

# VOLUNTEERING AT THE CHINA CARE HOME - ALEXANDER KOUDIJS - DAY 1, SUMMER 2011



July 13, 2011

As the elevator doors opened, the smell of warm Chinese food filled the air. It was lunchtime when I toured the China Care Home. As I walked through the home, I was amazed by the spirit of the kids. Having never been to an orphanage or a children's hospital, my original perception of what this experience would be was much different from what it actually turned out to be. The children here are happy--unfazed by their disabilities and their constant trips to and from the hospital. I feel that they are living in the moment and have as much fun as they can.

It is here where I found a place I could help. As an older brother of three, I have mastered the skill of playing with all ages, whether it is with a toddler or an infant. I have spent a lot of time since my arrival moving between the rooms and getting to know each of the children. The oldest children are where I feel I can make the biggest impact and from whom I receive the most joy. I love the time I get to spend in these rooms with the children; the constant struggle between our different languages is overcome by gestures and smiles.



I found that I have bonded a lot with two boys, Zhi and Xin. Two of the other volunteers and I have spent much time with these boys and I feel that the five of us have a lot of fun together. Zhi can throw a ball fast and far, even though he does not have all his fingers. Xin loves to be chased and thrown up in the air. These are two of the older toddlers at the home and they have so much energy. Their shouts of joy fade to soft chuckles of laughter by the end of the day, when all five of us are spread out on the floor wiped from a good day of playing.



Alec is a student at The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, CT, and this is his first time to China. He is still practicing how to master chop-sticks.