

September 1, 2009 Visit to the Ruijin 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.

Ruijin 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.

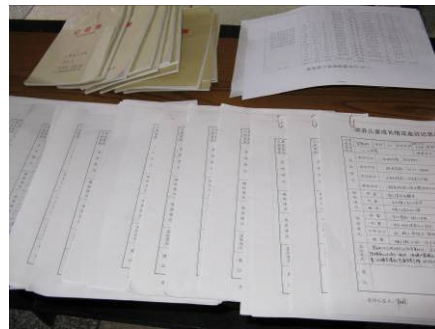
Coordinator:

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.

Ruijin:

We met with the orphanage director and Amity Grandmas to discuss two issues in detail: how to administer foster care to underweight children, and the present situation of the children under medical treatment at an institution in Shanghai.

We could see that the documents of foster children were done individually. The Amity Grandmas work with the orphanage staff to visit foster families regularly. They keep careful records of their assigned children in their visiting documents. For example, this child is one of the children assigned to Guo Ruijuan. We can see her records for June, 29, July, 10, 23, 28, Aug. 10, 17. The records say that besides milk formula, the orphanage provided Chinese medicine to stimulate her appetite. The child is



weak and gets sick rather easily. They brought her to see the doctor in Ganzhou three times, but she remains in poor physical condition. Other developments are quite normal. She has a very small appetite, is weak, and doesn't like to meet strangers. Her foster parents care for her very carefully and patiently but she had a fever the day we visited. When we visited her, her foster mother held her all day long. The foster mother told us that she likes to have vegetable soup, mashed apples, and meat soup, but only keep down a little whenever she eats. Her sleeping is quite normal, but during treatment for her fever, she seemed upset. She can stand and walk a few steps with her foster mother's help. In the record of July 23, her height is 72cm, weight is 6.5kg.



This child has developed well in the foster family. He has a good appetite and likes outdoor activities. According the record of July 20, his height is 98cm, weight is 12.4kg.

We also discussed the medical treatment of 5 children in Shanghai with the director. It was confirmed that they all went to Shanghai for the first stage of treatment from Oct. 2008 to Jan. 2009. They returned to Shanghai in May 2009 for the second stage of treatment and are scheduled to come back to Ruijin in Dec. 2009.

Therefore, there are currently only 2 children under foster care sponsorship.. The director also informed us of their difficulties, and hopes to increase their sponsorship. Because there are more children in with special needs their funds are limited.

The Amity Grandmas are very good to visit the foster children and advise their families on their care, to take care of the children in special care, and to help with basic rehabilitation. They have done a good job.

