

In This Issue:

Finally Home from China page 3 Charity Impact pages 4-6

Heritage Tours pages 10-11

Adoptee Support pages 12-14

A MESSAGE FROM CCAI CO-FOUNDERS



13,328 Children have found loving homes since 1992



"CONGRATULATIONS!" We had been waiting three and a half years to say that to Heather and Tim, who had just officially registered the long-awaited adoption of their aging-out son Matthew in Fujian, China. Theirs was the **first China adoption** registration since the pandemic caused a suspension of all China adoption operations in January 2020.

"Finally! Thank God! We are so happy!" Heather's long-suppressed excitement was contagious, and we cried tears of joy alongside them as Heather and Tim signed their adoption registration on May 14, 2023 (U.S. time). It was Mother's Day.

A close friend recently asked us: "With international adoption getting so hard, have you ever thought about quitting?" Honestly, yes, we have. But we can't! Why? Because we have so many struggling yet committed families in different stages of the process waiting for their children, and hundreds and thousands of orphans around the world are still dreaming of their extremely slim chance for a loving family.

Colombian sisters Maria and Helena became vulnerable children as a result of domestic abuse and were placed under protective custody at only five and three years old. Last year they were selected to be hosted by Lisa and Rick in Virginia, who fell in love with the two girls and decided to adopt them. Now, a year later, twelve-year-old Maria and ten-year-old Helena have joined their forever family.

"The process wasn't always easy, yet these girls are 100% worth it," Rick said. "We feel so blessed to get to be their parents."

Adoption changes lives and fulfills dreams. In thirty-one years our CCAI team has been privileged to be a beautiful part of more than 13,300 children's new lives. We are determined to continue our mission as long as God allows.

Josh & Lily

Chinese Culture in Chicago

In September, CCAI's co-founder Joshua Zhong had the opportunity to celebrate Chinese culture with around eighty Chicago area adoptees at the Chinese Consulate of Chicago! Local Chinese artists put on an incredible show of dance, musical instruments, kung fu, and singing. Children and parents learned how to make Chinese tea, dumplings, and moon cakes. They also had a lot of fun trying out traditional Chinese dress and playing the GuZheng, an ancient musical instrument. Of course, everyone enjoyed the very delicious Chinese buffet and gift bag! This celebration is the first and largest culture and adoption celebration event the Chinese consulate has organized since the pandemic — thanks to the Consulate for their invitation and entertainment!





Finally Home from China

By Heather Fowler

remember our social worker warning us: there will always be a hiccup in the process. Every adoption has some hurdle to get over.

Our adoption journey began when our 10-year-old read a newsletter advocating for children who were approaching the then age-out date of 14. He said, "Mom, why can't we give one of these kids a family and home?" I had seriously considered adoption five years earlier, after visiting an orphanage in China, so this grabbed my heart. Perhaps now was the time? My son kept praying and said, "We need to pick a child that no one else will pick, who would otherwise not get a home and family." After family discussions and prayer, the whole family was on board and excited to move forward!

At first, everything was straightforward and I joyfully checked off each item on the big paper trail. When I read about 13-year-old Xie Minyu, saw his brilliant smile, and heard how he'd asked his caregiver when he would ever get a mom and dad, I knew he was the one. We zoomed ahead and were on track to travel before that crucial 14th birthday in May of 2020.

Then we hit our hurdle.

That "little" hurdle was the COVID-19 Pandemic. The world was turned upside down and the crazy roller coaster ride of good news/bad news and interminable waiting began.

Good news: Our TA is issued!

Bad news: The US State Dept. says don't travel to China, and China is shut down and we can't register the adoption anyway.

Good news: An unheard of thing is happening! Due to our son being about to age out, the province will allow us to complete the adoption via a power of attorney!

Super Good news: On April 2, 2020, the adoption of Xie Minyu to Timothy and Heather Fowler is finalized by proxy in Fuzhou, Fujian, China!!

Then began the Long Wait. Minyu would celebrate 3 more birthdays without us. We would have a few (awkward) video calls and send packages and letters. We would wonder if he'd ever come home, and question the point of the whole process. We wondered if knowing he was wanted was the gift we were supposed to give him.

We waited. And, yeah, I participated in all the things — advocacy to our government, prayers, following news from China like an addict. Our older children went off to college. The little boy with the burning desire to give a Chinese orphan a home became a teenager, and I wondered how such a deep and long-term disappointment would affect his faith.

Let's fast forward to the good news again.

"We wondered if knowing he was wanted was the gift we were supposed to give him."

In March of this year, China began to open up travel!! Hillary (the Lord bless and keep her!) and I talked often as we worked again through all the excitement and frustration of another roller coaster ride. Finally on May 11, we got on a plane bound for China. We laid our eyes on Minyu on Sunday afternoon of Mother's Day!

We are still reeling with the honor and privilege of being the first international Chinese adoption in over three years.



But like the (now) 15-year-old said when we were making travel plans and getting ready for this trip of a lifetime—"Mom, people say, 'oh it's so sad that you've had to wait all this time and lost all these years,' but really, having him in our family is a gift we were never owed or deserved anyway, so we should just be thankful." Yes, we are thankful.

Welcoming a 17-year-old into your family is a unique experience. I haven't found a guide book, but I think love, patience, and grace for each of us is always the way. Matthew Minyu is truly a joyful human being. I have thought of what he has lost and afford him space to mourn, but so far, he seems focused on what he has gained in his life. He encounters new experiences with a spirit of fun and humor. He is kind and helpful, and more than a little (jokingly) ornery! He works diligently on his English and will surprise us by laughing out at something we didn't realize he could understand! We look to the future with very little certainty, but know that we are family, brought together by God through extraordinary circumstances, and we are grateful.



Making a Difference, One Life at a Time



One-on-One Education in Jiujiang, China

Ling Cha Ce was once terribly afraid of trying new things and lacked confidence. Enter CCAI's One-On-One Education Initiative, which seeks to help children like Ling Cha Ce gain confidence and learn new skills. Cha Ce joined our baking class to learn how to make Chinese pastries. At first, she encountered some challenges and her teachers could see her frustration mounting as she as once again felt afraid of failing. But with encouragement and one-on-one help from her teachers, Ling Cha Ce learned to shorten her baking time and ferment her bread appropriately. She successfully made the best egg tarts and bread in her class! Baking has not only taught Cha Ce patience, but she is also more confident when it comes to trying new skills!

Since 2020, the One-on-One Education initiative has:

- Provided 29 children with one-on-one tutoring;
- Introduced 12 children to the joy of sports;
- Helped 14 children unlock their artistic potential;

LOCC Saves Lives in Zhengzhou, China

Zhou Yi Ling was a premature baby, born weighing only 3 pounds. She was frail, her lips were colorless and dry, and her face was ashen. CCAI's Lily Orphan Care Center (LOCC) nannies knew that Yi Ling needed extra care and attention to keep her alive and, hopefully, thrive. As a result of the nannies' diligent, nurturing, and thorough care, Yi Ling's physical condition significantly improved; her face looked chubbier, her eyes became bright and beautiful, and she grew stronger every day.

Today, Yi Ling loves to laugh and responds to her name with a charming smile. The orphanage staff dotes on her; she has become a very active, intelligent, and precocious toddler! She walks independently and understands more language every day!

A Place to Sleep in Toretsk, Ukraine

Last year CCAI continued its commitment to supporting orphans living in Ukraine by helping to transfer children to a safer orphanage in Kyiv. The next step was for CCAI to help purchase new beds and mattresses!

Lena, our Ukrainian representative, is incredibly grateful for the generosity of CCAI donors: "Hi Josh, we assembled the beds and mattresses in the shelter! Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart for administering to the orphanage and all the kids! They are so happy!"

bing hase

Furnished accessible computer labs, music rooms, and

Redefined what education and child care should look like

for children with disabilities still living in orphanages

sports equipment; and

Ways to Make a Difference

Older Children's One-on-One Education Sponsors

There are 15 older children from Jiangxi who need sponsors to receive tutoring through the one-on-one education program. Sponsorship is \$50/month and sponsors receive quarterly reports!

LOCC Sponsors

Be part of a powerful force to positively change orphanages and elevate orphan care conditions by becoming an LOCC sponsor! You can choose between covering operational costs of CCAI's LOCC, sponsoring a child, or donating to the general needs of these special children.

Summer Camp Sponsors

CCAI is looking for sponsors for three summer camps in Hebei, Jiangxi, and Hunan provinces! Each camp costs around \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Orphanage Hair Salon

Three orphanages are seeking to set up a hair salon especially for older children with special needs who are not easily able to go out to have their hair cut. Each hair salon needs about \$1,200 to buy equipment and supplies.





Your Donations Make a Difference!



2023 CHARITY PROJECTS

	PROVINCE	ORPHANAGE	DONATION (USD)	PROJECT
CHINA	Henan	Zhengzhou LOCC	\$2,173	Staff salary and birthday cakes
		Zhoukou	\$450	Formula
	Hunan	Zhuzhou	\$7,446	Foster care
		Changsha	\$6,995	Summer Camp
	Jiangxi	Shangrao	\$12,227	Older child education, Summer Camp
		Yingtan	\$8,790	Older child education
		Jiujiang	\$42,229	Older child education & children's supplies
	Liaoning	Shenyang	\$5,200	Water heaters
	Fujian	Fuzhou	\$1,500	Children's supplies
	Chongqing	Fuling	\$16,888	Summer Camp & children's supplies
	Beijing	Charity Office	\$33,800	Staff salary, Charity Office rent
		CCAI Representatives	\$37,300	Support for struggling China reps
COLOMBIA Total \$44,800		Fundación para la Asistencia de la Niñez Abandonada (FANA)	\$5,000	Orphanage facility renovation
		Casa De La Madre Y El Nino	\$2,800	Support for Teen Pregnancy Center
		Casa De La Madre Y El Nino	\$4,500	Support for Hosting operations
		CCAI Winter Hosting	\$11,500	Older child hosting
		P143	\$21,000	Colombia orphan ministry support
HAITI		CCAI Representatives	\$2,000	Support for struggling Haiti reps
		Maison Orphanage	\$5,000	Orphanage financial support
UKRAINE		Toretsk Orphanage	\$2,400	Medicine, educational equipment for displaced orphans' schooling
Total \$13,100		Toretsk Orphanage	\$700	Beds & mattresses for displaced orphans
		CCAI Representatives	\$10,000	Support for struggling Ukraine reps





DONATE NOW!

Your donations truly make a significant difference Please remember to donate generously this year.



ccaifamily.org 6920 S. Holly Circle Centennial, CO 80112



Jumping Right In

By Rebecca Sutton

Ur adoption story began before my husband Jake and I met. We both felt God's calling and leading in our lives to adopt when we were younger. Jake knew when his sister was adopted through CCAI from China in 2002 that he wanted to adopt one day. I felt a pressing on my heart for children without families when I was in high school. We started praying for our future family and in January 2021 we began our adoption journey.

We knew we had found the right agency to come alongside us, but we prayed over three different countries for months until God directed us to Colombia. I had studied Spanish all throughout grade school into my first year in college (although I was a bit rusty), and we researched as much as we could about Colombia and its rich, diverse history. We knew that the Colombia program had more stringent guidelines, potentially more time in country, and that the process overall could take longer than some of the other countries, but we were prepared to wait patiently for our future children.

We filed our first piece of paperwork in July 2021 and arrived home with our two beautiful children exactly two years later. Through a lot of frustration, tears, and time, we gathered everything we needed and saw the first few photos of Xiomara and Santiago in July 2022. Even though we have never been parents before and we were jumping right in with an 11-year-old and a 3-year-old, we knew without a doubt that these were our kids!

On our first call with the kids we were all so nervous, but thankfully we had our pets and their bedrooms to show them and help break the ice! Each week, our calls were more sweet and our family connected well.

We finally traveled to Colombia to meet our kids on June 5, 2023. We waited anxiously in a small park at FANA not sure of what to expect, but as soon as our kids saw us, they immediately ran into our arms; we all hugged and cried tears of joy. It was such a beautiful moment!

The next month was filled with meetings, paperwork, appointments and a lot of time for fun stuff too. We visited the zoo, the mall, and the Salt Cathedral, walked to the park every day, and watched a movie every night with popcorn! Xiomara enjoyed helping me in the kitchen and Santiago had fun playing hide and seek with Dad (he always hid in the same place).



"Even though we have never been parents before, we knew without a doubt that these were our kids!"

We were so grateful to the kind and wonderful Martha and her lovely team of drivers while we were in Colombia. We were also thankful for Daniela and all of the amazing people at FANA who loved on our kids so well while they were in their care for 4 months. We are especially grateful to CCAI and the amazing team who supported us throughout our journey. They were always professional and kind and genuinely heard all of our concerns.

Both Xiomara and Santi were so excited to meet their extended family that they wanted to have a fiesta as soon as we got home! They did get to meet our entire family within the first 2-3 weeks in the US and felt so much love and support. Our beautiful extroverted kids love spending time with their new family and being silly with their cousins. Xiomara is very creative in the songs she makes up, the drawings she creates, and the games she likes to play. She also loves listening to music, singing, playing basketball, riding her bike, being silly, and telling jokes. Santi loves all things Spider-Man, dancing, riding his bike, jumping on the trampoline, and making silly facial expressions.

While it was difficult to wait and the transition hasn't always been smooth, we are consistently reminded of how great our God is and what He can do. He truly blessed us in more ways than we could have ever dreamed. **We love our kids so much** and can't imagine our lives without them!



Our Bulgarian Valentine

By Tanna Roush

Timothy and I (Tanna) have been married for 24 years and have 3 biological children (ages 21, 18, & 13). We completed four China adoptions between 2013 and 2017 (two boys and two girls, ages 12, 11, 9, and 9) and adopted our son domestically in 2019 (now age 5). So, we already had a full house when we heard about Bulgaria's Down syndrome program through CCAI and jumped in with both feet to begin our home study in May of 2021.

We chose Bulgaria because their adoption program is very large-family friendly, has relatively short travel requirements, and has a very active Down syndrome special needs program. Our last Chinese adoption was for a child with Down syndrome, and we were very interested in giving a home to another child with this special need. We loved working with CCAI for our Chinese adoptions and trusted them completely to bring home our child from Eastern Europe.

Our dossier was inscribed in the register by Bulgaria on December 2, 2021. And then, on May 27, 2022, we got the call we had been waiting for. We received the referral of a beautiful 15-month-old baby girl with giant brown eyes and sandy blond hair in the cutest pigtails! We were immediately smitten with our future daughter (who we named Scout Valentina) and couldn't wait to have her in our arms.

On July 2, 2022, we boarded a plane to Sofia, Bulgaria and drove 3 hours through the sunflower fields to an orphanage in Stara Zagora the morning of July 4th to meet our new daughter. Pictures did not do justice to just how precious she was!

Through our guide, we were able to ask questions of the orphanage workers and doctor who had cared for Scout in the 16 months she had been in their care. She was incredibly tiny (about 12 lbs.) but in good overall health. We spent as much time as possible with Scout in her orphanage over the next 5 mornings; playing, cuddling, walking the grounds of the orphanage (where we saw a wild hedgehog!), and getting to know our new daughter. In the afternoons we relaxed over long lunches with our guide, learning all about Bulgarian heritage, politics, and traditions. All too quickly it was time to return to Sofia. Leaving Scout in the care of her orphanage until we could return for her (after passing court) was by far the hardest part of our 18-month adoption process. But the orphanage workers were quick to remind us that we would be back SOON to start forever with our new daughter.

"We were immediately smitten with our future daughter (who we named Scout Valentina) and couldn't wait to have her in our arms."

A few months later we received news that we had passed Bulgarian court and that Scout was officially our daughter. It was time to celebrate and start making return travel plans! On November 18, 2022, we returned to Stara Zagora to pick up our new daughter. As with our Chinese adoptions, this was a bittersweet day. We knew that adoption was Scout's best chance at living a healthy life, but it's hard to take a child away from the only home and culture they have ever known. Bulgaria is a beautiful country with a rich heritage, but orphanages are no place for children. The moment Scout's nanny passed her to us for the final time was one of the top moments of our entire lives. We returned to Sofia and spent the next 8 days in a beautiful Airbnb, exploring the city, eating delicious food, and finalizing the paperwork needed for Scout to leave her homeland. Compared to China, it was VERY easy to

get around in Sofia as Americans. The people were kind, and the trip was one Timothy and I will never forget!

We flew home from Bulgaria on November 30th to begin our life as a family of 11. Scout adjusted incredibly well to her 8 new brothers and sisters, and they very quickly fell in love with our new tiny bundle of joy. She turned two on Valentine's Day and is an incredibly easy toddler, although we have been through some health challenges with her over the past 10 months. Scout is bottle-fed and will not accept pureed or solid foods. She also aspirates thin liquids and has a feeding tube surgically placed in her stomach to help with nutrition. She had emergency surgery and a 12-day hospital stay right after her birthday, and she will be having her tonsils and adenoids out later this month to help with her sleep apnea. But Scout is now 22 lbs., has learned to walk, and is a JOY to everyone she meets. We are so glad that we took the leap of faith to adopt from Bulgaria with CCAI!





Connecting our Daughter to her Homeland

By Lara Duke

From the time of Merryn's adoption, our family planned on returning to China for a heritage trip. Throughout her childhood, we did our best to expose her to the Chinese language, culture, and history as she grew up, but we knew there would be no substitute for traveling to China and seeing it for herself. We originally planned on traveling in 2021, but COVID had other plans.

My husband and I have discussed a future heritage trip since our daughter, Merryn, was a toddler. Growing up, she has always expressed interest and eagerly awaited traveling in 2021. SHE WAS SO EXCITED when I told her the heritage tours were back and we had also registered. Merryn pored over everything CCAI sent about the trip, and we created a countdown (in Chinese, of course) posted on the whiteboard in the game room!

Leading up to the trip, Merryn felt overcome with anticipation! Scott and I were concerned about the current political climate and the State Department's travel guidance. Thankfully, Josh addressed those concerns during our group meeting, and we felt comfortable proceeding with trip arrangements.

We knew we would not be able to visit the orphanage because of COVID protocols, but we were thankful to view the outside gate of the building. However, when we arrived, the guards only allowed our guide, Vivian, to walk up to the gate and take pictures. After some back-and-forth with the guard and some strong advocacy on Vivian's part, the guard granted Vivian permission to escort our daughter to the gate and take pictures. Of course, I wish I could have been with Merryn, but I'm so glad Vivian was with her, and we will be forever grateful to her for giving our daughter this incredible opportunity.

After the trip, we were tired (it's a bit of a whirlwind!) but amazed by our memories, the most significant being the birth city trip. It was exciting, intriguing, and emotional, providing additional information and context to our daughter's story. Merryn had a wonderful time; the trip met and exceeded our expectations. Our daughter especially liked traveling with other adoptees and experiencing China with them.

"It was exciting, intriguing, and emotional, providing additional information and context to our daughter's story."





We continue to be amazed by the richness, depth, and breadth of the history and culture of China. Struck by the unique character of each city we visited, we noticed that every city had a personality and an energy utterly different from the others, and we enjoyed them all! Merryn says she will never forget climbing the Great Wall and becoming a hero (at least according to our guide, Alice)!

If you're on the fence about going on a Heritage Tour, I advise you to go for it! **Not only is China a remarkable place to visit, but seeing your child connect with their culture more profoundly and meaningfully is priceless.**



2024 China





Heritage Tours









GRAND HERITAGE TOURS

\$1,739/child | \$2,039/adult

Spring Tour

March 31 - April 10, 2024 Deadline to register: January 19, 2024

Summer Tour

June 16 – June 26, 2024 Deadline to register: March 29, 2024

Winter Tour

December 22, 2024 - January 1, 2025 Deadline to register: October 18, 2024

PROVINCIAL TOURS

Hunan Province Tour

March 24 – March 31, 2024 **\$1,200/child | \$1,400/adult** Deadline to register: January 19, 2024

Henan Province Tour

June 30 – July 7, 2024 \$1,360/child | \$1,460/adult Deadline to register: April 12, 2024

Jiangxi Province Tour

November 24 – December 1, 2024 \$1,370/child | \$1,500/adult Deadline to register: September 13, 2024

Guangdong Province Tour

December 28, 2024 – January 5, 2025 **\$1,400/child | \$1,500/adult** Deadline to register: October 18, 2024





SKYSCRAPERS AND MOUNTAINTOPS TOUR

Shanghai to Yellow Mountain

June 27 – July 7, 2024 **\$1,669/child | \$1,799/adult** Deadline to register: April 12, 2024

CCAI IS ALSO PROUD TO OFFER CUSTOM TOURS!





Adopteen Leadership Training Retreat

By Julia Petrowski

In February, I opened an email from The Park inviting me to participate in their Adopteen Leadership Training Retreat. Having only worked remotely with The Park as a Research Intern and Development Intern, I had not yet had a chance to meet anyone in-person. Unsure what the weekend would bring, but excited to meet my teammates and other adoptee leaders, I booked my ticket!

The theme of the retreat was Supporting the Gradient of Stories Within the Adoptee Community. Gathering with fellow adoptees, the choice to be vulnerable was a gift, and the support from others was constant, even when our experiences varied. With three workshop presentations and fun activities sprinkled in, the weekend was an amazing bonding and learning experience. I wrestled with where I belonged in my identity as a Chinese-American. I was reminded how related, yet unique our experiences are as adoptees. I was reminded that I was not alone.

The Adopteen Leadership Training Retreat perfectly demonstrated to me the light that The Park is in the adoption community. From intense workshop work to making weird milkshakes, I saw how The Park and Adopteen foster an environment where individuals, whether new or long-time friends, feel empowered and celebrated. As a newcomer, I was inspired by the warmth and care found in this amazing community.

Attending the Adopteen Leadership Training Retreat was special. I am lucky to have met the strong and caring leaders I did. True to its theme, the weekend taught me that there is a gradient of stories within our community, but never a shortage of support regardless of where you are in your journey.







THE PARK BY THE NUMBERS 2023

2,519 Total Participants

366 Adoptees



44

Adoptive Relatives



States

Countries

Events



Visit theparkcenter.org



Dear Adopteen:

Wow. Adopteen Camp-Conference. I had the most amazing time EVER! I have always been very self-conscious, but when I went to Adopteen, I really felt like I belonged. I loved making so many new friends that I could really, truly relate to.

One day we shared stories about where we were found: "I was found on the hospital stairs." "I was found in a field." "I was found in a phone booth."

You would think it was sad, but then that same night we were dancing our hearts out at the silent disco, laughing and having so much fun! It sounds kind of crazy, but where else can you do that?

Only at Adopteen. Shoutout to Lucy, Annie, Faith, Xiu Xiu. Friends for life!

Oh, I also forgot! I also loved the amazing counselors. They were SO nice and funny! My team leader, Anna, was so much fun and I gave her the biggest hug when I left. I can't wait to see her again.

Being adopted can be really hard when no one else you know understands your story. But then you go to a camp like this, and your heart is just awakened, and you realize you aren't alone.

Thank you so much for giving me, and my happy heart, this amazing opportunity! I had the time of my life and I will NEVER, EVER, forget it.

Love, Gwen Keene





THE PARK 2024 EVENTS CALENDAR

JCCS Lunar New Year Celebration

February 10, 2024 Centennial Covenant Church, Littleton, CO

JCCS Chinese Cultural Camp – 3-day

(ages 5-14) June 19-21, 2024 The Park, Centennial, CO

JCCS Chinese Cultural Camp – 5-day

(ages 5-14) July 8-12, 2024 The Park, Centennial, CO

JCCS Lion Dance Camp

(ages 13+) July 15-19, 2024 United Martial Arts Center, Centennial, CO

JCCS Chinese Culinary Camp

(ages 13+ & adults) July 22-26, 2024 The Park, Centennial, CO

Adopteen Camp - Conference

(ages 13-21) June 24-29, 2024 | Washington, D.C. July 15-20, 2024 | Colorado Springs, CO

Beyond Adopteen Retreat

(ages 21+) August 9-12, 2024 Silver Cliff Ranch, Nathrop, CO



Visit our events calendar for dates













NON-PROFIT ORG U.S. POSTAGE **PAID** DENVER, CO PERMIT NO. 5377

6920 South Holly Circle Centennial, Colorado 80112-1018



STAY IN TOUCH!

Please keep your email updated with CCAI to stay informed of the latest news and exciting events! **mail@ccaifamily.org**



Visit **ccaifamily.org** to learn more.

