



Overseas Helping Hands

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Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ Eph. 1:2



Dear Friends,

Dec. 15, 2007

Across the miles, from our Bo' Ai School children and staff, we send a very warm Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year Greeting to you and to your loved ones!

As I was away from home for two months, I needed to do more bonding with our two grandchildren. So for the last two days, I have been babysitting Malia and Maile. In just two months, from speaking simple words, our two year old Maile can now suddenly talk up quite a storm but her monosyllables are still frequently an emphatic "NO".

Her five year old sister, Malia, is quite a dancer and is attending a Chinese school two mornings a week. The last time I was home, I had promised Malia to teach her how to make wontons. Because of time constraints, I was not able to do so. This homecoming time, the first words out of Malia were not "I missed you, Nai Nai!" but, "You still haven't taught me how to make wontons!!" What a memory our Malia has. December is the month we celebrate the birth of Jesus, but in the Chan family, it is also the birthday month of our two grandchildren, and of our two daughters-in-law, Lena and Kaori. December is a very busy month for the Chan family.



We bring you good tidings from Bo' Ai. In the most recent county examination, 49 of our students had one subject with perfect scores, 12 had two and one had three. Our test scores were the best in the county. We are so proud of our children. From an average county exam score of 49.4



when our school first opened, the average score of the entire school this year is 87.5. More importantly, the children have gained self esteem and have set goals to excel. We are told so many times that they are so well mannered and helpful to others. Not only that, but our children also carry their knowledge of hygiene and recycling into their homes. Their parents are amazed.

Our teaching staff is a wonderful group of young teachers. I must commend them on their dedication and love for the students. With the exception of meal times and noon nap time or free time, from seven in the morning to nine in the evening, the teachers spend time with the students either in studies or in play. They do get to take a break when the students go home for 4 days every two weeks.

Recently our school hosted a conference for the county education department. The conference was for educators and principals learning to implement new educational policies and goals that were set at the recent Peoples' Congress. I had thought that about 100 educators would come, but I was reminded that over 300 educators came over a span of three days. They also came to learn how we teach, administer the school and do things differently. That was quite an honor. Our site was chosen because the department considers Bo' Ai a model school.

This year, with the support and encouragement from several donors, we sent our student, Li Cheng Lung for heart surgery in Beijing and Cui Wei Juan for several plastic surgeries in Taiyuan. Wei Juan was not a Bo' Ai student. She had just graduated from high school and was to enter a university for language studies when she suffered severe burns to her body from an explosion. Cheng Lung can now walk briskly without turning blue.

Five of our young teachers got married in the past year. One has already given birth to a brand new baby. Two more are pregnant. We still have not resolved the issue with childcare for the newborn babies. It is not healthy that the babies are separated from their mothers 10 days out of every two weeks.

The OHH Houston Chapter mission team came to minister in June. 40 students and 10 chaperons from a private school in Beijing came to get acquainted with our village children in July. Then in August, Peter Trinh led a contingent of 33 persons from the States, Canada, Hong Kong and Beijing. In between, Max Tang, Amy Ng, Eva Chung, Fiona Chan, Justine Lee and her two friends, Mary and Jamina also came to help out in our school. We are thankful to each and everyone of them.



On the capital project side, we have just completed building a bun room and kitchen annex connected to the dining hall kitchen. We had tried to give as much business as we could to the local economy. In spite of repeated warnings, the bun makers did not heed to our concerns about hygiene, leaving us no choice but to make



the buns ourselves. Buns are a staple in their diet as bread is in ours. The 289 students and 41 staff consume over 700 buns per day. We are indebted to the donors who gave generously for this project.

Our entire school has only two file cabinets and no bulletin boards. We are in the process of purchasing file cabinets and bookshelves for the teachers' offices and the principal's office. Soon we hope to have bulletin boards in the classrooms and in the hallways.

We are still talking and negotiating with the government on building a middle school in our present location. The county government is building a gigantic middle school for several thousand middle school students in the nearby town. It would close all the middle schools in the county and concentrate all the middle school students into one middle school. We think it is unwise as there would be no competition. Additionally, it would fragment some families as some mothers will choose to relocate to the town and rent little rooms to look after their middle school children.

Please pray for our middle school project. The character of our elementary school graduates is not totally formed when they leave grade six. We would like three more years to mold our students during their teenage formative years.

Inflation is hitting hard on the farmers and on our school as well. What used to be 1.5 yuan for a catty of tofu two years ago is now 2.8 yuans per catty. We burn about 160 tons of coal every winter. When I first came to Shanxi Province in 1999, coal was about 60 yuans a ton, now it is 325 yuans a ton. On top of this, the value of the US dollar has plummeted in relationship to the yuan. As a result, the cost of upkeep of our students and of our school has gone up appreciably.

We are mindful of what we together have accomplished for Bo' Ai School in the past. Let us go forward together to give our children sound moral guidance and an excellent education for a brighter future.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May God Bless You Abundantly and Grant You Peace and Joy! Please continue to pray for our children and as always we value your support!

Prayerfully,



Christine H.C. Chan
Executive Director
Overseas Helping Hands.



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