



CCAI CIRCLE

2019
Edition

Building Families, Enriching Community



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ADOPTION STATISTICS

As of 9/30/2019

12,950
Total Adoptions

4,452
Children with Medical Needs

12,499 China
155 Haiti
143 Ukraine
95 Latvia
14 Bulgaria
5 Taiwan
39 US Domestic
10,496 Girls
2,454 Boys

What Keeps You Going?

CCAI's first group of six beautiful children arrived in the USA in April 1994. A few weeks later, we received their new family portraits in which those six babies had completely transformed; from malnourished abandoned babies, they had become glowing, cherished daughters. Lily and I hung the six pictures on our basement office wall and admired them daily. That was the beginning of the "Great Wall of CCAI Families." Today nearly every wall of our 16,000-square-foot office is decorated with thousands of happy family pictures. The Great Wall has been expanding with no end in sight.

"What keeps you going?" Families and friends ask us this question all the time, knowing the exhausting hours we work, the multiple programs we run, the complicated issues we deal with, and the ever-changing international adoption landscape.

It is THIS, the Great Wall of CCAI Families; it is the blooming faces of the children; and it is the proud realization that we have played a small role in so many children and families' lives that keep us going strong every day.

Right outside the door of Lily's office is the Zhong family portrait, one among many. Anna, our precious daughter with special needs, joined our family in October 2004. Today she is a gorgeous 24-year-old engaged to a wonderful young man. Isn't God good?!

We are joyful for all of you who are so blessed by adoption. We are praying for all families who are dealing with the challenges, large and small, of parenting an adopted child. For Lily and me, you are our forever family and we love all of you dearly.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays!



Josh & Lily

A Mother's Love *Tales from the Zhumadian LOCC*

There are some "mothers" who cherish and care for children not of their own blood, yet offer the world's greatest maternal love. Today let's go into the Zhumadian Lily Orphan Care Center (LOCC) to catch a glimpse of the daily lives of its nannies and children.

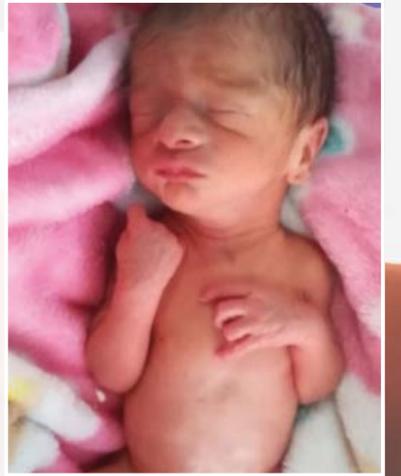
In the LOCC, there is a boy named Cai Kun, who was born on January 22, 2019, and abandoned shortly after birth. When he arrived at the orphanage, he weighed only 1.3 kg (less than three pounds) and was a premature low-birthweight baby. Because of his poor condition, he had to go to the hospital right away for treatment. He was treated in the hospital for nearly two months before his condition had stabilized enough for him to be discharged. He entered the LOCC in April 2019, weighing only 2 kg (4 lbs 6 oz). His body was so thin; we could barely hear his cry. Pale and weak, there was no light to his eyes. Even his breathing had a sharp wheezing sound. His weak resistance made him extremely susceptible to fall ill. He could drink only a tiny bit amount of milk at a time, so we fed him very slowly and carefully. Still, sometimes he would choke and spit up his milk all over us. We would hold him in our arms and look into his eyes, with worry in our hearts.

We nannies all said: "This child is so small, with no way to tell us his needs. We can't let him waste what precious strength he has to cry. He must rely on us, on everyone's careful attention." So with this thought in mind, all the nannies paid close attention to his expressions, carefully trying to figure out his needs.

Despite having many children to care for, the nannies checked on him every hour, day and night. Whenever Cai Kun made a sound, a nanny would rush over to change or feed him. Whatever it was he needed, the nannies would pick him up and gently comfort him back to sleep, fearful that his crying could suffocate him.

With the nannies' great care and love, Cai Kun's condition slowly improved. We started to see life come into his eyes and a bloom grow on his cheeks. His crying also got louder! Now he can roll over, lift his head, and do his best to creep forward. Best of all, he now weighs 6 kg (over 13 pounds)! Every day, when he sees his nannies come to work, he gives them a great big smile. Nothing could make us happier than to see those big changes in this tiny little boy.

The LOCC staff often says, "Taking care of a baby under three months old is the most tiring work." These little babies, especially preemies, constantly need to be fed, checked on, and carefully watched. As parents know, it's exhausting both physically and mentally. However, although the work is demanding, it is these smallest children who have the biggest changes. When we as nannies see them growing stronger, with rosy cheeks and smiles on their faces, all of our exhaustion vanishes into thin air. For the nannies, love is never a request; it is not an exchange of equal value, but giving it is a heavy responsibility. The LOCC children may not have "mothers," but they have the same maternal love.



Social Worker Training in Wuxi

In February 2019, CCAI's very own social work professionals Judy Winger, MSW, and Moya Smith, LCSW, spent a week in Wuxi, Jiangsu, China, offering training to some 40 orphanage directors and social workers from Zhengzhou, Nanyang, and Wuxi. Topics centered around the impact of trauma on children, ways to help children self-regulate, and ideas for play therapy and sensory-aware activities. Trainers and participants alike enjoyed the exchange of information and ideas on how to even more effectively prepare adoptive families and children for successful relationships.



The Chinese Consulate General in Houston hosted a group of families who adopted older children (12+) from China at Ambassador Li Qiangmin's mansion on June 29, 2019. Several children shared short speeches and guests enjoyed gifts, a delicious Chinese feast, and tai qi and calligraphy performances. The consulate was so gracious with sharing their culture at this wonderful event!

Many years ago as CCAI's China adoption program began to gather steam, Josh and Lily saw the dilapidated state of many state-run orphanages and the lack of training the staff received, particularly in regards to special needs children. Realizing that they could make an immediate difference in the lives of these special children, they established Lily Orphan Care Centers (LOCC), named for CCAI co-founder Lily Nie.

CCAI opened its first LOCC in Hangzhou, China, in 2001, and the huge success of this first LOCC led to the opening of 9 more LOCCs in other Chinese provinces. Through the LOCC training model, Chinese caretakers can visualize our child-centered philosophy. CCAI invites caretakers from all over China to attend childcare training at a local LOCC. We also send out training teams to many other orphanages to provide much-needed childcare knowledge and skills.

CHARITY REPORT

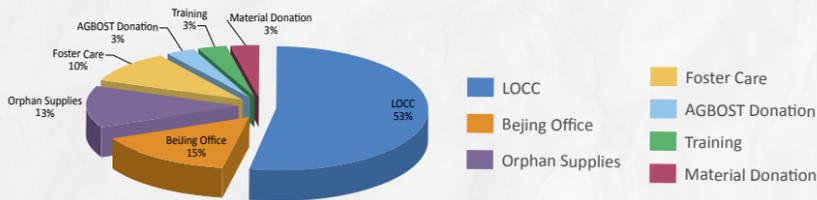
October 2018 – September 2019

| PROVINCE | ORPHANAGE | DONATION (RMB) | PROJECT |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--|
| HeNan | AnYang LOCC | 110736.00 | LOCC Staff Salary |
| | JiaoZuo | 16520.00 | Cribs |
| | Kaifeng LOCC | 4399.00 | AC |
| | | 21000.00 | LOCC Staff Salary |
| | NanYang LOCC | 221558.80 | LOCC Staff Salary |
| | XinYang | 1683.00 | Clothes and shoes |
| | XinYe | 1770.00 | Clothes |
| | XuChang | 84000.00 | Multifunctional blackboard |
| | | 41052.00 | Computers |
| | | 26400.00 | Filing cabinets |
| | | 174550.00 | First Hugs Staff Salary |
| | ZhengZhou LOCC | 17332.00 | Foster care |
| | | 871636.50 | LOCC Staff Salary |
| | ZhouKou | 5072.00 | Formula |
| | | 47000.00 | Washer |
| HuNan | ZhuMaDian LOCC | 141160.00 | LOCC Staff Salary |
| | ZhuZhou | 89553.00 | Foster care |
| | BeiLiu | 18364.00 | Laptop & AC |
| GuangXi | Fuling | 185400.00 | Foster care |
| | | 3536.00 | Tablet, PC, scale |
| JiangXi | FuZhou | 1860.00 | Clothes |
| | GuangDong | 9200.00 | Formula |
| | | 1711.00 | Diapers |
| ZheJiang | HangZhou | 34169.00 | Dining Cart |
| AnHui | Hefei | 35164.00 | AC & TV |
| XinJiang | Hohhot | 739940 | Clothes |
| BeiJing | QiAi | 18000.00 | Children's supplies |
| LiaoNing | ShenYang | 9280.00 | Desks |
| ShaanXi | XiAn | 100020.00 | AGBOST* |
| GuiZhou | ZunYi | 20073.00 | Kitchen supplies |
| BeiJing | Charity Office | 186700.00 | Charity Office Rent |
| | Charity Office | 256093.26 | Office operation expenses |
| | Training | 91206.08 | Child care, therapy & social worker training |
| HeNan \ LiaoNing \ ShaanXi | Material Donation | 75000.00 | Pulse oximeters, clothes, blankets |

Total ¥2,928,598.04

or \$450,553.55 USD approximately based on avg 6.5 exchange rate

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------|-------------------|-----------|
| LOCC | 1540641.30 | Foster Care | 292285.00 |
| Beijing Office | 442793.26 | AGBOST Donation | 100020.00 |
| Orphan Supplies | 386652.40 | Training | 91206.08 |
| | | Material Donation | 75000.00 |



* Adoptees Giving Back Orphanage Service Trip (AGBOST)



DONATE TODAY!
 ONLINE: CCAIFAMILY.ORG
 MAIL: 6920 S. HOLLY CIRCLE
 CENTENNIAL, CO 80112

CFC
 Combined Federal Campaign
 Our CFC Code is
93258





“Best Friend Brother”

By Rebecca Wells

Two years ago (March 13, 2017), I adopted an amazing 8-year-old little boy from China named GuMin. Within a week after bringing him home, I knew I wanted to adopt a sibling for him but figured it would be several years before that would happen. Fast forward 9 months to Christmas of 2017: GuMin began to express such deep concern for his “best friend brother,” SunYu... Was he okay, did he have a family yet? After a lot of consoling my son and prayer, a few months later I reached out to the Waiting Child Department of CCAI to see if they had any information about where SunYu was and how he was doing. We weren't sure of his birth date or even the spelling of his name, but I gathered all the information I could, a few photos of the boys together that were sent in a remembrance packet by the orphanage director, all the details that GuMin could remember, and some scraps of facts I was able to piece together, and sent them to CCAI so they could launch an inquiry. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack but we had to try--if for no other

reason it could give my son some peace about SunYu.

Fast forward 7 more months to July of 2018: Months had passed and there was no trail. GuMin asked about SunYu again, but not quite as panicked this time since he knew we were trying to locate him. I had to let him know that it was possible that the agency might not be able to locate SunYu. He said, “That’s okay, Mama, I will still always pray for him and remember him. But, if they find him and he doesn’t have a family yet, can he be our family?” My heart broke... BUT GOD! The very next day I received a call from Sarah at CCAI that the CCCWA had located SunYu and he was still at the orphanage and was doing fine! Praise God!

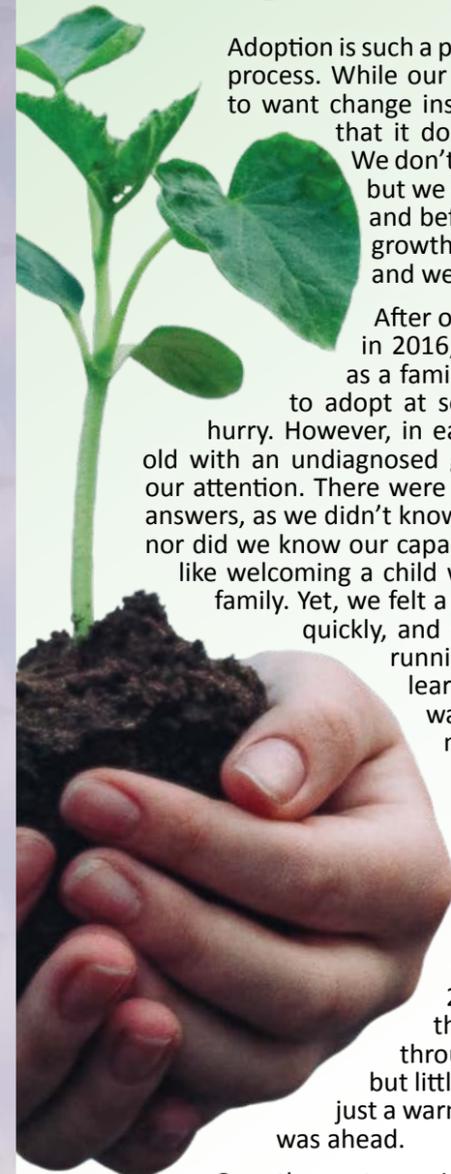
But that wasn't all...The CCCWA sent his adoption file to CCAI...it was now reactivated! And then I found out that his file had been sitting inactive for 6 years and if it had not been for the inquiry, SunYu would likely have been forgotten. My heart shattered at the gravity of this realization...It was a



Friday and I was in my office at work sobbing my eyes out and Sarah was crying too, on speaker phone...good thing most people at my work were still on vacation (haha!). It was at that moment that I truly felt the goodness of the Lord and how much He loves every single one of us, especially orphans. Sarah barely got the question out of her mouth when, without any hesitation at all, I cried, “YES!”

Immediately I began the great paper chase of the adoption process and in just over 10 months I had my sweet SunYu in my arms (June 24, 2019). We’ve been home for 3 months now and it feels like SunYu has always been part of our family. I feel like my boys have picked up right where they left off in China. Of course they have the typical sibling disagreements, but more often they have silly fun, play dinosaurs and power rangers, build Lego, and snuggle when they watch TV. I have truly been the recipient of the greatest blessing: My two sons, best friends reunited and now brothers forever.

Sowing the Seeds of Blessing By Ryan & Candace Hewitt



Adoption is such a picture of the transformation process. While our culture has ingrained in us to want change instantaneously, the reality is that it doesn't often work that way. We don't see growth in the moment, but we water and faithfully nurture and before we know it, the hidden growth slowly becomes evident and we see the fruit.

After our 3rd child (Zion) was born in 2016, we felt content settling in as a family of 5. While we felt called to adopt at some point, we were in no hurry. However, in early 2017, Jian Lu, a 6 year old with an undiagnosed genetic condition, came to our attention. There were many more questions than answers, as we didn't know his condition or his needs, nor did we know our capacity or what life would look like welcoming a child with unique needs into our family. Yet, we felt a conviction to go, and move quickly, and so we said yes and started running towards him. We quickly learned that Jian Lu's condition was rapidly declining with many doctors fearing he would not survive the months ahead. Yet, through hard work, teamwork, and prayer, we saw mountains moved out of the way, as Jian Lu's life was sustained and he was brought home in Nov. 2017. At only 7 months, we thought we had just sprinted through the adoption process, but little did we know that this was just a warm-up for the true sprint that was ahead.

Over the next year, in the midst of 4 young kids, medical needs, and numerous weekly therapies/appointments, we sought a new normal, but learned this meant anything but easy or predictable. We did our best to sow, water, and care for our family, and over time we have seen Jian Lu's health dramatically increase and his heart open up to us as his family in a myriad of ways we were told may never happen. It wasn't instant. It took time, but it was a reminder that the transformation is happening and the fruit will come!

But seasons of watering and caring can still be tiring. At this point, we could have given ourselves permission to scale back and turn our focus inward... but then we saw Xian Feng, a 13-year old boy with Morquio, a similar genetic condition to Jian Lu, who was aging out in a few months. We could not imagine Jian Lu growing up without the love of a family and the needed medical care, and realized that



Xian Feng's timeline for being in a family was quickly fading. There are times in life when we move forward with energy and emotions propelling us forward, but there are other times when we move forward with conviction driving us; such was the case with Xian Feng. Though our family was tired, we felt compelled by a deep conviction that he not only deserved to be in a family, but he also had so much to offer.

So, in late Dec. 2018 we reached out to CCAI and asked if there was any way that we could get to him before he aged out on April 8th? CCAI staff said it might just be possible, but there was no time to waste. So we began the adoption process again and the fastest sprint of our life. On March 23rd, less than 3 months from the start, Dad & brother were on their way to Beijing. Micaiah (Kai), our newest son, came home on April 5th, three days before he would have aged out. We got home and felt like we had just finished a marathon, yet realized a new race was just beginning. We fumbled through the first months, again with more questions than answers, but we had our past experience with Jian Lu to lean into. Believing that if we faithfully sowed, watered, and cared the best we could, there would be grace, and with time growth would

happen and fruit would come. And it has! Kai has brought so much life, energy, and personality into our family that we would not have had otherwise.

As we look back, we realize how easily we could have missed all of this, had we not walked this road of adoption. All the miraculous breakthroughs and sweet fruit we've experienced as a family is both astounding and humbling. Now we realize our small “yes” wasn't about us giving up something, but it was just as much about us receiving blessings we never could have otherwise. Adoption is hard work, and as with any transformative work it takes time and patience, but we can attest that the growth is happening, whether we see it in the moment or not, and the fruit is so worth it.



Adopteen

Skeptical. by Bethany Jones

My mom first discovered Adopteen in 2015. Like most adoptees I have met through Adopteen, I was skeptical at first. I thought it would be a camp where adoptees discuss their identities and ways of overcoming anger and sadness, or solely discussing potential emotions associated with adoption. It was not. During my first Adopteen camp-conference in San Diego, I loved everything from the beach excursion and cooking workshop to the friends I made and the beautiful campus! The committee leaders were open-minded, approachable and easy to talk to, which made the experience that much better. The friendships I formed at the Camp-Conferences are the main reasons I return every summer. I may not know at the beginning, but I always leave with new friends. In fact, I met one of my closest friends at the Adopteen San Diego Camp-Conference. We began speaking when we sat together on a bus. Since then, our

friendship has continued to grow stronger. Together, we have attended three camps and text every day. The people, experiences, and long-lasting friendships made me fall

in love with Adopteen. Without Adopteen, I would have never had the opportunity to meet such caring leaders and fellow adoptees. Building connections with other adoptees has helped me grow into a more confident person and I was able to open up. Since then, I have returned every summer and am honored to have returned my fourth year as committee leader. My perspective on adoption has changed significantly since becoming involved in Adopteen. With each camp conference I continue to grow, meet new adoptees as well as learn about different parts of the United States and the world, which has truly opened my eyes and heart. I cannot wait for another summer and hope that more people can come hang out with us! It's fine if you're skeptical, but I promise it's a life-changing experience worth having.



Connect, Build, Flourish

Cultivating and inspiring a trusted culture of participations and understanding around adoption through community education, cultural awareness, wellness, and outreach programs.

The whole event really exceeded our expectations. As soon as we arrived on campus and were greeted with smiles, music and the overall friendliness of the camp directors, we knew it was going to be a good experience.

I absolutely LOVED ADOPTEEN! This camp was a real eye opener for me. It was an AMAZING experience. I really hope this program continues going on to touch many adoptees' lives in the future!

Adopteen has created an amazing community for me to be able to be understood. It has honestly helped me so much with my adoption and I have created lifelong friends!!

Joyous Chinese Cultural School

Family Spotlight

*The
Henricks
Family*



This is our second year attending JCCS. We are thankful for JCCS helping us to raise our daughters with as much of their culture as possible. Ivy says she loves learning new words in Mandarin and especially enjoys the show the children put on for parents at the end of the school year. Jia says she loves learning new songs and enjoys learning. As parents, we love meeting other transracial families and building relationships. Our family will be attending JCCS for many years to come!



JCCS Summer Camp

Our Joyous Chinese Cultural School Summer Camps are a great opportunity for children at any level to immerse themselves in Chinese language and culture. Join us for a wildly fun week of traditional Chinese dancing, painting, cooking, and games! Summer 2019 brought a total of 28 campers and we had a blast!



Please see page 11 for all The Park event dates and information

Adoptees Giving Back Orphanage Service Trip

Reflections from AGBOST 2019

I remember Amy saying something to us like, "Don't be afraid to love each child with all your heart. Even if you leave with a broken heart, the kids will remember the happy moments." On the first day, the staff and the director of the orphanage greeted us with open arms and showed us the way to the kids' rooms where we would be working for the rest of the week. By the end of that day, all of us had a child or two that had latched onto us and we were smitten. I met a child named Nina... I cradled her and looked into her gorgeous eyes and she became the center of my world. We also had the opportunity to work with foster kids and older kids. We got to connect with them through games, arts and crafts, and went on a field trip to a museum. All of the kids were ecstatic at the opportunity to spend time with us. They were eager to get to know us, smart and intelligent, and they were oh so happy. As the trip came to an end, the 24 strangers I traveled with had all become my lifelong friends. In our two weeks in China, there was a lot of heartache, giggles, and tears but, most importantly, we loved each and every one of the children with all our hearts. The experiences of this trip may never be fully put into words, but it stays near and dear to my heart. The AGBOST was by far the best and the hardest experience of my life, and it has impacted me in the most profound way.

~ Gemma



During my weeks of preparing for the trip to China, I was so focused on the clothes, toiletries, and supplies I needed to bring, that I never thought about preparing myself emotionally. When the first few days was all touring and traveling, it felt like an incredible summer vacation. And then we arrived at the orphanage and our true work began. I realized early on that even though there was a language barrier, all kids are the same. We all love to laugh and we all just want to have fun. Being able to see the children's smiles shine brighter and laughs grow louder truly impacted me. I have taken so much away from this trip. I will forever remember the children I had the honor of meeting and spending my time with. As I prepare for college next year, my experience on AGBOST has guided me into the path of working with kids.

~ Emma Y



On one of the days, we got to take some of the older kids out on a field trip. We were instructed to pair up with a buddy or two to walk around with. Emma and I were instantly drawn to a sweet 10-year-old boy

(we'll call him Jack). He was very shy and reserved so we set our goal on making him laugh. We had so much fun! On our last day, when it was time to say goodbye, we took a picture to always remember our little buddy. When Jack asked to keep the photo, I realized that we had brought something much more important than laughter. We will always cherish our time with Jack and the rest of the kids, and we hope they will always remember us because they will always have a special place in our hearts.

~ Emma V

Apply to the 2020 Adoptees Giving Back Orphanage Service Trip today! Visit adopteen.org for more information.

EVENT DATES 2020

Adopteen Camp-Conferences

Denver, CO • June 22-27
Haverford, PA • July 18-22

JCCS Summer Camp

June 17-19 & July 20-24

Adoptees Giving Back Orphanage Service Trip

June 10-21
July 8-19

NEW!

Adopteen Day Camp

Denver, CO
March 27-29

新年快乐
Chinese New Year 2020
JCCS 19th Annual Celebration
7:15 P.M., Friday, January 24
Waterstone Community Church
5890 S Alkire St.
Littleton, CO 80127

Join us for Chinese New Year
All JCCS dance students will be performing live on stage, along with Chinese professional guest performers!

What's Happening at THE PARK ADOPTION COMMUNITY CENTER

Book Club

Coffee Break

The Connected Parent

PARENT PROGRAMS

Reading about different cultures around the world

Parent support group, led by adoptive parents

Concurrent child and parent support classes

Feb. 8th, 2020 | 1-4 PM
@ The Park HQ
Theme: *Community*



April 25, 2020 | 1-4 PM
@ Denver Museum of Nature and Science
Theme: *Identity*

May 16, 2020 | 1-4 PM
END OF YEAR FAMILY FUN DAY!

To register or to learn more about Adoptween visit adopteen.org/Adoptween.aspx



On the Horizon

BOYS MENTORING PROGRAM

- 2020 -

Share your **knowledge**, offer support and guidance

If you are interested in becoming a Mentor, please contact us at info@theparkcenter.org

2020 UPCOMING PROGRAMS

FINANCIAL LITERACY



CRASH COURSE CHINESE I & II



MAKE-UP & SKIN CARE



For more information or to register for an event please email info@theparkcenter.org

Want to stay up-to-date on what is going on at The Park Adoption Community Center?
Check out our social media and keep up with our regular content

[f](#) [@](#)
[@theparkcommunity](https://www.instagram.com/theparkcommunity)

Eastern Europe



2019 has been a great year for our Eastern Europe Programs! In 2019, we anticipate more than 70 children will be home with their forever families.

Ukraine has grown to be our second largest adoption program this year! Over the past 10 months, we have started relationships with several new facilitators, which has

allowed the growth of both special needs and older child adoption. We have also seen multiple sibling groups find their forever families.

In May of 2019, Latvia implemented new Adoption Regulations for all adoptive parents, including additional training hours. In anticipation of the new regulations, our CCAI Parent Training Department revamped our training curriculum in order to meet the new regulations, and is now offering this to all our new

Latvia adoptive parents! Despite the new regulations, we have seen Latvia adoptions begin to grow again. Latvia remains a great option for families open to older children or sibling groups.

In Bulgaria, CCAI continues to grow the Waiting Child Program by posting profiles both on our CCAI website and Rainbow Kids! Our Bulgaria Waiting Child Program is very similar to our China Waiting Child Program, as the younger children in the Bulgaria Waiting Child Program have medical conditions such as physical, mental, and/or developmental delays, limb differences, congenital heart disease, spina bifida, vision or hearing issues, neurological or gastrointestinal issues, etc. Many of the children we see have more than one medical need. There are also older healthy children, some with siblings! The children age in range from 2 - 15. More information on the Bulgaria Waiting Child Program can be found on our website at <https://ccaifamily.org/WaitingChild/child-Profile-login>, or contact bulgaria@ccaifamily.org. CCAI continues to support Older Orphan Hosting with Latvia and Ukraine, with the children between the ages of 7 and 16, many of them sibling groups! For more information on the Latvia and Ukraine Host Programs, please contact latvia@ccaifamily.org or ukraine@ccaifamily.org.

Taiwan

Although fairly new to the scene at CCAI, Taiwan adoption has caught fire and is one of our most rapidly growing programs! We've been excited to see all the children that have come home to their families already this year, with others quickly nearing travel!

Taiwan is unique in that families complete the home study on the front end, and only compile a dossier after they have officially submitted for – and been selected by – the orphanage to pursue adoption of a particular child or sibling group. This means that families identify the child(ren) they want to adopt by viewing their profiles on the website, reviewing and sharing their full file with their medical team, and then submitting their home study for specific consideration of that child/sibling set. Knowing each child's needs the best, the orphanage

then reviews the home study (or studies) submitted for each child and makes the final match determination. It may seem a bit intimidating on the front end for the adoptive applicants, but it's all part of the very child-centered approach of this program and has to date, produced some incredibly beautiful results.

For more information about CCAI's Taiwan adoption program, please visit our website www.ccaifamily.org and/or reach out to us at taiwan@ccaifamily.org. Taiwan child profiles can be found at <https://ccaifamily.org/WaitingChild/child-Profile-login>.



Bigger Than We Thought

By Becky and Tim Puls

We spent the first five years of our marriage creating memories and building a strong foundation, and then really wanted to start a family. Our household mantra is “stay the path,” which means always be open to anything and everything and trust that what’s meant to be will be. While we did try to get pregnant, adoption was not a last resort to us. After experiencing a miscarriage, something clicked inside us that made us realize we just wanted to be parents, and we felt our path lead to adoption. The desire has grown every day since then.

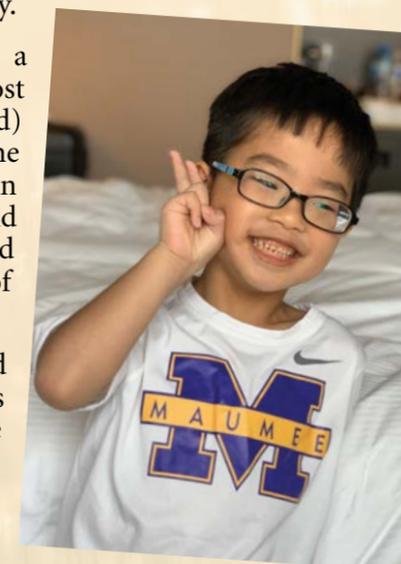
As our home study was being finished for the China program, we learned that being matched with China would probably take a few years longer than expected. One conference call on a Tuesday night with CCAI about the Taiwan program changed everything for us. We were drawn to the fact that we could see medical records, photos, videos, and monthly reports about children. We believe every story matters, and we loved the fact that Taiwanese adoptions allow you to know a child's story.

During a road trip to Chicago, we had a very long conversation with the (most amazing, wonderful, best in the world) girls on the Taiwan team at CCAI about the Taiwan program. We switched to Taiwan and requested to look at the Taiwan child profiles. We saw a photo of Mo, requested his specific file, and spent the remainder of our drive reading his monthly reports.

We looked at every photo, watched every video, and fell in love with his sweet giggle and cute little face. As we enjoyed our weekend in the city, we kept imagining him being with us and it felt right. We felt led to him and felt like he was the missing piece that would be the perfect fit to our family. After submitting our home study in December 2018 and waiting

five long weeks, we finally heard that we were selected to be Mo's forever family! Our lives changed forever in that instant.

The Taiwan program requires two visits and while that kind of annoyed me at first, I am thankful for it now. We traveled to Taiwan in July 2019 for court. We spent two and a half days with Mo and had the best time! We got to sight see, eat delicious food, take Mo swimming for the first time, go to the zoo, and just immerse ourselves in all things Taiwanese. Honestly, it's a bit of a blur and we felt every emotion while we were in country – every single one. As you can imagine, the in between time of waiting to go back has been difficult, but also healing and good. A child born to another woman called us mama and papa. The depth of that tragedy and the magnitude of that privilege are not lost on us. It's taken us some time to comprehend and process just how big adoption is. As we currently wait for the word of final travel, we feel so excited and ready.



One of our greatest joys in our life is this journey, but that comes with loss and heartbreak for Mo. There is no erasing the loss of what was – it's also not trading one story for another. Adoption is the total gathering of all we were and are and who we will be. A tender holding of all the parts and pieces of the story. All the chapters that have been written and the ones yet to come. We are bravely stepping into a story - CHOOSING a story. And saying, with all of us, we choose all of you.

We are so excited for what is next: another Taiwan trip, spending the holidays with our son (our son! It's so fun to say that!), and all the small moments that make every day special. It's messy and hard and tragic and beautiful and so, so worth it.

Are We There Yet?

By Tony & Jodi Collette

Oh, that infamous question that gets asked on family road trips! We asked it as kids. We dealt with it as parents. And we've asked it many times along the way toward adoption.

Our story began in Jodi's heart and mind as a young girl with the idea that someday she would adopt from Russia. That thought and feeling was awakened in 2009 through the inspiration of another home-school family that had hosted and were in the process to adopt four children from Ukraine. So began a season of hosting and the pursuit of adoption that would take 10 years to come to fruition.

Along the way we've experienced many twists and turns. Most were unexpected. Some were mere bumps in the road but some were significant and threatened the entire process. They were annoying, frustrating and sometimes mind-boggling. They made us angry and want to point our fingers at someone or something to blame. Some even caused us to doubt whether or not this was really God's plan. Another family from Texas adopted the first children we hosted while we were preparing our dossier. The second siblings were adopted by a family in Ukraine. Jodi and I both experienced major medical events. Our first adoption agency folded and filed bankruptcy. Our first home study agency folded and closed its doors at a critical juncture with our dossier in Latvia and a home study update due. We've paid to translate our dossier multiple times. Fingerprints? They never change but we have to do that again?!? Signatures, notaries and apostilles ... Oh my! We petitioned and were told "no" more than once. Ugh! The list goes on. But we stayed the course believing that this is what we were called to do.

Along the way people have expressed their admiration of our patience and perseverance. Though appreciated, the truth is that we were not always patient. Persevered... We'll take that. But in August 2018 I started asking the question and seeking advice as to "When does patience and perseverance start to look like disobedience?" We had reached a point where Jodi and I agreed that if Allison from CCAI called one more time with yet another "no" we would pull back and reconsider next steps. So when Allison called I had my planned response all ready. But before I could speak, Allison said "But... the Orphan Court would like you to consider these four children." What?!? More twists and turns followed. Since that time one of the four children changed their mind and

was replaced with another. The laws in Latvia changed in October and we thought this process was dead yet again. But it was revived once more in November when the Orphan Court presented a path forward, one that took several more months to materialize.

On Tuesday, April 30, 2019, nearly six years after we started working with Allison, we received "the call." Finally, after all that time, we received the referral! At that point everything seemed to fall into place. We booked an Airbnb and were on a plane by that Friday. A mere 13 days later we received custody of the children. In August 2019, the adoption became final. Our third and final trip is scheduled for November 2019. We are now a family of 10! What in the world?!?

We are grateful to God for calling us to adoption. We are grateful to the many ways that our friends, family and grant organizations have supported us along the way. And we are grateful that Allison stuck with us from start to finish and endured all of the twists and turns right there with us.

And so ... Are we there yet? Well ... Yes! And no! Yes, we finally adopted. But the truth is that what happened in 2019 was not really our final destination. It was a mile marker. A really big mile marker for sure and an incredible season in our adoption story. But a new season has arrived. Buckle up. Enjoy the ride. This journey continues. In many ways, we're just getting started.



Photo Credit: Victoria Conners Photography

Our CCAI Chinese Heritage Tour By Alexis Senger

China beckoned and it was time to return, to show our 12 year old daughter her homeland. A homeland she didn't remember from her life more than eleven years prior. Twelve was the age we had settled on, the age of personal exploration, of forging identity, the age where the existential questions begin to simmer for all of us but more so for adoptees.

"Your orphanage closed two weeks ago." We had just arrived in Nanchang after a four hour bullet train from Guilin. In fact, our orphanage had closed just as we were boarding our US flight to Beijing -- but our regional coordinator had a good handle on what was happening so we were assured. For now, the remaining orphanage staff were housed in a temporary orphanage housed

covered with trays of apples and grapes, and her file that we'd requested was displayed next to a red and gold gift box waiting for her. We were told where to sit and we presented our gift. We had compiled a photo album comprised of her early pictures there (thanks to a disposable camera sent after our match) and pictures of life now in the US (family, hiking trips, Shakespeare Festivals, recitals, vacations, and our daughter's beloved dog). The nannies excitedly pointed themselves out in the early pictures and passed the album around. Our interpreter struggled to keep up with the buzz.

I smiled at my daughter sitting next to the orphanage director. She was staring at me intently. It was a lot to take in, the culmination of so much. It's really hard to describe how much this meant to all of us. After visiting for a time and talking about our daughter's life in the US, we left together and returned again to the original orphanage, this time with the director showing us around. Later, we all feasted together on shrimp, tofu, lotus root, noodles, dumplings and meatballs at a local restaurant, and afterwards said our goodbyes. Our daughter slept deeply on the drive back, relief and exhaustion finally taking their toll.

There will always be questions but, for now, we have this.

We traveled to Shanghai. It had been strategic: a dear family friend now lives there. We had initially worried that the hometown visit would require some recovery, best done with a knowing friend. Instead, we lightheartedly toured and ate our way through Shanghai. No soup dumpling was spared. Our young Shanghai friend, a US adoptee from China teaching in Shanghai, and our daughter together decided that they considered each other sisters.

We are now back to school and back to life. Yesterday my daughter sent her 7th grade green architecture teacher pictures of the Pearl Tower from the Shanghai skyline: "I was there!"

Indeed.



We tell friends and family that our heritage trip to China was "big." It's a little word that somehow best describes it. We crisscrossed over 3,800 miles inside the country. We hiked The Great Wall outside Beijing and biked the Ancient Wall in Xi'an. We took a boat down the Li River and marveled at the karst mountains which shoot straight up out of the ground. We fed pandas in Chengdu and drank tea in the park. We treated ourselves to hot pots and ate noodles cooked every which way. A rickshaw took us along old Beijing to the home of a woman who cooked for all of us. I stole a peek into her kitchen: humbled, I saw two single burners which yielded about ten different dishes for all 45 of us. Nearby, a man opened his home to us that his family had owned for 140 years and we sat in the shaded courtyard near his garden as he discussed life in China. We cleaved our way through cooking school in Guilin, amid a backdrop of water, mountains, and lush green hillside. Throughout, our guides were warm and informative and they had our back the whole time.

not far from the original location and we were still on to visit. The next day we would take a three hour car trip with an assigned guide to our daughter's hometown of Yongfeng.

After we arrived in Yongfeng we asked the driver to take us directly to the abandoned orphanage. We recognized it from our pictures except now it stood weathered and discolored from its short life, abandoned. Walking around the building our stoic 12 year old fell into my husband's arms. The weight of it all, the boots on the ground - it was different actually being there. We walked around solemnly for a long time, treading gently on the adjoining dirt road.

Wandering the streets of Yongfeng, our daughter was welcomed with gratitude. Come back again, they would implore. Please don't forget us.

The next day they drove us to the interim orphanage. The orphanage director and a handful of beaming nannies met us at the curb, the welcome immediate and heartfelt. "Look at her!" They touched her long hair and marveled at her. A dim stairway led us to a modest two-bedroom apartment with a couple burners in the makeshift kitchen. The main room was adorned with a large red banner across the wall which welcomed her by her Chinese name. The coffee table was

China is at the crossroads of change. Now with the end to its dehumanizing One Child Policy in 2015 and relaxation prior to that, orphanages are closing, consolidating, regionalizing. This means that one sees beloved little girls dolled up in dresses on every street, beaming parents close at hand. When we adopted in 2008, we seldom saw girls on the street and, sadly, orphanages were busy.



2020 Tour Dates

Spring tour: March 15 - March 25, 2020

July tour: July 19- July 29, 2020

June tour: June 14- June 24, 2020

Winter: December 19, 2020- December 29, 2020

Email: heritagetour@chinesechildren.org for more information!



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Please keep your email updated with CCAI so we can contact you with the latest news and events!
mail@ccaifamily.org

For one glorious summer day, our CCAI Family is able to gather together and have some fun! The CCAI National Reunion is our favorite event every year and we are always so touched by the turnout and the memories. This past summer, we explored Denver Zoo with Josh and Lily – who tried their best to say hello to as many families as they could – and our The Park team led a fun family scavenger hunt with awesome team names! Mark your calendars for next year's Reunion and we can't wait to see you!



Save the Date! CCAI's National Reunion is June 27, 2020

