



## Mary's story April 2010

### Mary's report on her first visit to Lao Wang's Orphanage Saturday/Sunday, 24-25 April 2010

After loading up the lorry, and a quick pizza lunch, the Pudong volunteers (Tony, Julie, Mary, Dot, Doris & Bing) set off for Anhui at 12.30pm. We met up with the Puxi girls - Angela, Anne-Claire and Connie (from Crocs company), arriving in Hefei amidst heavy traffic congestion and settled into our hotel. Next morning at 7am, together with another group (4 ladies and their 3 daughters), we journeyed to Lao Wang's Orphanage.

On arrival, the cheers of the children at the gate met us. The tables were set up and the children queued for their goodie bag/apple and orange. The three daughters of volunteer group had brought along some origami arrangements and were quickly teaching some of the orphans how to fold the origami papers. The rest of us spread out, visiting the 26 rooms where the disabled children were or interacting with the other children in the compound, some dancing and singing.

As for me, I set on my pre-determined task as I had earlier been informed by Dot that some of the children's hands were badly chapped during the winter season. I started with a cerebral palsy girl sitting in a wheelchair and applied Vaseline Petroleum Jelly on both palms, massaged each finger, and taught her to do simple finger-stretching exercises. She was so happy as she had never applied any oil or lotion on her hands before. She could move just her fingers slightly but her arms were stiff, but we managed to raise both hands up for a "give me a 10" clap. Then I placed my mini hairbrush in her hand and got her to brush her own hair. She just kept on smiling as I encouraged her and told her how pretty she looked. Another Mifan Mama volunteer presented her with a mirror. Then we went to her 'room' and gave the petroleum jelly jar to her Ayi and taught the Ayi how to apply it on a daily basis. Of course, I attracted quite a bit of attention, as some of the children were just curious as to what I was up to and wanted me to apply lotion for them too. I left another three jars with Lao Wang's daughter and asked her to remind the Ayi to use it to ease the badly chapped fingers and lips.

Then it was lunch break and the children and caretakers queued up to collect their food. We had a delicious lunch consisting of steamed mantou, rice/red bean congee and three vegetables. During lunch, I sat with two cheerful boys. One is Ma Siaojin (about 14-16 yrs) who was very chatty and telling me how much he loves music. Another was a blind boy called Kang Kang. On asking what he liked, he said he loves listening to music and although he has not played any

instruments before, he likes the piano. He asked whether we could bring a piano for them, as today they had been given a guitar. I told him that someone wanted to donate an electric keyboard, and we would bring it to the orphanage as soon as we received it.

Many children just wanted to hug us, or follow us around, tugging and pulling my arms. Some want to hold hands, curious at what's in my handbag, I tried to speak to as many children as I could. I taught Ling Yun to 'sing' the English alphabet (to the tune of Twinkle Little Star) and got her to recognise the alphabet, which I wrote on a slip of paper for her. She learnt to write her name in pinyin. I promised to bring her some alphabet text and exercise books. She proudly said that she knew some English e.g. "welcome to our home"; "thank you". She called me 'laoshi' after that.

Time passed by so quickly and although it was drizzling throughout the day, the spirits of the children gave me much joy and cheer. As we prepared to depart, it was all hugs and kisses again. As we drove off, the children and caretakers were at the gate to wave their goodbyes, and at this point, I could not hold back my tears. I really look forward to the next visit.

I'm glad to have experienced this first visit to Lao Wang's orphanage and it won't be the last! There is much more that can be done for these lovely children. A great big THANK YOU to everyone at Mifan Mama - YOU are making a great difference in the lives of 220 children!!!!

*Written by Mary (home country: Singapore)*