

Translated from:

***China Youth*, Aug 11, 2011, Reporter Sha Luo, Intern Reporter Wei Zhang**

“I am not a kid fooling around”

Most children probably still cling to their mother when they are 11 years old, but he had gone to study in China alone. At age 16, many children are worried about their exams, but he was already setting up a charitable organization in the U.S. called the China Care Foundation (CCF). At the age of 27, he is still persisting, “I will not ever give up CCF; I will make it bigger and better.” He is Matthew, a young American with a special connection to China.

Matthew could not help smiling when he recalled how he arrived at Shijiahutong Elementary School when he was 11.

“I was surrounded by students as soon as I entered the school. I felt like a new animal in the zoo,” Matthew said.

This cheerful boy soon won the love of his teachers and classmates. “They liked the way that I am frank and open. Of course, they also liked my accent. My desk mate often told me, Matthew, ‘it sounds like you are singing when you speak Chinese’,” Matthew said, “My school organized a big party for me when I graduated a year later.”

Matthew did not forget about China after he returned to the U.S. “Anything related to China would catch my attention. I heard that in the area I lived in, many people liked to adopt children from orphanages in China. They are more ready to accept healthy orphans, but the percentage of special needs orphans in orphanages in China was very high at the time,” said Matthew, “So I thought, why not set up an organization to help these orphanages and to also provide medical treatment to the special needs orphans?”

In 2000 when Matthew was only 16, he set up the China Care Foundation. The mission was to raise funds to provide medical treatments to disabled orphans. CCF has now earned a good reputation and enjoys wide support. But thinking of the difficulties he came across in the early days of CCF’s establishment, Matthew cannot help shaking his head.

“How could a child acquire donations from clever grown-ups? This is not an easy problem to solve. There had been many incidents,” said Matthew.

In order to obtain the trust of the adults, Matthew had to take with him at all times media reports he was featured in. He said, “I thought at least they would know that I was not kidding after they read the newspaper. But even with that, it was still not easy to collect donations from them.”

Matthew still remembers his fund-raising experience in a coffee shop. “Facing this stubbled mid-aged man, I was very nervous, but I forced myself to speak up. I said to him, ‘While you are enjoying this cup of coffee, there are probably children on the other side of the world who do not even have clothes to wear. Why don’t you help them out? Giving will bring you happiness.’ ”The man had a stern expression. He put down his coffee and frowned slightly. A moment later, he handed some money to Matt and told him, “Kid, you are doing the right thing. I support you.”

In the following two and a half years, with his enthusiasm and persistence, Matthew raised about \$500k for CCF. He also arranged temporary foster homes in Jinghai County for 50 special needs orphans in Tianjin. Matthew said, “What’s more, CCF also sponsored medical treatment for 15 disabled orphans.”

When everyone around thought Matthew should catch the tide and speed things up, he slowed down his paces instead.

Matthew said, “I don’t think we should simply be giving out money to the orphanages. Instead, we should take the time to research and find out the best way to spend the funds. There are many things we need to consider, which includes choosing suitable recipient orphanages, the projects the donations should support, and determining the right amounts of donation, etc.”

When he returned to China again, Matthew visited many orphanages in different regions.

Matthew spoke with excitement, “I have now realized my goal. I want to tell people that based on my experience that it may not be your responsibility to give to others, but giving will bring you happiness. When others call me a hero, I don’t feel that I am. I am only doing what I can. If you want, you are also capable of doing it.”

After years of progress, CCF has developed its own special operations model, which is to collaborate with local orphanages, to provide medical care to special needs orphans, and to send the cured children back to the welfare centers. The “love cycle” principle is fulfilled by the process of “intake – treatment and care – return to society.” In addition, CCF has also started China Clubs in the U.S.

The members of the China Clubs are mostly American students. They volunteer to help the children adopted by American families learn about their Chinese culture and their native land. Matthew said, “I hope that there would be more and more people devoting themselves to charity in every corner of the world. When you partake in charity work, you will find that you receive far more than what you give.”