Harvard China Care is pleased to announce that a little boy named Yan was adopted internationally this past July. In December 2007, HCC had sponsored an urgent surgery for Yan to successfully correct a condition known as diaphragmatic eventration. This condition, which involves one part of the diaphragm pressing up against a lung, results in difficulty breathing. A week-and-a-half after this surgery, he underwent a hernia operation as well. Yan has grown into a very healthy boy now in the care of his loving family.
Mentoring Kickoff!

BY: Frances Jin and Yuying Luo

Harvard China Care's 2009-2010 Mentoring Program kicked off with a fantastic event on October 4th, 2009. This year's program features twenty-nine mentor-mentee pair, with both new and returning mentor-mentee pairs. We were extremely happy to see that almost everyone made it out for our first event! Everybody introduced themselves to each other through a few icebreaker games. We shared our favorite summer memories, and split into two groups to play the classic game “Two Truths and a Lie” in a smaller, more intimate setting.

After the icebreaker games, we moved onto the theme for this event: the intricate and timeless art of silk screening. Mentees received a handout and learned all about the history of silk screening from its origins to its expansion around the world (including learning about the famous Silk Road). They also learned about the actual process of silk screening, and its cultural prominence in China today. The real highlight of the event was the interactive silk screening activity itself! One of our very own mentors designed a striking logo to be screened onto the T-shirts that each mentee brought. Everyone had the choice of screening the design onto their shirts in red or blue fabric paint—both choices were quite popular and both turned out beautifully. The project was messy, but well worth it! While the children were lined up getting their T-shirts printed, all the other mentor-mentee pairs were able to catch up on some one-on-one time with each other, just to get to know each other better. Some played ping-pong, others played the piano, and still others chatted on the couch. The room was packed and quite active—we hope that this mentor-mentee bonding time will become a habit for future events!

We are looking forward to more exciting events in the future. The next event is scheduled for November 8th, at the same time and location. We hope that the interactive events will be a success in this coming year, and that everyone will join us for our next event!

Dumplings Kickoff!

BY: Daphne Xiao and Dianne Xiao

Our first Dumplings Playgroup of the semester opened with a celebration of the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival! We told the story of Chang’e and Houyi, two lovers in ancient China. Houyi, a skilled archer, saved China by shooting down nine suns in the sky, protecting the earth from their scorching heat. In return, the gods rewarded him with a pill of immortality. However, Chang’e accidentally ate the pill, flew up and up, and finally settled on the moon with only a rabbit as a companion. Now, every full moon, Houyi would watch the moon and sadly yearn for his love. This is how the tradition of moon watching during the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival came to be. For our arts and craft activity, we made lanterns depicting the story of Chang’e and Houyi, as well as rabbit picture holders. Following our own Dumplings Playgroup tradition, we had moon cakes, Chinese jellies and other goodies to eat!

During our second Dumplings session, we embarked on an imaginary trip to Inner Mongolia, learning about the customs, sports, and everyday life of those who live in the grasslands. To set the mood, we danced to Mongolian pop songs during our opening game of musical chairs, as well as popular Mandarin songs. Then, we listened to a video presentation made by our very own Dumplings Co-Coordinator Dianne, which featured clips of horse racing, archery, wrestling, as well as traditional Mongolian song and dance. For our activity, we made “Meng Gu Bao,” or Mongolian yurts. To wrap up the day, we ended with our usual snack time, but somehow all the kids ended up jumping on the mats!

Our third Dumplings session on October 10th was Wuxia themed. Wuxia novels, TV series, and movies are very popular in China, and involve martial arts, fantasy, and romance elements. During Dumplings, we told an extremely abridged version of Jin Yong’s epic love story, Shen Diao Xia Lu. The kids loved the presentation, although we caught a few of them cringing whenever we said the word “love!” We’ve missed all the kids over the summer, and we’re so happy that Dumplings Playgroup has started up again!
This summer, Harvard China Care was happy to send eight interns to three different locations in China. Joan, Kane, Alexa, Frank, and Danni went to the Luoyang Children’s Welfare Institute, a public institute run by the Chinese government. Helen traveled to Beijing and worked at Bethel, the only foster home and training center for the visually impaired in China. Sheng and Chris were involved in an August program in association with the Hong Kong Polytechnic Institute and worked with disabled children in Hunan province. Here are some of their stories regarding the overall experience and the special children that touched their hearts.

Spotlight: HCC’s Summer Orphanage Internships

“It was an honor to have spent my summer at Bethel, doing my best to make the children’s lives a little brighter.”
~ Helen Yang

“A month at the Changsha orphanage taught me about appreciation and passion, and constantly challenged the extent of my altruism.”
~ Chris Sun

“Seeing the tremendous personal growth I underwent during my time at the Luoyang orphanage has filled me with a lasting sense of accomplishment.”
~ Alexa Stern

Bethel: A Haven for Blind Orphans

BY: Helen Yang

When I first arrived at Bethel at 10 pm after a fourteen-hour flight and an hour-long car ride, I had no idea what I expect in this private foster home, the only one in China for the visually impaired. All the children were long in bed, and everywhere was silent and still in the cool Beijing night. The next morning at daybreak, a shrill Cock-a-doodle-doo! and loud “mooing” from the sheeps woke me and all the other volunteers up. Thus began the lively day—children playing and studying, nannies bustling about busily, cute toddlers waving toys and gurgling. I never thought I’d see the sight of a blind child sprinting down the hall at full speed in socks and sliding on the marble floor. Bethel is a beautiful and vibrant home for these children, complete with a fish pond, outdoor swimming pool, and ten individual houses that are currently under construction. There are even plans to build a field and stable so autistic children can do therapy with horses!

One of my main roles at Bethel was as a piano instructor. Some children had never approached the piano before, while a couple of the older kids already knew how to play some basic songs with one hand. My students’ enthusiasm for learning was infectious—soon, other kids tried to fiddle with the keys and begged me to teach them. It made me so happy that the kids were eager to learn and enjoyed music. Slowly, they learned beginner songs like “Wheels on the Bus” and “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.” Day by day they progressed and by the end of my stay the advanced students had learned to play with both hands, and a girl named Theresa had even started using the foot pedal! Besides teaching piano, I also taught English and French, recounted highly-embellished versions of children stories, accompanied them to their choir performances, and acted as a resident translator.

The children at Bethel are all visually impaired in some way—some are completely blind, others retain limited vision thanks to surgeries. I wish I could say that, having been robbed of their vision, they are mentally and physically healthy in every other way. However, that is not the case: some children are autistic, one girl named Christina has a form of juvenile osteoporosis, another young girl suffers from a painful skin disease, and many of the children were abused in their former lives.

Despite difficult pasts and lack of vision, however, Bethel children are happy in their home, and it makes me so happy to see that they’re so open and welcoming to people in their lives. It was an honor to have spent my summer at Bethel Foster Home, doing my best to make the children’s lives a little brighter, and I hope to be able to return in the future.
Love in Luoyang

BY: Frank Zhou

Once, we were playing with Da Ban, the oldest of the younger kids. Because the air conditioning had gone out, the teachers took the kids outside to a street next to a school. By this time, the kids had become familiar with us interns, and we were a constant source of fascination for them. One child, whom I nicknamed Little Frank, was especially excited that day. Because we were outside, the kids had plenty of room to be rambunctious and they especially liked when we swung them in circles by their arms. At times, six or seven children would try to climb on me and ask me to swing them. Since I only have two arms, they had to take turns. Little Frank decided that, rather than wait his turn, he would try a more intrepid strategy. He proceeded to climb up onto my back as I was trying to organize the kids in front of me. Almost immediately, I felt the weight on my back disappear, and heard a “thump” behind me. Little Frank, in his enthusiasm, had fallen off my back and was sitting on the ground crying. Big Frank had dropped Little Frank! I quickly went over to comfort him, while chiding him for trying such a reckless feat. Eventually he calmed down, and after one more round of arm-swinging he was laughing as before. For some reason this moment has stayed in my memory. Maybe it was Little Frank’s expression, or maybe it was his enthusiasm, but somehow, it made my day. Although some problems cannot be solved so easily, others only require another round of arm-swinging.

Finding Hope in Changsha

BY: Chris Sun

When I first arrived at the orphanage at Changsha and met the fifteen or so orphans that lived on the third floor—all with varying degrees and types of disabilities, I was shocked. A few had severe autism, several had heart problems, two or three had Down’s syndrome, while the rest were relatively healthy. Strangely, it was not their disabilities that surprised me, but rather their ability to survive and to communicate.

One child, named Fei, stood out to me. A mere four feet and only ten years old, he had a pale, white face with almond-shaped eyes that struck at me. He was blind yet somehow I felt that he could see something I could not. There was a strange mix of mysterious wisdom and irrational pride about him; he experienced something I could not because of his disability and was proud of it.

Through my experience in Changsha, I learned to appreciate the happiness of my own life and to cherish the fact that I was a fully capable human being.

BY: Alexa Stern

One of the best things to happen to me during my stay at the SWI occurred rather unexpectedly during a fairly routine afternoon. We were hanging out with a handful of the older kids watching music videos and making beaded bracelets. Out of the blue, this mundane scenario took a heartwarming turn. One of my favorite children, a beautiful and somewhat impish 10 year-old girl named Susan, came and sat on my lap, kissed me on the cheek, and told me “wo ai ni” (“I love you”). Her words made me feel what a tangible impact I had on their lives, and I feel so happy to have been able to brighten their lives and love them back.

BY: Alexa Stern

Yet most importantly, I saw that there was something hopeful left in the future.
HCC Member Visits
The China Care Project Home

BY: Dianne Xiao

The China Care home in Beijing, though new, has fast become home to 47 children (as of August), thirty of which were originally at China Care’s previous five children’s homes. I had a chance this past summer to visit the home for an afternoon. While this Beijing home is much larger—the total capacity is 73 children, more than the five children’s homes combined—it still retains a warm and intimate atmosphere. The home is separated into four sections, each of which has their own brightly colored, toy-filled play area, as well their own bedroom.

The new home already has its share of success stories. Shortly after I arrived, the nannies took all the children to the playground outside. One boy particularly enjoyed the slide; he went down repeatedly, grinning each time. It was only afterwards that I found out he had a complicated heart surgery (paid for by several China Care clubs) just this past February. Now he is healthy enough to throw shoes across the room!

It was dinner-time when I left the Beijing home. As I walked out, I saw a girl rocking back and forth on a pink plastic rocking horse while her nanny attempted to feed her hot porridge. The new Beijing home is truly a warm home for these children.

China Care Club Conference

BY: Helen Yang

On Saturday October 11th, 2009, three HCC representatives traveled to New York City for the third China Care Foundation college conference. Harvard ChinaCare was one of the dozen clubs that attended from across the country.

Annie Yao, Helen Yang, and Max Meyer, participated in seminars on fundraising and listened to speakers who volunteered in the ChinaCare home in Beijing last summer. We also mingled with other club representatives, exchanged fundraiser ideas, and discussed possibilities in the future of working with other CCF clubs in the greater Boston area such as Tufts and Boston University.

Overall, said Annie, “it was a really good chance to see the mission of CCF from the perspective of the overall organization, to meet people, and see how our work really helps to make a difference.”

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