



From the Editor

On behalf of the old folks of Ren-ai Nursing Home in Inner Mongolia, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for your generous response to our appeal for help in the last issue. In this issue we would like to introduce a few success stories about programmes we carried out in the Mainland; and we will draw your attention to the need of an organization in Xingtai city, Hebei province that specializes in delivering desperately needed services to elderly who are living under adverse conditions.

Left-behind Children Have a Piece of Their Own Sky

According to statistics there are 450 thousand left-behind children in Liaoning province. These are children whose parents went to seek employment in the cities and left them in the care of grandparents or relatives in the villages. Guanling is a village with about 40 such children. These children tend to be poor in their studies because they lack love and care. They also lack self-esteem and confidence; they are shy and find it difficult to socialize with others; and it is difficult for them to fend for themselves.



Learning together,
growing together

We are one big family

In May, 2015, the Cana Marriage and Family Service Centre, with help from Caritas-HK, started a programme with various activities to help these children in Guanling village. The activities included: tutoring and hobby classes; setting up reading corners to promote reading; activities to promote healthy parent/guardian-child relationship; field trips to attend cultural activities in cities; and regular home visits. The programme also gained support from a 5-star hotel in a nearby city whose staff volunteered to teach these children English; to help the villagers during the harvest; and to help improve hygienic practices in the village. Through participating in the activities and witnessing the changes in the social environment, the children's horizons have been broadened.

A year on, results brought about by the programme are positive. There is a marked increase in the children's interest in studying, as demonstrated by an improvement in their academic achievements. Whereas they were shy, now they feel comfortable interacting with strangers - a sign of self-esteem and confidence. Other villages noticed all these positive changes in Guanling so they want their 'left-behind children' to enroll in the programme too. The teachers are confident that more children will benefit from the programme in the future.

A Clinic Turned Hospital Offering Help to More People while Achieving Self-Sufficiency

The Ephphatha Clinic in Renqiu city, Hebei province, was established in 1984 by the Xianxian Diocese. In 2008 the responsibility to manage the clinic was handed over to the Sisters of Holy Hope Congregation. There are close to 60 Sisters of the community working in this clinic. The clinic is popular in the area for several reasons: its pediatric and ophthalmology practices are highly regarded; it charges a reasonable fee; the sisters lovingly care for the patients; their no-nonsense approach to professionalism and refusal to accept 'red packets'; free medical services are offered to the needy elderly and orphans. The clinic serves hundreds of thousands of patients annually.

After all these years in service, the building grew old. It became dilapidated; it was not well ventilated; there was insufficient space to serve the needs of the patients. One example is that three doctors had to share the same office to diagnose patients – a potential cause for cross-infection. The X-ray room was so overused it was in constant danger of leakage. All these, plus the fact that much of the equipment being used had become obsolete and desperately needed to be replaced, meant a possible loss of clients.

Ephphatha had actually been operating as a de facto small hospital for a long time. Reason for it not being called such was because of its lack of space which led to a limitation on the number of beds; the insufficiently equipped X-ray room, laboratory, dispensary and ophthalmology unit. The fire protection facilities were also found lacking on the premise.

The main advantage of being designated a hospital is that its patients could claim 60% of the medication fees through the rural medical scheme which leads to more patients, thus a more stable source of income for the clinic. In fact, by achieving financial self-sufficiency, the sisters will be able to provide more and better service to more people.

The dormitory for the staff used to be in the same building as the clinic. So as a first step for the expansion plan, the sisters, in 2014, used up a significant portion of their savings of many years to build a dormitory on a plot adjacent to the clinic, which allowed more space in the old building for medical purposes. The next was to find the funds, about RMB 2.2 million, to purchase the needed equipment and facilities. However, the sisters' savings, after paying for the dormitory, was only half that amount. With generous donations from kindhearted individuals, Caritas-HK came to the sisters' assistance. Sufficient funds were eventually raised to make up for the difference, and the renovation programme was able to continue to its fruition.

After years of hard work, the Ephphatha Clinic was upgraded to the status of a hospital, 1st class, in April 2016. Now, more people, including the needy elderly and orphans in Ren-qiu are able to benefit.



Security and surveillance monitoring system



Nurse station



X-ray room



Optical coherence tomography scanner



Non-contact specular microscope



Isolation ward for patients of pneumonia



Clinical laboratory



Patient room



Pediatric playroom



Pediatric patient rooms



Ceilings and corridors after renovation

Call from Afar . . .

Item no : 5101

Dear Responsible Person of Caritas-HK,

Greetings !

Under the guidance of our parish priest, Fr. Xi, and armed with the spirit of St. Vincent, Patron Saint of Charity Work, our mission is to care for the needy elderly in our midst as if they are our own. In 2003, We began by starting the 'Vincent Home of Universal Love & Care' in Xingtai, which was formed to help elderly folks who had no family to care for them.

There are many such old folks scattered in remote rural villages around Xingtai. They don't have enough to eat, and they don't have enough clothing to keep warm. With no immediate family, they live a lonely life. To provide them a measure of warmth, we formed a team of volunteers to provide them with services such as:

- Once every two months, we visit, talk and listen to them;
- Egg for each person every two days, and 10 pounds of cooking oil a year;
- Clothing according to their needs;
- Seasonal cleaning of their beddings, blankets, overcoats ...
- Annual celebration activity.

We started by serving 56 elderly folks in 2003. Today we serve 850 of them scattered over 200 villages in 10 counties that cover an area of 3,000 square kilometers. We had a few dozen volunteers when we started. Now we have more than 400.

Because the elderly we serve are scattered over a wide area, we rely heavily on the few of us who have cars to help move the materials - food stuff, clothes, etc. But these vehicles are not always available and when they aren't, the elderly who are in desperate need of help will have to wait, which means they have to go hungry, cold, or both until aid arrives. It would be extremely useful if we have a mini-van to help provide timely services: to bring food, clothing, cooking oil ... to the old folks we care for. But a modest mini-van may cost about RMB 100,000 (approx. HK\$ 113,636), which is an astronomical sum to raise in a rural community such as ours. Our parish priest Fr. Xi suggested we write to you for help. We pray you will take our request into consideration.



Visiting elderly living in remote villages



Looking forward to
your response



Yours sincerely,
The volunteers team of
Vincent Home of Universal Love & Care
27 October 2016

For enquiry, please call on 35892259 or 35892500, or leave your message at mainland@caritas.org.hk. To show your care, you may write a crossed cheque payable to "Caritas-Hong Kong" and send it to: Mainland Service Desk, Room 505, Caritas House, 2, Caine Road, Central, Hong Kong. Please write down the item no. / purpose of the cheque and your contact information on the back.