New Amity Project Helps Hearing Impaired Children

Not everybody who appears to be mute, actually is. Many disabilities in this area are due to an innate hearing problem, while the original language capability is fully intact. Based on this realization, a new Amity project has been established. It is called The Amity Center For Hearing Impaired Children, and it is run through the combined efforts of the Amity Foundation, the School For the Deaf And Mute in Nanjing, a local hospital and the Office For Special Education Research at Nanjing University.

The center has started its work on a small scale and on an experimental basis. In October, 1988 it received its first class of students: ten children from the ages of two to six, all with minimal hearing ability. They will undergo half a year's systematic training to reestablish their sound and language systems. Their existing hearing capability, weak as it is, will be developed with the help of technical devices and supplemented by developing their senses of sight and touch. In this way they will develop their language communication skills and their intelligence so that in the future they will be able to study and live as healthy children.

This center, with only a small and modest beginning, may very well be the first of its kind in China. But the problem it is dealing with is a widespread and urgent one. About eighty percent of newly born deaf children have some residual hearing capability. If they could be provided with treatment at an earlier stage, their hearing could be restored. With the help of hearing aids, a considerable number of deaf children could be brought back to the world of sound through language training. The best language learning age for children is between 3 and 7. If they are not able to receive hearing and language training at this stage, there is a great possibility that they will remain deaf and mute for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Xu Xunfeng, Associate General Secretary of the Amity Foundation, is the director of the rehabilitation center. People from the Provincial Association for the Disabled, the Provincial Education Commission, the Municipal Association for the Deaf and the Mute, the Municipal Education Bureau and a number of hospitals in Nanjing are also involved.

At the opening ceremony of the center, a grandfather of one of the newly enrolled children gave a speech during which he was moved to tears of thankfulness and aspiration. Says Mr. Xu: "It's those children's parents and grandparents who pin their hopes on us. That makes us feel a great sense of responsibility to strive to expand our work as soon as possible."
One of Amity's main undertakings is the sending of foreign specialists on short term programs to medical, educational and social welfare institutions in China. The following article is a translation from a local newspaper in northern Jiangsu province. It describes the work of Dr. and Mrs. Christy, former Presbyterian missionary-fraternal workers in Pakistan. The article shows how Amity's activities are received and understood by the Chinese public.

The sun shone brightly on the morning of May 8th. Dozens of eye-doctors and experts gathered under the shadowless lamp in the No. 4 Operation Room of the Red Cross Hospital in Yanfu City.

Operating on the left eye of an old man named Wu Ruje was Gu Weiguang, the chief doctor of the Eye Department there. Among the dozen spectators were two Americans, Dr. and Mrs. Christy. Dr. Christy, who graduated from Harvard University in the US, is a world famous cataract extraction expert. He and his wife opened a charitable hospital in Pakistan and worked on eye diseases there for 40 years. When they retired in 1987, they left Pakistan for the US and resettled in their home country. Dr. Christy is currently the advisor of the Eye Department of the Asia Division of Christian Blind Mission, a worldwide charitable organization.

On April 22th, the Christys, sent by CBM through the Amity Foundation, a Chinese charitable organization based in Nanjing, arrived in Yanfu City to investigate work on the prevention and treatment of blindness, and at the same time to demonstrate their skills in operating on the blind. They expressed a willingness to assist ten townships in Yanfu City. Dr. Christy told the reporters that he had come to China in order to demonstrate the performance of operations with relatively simple instruments so as to relieve more blind or half-blind persons of their sufferings.

When Dr. Gu had finished the operation, Dr. Christy proceeded to perform a difficult operation on a 73 year old woman. Dr. Christy was so skillful in using the cornea-cutting method that in less than 14 minutes he had it done. Dr. Zhou Zhengde, chief of the Eye Department of No. One Hospital of Yanfu City, told the reporter that it took only ten minutes for Dr. Christy to complete such an operation, while it would take a local doctor half-an-hour due to inefficient methods and the lack of equipment. Dr. Christy did six operations in succession. He could work either right-handed or left-handed, using his right hand to work on the right eye and his left to work on the left eye. As a man of 66, he stood performing operations for four hours running without taking a drink or sitting for a rest.

Mrs. Christy was equally busy the whole morning preparing everything needed for the operations conducted in the two operation rooms. When the head nurse brought a chair for her, motioning her to take a seat and rest for a while, she declined with a smile and an expression of respect.

Before coming here, the Christys had been to seven places in China where they were assisting and conducting operations for 43 blind people, ranging from 11 to 83 years in age. Each operation was a full success. Their working efficiency and selfless spirit in serving the people are really amazing!

On May Day after they had just completed an operation on an 83-year-old woman, a young man presented Dr. Christy with a delicate vase containing a beautiful flower. The young man introduced himself to the doctor through the interpreter, saying he was the grandson of the old woman. Upon hearing that a world famous eye-doctor was coming to Yanfu City to offer treatment, he had immediately set out from his home and arrived on the same night. He thanked Dr. Christy for the successful operation on his grandson's eyes. The Christys were also moved by his filial behaviour, and Dr. Christy said: "We hope your grandson will soon be able to see her grandson."
Lights To Be Turned on Soon in Lingxia Village

For the people of Lingxia Village in the sparsely populated mountains of southern Jiangsu Province it is now only a matter of a few more heavy rainfalls. Then the reservoir will fill up, and the lights will be turned on with power from the new hydroelectric substation. So will the few television sets and electric fans which have already been bought and plugged into the recently installed electric system. In their communal meetings the villagers are afire with plans for a better future.

“We should use the electricity to dehydrate our tea leaves.”

“And to power the kiln to fire our pottery.”

“I no longer want to walk miles across the mountains to get my rice shelled and wheat ground.”

With the recent completion of the 150-kw hydroelectric plant in this poor, isolated village all these dreams have now become real possibilities. The Amity Foundation is happy to have had a hand in turning dreams into these possibilities — it has supplied facilities for the villagers to build their small power plant.

The villagers had already begun building a dam and reservoir several years ago. Because they lacked funds, however, they were unable to proceed with plans for a hydroelectric power station.

After a careful process of screening and selection, the Amity Foundation chose to contribute to the construction of this power substation in Lingxia Village. Amity Liaison Director Gu Renfa sees this as an excellent example of a local initiative which will have a direct and immediate impact on the economy and development of the area. With generous support from the “Five Loaves and Two Fishes” campaign of the Hong Kong Christian Council, Amity believes that support for this rural development project will be helping people help themselves.

In addition to providing villagers with a regular source of electricity, excess power can be sold to the government hydroelectric authority for use elsewhere. The project has the full support of the local government, and the provincial government’s Bureau of Hydraulic Engineering has overseen the work of construction. Once the water in the reservoir has reached a sufficient level, the power plant will start its operation.

The Hongkong Christian Council has contributed HK$200,000 for this project, and Amity is providing an additional RMB 50,000 contribution. The villagers have done the construction work themselves, and supplementary funding has been received from the local government. In this way, the project represents the type of co-operative undertaking which Amity is seeking to promote, between the Christians and the Christians, between people from Jiangsu and from Hongkong. This project also shows the village what international Christian co-operation can mean for rural development in China.

News in Brief

Nanjing University hosted a symposium on “Education and Social Progress” in October of this year, with the support of the Amity Foundation and the United Board of Christian Higher Education in Asia. More than thirty educators and academics from China, Japan and North America took part in the three-day conference in Nanjing, reading papers and exchanging opinions on social, philosophical and cultural aspects of education and modernization. Kuang Yaming, Honorary President of the Amity Foundation, spoke at the opening ceremony, which was also attended by Amity General Secretary Han Weazao. Amity’s Educational Consultant Ting Yenren took part in the symposium.

The 1989 Amity Calendar documents the work of the foundation in twelve beautiful colour photographs. The format of the calendar gives space each day to record engagements and events. Calendars can be ordered from Nanjing. Donations for the calendar will go towards the work of the Amity Foundation.

In early August 1988, Zhejiang province, located south of Shanghai on China’s eastern coast, was devastated by the worst typhoon to hit East China in three decades. Seven cities and 41 counties with a total population of more than ten million people were affected. Reports showed 443 deaths and a direct economic loss of more than 2 billion Chinese yuan (equivalent to 540 million US dollars).

Hard hit was Xiaolin Xiang Middle School in Yuwang County. Built in the 1960’s, this middle school enrolled 660 students from surrounding villages. The main classroom building and extensively damaged surrounding buildings.

Amity is raising funds for the reconstruction and enlargement of a new main classroom building, the repair of outlying buildings, the purchase of 200 sets of desks and chairs, replacement of educational equipment and books so that the students education may continue.

Other work will center on the rehabilitation of educational and health service facilities in response to the requests which have been received from several rural localities. Funds are being raised through the channels of the World Council of Churches. Inquiries can be made to the Amity Foundation in Nanjing or to the World Council of Churches, CICARWS, P.O. Box No. 66, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.
They came from all over the world; West Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and the USA. The arrival of the new Amity teachers is always a time of excitement and anticipation. This year’s Amity Teachers orientation, held August 28-31 in Nanjing, saw the arrival of 39 new teachers and the return of 46 others.

As the new teachers were quick to learn, there was much to cover in just three days of conference. A mixture of plenary sessions, small group sharing, lectures and audio-visuals blended together to capture the important aspects of living, working and teaching in the People’s Republic of China. The highly acclaimed Chinese motion picture “The Old Well” brought to life a vivid portrayal of contemporary Chinese rural society.

The Amity Teachers Program is now in its fourth year. There are currently 85 language teachers assigned to five provinces and one municipality. Languages taught are Japanese, English and German.

Yunnan Earthquake

Devastating earthquakes have shaken Yunnan Province in southwestern China, inflicting great losses on the lives and property of the people in the affected areas. Initial reports showed an estimated death toll of nearly one thousand people. According to the provincial government, the earthquake destroyed 400,000 homes and damaged 700,000. Half a million people are said to be left homeless. Amity is now formulating plans for rehabilitation assistance to several selected schools and hospitals in Yunnan. Contributions can be made to the Amity Foundation in Nanjing. We appeal to friends overseas to join with us in this humanitarian effort.

The Amity Foundation has been created on the initiative of Chinese Christians for the purpose of promoting health, education and welfare in the People’s Republic of China. It is an independent Chinese voluntary organization in which people from all walks of life may participate. Amity represents a new form of Chinese Christian involvement in society, through which Chinese Christians are joining hands with friends from around the world to serve the needs of China’s modernization.

The Amity Newsletter is distributed free of charge two or three times a year. If you would like to receive the newsletter, or desire further information on any of our projects, please feel free to write.

Funding for the work of the Amity Foundation is from sources, both Chinese and foreign, religious and nonreligious, individual and organizational. Inquiries concerning the possibilities of new project initiatives are welcomed, as are contributions for the direct support of the Amity Foundation. Checks or drafts made payable to the Amity Foundation may be sent to the Nanjing Office.

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The Amity Newsletter is prepared by the staff of the Amity Foundation and printed by the Amity Printing Press

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