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Young American from Affluent Family Fundraises 11 years for Special Needs Orphans in China

26-year-old Matthew Dalio and his team who founded the China Care Foundation, Inc (CCF) have been fundraising for special needs orphans in China for the past 11 years.

The China Care Home (CCH) is situated in a high-rise building at Shuangjingqiao in Beijing. Over 50 orphans from orphanages all over China woke up from an afternoon nap in an air-conditioned room that shielded them from the heat of Beijing. A toddler with cleft lip, helped by a caretaker, stumbled towards Matt with open arms. Matt went forward and lifted her into his arms. "This is my responsibility." Since 2000, CCF has already helped over a thousand special needs orphans in China.

Family Influence

Matt said, "Starting a business venture and helping the needy have been my two core goals since I was little." He inherited that from his father.

Matt comes from a large family, he has three brothers. His father was a child from a poor family. He built his life from nothing and became a billionaire. Matt's father started his first investment company in a bedroom of the apartment they rented in eastern Manhattan in 1975. His company later grew into a global investment company managing over 80 billion US dollars worth of funds. His personal assets are estimated to be worth over 4 billion US dollars. He is one of the richest residents even in the wealthy states of Connecticut.

In the 1960s when Matt's father was a child, he worked as a caddie in a Golf Club. The stock market was bullish then. This 12-year-old caddie heard about investment tactics in the golf field and decided that he wanted to try it out. He then borrowed some money from his uncles, and was immediately hooked after the price of the first stocks he bought went up. Like many other billionaires, Matt's father has his own charitable foundation. For the past three years, he has sponsored a campaign called "let's redefine Christmas" by putting ads on TVs and newspapers. This campaign encourages people to give to charity instead of indulging in holiday shopping.

Matt has inherited his father's spirit of entrepreneurship and charity. Just like his adventurous father, Matt ventured out and at 16 he set up CCF in Greenwich, CT.

Although it is not hard to set up a foundation in US, Matt's story is still one of a kind. Can you imagine what the response was when a 16-year-old boy reached out his hands and asked you to give him money, especially considering that money was for children far away in China? Matt still remembers the time when he received the first large donation. "He was my father's friend. I

had brought with me testimonies including Chinese newspapers with reports about me. I visited him and told him what I was doing. He was moved. A child was trying to help other children, so he gave me \$7000. ”

Using the first \$50K raised, Matt started his first project, which was to help orphans to find foster families. For a while, Matt went to coffee shops every day to raise money. He told the customers in the coffee shops, “You can give these children a home.” This heartwarming story spread in the area. Soon, a local media approached Matt, and gradually Matt’s story gained increasing media coverage. Reports on him that Matt collected over a summer spanned 4 large pages. The famous People magazine and talk show Opera had also interviewed Matt. “The hero amongst us” was one of the names they gave Matt. Some people even said Matt should campaign for presidency some day.

To help the growing China

Since his first visit to Beijing at 11 years old, Matt’s has become proficient in Chinese. He not only masters the use of chopsticks, he is also able to acquaint himself with Chinese people who speak different dialects. Matt first came to China as a young study abroad student. At 11, he was enrolled as a foreign student at Shijiahongtong Elementary School. Matt’s parents entrusted Matt under the care of their friend, Ms. Zeqing Gu (Ms. Gu later served as a board member of CCF). Matt often felt homesick while he was alone in China.

Christmas was near. If it had been in Matt’s hometown, he would have already felt the excitement in the air, and he would have been playing with his brothers. But in Beijing in 1996, he searched through the entire neighbourhood in Beijing before he could find a small tree with Christmas lights and decorations. However, what surprised Matt was that on Christmas Day, all his classmates and teachers appeared at his Christmas party. Everybody brought some homemade dishes and gifts. This warmed Matthew’s heart. The Christmas lights flickered as everyone danced to the music. He still remembers this scene very clearly.

Matt gradually got used to the life in Beijing. One year later when he was about to leave, he could no longer be separated from China.

In order to help the growing China, Matt turned his attention to orphans. He set up a charity foundation in the U.S. to fundraise for orphans in China. The donations have been used to pay for foster care and medical expenses. CCF was officially set up in 2000. After 11 years, CCF has already helped and saved over a thousand special needs orphans.

Even the cost of a diaper has to be audited

In order to help more orphans, Matt chose to cooperate with Half the Sky Foundation (HTS). He thinks the key rationale for their partnership is that CCF and HTS share similar missions and end goals, their projects are also complementary. After an orphan receives the medical care at CCH,

he can then join the existing education programs provided by HTS. HTS is already officially registered in China, which will make it easier for them to bring out further projects.

As CCF grows, young Matt also grew into adulthood. He attended Yale and then Harvard to complete the learning for his profession.

In Xiaogeng Wang's eyes, Matt was still a child. In 2002, Xiaogeng was moved by Matt's story and joined CCF, she became their first employee in China. Xiaogeng once told Matt, "I will work for you." But Matt responded sternly, "You don't work for me, you work with me". His words touched Xiaogeng. "Years ago, Matt was loving, keen, and compassionate. The Matt of today has become more inspiring and has leadership qualities," Xiaogeng wrote in her blog.

Matt didn't know who Meimei Guo was, and he also could not understand what brought about the crisis. He told the reporter at China Charity Daily that all the administrative expenses at CCF was covered by its Board, and not paid for by the donations. Matt said any organization should know very clearly where their donations are going and where they are spending their money. In China, CCF hired an auditor who checks every single expense, even money spent on the children's diapers. At the same time, CCF has an auditor in the U.S. to verify the China auditor's work. If a single expense is over RMB 100, the auditor will review the expense by checking it against the invoice. The US auditor is also supervised. These multiple levels of audit follow closely every cent that is being spent in CCF. All these data can be traced. "These are all very basic procedures," Matt said.

Matt will graduate soon. He had never thought of relying on his billionaire father to pave the way for him. He said, "I don't want to be a billionaire. I want to help more people. I think I would definitely spend the rest of my life doing charity work."

What Matt can never forget is what happened in the spring of 2003 after the SARS outbreak. Xiaogeng arranged for Matt to give a speech at a middle school. Matt stepped onto the stage facing over 400 students. He gave a lively account of the story of CCF. Matt felt stimulated and raised the question, "how many of you have worked as a volunteer?" There was silence; only two students raised their hands.

Matt thought the response was a shock but more so a motivation. The 16-year-old Matt already wanted to tell more Chinese people that giving can bring more happiness. Charity does not necessarily mean just donations. More importantly, people need to devote time to it, and becoming a volunteer is the easiest way. After 11 years, more and more Chinese people now understand what he was saying.