

August 31, 2009 Visit to the Ganzhou Orphanage

Zhou Bo (from Amity Foundation's Nanjing office) and Ms. Luo (Jiangxi coordinator of orphanage projects) traveled together to four Jiangxi orphanages during August 30 to September 3. Activities included:

- Visited foster children under sponsorship;
- Observed the working situation of the Amity Grandmas Project;
- Visited some schools attended by the orphanage children under sponsorship;
- Acquired necessary medical care for special-needs children;
- Visited orphanages and discussed the current state of affairs and ongoing projects with directors and coordinators of orphanages;
- Acquired new information on orphanages and children's needs;
- Discussed with Ms. Luo the details of each of her orphanage visits and her understanding of the principles and requirements of the project;
- Discussed and assessed with Ms. Luo any improvements needed in the projects.

Ganzhou was one of these orphanages that they visited. At the end of this report are some photos and comments specific to this orphanage but first some general observations and concerns related to all of our orphanages:

Observations and Comments:

Foster care:

Those foster families who have been taking care of their children for many years have deep feelings for the children. They can tell the children's whole life stories from when the children first entered the foster family. They have given them more individual love and care than they have to their biological children. In a word, they adore these children in spite of their disabilities and provide them with the love they were denied when they were born. We saw this plainly when we spoke to foster mothers Zhang Youxian and Zhang Xiangyan in Ganzhou. They moved us deeply as they recounted all the details of their foster children's growth and improvement. We are grateful for their many years of patience and selfless love!

The foster families with severely disabled children have been extremely patient and shown them great individual care, but unfortunately these children seem to have made little progress physically, mentally, or psychologically. These children need constant care on a daily basis: they need assistance in using the toilet, bathing, and eating their meals. The main task for their foster families is to take care of all the time.

Although the foster family members are willing to continue fostering and have been patient and caring for so many years, still they are worried about their foster children's future. We visited HXQ's foster family on the trip to Nanchang. Her foster parents were so kind, honest and patient. Her foster father was feeding HXQ grapes one-by-one with a spoon, and her foster mother played music to help her relax. When the music stopped, her mother observed HXQ's displeasure and turned the tape to other side to let the music start again. Long years of observation have allowed these foster families to read their children's thoughts and emotions. We have several severely disabled children like HXQ under sponsorship. Their families harbor little hope for their futures and feel that they can do nothing but continue to love and care for them.

Other foster families have lost their children after they were adopted. Although they are happy that the child has found a permanent home and family, still they miss the child deeply. The foster care project has yet to train orphanage staff to provide professional counseling to those foster families recovering from the pain of loss.

We continue to be concerned about how to provide better support to foster families. The three training sessions we have held for orphanage staff and directors in the past three years have not included all of these issues. The Ganzhou orphanage has seen some improvement after its director and staff took part in a seminar in Chengdu in June, 2009. The orphanage has improved its approach to and administration of foster care, the staff at the foster care office has increased, and administration documents have become more standardized.

Another situation is that most of the orphanage children suffer from disabilities such as cerebral palsy, mental disability, deafness, and behavioral problems. They cannot attend school once they reach school age, as local's schools will not accept them due to their disabilities. For example three children in Yichun have attended kindergarten for several years now. The local primary school cannot accept them due to their delayed schooling and disabilities. Their foster families have taught them some basic knowledge, but society still needs to accept and accommodate disabled children with special education needs.

These are the two main tasks at hand: 1) strengthen foster care administration by providing professional support to the children and their foster families, and 2) find a professional way to deliver education to foster children who cannot enter local schools.

Amity Grandmas:

The orphanages we visited are seeing an increasing the number of older disabled children as well as some infants who need special care. The Ganzhou Grandmas give these children a lot of care and love. They also help care for children in special care after surgery. The doctors at the hospital were touched by how patiently and knowledgeably the Grandmas cared for these orphans. They also do rehabilitation exercises with the children, and are delighted by any improvements they make.

Coordinator:

Ms. Luo started the work of coordinator in September 2008. She is hard-working and interested in working for the children. She felt that the foster care seminar was very helpful, especially the courses which instructed the orphanage staff in practical work. She understood the situation of the project orphanages. We discussed the situation and regulations of the foster care project in some detail during this trip.

Visits :

Ganzhou



We visited YX's foster family. She can read characters, recite poems and knows some English words which learned from her kindergarten teacher and foster mother. Although she could not speak clearly, she still read for us when we visited. The foster mother devoted much time and patience to her. Whenever she talks about YX it is obvious that she is very proud of her. YX is the center of the family; every family member loves her.



GL has grown taller; she can take care of herself and also help her foster mother around the household. During summer vacation, she says she mostly did homework and watched TV. Singing is her hobby.



We met three children in the primary school when they applied to the school. The three children looked so excited to attend school. The foster mother told us she was still missing her former foster child who was adopted.



We met the Grandmas in the orphanage. From left are Qi Hongying, Xiao Houying, Zhong Liyuan, Xie Ruiying and Zhong Lili. They are kind and like to work with the children. Besides the daily work with the children in the orphanage, they also helped with the children who needed special care. For example, they took care of the children after surgery in the hospital individually and patiently. One child was back in the orphanage after cleft lip surgery, and the other after having had heart surgery.





Zhong Lili also helped the older children make some handicrafts. When we visited them, they showed us how to do the lighter.