
we dream, believe and achieve



Mifan Mama September 2011 Report

Our report starts with the announcement that sadly Julie and Tony have now moved to Nanjing. Happily, they have settled in well and are enjoying the new adventure. However, they are also concentrating on the health of Faith who may require a further operation to aid her feeding. In the meantime, the day to day running of the Mifan Mama and upcoming events falls in the very capable hands of Julie G and Valerie, with the help of our dedicated team of volunteers. The main contact as usual however, is the mifanmama email – mifanmama@gmail.com

We hope that you enjoyed the concert at the Shanghai American School, which recently took place and other events are in the planning pipeline. We even have a cashmere sale being organised by Marie in Brussels!

Volunteers will also be needed to help man the Mifan Mama stall at the many events and fairs over the coming months. Please do help out as we need to generate funds for food supplies in 2012. Julie G and Valerie will be sending emails to ask for volunteers. The emphasis for the upcoming months is on fundraising and ensuring that we have the funds for the coming year. Fundraising ideas are always welcome!

Boxes of Love

Valerie has been working hard to get the groundwork for Boxes of Love in order. The goal is a phenomenal 10,000 boxes (double last year's amount!). We are already half way there. Emails have been sent to all sponsors and those involved last year. We hope many of them will want to get involved again. Remember we only ask 40RMB to fill the boxes with sealed treats such as sweets, crackers and lollipops. The boxes are delivered all over China to some really underdeveloped areas and so appreciated.

We will be selling boxes at all events from now on. Please note, there will be an event at the Kerry Centre, Hua Mu Lu, Pudong. Passers by will be able to decorate and fill the boxes on Saturday, 3rd December from 12 to 2. Volunteers to help will be needed and it should be a fun event for kids. More details to follow.

Update on Laowang's Orphanage

Julie and Tony are now closer to Laowang's and have been continuing to visit the orphanage. Mifan Mama remains in contact with Laowang and we are waiting to see how the move to the new facility is progressing. A trip was undertaken by volunteers in September (see Rita's article below) and a truck filled with supplies will headed out on 22 October.

Mifan Mama will continue with our support at Laowang's and we are also planning trips to other orphanages. We would like to widen our support to other orphanages. We have a list of possibilities but the aim is to identify the most in need and what we can offer.

A trip to an orphanage in Jiangxi Province (south of Anhui and Zhejiang) by volunteers is planned for the weekend of 19-20 November. Julie and Tony have visited and they believe that the children mostly need people to go and see and interact with the children.

Investigations are also taking place at a facility in Hefei that houses 74 children who are in desperate need of love and kindness as well as basic needs.

Thank You!

Mifan Mama have been very fortunate to again receive the generous support of the **IBHS Group**. International Branded Hotels of Shanghai includes most of the best known hotel brands in Shanghai, and the world! Many of the General Managers were able on the morning of September 7th, to meet at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Century Park for the donation ceremony. Among those present for the ceremony were the IBHS Chairman, Christophe Lajus, General Manager of Crowne Plaza Hotel and a candidate for this year's Shanghai Charity Star Award, and of course Gerhard Fasching, General Manager of Radisson Blu Century Park.

The two Julie's were in attendance to accept the 'big cheque' and meet with the gentlemen managers, along with Kitty Xia from Shanghai Charity Foundation. Shanghai Charity Foundation will administer the donation on behalf of the IBHS Group. After a chat about Mifan Mama and the work we do, and will continue to do in the future, providing basic needs to children in poor orphanages in rural China, the presentation ceremony was under way, followed by lunch in the Radisson's restaurant.

The support of IBHS is very important to Mifan Mama, in addition to their joint support with this generous donation, we also receive other forms of support, such as support for events, sponsorships etc throughout the year. The management and staff of the IBHS Hotel group along with other hotels and companies are also an important part of our Boxes of Love programme, which we will start in the coming weeks.

Our grateful thanks go out to all the members of the IBHS Group who all support our work, and we appreciate all you do for us throughout the year.

It was a great morning, and good to be able to express our thanks in person to the gentlemen of IBHS, who we don't always see too often. Once again, Mifan Mama is grateful to receive the support of IBHS in addition to the private support we receive, as we all understand how easy it is to make the life of an impoverished orphan just that little bit better.

We are also delighted the **Radisson Thumb Plaza, Pudong** has chosen to sponsor Mifan Mama and we very much appreciate the support.

It is a goal of Mifan Mama that the children at Laowang's have access to clean, safe drinking water so a **BIG thank you to Mark**, from **A Child's Right**, who flew in from

Beijing during the October holidays to help fit the water filters that so many people had kindly contributed to.

Thanks to the children of Deborah Piagge. A really lovely story from the summer was that of Deborah's children Elisa, Lucia and Chiara Dalle Piagge. The children were so moved by Anna Willett's, 'Inside a Chinese Orphanage' that upon their journey home to Italy this summer they organised a presentation for family and friends to tell people of the situation in China and to raise money for the children. It's a wonderful story of children helping children and they raised a fantastic 250 Euros!

Thanks to the Australian Ladies Club and also, **Lillian and Anna Fong's family** whose contributions go towards the essential food and supplies every month.

Shining Star Update –

The project continues to progress. We are still looking for a suitable location for the home but we have identified potential, well-qualified teachers. The Shining Star project team are working hard to gain sponsorship to ensure the funding is available. There are other exciting developments in the pipeline to make this dream a reality and they will be announced in due course. The team also continue to work closely with Bethel (www.bethelchina.org), a pioneering centre for the blind in Beijing, as both Marie and Julie will be training with them in the new year.

Finally, our volunteers visited Laowang's during September and the following has been submitted by Rita, a volunteer who took part -

Poignant visit to Lao Wang's Orphanage in Shaan Shi Lu Village, Anhui Province.

September 3-4, 2011

By Rita

Anticipation and mixed feelings were foremost in my mind as I prepared for my very first visit to the Orphanage supported by Mifan Mama, the charity group I joined as a volunteer, just a few weeks ago. I had heard a lot about the children who had been abandoned, the long journey and also the spirit of human generosity at work here, but I wanted to see and experience for myself, the reality of what, where, how, why and most importantly for WHOM Mifan Mama is striving so hard and unceasingly with such sincerity and loving spirit. By the end of my trip I had the most revealing answer!

Orphans who have very little hope of support from anyone are being supported by Mifan Mama on an ongoing basis. This group of loving "Rice Mothers" well understands the plight of these kids and hopes to continue providing the help and care they need for all time. Mifan Mama brings hope for now and future of these kids in a variety of ways. Food, clothing, clean water, surgery and education but above all it tries through all of us to put forward a loving hand to those who need it most.

The pure looks of joy and innocent smiles that I received from the kids brought a tear of joy to my eyes and the realization that the kids understand the motherly love Mifan Mama is providing them and they are reciprocating in equal measure. They were able to communicate without words the feeling of joy as a child would do to a mother.

I received the gift of knowledge that love has no borders or language barriers and that mothers from far away lands could generate the same emotions in these orphans as they do for their own children.

Twelve volunteers embarked on this journey of discovery. It was a varied group, several young people, including a newly wedded couple, who took the opportunity to see the reality of life from close quarters. For most of us it was our first visit to meet and interact with the children and the residents of Lao Wang's "Home"- the Orphanage. Lao Wang has been running this orphanage of 200+ kids for past many years with love and care often with meagre resources. Since 2009 Mifan Mama has been supporting the kids in a variety of ways.

The orphanage located in Anhui province is in one of the poorer regions of China.

On the way our bus passed through Wuxi, crossed the mighty Yangtze river to Nanjing and then onto Hefei, the capital of Anhui province. The trip was long, about seven hours but pleasant enough with much appreciated rest stops. The time went by with music, reading and of course getting acquainted with each other. We stayed the night at Hefei. Next morning we set out early and travelled for about two hours through the rural countryside of Anhui to arrive in Ying Shang town. The orphanage is situated in Shaan Shi Lu village just a few km from this town. The specialty of this area is making coffins and toys in villagers' homes using local wood.

The orphanage is set among lush green fields and water canals. There are fields of ripening corn and lots of green vegetables being cultivated. There was excitement in the bus as we neared the gates of the orphanage, and my camera was on the ready. I admit there was a little trepidation in my mind as to what I would see and how I would react. I was so pleasantly surprised to see how normal all appeared. The children and adults, all were happy to see the bus arrive. However, before we could get off the bus we learnt that the Mifan Mama truck from Shanghai carrying bags of rice, flour, beans, baby milk powder, other necessary food items, diapers, clothes, toys, bicycles, baby prams, and lots of assorted stuff needed by the residents including the kids, Ayis' and other care givers had arrived at the new facility built by the local government for the children of Lao Wang's home. Each month the truck also carries a "goody" bag from Mifan Mama for each child. Since the children were not together at one place it was decided that the bags will be given out later when they were altogether. It is because of the kindness, generosity and support of all that it is possible to send a load full of truck out month after month.

We decided to visit the new place first to help unload the truck. Also, some of the older and healthier children were at the new facility on that day. This new facility is just 2 km from the old orphanage and will house most of the kids in the next few months as the building is near completion. As we entered "Ni Hao" and greetings were exchanged all around. Some of the very young kids were willing to come to us as we called out to them and even tug at our glares and caps. Others were shy. One young gentleman from our group who has a long beard was very popular with the kids. They wanted and tried their utmost to touch, pull and play with his beard! In our own style each of us tried to reach out to as many kids as we could.

I was amazed to see the size of the truck and even more amazed to see the amount of donated goods it had carried from Shanghai for the children. Kids- young and old all unloaded the truck very enthusiastically. A few teenagers were trying to put the bicycles together and others were figuring out the several toys and gadgets. It was wonderful to see the grins and smiles on their faces.

However, the feelings of euphoria of visiting with the near normal kids gave way to shock and despair when we went back to the old orphanage compound after lunch and visited each of the rooms housing the infants and kids who are severely disabled. It was very difficult and painful to see the kids with Downs's syndrome, mental illness, hearing impairment, blindness, physical disfigurements, cleft palates and other deformities. After meeting with just a few, it felt like we could not gather the courage to see others. However, the bright smiles on the care givers faces and their eagerness to share their stories the need in the children for a fresh human touch of love and kindness kept us going. We came away very impressed with the selfless caregivers who are sincere, hard working and grateful for whatever Mifan Mama does for them.

At one point I was saddened to meet this beautiful young woman with just one good eye but the next moment I was so thrilled when she so proudly showed me her little daughter. Nature is cruel and bountiful at the same time and I decided to learn and be positive like her. This lady and her attitude is an inspiration. Soon the kids who had got somewhat used to our unfamiliar faces were now being bold and playful and tugging and pulling us in different directions wanting our attention. These kids are so resilient in spite of all their difficulties. Even the kids who were confined to their rooms had the hugest grins and were so eager to play with us.

Very soon it was time to say our farewells, just when we were getting a bit more acquainted with the kids. Some of them were reluctant to let us go. We started back around 3.30 pm and all of us were back home by midnight. My Yang our bus driver ensured a very smooth ride and deserves our applause.

The return journey was spent in contemplation of the touching impressions and moving pictures of the struggling little ones. But also the sheer delight of the hugs of Loi Loi and his young pals. These will remain ingrained in our minds and hearts forever and reenergize our efforts to help the children in every way we can.

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