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

Rural Project In Puding Shows First Results
Amity Arranges International Dialogue On Development

Last October, 15 international friends of the Amity Foundation flew into Guiyang, capital of China's southwestern Guizhou Province. They took a minibus to Puding, one of the poorest counties in the province, and eventually walked up into the hills to meet the villagers who, with Amity's support, have embarked on a road to change.

In the county's two remotest and poorest townships, an area incorporating several dozen villages, two thirds of the people earn less than 500 yuan (US$ 60) per year, which classifies them as poor by official Chinese standards. Arable land is scarce, population density high. On average, there is less than 10 x 50 meters of arable land per person. With poor soil, steep slopes and fields constantly threatened by erosion, annual harvests provide a meagre 195 kg of maize and sorghum per person.

The Amity Foundation learned of this situation through a village doctor training program carried out in 1993. After two years of analysis and discussions with villagers, local officials and Chinese experts, and after some initial small-scale projects on an experimental basis, Amity started to implement a full-scale integrated development project in September 1995.

The project includes nine different programs: (1) terracing slopes to grow grain, vegetables and fruit trees; (2) construction of two pumping stations on the Boyu River, for irrigation and water supply; (3) supporting poorer families to meet their children's school expenses; (4) assisting polio victims in medical treatment; (5) training village women in producing handicrafts for income generation; (6) equipping households with biogas systems for energy production; (8) converting cooking stoves so that houses are no longer filled with smoke from soft coal with a high fluorine content; (9) training township doctors.

Up to October 1996, the project had seen a total investment of 15 million yuan (US$ 1.8 million), with seven million yuan (US$850,000) coming from Amity, four million from the local government, and another four million contributed by the farmers, mostly in the form of manual labor.

Most of the 15 international visitors, who came for a field trip and evaluation, represented funding agencies which have supported Amity for a long time and were accountable to their donors back home regarding what their money had achieved in a place like Puding County. Thanks to Amity's young interpreters, who understood English as well as Puding's local dialect, the visitors were able to overcome the language barrier. Thanks to functioning transport facilities, they overcame the barriers of long distances over dirt and gravel roads. Thanks to the excellent preparation by the local project team of county officials and local experts, the visitors were able to take in a huge amount of statistics and detailed information. And thanks to the mutual trust and transparency among all those involved, the visits and discussions helped people to learn and the project to stay on course toward a better future for thousands in Guizhou's mountains.

This issue brings accounts from the field trip and background information on our project in Puding. To feed themselves in an economically sound and ecologically sustainable way will remain the greatest and most basic challenge for the people of China in the foreseeable future. Amity is proud to contribute to this effort.
More Than Half The Sky
Women's Meeting Beside The Road

According to a famous dictum by Mao Zedong, women hold up half the sky. In Puding, however, they hold up much more than that. Because many men have temporarily migrated to the cities for employment, it is now the women who have taken over most of the farm work. Women are also clearly the backbone of the Amity project in Puding. The greater part of the manual labor in the tree planting, slope terracing and irrigation programs has been contributed by women. They carried heavy stones in baskets on their backs and climbed up and down the slopes. They dug ditches in shifts from the first morning light until late at night, leaving behind a lot of family chores. In order to improve the food basis for their families and the next generation, they worked much harder and did much more than what would have been expected from them traditionally.

Who are these women? And what makes them so dedicated? During their October field trip, several international visitors had a chance to meet some of them. In Xiaogumao Village (Houchang Township), 100 women have received training in goat, cow and pig raising and the planting of fruit trees. Special emphasis has been given to the ammoniation technique, a method of producing animal fodder from a mixture of corn stalks and urea. This is the corner stone of Amity's goat raising project. The project's success rests on mastery of this agricultural technique by the peasants involved.

The international visitors were late and the women waiting to meet them had already left. However, some time later the visitors found them in another hamlet along the roadside. Apparently, the women had been on their way home when one of the local cadres in charge of the visitation program had informed them that the foreigners would soon be passing through and had requested them to wait.

They were half a dozen ladies, standing close together on the village road, greeting the "long noses" with nervous smiles, as the latter stepped from their mini bus. One of the village women, who had apparently been designated to act as their spokesperson, was clearly embarrassed and shy. She was holding written notes which she now tried to thrust into the hands of the foreigners' interpreter: "Just read it out to them! I have nothing else to say." But the visitors had not just come to pick up pieces of paper. They wanted to meet people. Those who spoke Chinese addressed the women directly, trying to engage them in conversation. Haltingly, the spokeswoman finally began to speak about Amity's income-generating project and the training course they had recently attended.

In this rather spontaneous, unceremonial situation, the visitors managed to brush the officials aside. The women's spokesperson soon lost her shyness and talked freely, while many of the other women crept closer and, after a while, literally backed her up from behind.

Initially, the woman spoke about their recent training course, in which the All China Women's Federation had been involved. The village women had been given lectures supported by printed information. As tangible proof, one woman produced a technical manual on agriculture, published by the University of Sichuan. When asked about the literacy rate among women in the area, they responded that 80% of the course participants were able to read.

The conversation had been circling around fodder, livestock, money and literacy for quite a while when one of the visitors then wanted to hear from the women what they thought their most urgent need was. The interpreter had hardly finished her sentence when a small middle-aged woman in a brown woollen sweater thrust herself forward from the back and, determination ringing in her voice, threw a single word over the spokesperson's shoulder: "Health care!" The rest of the group responded with nods and murmurs of approval. The women now became more animated and told the visitors that their villages had no health workers. Some of them, they complained, had to walk 14 kilometers, carrying their children on their backs, when they had to see a doctor.

When asked about the 1995 UN Women's Conference in Beijing, the spokeswoman did not know about it, but another woman said that she had heard about it on TV.

In its own way, this road-side women's meeting was certainly rather improvised. In spite of this, or rather precisely because of this, the visiting Amity friends experienced this encounter as a highlight of their trip. It was less staged and free of the formalities with which so many of the usual programs for foreign visitors in China are burdened. Afterwards, a woman from Canada commented: "Given more time, we could have had a very lively exchange." Because speaking for themselves and taking charge - that's what women do these days in China's remotest villages!

G.O.
Wrangling About Trees And Goats
German Consultant Scrutinizes Puding Project, Meets Mixed Reactions

As in all of its project work, Amity's role in Puding County is much more than that of a funding agency. Amity engages the local people - farmers, doctors and teachers, men and women, and not least county and township officials - in an ongoing dialogue about development. This covers technical details of how best to increase yields and supply clean water in a karst area as well as social values and priorities to be defined by a community fighting the threat of hunger and striving for a better life.

While Amity's project coordinators are involved in this dialogue personally, they also facilitate it by networking with local officials with Chinese specialists and international consultants. One such consult was Peter Rottach, an agriculturalist from Germany, who visited Puding County last August. His visit was sponsored by the Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development (ZDE), a close Amity partner who has given a lot of financial support to the project.

After a one-week field trip, Rottach composed a travel-memo in which he drove home a number of critical points in the local project team. His views and suggestions, aiming to improve the project and warn people against potential failures, were of course not simply received with meek appreciation. China, too, has its experts, and the local project team responded with its own paper. But all of Rottach's points were given careful consideration, discussed in detail and, where rejected, rejected with reason.

On one point, Rottach's memo served as a valuable reminder, namely that afforestation in this almost barren karst area must not be neglected but must serve as an essential base for any long-term, sustainable development. The project team conceded that the almost 100,000 trees planted in the first two years (fruit trees in order to diversify people's diet and to stabilize and fertilize slope terraces) are by no means enough and that a lot more needs to be done to build up a comprehensive system of ecological protection and agro-forestry development. According to local officials, the difficult part of afforestation lies in persuading the farmers to convert farmland into forests.

In order to teach them by example, Amity selected one village to carry out an inter-cropping experiment in which Eucommia trees were inter-planted with maize over an area of 100 mu (6.7 ha). In addition to their ecological usefulness, the trees will add to the farmers' income, as their bark serves as a traditional remedy against high blood pressure and their leaves can be sold as fodder.

In his paper, Rottach expressed his deep distress about the clear symptoms of soil erosion he observed in many places. While he saw newly terraced slopes, he missed tree planting on the hill tops. "This," he pointed out, "could threaten the newly established terraces in the long run. Any soil erosion control method including terracing has to start on top of a hill or at least simultaneously on the slopes and on the top of the hills since water run-off always starts at the highest elevation and therefore has to be addressed there."

The local team agreed that this was indeed the orthodox way of doing things but gave a compelling reason why Amity in this case had chosen to start the project from the foot of the hills. Given the extremely limited arable land available per capita, the problem of food shortage is pressing. It was for this reason that local farmers destroyed forests and over-cultivated hill slopes in the first place, with the notorious results of erosion and low grain yields. In this situation, it would be difficult to persuade them to engage in any work that does not give them more to eat within a foreseeable time frame. They will accept environmental education only if it leads to tangible results and if they don't have to wait too long for the proof that it can ease their food shortage. Hence, tree planting without field terracing would never have been accepted. But a simultaneous approach, namely undertaking hill top afforestation and slope terracing at the same time, would have overstretched the available labor force as well as financial resources. While the hill tops will eventually be covered with trees, it is hoped that in the meantime the new terraces will catch the soil washed down from the tops.

Rottach expressed his doubts whether the introduction of goats and cows to stimulate the local economy would be feasible in Puding's topography. Given the scarcity of farm land, only wasteland or grassland could be exploited to procure the necessary fodder. But those areas, he argued, were mostly located on extreme slopes and to be found interspersed with rocks and carrying only thin layers of soil. The grass, shrubs and trees growing there would form such a fragile fodder base that further soil erosion would be the almost inevitable result of the increase in local livestock. Rottach even wondered whether China in general, in light of its extremely low ratio of arable land to population, should not better refrain from any domestic meat production and instead concentrate all its agricultural resources on creating a secure grain base.

With China's rising rate of meat consumption and the country's ambition to remain self-reliant in all key areas of its food production, it was no surprise that this particular point in Rottach's paper was dismissed as too sweeping a conclusion. National policies would not fall within the reach of county officials anyway. In their response, Puding's lo-
cal experts emphasized that they increased animal husbandry only in those parts of the county which provided sufficient vegetation to sustain it. They also declared that they had undertaken careful calculations according to which the livestock-supporting capacity of the project area’s non-arable land was far from being exhausted. The 250 head of cattle and 750 goats introduced by the project represented a very limited number and would eat up hardly more than 10% of the amount of wild fodder which had so far been untouched but which could be put to use without any long-term ecological damage. Nevertheless, the Amity Foundation could make use of Rottach’s concerns in its insistence that the raising of cattle and goats needs to be accompanied by active measures to improve the natural fodder base. It is planned that farmers will support wasteland vegetation by planting grass and leguminous fodder crops as well as bushes and trees (which can be pruned for fodder).

In addition, some animal fodder will be produced by the farmers through ammoniation. In this technique, food crop waste like rice straw and maize stalks are mixed with urea and sealed in storage for a fermentation process resulting in fodder of higher nutritional value. Rottach pointed out that this kind of silage technique is not easy to master and requires careful training of the peasants involved. If, for example, they do not apply the correct amount of urea, the animals could get sick and die. This point was very well taken by Amity, since training has always been its major concern and had been incorporated into the project plan from the very beginning.

The Amity project group in Puding welcomed the Rottach report as an expression of EZE’s concern and support for the people in Puding. Despite many disagreements, the group found his recommendations helpful and enlightening. An EZE representative participating in the October field trip defined the important but limited function of a consultant’s report in this way: “Coming from outside, it should provide ideas, link up with the experience of similar projects elsewhere, encourage, but also warn against possible dangers. By raising a variety of issues for discussion, it should deepen the dialogue among all parties involved. But let me stress that the final decisions on how to make the best use of the recommendations presented rest, of course, with Amity.”

G.O.

Seeing And Trusting
How Much Can A Field Visit Achieve?

For two days, representatives of our overseas partner organizations visited villages in Puding County to get first-hand impressions of Amity’s ongoing integrated rural development project there. During an ensuing evaluation meeting, Jan Reinders, an executive of an organization providing major funding to the project, shared the following observations.

On our way to Longga Village, we saw quite a number of terraces which reached about half-way up the hillside and appeared to be very well constructed. We were also shown water escape channels and told about their usefulness during floods. At Xianma, no terraces had been built so far. On our way to Shangguan Village, we saw signs of erosion on the hills and dilapidated terraces, but no new terraces.

As for tree planting, we saw one plantation of trees with leaves that can be used for medicinal purposes. Otherwise, we did not observe large plantations.

We were told about plans to begin terracing at Xianma this winter, and to build further terraces with water escape channels at Longga, and to stabilize those terraces by planting trees at their edges and on the hill tops. We learned that the terraces are built by the villagers communally, and that the thus stabilized or newly gained land is cultivated according to the household system. But we did not go into this in detail, and we know little, if anything, about processes of participation and decision making. Neither was there much chance to learn more about the interaction between villagers, village and township authorities, the county project office and the Amity Foundation. Future project extensions - like the increase of productivity, the marketing of new products, credits etc. - could not be discussed. There was simply not enough time for that.

This taught us something about the opportunities and limitations of a field visit. What can actually be seen is best a small part of such a large project. Most of it does not lie before the visitor’s eyes but stretches out into the past and future. It is told and explained by the project team and needs to be taken for granted - particularly all the wishes, hopes and plans for the time ahead. Apart from time, there will always be another dimension of important project features that we remain ignorant of: the internal relations among the many people involved, and in concerned with the project.

This basically meant that our cooperation is to a large extent built on trust. We would never be able or willing to give support to this project in Puding if we had no trust in the decisions of the county project team and the Amity Foundation, who go through a process of development and learning in which they also involve us as learning partners. This we acknowledge with appreciation.
Using Available Resources Wisely
How The Puding Project Contributes To Development

At the end of the consultation between the Amity Foundation, the Puding County project team and 15 international representatives, Amity Associate General Secretary Gu Zhenfa gave a speech, in which he outlined some of Amity's perspectives on rural development. The following is an bridged version of his contribution.

Over the past ten years, the Amity Foundation has gone through a practical learning process which has sharpened our understanding of poverty and development. The development project in Puding, our first one to concentrate a variety of programs in one area and to integrate them under a unified approach, tries to put into practice what we have learned through our work elsewhere. In our understanding, poverty can be defined as a lack of resources and commodities severe enough to impede the maintenance of basic living standards and simple reproduction. Ultimately, poverty is caused by unreasonable structures which lead to the under-use of usable resources. In order to overcome poverty, such structures need to be changed and to be replaced by more reasonable ones. In the process, all arts of the social structure are affected and gradually transformed from inefficiency to greater efficiency. This process of long-term change and overall transformation may be called development.

In this sense, we hope that our involvement in Puding County will lead to a model of development in which the local natural resource basis, the existent labor force and available capital are scientifically managed and reasonably utilized. We expect this approach to result in efficient production, the removal of poverty and the overall development of society.

Since our project in Puding started only a little more than a year ago, it is too early to draw any definite conclusions. However, our involvement has already shown some initial results which are worth scrutinizing.

1. The project's core elements, which are slope terracing, water conservancy and the supply of drinking water, have noticeably improved the living environment and provided the material basis for future economic growth. In Bulang Township, 752 mu (50 hectares) of slope land were terraced. On the edges of the terraces, 24,038 trees were planted. Two-hundred mu (13 hectares) of fields were opened to irrigation, and 1,000 people plus 250 domestic animals were given access to drinking water. The benefits of these achievements are obvious; their economic effects will become apparent in the foreseeable future.

2. More immediate financial rewards were brought about by our animal husbandry program. In Shuijing and Benjie villages, we provided 20 households with one piece of farm cattle each. This resulted in an average of 150 yuan of additional income per household within half a year.

However, such immediate success does not mean that the vicious circle of poverty has been broken. Only if the existing social conditions in the farming villages are changed can poverty truly and significantly be alleviated. It is therefore important to evaluate the indirect social benefits of the project.

1. Our project has released labor resources which can now be used in non-agricultural production and generate additional household income. Before we implemented a drinking water project in Shuijing Village, people had to walk as far as five kilometres to fetch water. This work was too hard for children and old people. Each household had to send a strong person to fetch water three times a day, with each walk taking at least two hours. In other words, each family had to spend 180 labor hours monthly just to secure their basic water supply. Now that the families have been provided with water taps inside their homes, the village has a tremendous amount of surplus labor. As a result, over one hundred people have migrated to other places for employment. In this way, more financial capital will flow into the village. Another example is the Huang family in Boyuhe Village. Before the completion of our irrigation project there, this family needed eight people to work on their seven mu (0.47 ha) of land. With the new irrigation system, the same amount of land can be tilled by only three. The other five family members all found wage-earning jobs, which added an extra ten thousand yuan to the family's assets within a year.

2. Our drinking water project in Shuijing Village has also improved public health. Previously, families had to make do with so little water that they used each bowl-full several times. Family members would first one after another wash their faces, and then their feet. After then letting the water settle for a while, they would use it again to cook pig fodder. Dirty clothes were collected and washed only once a week.

Taking a break on their way from school; these boys may become Puding's future elite.
five kilometers from home. Now that hygiene has improved, the spread of various diseases can be checked and people will generally become healthier.

3. The improvement of the agricultural production base has changed the patterns of household expenditure. Our irrigation project in Boyu Village, started in 1994, has shown remarkable social benefits. For over 70 families, incomes have increased significantly. A dozen families have built new houses; 20 families have purchased farming tools, furniture, clothes and TV sets. It is worth noting that with the boost in agricultural output and subsequent prosperity, the farmers have shown a greater interest in sending their children to school and improving their living environment. In Boyu Village, primary school attendance has gone up, and residents have started to collect money among themselves to pave their village roads.

4. In addition, the Boyu farmers were able to improve their diet. Due to newly introduced irrigation, dry land has been turned into paddy fields. As a result, people have changed their staple food from corn to rice, and the consumption of edible oil has increased. More meat and eggs are to be found on dinner tables, along with a greater variety of vegetables. Improved nutrition will enhance public health, which again will lead to increased production and income. A self-sustaining circle of development has been created.

5. In design and purpose, many of our Amity activities are similar to development projects run by the government. Our role vis-a-vis the government is a supplementary, critical and innovative one.

a) The government initiated a lot of slope-terracing before we got involved in Puding County. However, in contrast to most public terracing projects, we pursue a diversified approach. In addition to the actual terracing, we dig water tanks and build water escape channels and walls to minimize the effect of flash floods. We plant trees on the terraces' edges to utilize each square-foot of land, to improve natural fertilization and to stabilize the slopes. In addition, we turn the hill tops into protected areas where neither wood-cutting nor grazing is permitted and trees are planted. In the future, hill terraced by the Amity Foundation will wear green caps, belts of fruit trees and boots of grain. It is hoped this design will serve as a model for government-run slope projects elsewhere.

b) Our bio-gas and kitchen-stove projects are unique; nothing of the sort has ever been undertaken by the government. While they are not meant to alleviate the most abject poverty, they help to improve the villages' environment and overcome chronic health problems. These projects function to support the basic economy where it has already been improved.

c) Wherever in Puding County we introduced the raising of goats, we explained the need to have them properly insured. In the beginning, local insurance companies did not offer such a service, and neither the farmers nor the county officials saw any need for it. In response, the Amity Foundation made the insurance a part of its project, working out a contract with a company in Nanjing. In the course of the first project year, 161 out of the 281 Amity-sponsored goats in Houchang Township died of a very rare infectious disease. Thanks to the insurance, the farmers were paid compensation and could increase the number of goats to 377 in the second year. The local people have since realized the importance of having their investment commercially insured.

In conclusion, our involvement in Puding County has shown positive results, with regard to both direct economic and indirect social benefit. This does not mean, though, that everything is smooth sailing. Constant adjustments and improvements are needed in order to reach the defined targets. Major problems are still to be found in our training of village doctors. After the Amity-sponsored training course, we expect the trainees to return to their villages to provide medical services to the farmers and engage in health education. However, by the end of last spring, only 37 out of the 100 trainees had opened practices. This is because many of them lack the money to purchase a stock of medicines, and others have no house in which to practice.

Another problem area of our work is that relating to gender. We have organized women's training courses in various townships and villages and emphasized the importance of women's participation in poverty alleviation. However, our training so far has focused on agricultural techniques and vocational skills. Other areas in which women play an equally or even more important developmental role are rural public health, maternal and child hygiene, family planning, child education and other issues. There is a lot left to be done and much room for improvement.
Amity Honorary President Dr. Kuang Yaming, 91, died of a brain hemorrhage in Jiangsu People’s Hospital (Nanjing) on December 16.

Although not a church member, Dr. Kuang was instrumental in the reopening of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary after the Cultural Revolution and in the founding of the Amity Foundation.

His early life was spent in Shanghai, Suzhou and other cities in southern Jiangsu, where he was in turn university student, Communist underground worker, school teacher, headmaster, newspaper reporter and prisoner of the nationalist government. During World War II, he was editor-in-chief of a major newspaper published in the guerilla bases of Shandong Province, and later a high ranking commander in the People’s Liberation Army. After the Communists took power in 1949, he served as president of Jilin University in northeast China and, since the early 1960s, as president of Nanjing University.

At the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, Kuang Yaming was among the first to be purged and severely persecuted. He was repeatedly humiliated at public rallies and was held in solitary confinement in the basements of various Nanjing University buildings, including the one which now houses the Amity office.

As soon as Dr. Kuang returned to his old position as university president after the Cultural Revolution, he established the Center for Religious Studies within the university and staffed the center with faculty members of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. At that time, the seminary had been closed for over 10 years, all library books burned, the campus occupied by squatters, and the teachers either forced to stay at home or to take up menial occupations. Kuang's initiative helped the theological teachers resume their work and prepared the way for the eventual reopening of the seminary in 1980.

Kuang Yaming also supported the founding of the Amity Foundation in 1985, at a time when many people still viewed the idea of a Christian-initiated social service organization with suspicion. The fact that Dr. Kuang, a senior Marxist scholar, backed Amity's work encouraged many government officials to look at Amity and the Christian church in a more positive light. His comment that “true Communists and true Christians share much more in common than they disagree on” is still frequently quoted.

When Amity was first established, Dr. Kuang was one of three honorary presidents of its board of directors. The other two were Dr. Wu Yifang and Dr. Chen Yuguang, both active church members, who died in their 90s in 1986 and 1987 respectively.

Ting Yen-Ren, Amity Associate General Secretary

Kuang Yaming

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Mr. Zhu Aimin, a young graduate from the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, has recently joined Amity’s Rural Development Division as a volunteer.

Our latest Annual Report, covering the period between July 1995 and June 1996, is available from our Hong Kong office. Amidst a variety of useful information, the report lists the almost 50 overseas organizations which have given financial support to Amity within the 12-month period. However, due to a communication error between Amity’s two offices in Nanjing and Hong Kong, two donor agencies were omitted from the list. They are the Korean Society for Mission and Service in Asia and the German-based United Evangelical Mission. Both are important supporters of our work, and we apologize for the omission.

Under the Amity Scholarship Program, Ms. Zhu Huimin and Ms. Lu Ling, English teachers at Shangrao Teachers College (Jiangxi) and Fuyang Teachers College (Anhui) respectively, have been selected to attend a two-year study program at Silliman University in the Philippines. The scholarship program is sponsored by the World Council of Churches and supports English language teachers of small and remote teacher training institutions in China to study TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) at an overseas university.

Amity Rural Development Director Qiu Zhonghui attended the NGO Forum on Food Security in Rome, November 11 - 16. The Forum, which preceded the UN Food Summit, affirmed the universal basic human right to food security.
After three years of preparation, Amity has started an AIDS Education Project in Yunnan Province. Due to its long borders with Burma and Laos and its proximity to the Golden Triangle, Yunnan is the province with the most HIV-positive cases in China. Amity Medicine & Health Director Li Enlin comments that AIDS education in Yunnan has so far been carried out by the provincial government through health workers in hospitals and quarantine stations. "Unfortunately, these efforts have not reached the broad masses at the grassroots level, and the people's ignorance about the disease cannot be overestimated," says Li. The Amity project, which will initially cover the border counties of Lincang, Fengqing and Longchuan, will be sponsored for two years by the German-based Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development (EZK).

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The Amity Office for the Coordination of Medicine and Health Projects in Western China was opened in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, on November 3. The office is staffed with six young professionals, who will strengthen the administration of Amity's Health Worker Training Program and help solve the problem of staff shortage in the Nanjing headquarters.

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In November and December, five regional conferences on the Amity Health Worker Training Program were held in the provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan and Gansu. These meetings, which are held on an annual basis and used to take place in Nanjing until last year, aim at coordinating and improving the Amity program in which each year 1,200 village doctors receive 10 months of training to upgrade their skills in basic and preventive medicine. This year's conferences focused on the question of how to help the trainees set up their clinics after they have finished the training. Due to lack of funding and other reasons, around 20% of the graduates from previous Amity courses were unable to open proper health stations in their villages.

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Yangzhou ("Bring Forth True Light") School, the only church-run middle school in China, has further developed in 1996. The school, which is located in Longquan (Zhejiang Province) and serves grades seven to nine, was founded in 1985 to improve schooling opportunities for children from the county's rural areas. Since then, Amity has supported the construction of a new classroom building in 1991 and a teachers' dormitory plus dining hall in 1996. Funding for the teachers' quarters came from the US-based China Connection. There are currently 450 students enrolled in eight classes, 380 of whom are boarding students.

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From October 7 to 10, a delegation of eight doctors and nurses of Nanjing hospitals visited Hong Kong institutions rendering hospice services to the elderly. With recent economic and social changes in mainland China, an increasing number of old people can no longer depend on their families if they become frail and unable to look after themselves. "In this situation, China needs to develop its own hospice programs for the elderly, and Amity is prepared to get involved," says Amity Social Welfare Director Wu An'an. The exposure trip to Hong Kong was arranged by the Amity Foundation and sponsored by the Norwegian-based Christian Mission to the Buddhists.

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