



**LOVE NEVER LEAVES
ANYONE ALONE**

- ◆ This is the happiest moment in my life
- ◆ At that moment, I took it all



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THE AMITY FOUNDATION

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Love is the driving force



The common theme for the year 2023 all over the world is restart and recovery.

Before the arrival of the Spring Festival, Amity staff jointly made a wish: "Let's departure in 2023" - departure towards a meeting or a reuniting in a long journey.

Unexpectedly, the first trip for Amity staff in 2023 was due to a sudden disaster: the Feb 6 Türkiye earthquake. Within a day, many areas in the country was turned into ruins, and countless people lost their homes in an instant... These drive the Amity people to set off, immediately!

On the afternoon of February 6, 2023, the Amity Foundation

Ling Chunxiang

General Secretary
The Amity Foundation



launched an emergency response and dispatched rescue teams to Türkiye to conduct disaster and need assessment. Based on the results, Amity collaborated with local social forces to provide humanitarian relief to the affected groups. With the support of love forces from all walks of life, the humanitarian relief work of Amity in Türkiye has two parts:

Firstly, Amity is one of the active members who established the "Türkiye Earthquake Response Coordination Base for Chinese Social Forces". There, Amity provided financial support for the base, helped the registration and reports of Chinese rescue teams in Türkiye, organized action information, and gave

logistical support. Amity's work ensured an orderly and effective participation of Chinese social forces and the connection between Chinese relief operations and other aid systems.

Secondly, Amity focused on the needs of local people in the resettlement stage by providing supplies. With the successive emergency supplies, food and other materials from Amity, more than 10,000 people affected in Kahlamamarash Province, Adyaman and other places were benefited.

During this process, the Amity people couldn't help telling: human love and mutual assistance across time and space

will overcome the harm caused by disasters, allowing the dawn of hope to dispel sadness.

Today, the disaster stricken areas in Türkiye have entered the post-disaster reconstruction stage, but the road to post-disaster reconstruction is long, so the work of Amity is still continuing.

At the same time of Türkiye earthquake relief, in the new year, the Amity people are also moving to more needy people around the world.

Encounters or reunions under the sun, assistance or relief in the rain, the Amity people are on our way.

Let people who care for the “children of stars” shine together

Millions of parents giving care to autistic children in China each face different challenges while sharing similar experiences. To these loving parents, their story is not just their own.

According to the *2021 Blue Book on the Rehabilitation Industry for Children with Developmental Disorder* jointly released by the China Maternal and Child Health Association (CMCHA) and China Autism Rehabilitation Research Center, the prevalence of autism is increasing year by year. Today, more than 3 million children in China are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

When we call on society to embrace the “Children of the Stars”, we should also show more care and love to the people who take care of these children and the professionals who work in this field.

Let people who care for the “Children of Stars” shine together.



This is the happiest moment in my life

Mr. Wei's daughter Xuanxuan was diagnosed with autism, leading him to reflect on the ups and downs they've encountered in their lives.

It was not until my daughter, Xuanxuan, was diagnosed with autism that I realized that the car crash I survived was not the biggest challenge I'd face in my life.

After losing my legs in that car crash, I became a swimmer with a disability. I competed all the way from regional team to provincial and even national team, winning many awards from the 9th FESPIC. In the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, I was one of the torchbearers for Qiannan Prefecture.

Yet I almost lost my motive and direction when I got my daughter's diagnosis.

After being confused and depressed for a while, I told myself: only by facing this challenge head on can our family's life continue.

Thus began Xuanxuan's road to rehabilitation.

Before her diagnosis, Xuanxuan's name was actually Xiaoting. Her new name, meaning "bright and warm", bears our hope that she would grow to be a talkative and social person.

This would prove to be a challenging wish to fulfill. Xuanxuan was non-verbal, and had poor cognitive ability. Her early rehabilitation progress was very slow. My wife and I were so disappointed that we questioned the effectiveness of the treatment she was receiving.

However, three months into her training, we saw a ray of hope. We were elated and moved when we heard Xuanxuan said her first phrase "Mum!".

This moment brought us hope, but our financial pressure over the years

remained heavy. I have been responsible for Xuanxuan's tuition, rent, transportation fees, as well as my old mother's living expenses and medical expenses. I work in our local Disabled Persons' Federation. Although my income is relatively stable, the cost of rehabilitation is very high for an ordinary family like us. We were heavily in debt.

When "Love-Connected Garden" settled in Guiding, Xuanxuan had a chance to receive treatment at home. In addition, we received the sponsorship of the "With Love, No Loneliness" project. This was a huge turning point for us, helping to ease the pressure of finance and transportation. Meanwhile, I had the opportunity to receive parenting training to learn more about autism.

In the past, I was reluctant to talk about my daughter because Xuanxuan was not like other children. As I learned more about autism, I became aware that Xuanxuan still had certain gifts. Having totally accepted Xuanxuan's condition, I take her out much more often.



► Xuan Xuan's handicraft
(Provided by Mr. Wei.)

Autism makes my daughter feel that it is harder to reach out to the outside world, so she learns things slower than her peers. For example, when she's eight years old, she can only acquire the skill and the knowledge of a four- or five-year-old child but it doesn't mean she cannot master it.

A while ago, Xuanxuan finished a hand-made piece of artwork. This is simple for the other children at her age but it's hard for Xuanxuan because it requires her attention, cognitive ability, coordination and fine motor skills.

I was more excited when I saw the handicraft than winning all those swimming contests years ago. It was the happiest moment of my life!

“At that moment, I took it all”

Ms. Li is a mother of two. Xiaoqian, her younger son, is autistic. She shares her thoughts on how society views the disorder and hopes for change.

I have two sons. The older one is called Yangyang. He’s in the fifth grade. My younger son Xiaoqian is autistic, a fact that took me a long time to accept.

Elderly people tend to believe that some children won’t start to talk until they are 4 or 5 years old. However, I found Xiaoqian’s symptoms concerning so I took him to the doctors. I had hoped the problem was in his hearing, in which case a hearing aid would be enough to meet most of his needs.

When he was diagnosed with autism, I spent a lot of money hoping for an alternative outcome. Finally, I had to accept that autism cannot be cured, and started to seeking treatment for Xiaoqian at rehabilitation centers.



► Xiaoqian was receiving rehabilitation training

I rented a flat in the downtown area of Guiding County to receive better medical and rehabilitation treatment for Xiaoqian. I left my older son with my parents because my grandparents were too old to help. All our expenses were paid by my husband's wage from working in a construction site in Chengdu.

Thus I really appreciated the support from the "With Love, No Loneliness" project and the subsidy from China Disabled Persons' Federation. With their timely aid we are now able to afford Xiaoqian's rehabilitation fees and living expenses.

In the eyes of the rehabilitation teacher, I'm one of the most cooperative parents because I accompany my child during classes, print all the course materials for my son to review and ask a bunch of question

during sessions.

However, in the eyes of my older son's teacher, I'm one of the most uncooperative parents.

His class teacher would sometimes call me, telling me that Yangyang had misbehaved at school and advised me to do something about it. However, I'm not around him and couldn't possibly help. At that moment, I would justify to myself that while Yangyang would at least be able to make a living in the future, but it would be much harder for Xiaoqian to do so.

Burdened with mental and economical pressure, I try my best to pull it through as Xiaoqian is slowly progressing. Although I've experienced several mental breakdowns, I always pull myself together for the sake of my children.

The hardest thing for me to bear is other people's misunderstanding.

There was a time when Xiaoqian lost control at the high-speed railway station. His actions might have affected other passengers. I explained to them that my boy was diagnosed with autism, so his mood and behavior would be unstable. Most understood our situation, but one old man kept criticizing me and said that child like this should not be brought out to the public.

I felt angry, wronged and helpless. However, Xiaoqian couldn't sense my feelings so he just kept on screaming and continuing to embarrass me.

At that moment, I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders.

“I was so desperate that I almost left her by the roadside”

Lin Xu is diagnosed with autism, ADHD, and experiences sleep disorders and self-harming behaviour. Her mother, Ms. Tai shares her experiences before and after receiving support from Amity’s “With Love, No Loneliness” project.

I am a single mother.

I often have trouble sleeping because Lin Xu might wake up in the middle of the night and make a lot of noise. I had no choice but to get used to it.

As a single parent, my biggest fear is falling ill. Recently, when I had to undergo gallstone removal surgery, I felt the most helpless moment in my life.

I didn't take my daughter with me to the hospital, but there were no relatives or friends who were willing or able to help. They distanced themselves from me, perhaps afraid that I would ask for money from them. To make matters worse, it was during the winter break, so I couldn't reach out to Lin Xu's teacher.

I had no choice but to lock Lin Xu at home alone during the two days before the surgery, when I had to take antibiotics. I was afraid of her being in danger, and even more afraid of her causing trouble, so I locked the refrigerator, blocked the kitchen door with the washing machine... I did everything I could, and then installed a camera to monitor her in real-time.

However, just as I left the house and hadn't even gotten on the bus, the camera showed me something that forced me to hurry back home: Lin Xu, somehow mustering great strength, pushed the washing machine aside, entered the kitchen, and poured all the oil, salt, soy sauce, and vinegar we had into a bucket filled with water...



► Locked refrigerator, blocked kitchen door by the washing machine... In the small rental apartment, many details were intentionally arranged.

When I got back home, I scolded her. I got angry with her, but she couldn't understand. I was truly furious at that moment. If it weren't for the fear of her getting hit by a car, I would have left her by the roadside to get rid of her. Seriously, I even prepared a small note to carry with her: "Hello, I am six years old and I am autistic..."

To make her more independent as soon as possible, sometimes I had to be a "tiger mom", being strict and tough.

Because she couldn't go to the toilet by herself, Lin Xu wore diapers for many years, which was also a considerable expense for me. I know I had to train her but it was difficult. Whenever I saw her shaking as if she needed to urinate, I would immediately bring her into the bathroom, sit her on the toilet, and make her understand that it was the right place... In the end, I don't know if it was out of fear or if she couldn't hold it anymore, but she finally urinated in the toilet... After repeating this process several times, she can now go to the bathroom on her own.

This method was not ideal. There were times when she would

run away at the sight of the bathroom from a distance. But I had no other choice; I had to do it this way.

I used to work and run my own shop, so I had some savings. However, to "watch over" Lin Xu, there was a period when I couldn't work at all. I had to rely on my previous savings to rent a place in the city and focus on her rehabilitation... Later, I managed to get a janitorial job at the rehabilitation institution where Lin Xu receives treatment, which provided a more stable source of income. However, I still lived



► To develop Lin Xu's expressive skills, Ms. Tai has recently been using her favorite jelly as a "reward." Lin Xu must say the complete sentence, "Mom, help me open," in order to get the jelly.

a fugal life. I ask for secondhand clothes from other mothers and give them to Lin Xu; as for Lin Xu's training aids, I would try to borrow or copy them whenever possible instead of buying them.

Now, with the support of the "With Love, No Loneliness" project, I am willing to spend more on her training aids.

With the pressure of caregiving in daily life, I often have little energy to care about others' opinions and attitudes. However, there were still moments when I felt the unspeakable frustration. For example, there was a time at a shopping mall when Lin Xu had a meltdown, screaming and crying at me for two hours. It attracted the attention of many onlookers who whispered and pointed at us. A young couple even followed us for a long time, perhaps suspecting me of being a child trafficker. Finally, Lin Xu calmed down, and I said to her, "Come to mommy". This young couple didn't leave until they saw my daughter stumbling into my arms.

To be honest, sometimes I feel that when we go out with our children, the best thing others can do for us is to leave us alone.

The story is over, but life goes on.

There are millions of parents giving care to their autistic children. They share similar experiences but face different challenges.

Lonely Echoes

"**C**are for children with autism, support caregivers, and empower professionals" - the slogan for World Autism Day in 2023 brought tears to Ms. Dong's eyes.

Ms. Dong is a teacher working at the Little Turtle Special Children Rehabilitation Center in Qiandongnan Prefecture. Dedicated to providing support and care for children with autism, she herself is the mother of a 15-year-old with autism.

As both a caregiver and a professional in the sector, she has witnessed and experienced numerous challenges faced by families with autistic children these years: the diagnosis of autism disrupts the original plans for family development. It not only cuts off a portion or all of the sources for family income, but also requires significant additional expenses for therapies and rehabilitation. This places a heavy financial burden on families, even ones with stable income like Mr. Wei's. Furthermore, for children with autism like Xiao Qian and Lin Xu, who also have comorbidity, taking them out of the house presents significant psychological burdens for caregivers...

Caregivers hope for assistance and, more importantly, they yearn to be accepted, embraced, and understood. Parents, as the direct recipients of societal attitudes towards the autism community, desire this acceptance.

Ms. Dong said, the thought that "I hope my child dies one day before my death" is a sentiment shared by many caregivers of individuals with autism. They fear the day when they will no longer be there, leaving their children alone, friendless and helpless.

How can we address the shortage of 300,000 professionals?

As a professional social worker, Ms. Dong finds working with children with autism to be highly demanding. As each child presents a unique set of conditions, cases have to be highly personalized, requiring a significant investment of time and energy from a dedicated team of professionals.

Ms. Dong earnestly hopes that psychological rehabilitation institutions for children, such as the Little Turtle Center, can garner increased support from both national policies and societal forces.

During group or class sessions at Little Turtle Center, each child is assigned a dedicated "shadow teacher" who provides constant support and guidance. Additionally, every child has their own personal trainer. Due to the intensive nature of this individualized care, each teacher can only accommodate one child per half day. Consequently, as the number of children with

autism opting for rehabilitation at the Little Turtle Center increases, there is a pressing need for additional teachers to meet the growing demand.

According to 2021 Blue Book of the Rehabilitation Industry for Children with Developmental Disorders, China currently faces a significant shortage of 300,000 professionals specializing in child rehabilitation education.

In order to provide personalized care, teachers must possess not only theoretical knowledge but also the ability to analyze their experiences. Thus, the sharing of experiences and the enhancement of professional skills are forms of support most desired by teachers like Ms. Dong and others in the field.

Zhou Shanshan dedicated three and a half years of her career to the Little Turtle Center. When she was a freshman in the organization, she encountered a little boy who would burst into loud cries whenever she tried to

teach him how to build blocks hand by hand. This experience left her frustrated and perplexed. Later at a professional training session Zhou Shanshan shared the video of her teaching the young boy with her professor. The professor swiftly identified the problem: "The boy might have an aversion to physical contact, but he doesn't know how to express it."

With this realization, Zhou Shanshan decided to take a different approach - to avoid touching the child's hand during communication. Sure enough, the child no longer cried. Inspired by the professor's advice, Zhou Shanshan proceeded to implement desensitization training with the child. Over time, the child gradually became able to accept physical contact, such as shoulder-pats, handshakes, and even hugs.

It was then that she once again experienced the importance of professional experience and knowledge.

Love never leaves anyone alone

It is crucial for children, parents, social organizations, and the whole sector to support the autism community so that it can be embraced and integrated. Recognizing this need, the Amity Foundation has been diligently devoted to this cause.

Throughout the years, the "With Love, No Loneliness" project has striven to alleviate the financial burden of families with autistic members and foster the growth of autism service institutions by enhancing institutional facilities, building capacity, and providing family support and other essential services. In addition, by organizing international seminars on autism, the project aims to establish a platform for communication and exploration among practitioners. This platform allows the sector to collectively voice out their concerns and promote broader societal comprehension of the autism community.

Thanks to the invaluable support provided by the "With Love, No Loneliness" project, Mr. Wei has received caregiver empowerment and psychological counseling services; Ms. Li received increased financial support, relieving the mother and son from heavy burden; Ms. Tai was able to acquire better teaching aids and purchase new clothes for her daughter; the children's playground at Little Turtle Center underwent a remarkable renovation; and this project also facilitated professional growth for dedicated individuals like Ms. Dong and Zhou



► New teaching aids that Ms. Tai recently bought for Lin Xu

Shanshan, exposing them to advanced industry knowledge and concepts, thereby elevating their professional capabilities. Most significantly, the project extended the opportunity for a broader segment of the public to gain awareness and understanding of the autism community.

By the end of 2022, the "With Love, No Loneliness" project had provided support to more than 40 rehabilitation centers and numerous families with autistic patients across ten cities throughout five provinces. In addition, Amity had held 11 Amity International Seminars on Autism, inviting esteemed experts in autism from both home and abroad to share their professional insights and knowledge with practitioners, service providers, and the general public. Through these efforts, Amity has been advocating for increased societal attention to the field of autism.



► A renovated playground supported by Amity

A dawn for us

As a teacher for children with autism and a parent of an autistic child, Ms. Dong faces many difficult challenges, but her extensive frontline experience has endowed her with a more intuitive understanding of positive changes in the field compared to other parents.

One such change is improvement in government policy. In recent years, to facilitate greater access to rehabilitation for children with autism and to alleviate the financial burden on their families, the government has increased service assistance and broadened the scope of supported groups. For instance, in Guizhou Province, children with autism who meet the local criteria are eligible for an annual training subsidy of more than RMB 12,000.

Ms. Dong has also observed a noticeable improvement in the social atmosphere. In the past, embarrassing situations like those described by Ms. Li and Ms. Tai would occasionally arise with her own daughter. However, such situations have become few and far between. She can now take her daughter to restaurants, take public transport together, and can often get assistance from others.

"I used to harbor the thought of 'wishing my child would pass away earlier than me'. But now, national policies are progressing, and society is giving us greater support, acceptance and respect. As a caregiver, I have changed my mind. While I strive to earn more money for my child, I will also persist in teaching her essential life skills."

The growth of children with autism is intricately linked to the tireless dedication of caregivers and professionals, day after day, year

after year. These remarkable individuals who illuminate the dark night also deserve our attention and support.

Those who tend to the stars should also be seen.



► Mrs. Dong eagerly shared her channel with me, proudly showcasing how her daughter had learned to cook with her unwavering guidance over the course of several years. This achievement brought enduring satisfaction to Mrs. Dong.



Amity hosts exchange with United Bible Societies

On March 22, 2023, Reverend Dirk Gevers, Secretary General of United Bible Societies (UBS) and his colleagues visited Amity's Headquarters in Nanjing. They were warmly received by Amity Board Chair Qiu Zhonghui and Vice Chair Gu Chuanyong, and sat down for a friendly and extensive exchange.

Mr. Qiu expressed his sincere welcome to Rev. Gevers and his entourage for their second visit after three years. Subsequently, Amity Assistant Secretary General Zheng Wei outlined Amity's development and operations in recent years, and described Amity's social services, project fund-raising, overseas exchanges and recent rescue work in the earthquake in Türkiye.

Moved by the sharing session, Rev. Gevers praised Amity's achievements and innovative spirit. He hopes that Amity's experience in online fundraising and social services can be shared globally, such that more social organizations can benefit from Amity's example.

Mr. Qiu, recalling the 30 years of cooperation between Amity and UBS, emphasized that the two parties have always operated on equal ground and mutual respect for each other. He thanked UBS for supporting Amity through the years, and hopes that this precious relationship can continue to grow for generations to come.

Mr. Gu was especially excited to meet colleagues from UBS again after the COVID-19 pandemic. He hopes for his friends abroad to learn more about China and Chinese stories, and for Amity Foundation to reach out internationally to help more people in need.



► Mr. Qiu Zhonghui, Board Chair of Amity Foundation



► Reverend Dirk Gevers, General Secretary of United Bibles Societies



► Mr. Gu Chuanyong, Vice Board Chair of Amity Foundation

March update: Türkiye and Syria



Following the earthquakes that struck Türkiye and Syria in February, the Amity Foundation wasted no time in providing humanitarian aid to the affected people by raising funds, sending supplies and dispatching staff to the disaster area. After 14 days of conducting relief work in Türkiye, Amity colleagues Zhang Chao and Cui Yazhou have returned to Nanjing with stories to share.

Amity's response to the disaster began at home. On the day of the earthquakes, our staff contacted international and domestic partners to gather information and coordinate actions. Three days later, our relief team arrived in Türkiye and immediately commenced local operations, conducting needs assessment, purchasing and delivering much-needed supplies to hard-to-reach areas.

Reflecting on the experience, Zhang Chao remarked that Amity's assistance focused on helping those in temporary settlement areas, providing them with sanitary and winterization supplies. "We could not have managed to deliver such a great number of supplies without the help of local volunteers." added Cui Yazhou.

Indeed, local solidarity could be seen at every turn of Zhang and Cui's journey. Unfettered by differences in race or creed, local volunteers selflessly provided food, transport and shelter to their counterparts from abroad.

"There is still so much work to be done." Zhang said, referring to the people who remained displaced in the wake of the disaster. "In addition to conducting relief work, we managed to establish ties with local organizations, which will be important for cooperative operations going forward."

Amity continues to appeal to all to provide assistance to Türkiye and Syria on their long road to recovery. Visit our Türkiye and Syria portals to learn about our work there and how you can get involved.









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