruit trees. There are about 20 children here, mostly with Cerebral Palsy. A highway is being expanded right outside what used to be the front of the home. The government paid Mrs. Ren (I believe it was equivalent to \$40,000 US) to compensate for her losses. This money is being used to rebuild more rooms and facilities for the foster home. Mrs. Ren is a very humble, gracious woman, who has very caring and loving ayis helping her.

An amazing couple, Keith and Cheryl Wyse from Indiana, are the mainstays behind Agape Life House, located in Langfang, near Beijing. Here all of the children had Osteogenesis imperfecta, otherwise known as brittle bone disease, which is a genetic bone disorder. These children require expensive medical treatment and therapies for their disease. Most of the children either use a wheelchair or a walker to get around. Keith Wyse rebuilds wheelchairs and walkers to make them useful for the children. All of the children attend school on the premises. One unique thing about this home is that there is a bakery. Cheryl helps in the bakery and makes deliveries of the baked goods. The older children are being taught to bake and the baked goods are sold to mostly expatriates. The skills they are learning in the bakery are useful for when they go out on their own to look for work. For lunch one day we had their homemade pizza, brownies and carrot cake. Delicious!

Starfish foster home in Xi'an was run by unstoppable woman, Amanda de Lange from South Africa. Starfish consists of two 3 bedroom apartments, which house around 50 children. Most of these children are under the age of 2 with cleft lip or cleft palate or heart conditions.

All of the foster homes we visited were unique and wonderful in their own ways. The common thread seen was the dedication and true love shown by the volunteers, ayi's, and the foster parents for all of these children.

It was an awesome experience to witness and partake in. All of the girls in our group were real troopers as far as digging in and doing their share of the work. And some of it was very hard work, especially in the heat and high humidity. It was also evident that each girl showed true compassion and caring for the children. Each teen and adult I'm sure came away with a many different emotions and introspections, not only about the trip and our work, but feelings related to the common thread that brought us there in the first place—the children of China. For both the girls and their parents, it may have brought out thoughts and feelings of the beginning of their lives in China. I am so glad to have been a part of this experience and in the near future I hope to accompany our eldest daughter on the 2nd biannual FCC-NW Teen China Trip! ■

Culture Camp Fun



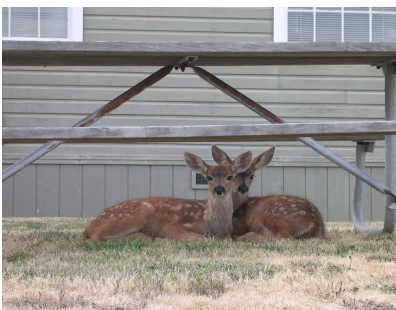
by Sage Choi, Seattle Washington, Age 9

I love to attend culture camp. This was my 7th year going to camp. It is held at Camp Casey on Whidbey Island. We take a ferry boat to get there. I see old friends and make new ones. Some of the fun things we do every year are a flashlight hunt, bike riding, swimming, and the Parade of Provinces. We march around a big field with signs with the name of the province we are from. I am from Hunan. I also like the bonfire and s'mores.

Every year we have a special guest and camp activity. One year we protected the Great Wall of China using water balloon launchers. One year we did a Tour de China with a bicycle obstacle course. This year it was the Amazing Race China. We had to find special pagoda's that had questions about China. We used Ms. Frizzle's Adventures Imperial China book to find the answers. I won a special prize.

I really like our special guests. One year we had the jump rope the champion Rene Bibaud. She can jump really fast. She taught us jump rope tricks. The author of the Yang the Terrible books, Lensey Namioka, shared her stories about being Chinese and how she writes her books. But this year, our guest was SUPER FUN! He was a Chinese Magician. His name was Dr. J.D. Zhang. One of his tricks he stood on 6 raw eggs holding 2 heavy buckets. He did not break any of the eggs! But I liked best when he did the Change of Face magic trick. He changes masks on his face without using his hands! I don't know how he does it. He also taught me a rubber band magic trick.

I can't wait for culture camp next summer! ■



宝宝

Want to read more about the Teen China Trip?
Visit their blog at:

www.fccnwchinatrip.blogspot.com

More Fun

Now that the Youth Board teens are home, they have been busy planning more fun activities for FCC teens! Hopefully FCC teens will get together for a variety of activities including X bowling, spa day, shopping or movies. Dates and activities will be announced in the FCC e news or you can contact Julia Tombari and Tian Kisch at FCCNW@yahoo.com



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