AMITY NEWSLETTER
QUARTERLY BULLETIN OF THE AMITY FOUNDATION
Amity is a Chinese Christian initiated voluntary organization, promoting health, education, social service and rural development in the People’s Republic of China

Friendship Defies Physical Limitations
Children With and Without Handicaps Join In Summer Camp

Tourists to Nanjing, visiting the famous Sun-Yat sen Mausoleum on a hot July day in 1990, may have come across a bewildering sight: a number of blindfolded children stumbling and groping their way up the nearly four hundred steps leading to the mausoleum. Other children, acting as guides, led them by the hand. Another group of children, their ankles loosely tied together with string, struggled and hopped up the same steps. Quite a few children used sign language to communicate, and judging from their laughter and confusion, apparently some were new learners.

The lesson that these children learned at the mausoleum was not so much about the patriotic life of Sun Yat sen, but something more impressive, personal and sustaining. The non-disabled children experienced the physical limitations that many handicapped must live with; for the children with disabling conditions it was an inspiring experience to have the attention and companionship of peers and to be treated as friends. Most importantly, all of the children realized how much can be gained through cooperation.

This was just one of many activities that 24 children, ages 9 to 14, participated in at a summer camp jointly organized by the Amity Foundation, the Provincial Federation of the Handicapped and the Jiangsu Children’s Welfare Foundation. The camp, held from July 2nd to 6th, 1990, was the first of its kind in Jiangsu Province. Of the 24 children from different parts of Jiangsu Province, 10 were hearing impaired and two mentally handicapped. Developing mutual understanding and friendship between children with and without handicapping conditions was the major purpose of this project. The value of this experience cannot be underestimated in a society in which it is customary to isolate handicapped persons from the rest of society, allowing them to receive whatever training is available only in special schools separate from other children. Dependence on social welfare throughout their lives is the norm.

Amity’s summer camp brought new experiences for handicapped and non-handicapped alike. Under the guidance of experienced teachers, children without disabilities quickly overcame their initial shyness in relating to their deaf-mute or mentally handicapped companions. It was touching to see how patiently a group of youngsters taught a mentally handicapped girl a simple song along with some rhythmic movements. She had never before experienced the joy of singing and dancing and was visibly delighted. Some children quickly learned a little sign-language and translated basic messages to their deaf-mute friends. But communication also worked the other way around; when a non-disabled child injured her hand, a deaf-mute helped her do her laundry.

Indeed, many lessons were learned at this summer camp, even difficult ones. One day, the children were asked to paint pictures related to the upcoming Asian Games. One girl who was used to high praise from parents and teachers, presented her work confidently, if not rather arrogantly. But glancing at a picture drawn by one of the hearing-impaired, she flushed in embarrassment. She instantly realized that this other picture was far more elaborate than her own. She stopped looking down on her campmates and learned to appreciate their individual gifts and potential rather than judge them on the basis of their handicap.

When the children painted pictures about their dreams and hopes for the future, many of them, including the non-handicapped, designed rehabilitation centers, or vehicles, apartment buildings and other facilities designed for the convenience of people with different handicapping conditions. These pictures served as encouraging evidence of how far the young participants have come in their awareness of the needs and concerns of those who are handicapped.

This summer camp, however, was not organized just for its 24 participants. It is hoped that the idea of integrated education will spread. Throughout Jiangsu, concerned government agencies and school authorities, by their involvement in the preparation of this camp, have been presented anew with the idea of integrated education.

More personally, however, there are also 24 children, representing different parts of Jiangsu, who have grown in trust and understanding of each other, far beyond any physical limitations. This perhaps, is the most important message of all.
Amity’s Major Partner in its Work for the Blind

Many former issues of the Amity Newsletter brought news about projects sponsored by the Christoffel Blindmission, known in China as the CBM. CBM sponsors more projects than any other overseas partner organization. Over 25 projects in eight provinces and two municipalities - mostly related to schools for the blind and hospital ophthalmic departments - are currently funded by CBM. In addition, CBM assists Amity in recruiting personnel for lectures on education of the blind and for training courses in eye-surgery. In 1989 alone, the Amity Foundation handled 900,000 Yuan RMB (approx. US$ 190,000) worth of donations from CBM, in cash as well as kind. This issue brings more about CBM and CBM-related projects.

Blind Children Should Learn in Regular Schools Amity Holds Course on Integrated Education

Why should blind children study in regular schools, alongside sighted children, rather than in special schools? I posed this question to Ms. Chawee Wan Phetthae of Thailand, who had just returned from a ten day course in Harbin, capital of the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, where she lectured on the concept of integrated education for the blind.

She gasped at my question as if it were extremely ill-informed. But then, revealing herself to be a committed professional, she summarized the main idea of her lectures to the 54 special and regular teachers, as well as related administrators who had attended her course.

Basically, there are two main reasons for the superiority of the integrated system over the traditional form of special education - one based on educational considerations, and the other on economic ones. The overall goal of education for all children, with or without handicapping conditions, is to enable them to live self-determined lives in society, and for children, the school usually functions as a model of society. In relating to classmates and teachers, pupils learn basic patterns of social life outside the protective sphere of the family. Confining blind or visually impaired children to special schools means withholding from them the opportunity to receive training for life in an environment with sighted people. Although in special schools blind children enjoy the privilege of having everything adjusted to their special needs, they will later have to pay a high price to pay, and may feel discouraged about joining the broader society. Consequently, they miss a lot of human interaction as well as job opportunities that only the world of the sighted can provide. Many blind people, provided they receive a solid education, are far too aware of their talents and abilities to feel happy with the traditional work of massage and basket weaving, or with the limited opportunities sheltered factories can offer.

Ms. Phetthae’s proposed integrated system also offers a very practical advantage, especially in developing countries. According to government statistics, in 1987 only three percent of China’s blind children were enrolled in special schools, while most were deprived of all education. Lack of education puts these children under a double blindness. Yet, establishing special schools for the hundreds of thousands of China’s blind children would far exceed financial resources, especially in light of the fact that in many parts of China the required minimum of nine years’ schooling has not yet been implemented even for regular students. Furthermore, in China’s countryside, home to nearly 80% of its population, special education would make a network of boarding schools necessary, yet another cost consideration. Therefore, the only reasonable option in considering education for the majority of the blind is to enroll them in regular schools.

How does the integrated system work in Ms. Phetthae’s home country? Though only 30 years old, she has seven years’ experience working with the Christian Foundation for the Blind in Thailand. On her first job with the Foundation, she worked as an itinerant teacher for blind children studying in regular schools. She was responsible for four middle and high schools where she provided blind students with textbooks in braille and with other learning aids. She transcribed their home assignments from braille into print so that their teachers could read them. Although students had already learned basic braille at the primary level, she taught them braille contraction, a kind of short-hand based on English. Learners of English are thus enabled to take notes in braille quickly.

In time, Ms. Phetthae became Assistant Director of the Foundation’s Education Centre for the Blind in Khon Kaen, Northeast Thailand. This center runs a boarding school which Amity Welcomes New Staff

The Amity Foundation has recruited seven new staff members. At Amity headquarters in Nanjing (see picture below), Mr. Yan Jiabo (back left), a 1975 Nanjing University English graduate who worked twelve years with the China International Travel Service, serves as head of the Administrative Division. Three others have been added to the same division: Ms. Wu An’an (back center), a 1978 graduate of the Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute, formerly on the staff of the Nanjing Engineering Translation Institute, is now involved with administrative work related to the Teachers Program; Ms. Cao Jingxin (front right), a recent English graduate from Nanjing University, administers files and mailing lists; Ms. Gu Xiuhe (front left), a 1982 graduate of Suzhou University and a former middle school English teacher, has been seconded to the Nanjing office of the China Christian Council on an interim basis. Ms. Zhuang Ailing (front center), formerly an English teacher at Ningxia Educational College, completed her M.A. in American Literature before she joined Amity’s Rural Development Division. Ms. Yu Xiaomin (back right), a 1990 English graduate from Nanjing University, now works with Amity’s Medical and Health Division.

Susan Raeburn-Gibson

The Overseas Coordination Office in Hong Kong also has gained additional staff. Ms. Susan Raeburn-Gibson (see picture above), a social work and education graduate from Canada, taught English as an Amity teacher in Nanjing from 1988 to 1990. In Hong Kong, she is responsible for office administration and special projects. Susan is jointly seconded by the Presbyterian Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada.

In other staff developments, Ms. Yang Guangjie from the Education Division has left for the United States to pursue graduate work in education; Mr. Xu Xunfeng, head of the Medical and Health Division, is on eight months’ leave to receive further training in England. Amity looks forward to welcoming back Ms. Yang and Mr. Xu after they complete their studies.
promotes the concept of the integrated system by teaching basic skills children must master before they can enter regular schools. These include mobility, the use of the "white stick", basic reading of braille and the handling of writing aids. The center also produces textbooks in braille, and organizes short-term training courses for regular subject teachers who have blind children in their classes.

Asked if the way in which the work for the blind was carried out in China differed from what she was used to in Thailand, she nodded: "Yes, there is one very significant difference. In Thailand, new programs start at a grassroots-level." The Christian Foundation for the Blind for which she works is a non-governmental organization. Her center must take the initiative to find places for its blind children in regular schools, and very often it takes great effort to persuade a school principal to accept a blind applicant. Hopefully, at a later stage, the center might win over the district supervisor. Only after programs have been carried out on a larger scale and proven successful, would the government adopt the idea.

In China, Ms. Phettac observed, everything is done from the top down. If you want to realize new ideas, you must first win over the responsible cadres in the national or provincial government; they will then give orders to the lower levels. If the top officials block your way, little can be done. But fortunately Ms. Phettac finds Chinese officials very open to the idea of integrated education, although China does not have much experience in this area as of yet. However, the authorities in Heilongjiang Province, in particular, wholeheartedly support integrated education, and Ms. Phettac's course in Harbin is a striking example of this.

Initiated by the Amity Foundation and the Golden Key Project, a China based organization for the education of the blind, this course was hosted by the Heilongjiang Provincial Education Commission. At Amity's request, the Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM) recruited Ms. Phettac and sponsored her trip. Her course was a small but crucial step in advocating integrated education for the visually handicapped, a concept which both Amity and CBM uphold as part of their development policy, and which they jointly promote in their efforts to improve the life of the blind in China. written by: Gotthard Oblau, Overseas Coordination Office

Amity's Xu Xunfeng Greets Teacher from Kunming

Foreign Specialists Teach Teachers of the Blind

The course given by Ms. Phettac in Harbin, as described in this article, was not the first of its kind. Recruiting foreign specialists for short term lectures is one of the major undertakings for which the Amity Foundation relies on the Christoffel Blindenmission (CBM) in their joint efforts to raise the level of education, rehabilitation and medical treatment for the blind in China.

In June of 1989 Dr. Tom Blair from Australia held a course on orientation and mobility for teachers of the blind in Beijing (Amity Newsletter, Winter 89/90). The attendants, using only a white guide stick, learned how to maneuver through crowded markets and how to use public buses without visual orientation. In turn, they learned how to teach these same methods to persons who are blind. In May 1990, Dr. Blair held a similar course in Nanjing.

Lectures on school education for the blind were given by Dr. Kim Sykes (USA) at Nanjing University in 1989 and 1990. In October 1989, Prof. Heather Hewitt from Melbourne (Australia) taught a four week intensive course on early intervention and education for blind children. This course was given at Nanjing Teachers Training School for Special Education.

At the same school in October 1988 as well as at Liaoning Teachers University, Dalian, in July 1990, Dr. Stanley Bourgeault (USA) familiarized students and teachers of the blind with teaching aids designed to stimulate the tactile senses of persons without sight. Dr. Bourgeault demonstrated ways of using these aids and encouraged participants to design their own. At the end of the course, students shared their ideas and inventions with each other.

What is the Christoffel Blindenmission? An Interview With Mr. Gerhard Reichmann, CBM's Asia Representative in Bangkok

Q: What is the Christoffel Blindenmission (CBM)?

A: The Christoffel Blindenmission - called Christian Blind Mission International in North America and Australia - is an interdenominational Christian aid agency assisting national churches, missions, and other overseas non-governmental organizations by providing funds, expert personnel and other types of professional counsel in order to prevent and cure blindness, diseases and to educate and rehabilitate visually and physically handicapped people - irrespective of their nationality, race, creed, or disability.

Gerhard Reichmann

Q: When and how did CBM get involved in China?

A: The first professional contacts were made during a 1985 study tour to various medical facilities in China by CBM's ophthalmic consultant Dr. Joseph Taylor. We were introduced to Amity in September 1986 and shortly thereafter experienced a rapid increase in our activities within China.

Q: What project policy does CBM pursue specifically in China? What kinds of projects receive priority?

A: In the medical field, we concentrate on comprehensive eye care programs which strongly emphasize mobile outreach work among the poor rural population, and the training of ophthalmic health personnel.

We also support educational and rehabilitation projects, especially those which offer services for blind and deaf children.

Here again, the key component of our help is staff training and the supply of other appropriate know-how, as well as material aid.

One of CBM's working principles is non-interference with a partner project's policies -- the partner's own "local way of doing things", so to speak. If we find a project with an energetic, enthusiastic leadership and staff who are interested to help as many clients as possible with the most appropriate means, those who are also willing to take up inconvenient and sometimes unpopular tasks (such as going out into remote rural areas to do mobile eye work, for example), then we are most sympathetic towards their requests for assistance and cooperation.

Q: CBM channels its support to China through the Amity Foundation. Why did you opt for cooperation with Amity?

A: We found that the goals and objectives of the Amity Foundation come amazingly close to our own. We needed a representation in China consisting of knowledgeable Chinese people to guide and advise us in project work from a Chinese point of view, and also to take care of programmatic and administrative tasks - like organizing courses and visitation tours - which we could never have done working out of our Bangkok Regional Office. Everything seemed to fall in place and we are very pleased indeed that our partnership with Amity has developed so successfully.
Summer English Teacher Training

Amity Gains Ground in Crosscultural Team Teaching

The summer of 1990 marked a new milestone in the development of Amity's educational programs: the addition of summer English teachers training programs in two provinces. At the invitation of the Education Commission of Jiangsu and Jiangxi Provinces, Amity and Cooperative Services International (CSI), a Southern Baptist Christian Service agency from the U.S., worked together to upgrade the English proficiency of 130 Chinese middle school teachers.

The fifty participants of the teaching seminar in Ruiuchang were chosen from middle schools in northern Jiangxi, with the addition of four participants from Hubei Province. The seminar aimed to improve their language skills and teaching ability.

During four hot weeks in July and August, five American teachers together with five Chinese colleagues committed themselves to this educational joint venture. CSI team leader Betty Cunningham, a PhD candidate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), worked closely with Chinese teachers and administrators to implement a teaching plan which included classes in listening comprehension, spoken English and cultural background. All courses were “team taught” by a foreign and Chinese teacher, giving this particular program an element of quality missing in other short-term English programs.

According to Mr. Ting Yenren, Amity Education Coordinator, Amity’s commitment to teacher training goes beyond short-term summer programs. Amity is sponsoring two foreign teachers in a year-long training program at the Jiangxi Languages Training Center in Nanchang. Plans are for this program, as well as the summer training courses, to continue beyond 1991.

The bustling port of Lianyangang in northeast Jiangsu plays an important part in China’s plans for economic modernization. This summer’s completion of a new railway link between China and the U.S.S.R. made Lianyangang the “Rotterdam of the East,” the Asian hub of a 10,800 km transcontinental rail line which stretches from the Netherlands across Europe and Asia to Lianyangang. Like Shanghai, it may one day be a major international transshipment point for import and export products. For

Bible Production Well Above Two Million

The Amity Printing Company produced its two millionth Bible in August, 1990. This represents the accumulated production figure since the opening of the company in December, 1987. The total includes complete Bibles, New Testaments with Psalms, hard cover Bibles and pocket editions. More than a hundred thousand Bibles, ordered by different ethnic minority churches along China’s border areas, have been printed in languages other than Mandarin Chinese.

Most of the Printing Company’s capacity is currently used for the production of Bibles and other Christian literature. Thanks to good management and careful monitoring by the Amity Foundation and the United Bible Societies, both administrators of this joint venture project, productivity and efficiency have been increased. The printing of the two millionth Bible came just eleven months after the completion of the first million. In 1991, the China Christian Council plans to order up to 1.4 million Bibles.

The Amity Foundation was 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 organisation in which people from all walks of life can 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 promote the modernisation of China’s modernisation.

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The American teachers in Ruiuchang, with the mayor of Ruiuchang City (second from the right), Ms. Wu An Nan of Amity (front center) and the CSI representative Charles Wilson (far right).

its future role in international trade, persons skilled in the English language are required. Anticipating this need, the Jiangsu Provincial Education Commission asked the Amity Foundation to recruit a team to train Chinese teachers of English. Amity shared this request with CSI, which fielded a team of five professional teachers, all of whom volunteered both time and transportation expenses to the program.

Over 80 students took the test to qualify for the 80 slots in the program. Most had never met, much less talked with, a native English speaker. By the end of the four-week course most participants increased confidence in speaking and listening abilities. The course was culminated in, in the words of teacher Howard Stephens: “wonderful experience, wonderful people”, referring equally to participants, local administrators, and hosts at the Lianyangang Institute of Education.

Chinese interest remains high for similar programs next year. And both Amity and CSI are eager to continue their cooperation in educational projects like this in the future.

Teacher Kaye Rousseau speaks for the majority of the CSI teachers who would happily come back to do it again. Why? “The people! They were warm, so friendly. And the students were all very eager to learn. What more could a teacher ask?”

written by: Charles Wilson, Education Resources Coordinator for CSI/China.

For the printing of Bibles and hymn books, the company imports special quality paper, the cost of which is covered through donations from Bible Societies overseas. The paper for one Bible costs between US$1 and US$1.25, depending on the edition, while the paper for one hymn book costs 25 cents. Bibles are sold for 7.5 Yuan RMB (US$1.6) a copy, hymn books for 3.5 Yuan (US$0.75).

New Calendars Available

Chinese water-color block prints, an art form dating back 2000 years, illustrate the 1991 Amity Calendar. Featured artist, Mr. Li Shuqun, draws from the strengths of this ancient art. His work also reflects the strong folk flavor of contemporary art in Jiangsu Province, inspired by the realities of rural life and the beauty of nature.

Requests for calendars may be sent to the Amity Nanjing headquarters. Suggested donation is US$5.00 per calendar.

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 non-religious, individual and organizational. Inquiries and suggestions concerning the possibilities of new project initiatives are welcomed, as are contributions for the direct support of the Amity Foundation. Checks or bank drafts made payable to the Amity Foundation may be sent to the Nanjing Office.

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