

Half the Sky



半边天基金会

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Fall, 2001

www.halftthesky.org

Chuzhou Summer

by Lynn Woods, *Half the Sky Volunteer*



Lynn Woods, her husband, Bill and their four year-old daughter Maya, joined a Half the Sky volunteer work crew building a new Little Sisters Preschool and Baby Sisters Infant Nurture Center at Chuzhou Social Welfare Institution in Anhui Province.

This past July, my family had the honor of being part of the Half the Sky work crew in Chuzhou, Anhui. Our task was to turn five dilapidated rooms of the Chuzhou Social Welfare Institute into a preschool and an infant nurture center.

We had eleven days to work miracles. It was the hottest month of the year, and what we encountered, despite all our mental preparations, was beyond most of our expectations. In 100 degree heat and 90 percent humidity, we confronted both physical and emotional challenges that inspired us, exhausted us and made us all vow to do it again. Our team consisted of eight women, two men, and seven children ages 3½ to 8½. The return with our girls to their homeland was an extraordinary journey of self-discovery, and a sobering reminder of the miracle of our daughters. What follows are excerpts from my Chuzhou journal—scattered descriptions, contemplations, and epiphanies.

Arriving. A banner in honor of Half the Sky Foundation festoons the front of the hotel in this bustling town of 200,000, as our bus rolls in. Exhausted from 15 hours of flight and shuttling, getting caught in a monsoon-like downpour, followed by a grueling six-hour bus ride, we find ourselves sitting at huge round banquet tables with the Vice-Mayor and assorted Chuzhou dignitaries feasting in our honor. We visitors might have preferred a quiet room and a shower, but this classic Chinese pomp and circumstance is required and, admittedly, captivating. Unending speeches, myriad toasts; glasses raised to HTS, to Executive Director, Jenny Bowen, to each of us, to Family, to Children, to the Project, and finally an endearing toast by Jenny to the Chuzhou people, who “welcome us with such open arms.” We are celebrities, bleary-eyed and yearning for sleep.

Waking up. Our room in Chuzhou is sweltering in the early morning as we



Little girls at Chuzhou SWI get their first look at the world inside their new school's mirrored triangle.

Half the Sky Foundation was created in 1998 by adoptive families of Chinese children in order to establish preschools and infant nurture centers inside of China's state-run orphanages. Half the Sky's work is supported by donations and volunteers. Enjoy our newsletter and please help our efforts however you can.

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One World, One Family

by Jenny Bowen, Executive Director, Half the Sky

Like most of you, my first impulse on September 11 was to gather my family close, and then to check on the welfare of friends and loved ones wherever they might be. In the hours that followed, folks across the nation and around the world came together, united by a common concern, joined by our great sorrow. And as the days passed it began to feel like we were all truly one family. If any good can be said to come of the suffering, it may be the reminder that family is not defined by blood or ethnicity. Humanity is the name of our family.

The World Trade Center attack extinguished

the lives of victims from 60 different countries. It was really an attack on the world community. And with the exception of a few extremist groups, expressions of solidarity and regret have come from virtually every spot on the globe.

Perhaps one positive lesson we can take from this outpouring is that the world is smaller and more connected than ever before. Now, more than ever, we are aware of how responsible for and how much we depend on each other. In the same way that we yearn to protect those in our immediate family in times of crisis and to nurture them in times of quiet,

our mutual vulnerability and mutual dependence now extends to the world outside the walls of our private homes and our local communities. We truly are one world, one family.

Organizations like Half the Sky exist because of the care and concern we feel for this, our greater family. We fully understand that there is a rightful priority in these difficult days to protect the futures of the those families most directly affected by the tragedy of September 11. We at HTS are deeply grateful and moved that even during this difficult time, you have not forgotten your family

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At the heart of the Half the Sky family: volunteers, staff and children all together at Chuzhou Social Welfare Institution

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The mission of Half the Sky Foundation is to enrich the lives and enhance the outcome for the babies and young children in China who wait to be adopted, and for those who will spend their childhoods in orphanages. We are establishing early childhood education and infant nurture programs in Chinese welfare institutions to provide the children stimulation, individual attention, and an active learning environment.

Half the Sky was incorporated in California in 1998. The foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.

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An Infant Nurture Center for Changzhou

This summer, HTS volunteers built a Baby Sisters Infant Nurture Center at Changzhou SWI.



above: HTS Volunteers at work, l-r. Greg Kordecki, Bev Schwab, Toni Masciangioli, Rich Schwab, Christine Kordecki, Rachel Erwin, Robet Seefeldt, McKinzie Jernberg

right: HTS Volunteer Robert Seefeldt chats with a satisfied customer in Changzhou.



Measuring the Effects of our Preschool Program

by Dana Johnson, MD, PhD, Board of Directors, Half the Sky

Studies of children who spend their early lives in orphanages show universal, progressive declines in their intellectual abilities. While adoption and foster care prevents and even reverses such deficits, these opportunities are available to only a small number of children institutionalized during early life. That's a major reason why Half the Sky set out to establish preschool programs within China's orphanages. Since retention of cognitive abilities provides the foundation for development of most other skills, HTS was particularly interested in determining if the Reggio Emilia approach to preschool education could prevent intellectual deterioration in the children being served.

To date, we've conducted several tests to measure the impact of these programs. In April, 2000, before the first "Little Sisters" program was established in Changzhou, 13 children were tested by Kay Dole, an occupational therapist from the International Adoption Clinic at the University of Minnesota, using the Battelle Developmental Inventory. Ten and a half months later, of those children originally tested, seven remained (others were transferred or adopted), and these children were administered the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence test. Participants in this evaluation included Ms. Dole and two additional International Adoption Clinic staff members, Sandra Iverson, a pediatric nurse practitioner, and Dr. Pi-Nian Chang, a child



HTS' Changzhou Little Sisters are eager to share their memory books

psychologist who was born in China. Of the seven children tested, five were girls and two were boys. The average age at entry into the Reggio Emilia program was 4.4 years. The oldest child was 6.1 years, while the youngest was 2.2 years.

The tests show that cognitive abilities in these children were not only maintained, but showed significant improvement over the 10.5-month period (Table). Also noted was a significant improvement in brain growth (head circumference). Social skills did not deteriorate. Both adaptive/daily living and communication scores decreased, but mean scores remained in the normal range.

One year ago I wrote in this newsletter about the hopes that the Half the Sky programs would "save the brain." While this sample size was very small, the results are extremely encouraging. Even during a pilot year of a

Dr. Johnson is the Director of the International Adoption Clinic at the University of Minnesota and Director of the UMN Department of Neonatology

program where young teachers were just beginning to take the first steps to practice a method that was new to them, this orphanage-based preschool program not only prevented deterioration, but also improved cognitive skills and brain growth. These data also suggest areas that deserve additional attention as the "Little Sisters" program evolves. But the bottom line is this: The program works! ☘

* * *

For those interested in the details, here's a table of results:

Prior to Program Initiation	Post-Program Evaluation	Statistical Significance
Cognitive Skills	-1.64 ± 0.75	-0.66 ± 0.56 p < 0.05
Head Circumference	-1.14 ± 1.68	-0.21 ± 1.29 p < 0.05
Social Skills	-1.50 ± 0.76	-1.32 ± 1.03 not significant
Adaptive/Daily Living Skills	-1.00 ± 1.00	-1.65 ± 0.51 p < 0.05
Communication Skills	-1.07 ± 1.02	-1.97 ± 0.74 p < 0.05

Table explanation:

As the tests administered were different, standard deviation scores (SDS) for the psychometric tests and growth parameters were used to compare (paired t test) pre- and post-program measurements. A standard deviation score of -1 is one standard deviation below the mean, or below average, and a score of +1 is one standard deviation above the mean, or above average. The lower range of normal is defined as a standard deviation score of -2 and the upper range of normal is +2. A p value less than (<) 0.05 is considered statistically significant.

Partners in Learning – A Teacher’s Notebook

Nurturing the Teacher-Child Relationship

by Wen Zhao, Program Director, *Half the Sky*

HTS’ 2001 summer teacher training was held from July 18 through August 11 at Hefei and Chuzhou Social Welfare Institutions. The training was designed to help the future teachers in HTS’s Little Sisters preschools understand the Reggio Emilia approach, how to combine it with Chinese teaching methods, and also to get some hands-on practice with the children. Three trainees from Chuzhou (where HTS built a preschool this past summer) and seven from Hefei (where HTS doubled the size of the existing school) attended. The new teachers started their jobs at Chuzhou and Hefei in September. HTS Program Director and teacher-trainer, Wen Zhao filed this report.

It wasn’t too long into our training session at the Hefei institution, as we explored the Reggio Emilia philosophy and worked with the children one-on-one, before some of the teachers began to comment that they had begun to feel uneasy about their previous assumptions. Several had already had some experience teaching in institutions, and said that they had come to believe that children in such settings were destined to be retarded, or at the least, slower in their development than “normal” children, and to have more behavioral and psychological problems. As we worked together, the teachers began to realize that the orphanage environment and the lack of significant adult figures to provide consistent love and attention were the very factors that caused many of these children to lag so far behind.

As we worked together, we spent a lot of time focusing on the role the teacher should play in establishing a secure attachment with these children. One highlight was an exploration of the idea of equality between the teachers and the children. This was the beginning of a transformation in the trainees from their deep-rooted traditional role as teachers with full power and control over the children, to a more democratic and child-centered role.



Wen Zhao explains the basics to new Hefei and Chuzhou teachers

Each trainee began spending time every day with one particular child. By the end of the first week, all the teachers reported that they had made slow, but real progress. At first the children were wary, but with persistent one-on-one attention, they began to talk more, play more, and smile more. They soon began to look for their teachers when their teachers were not there.

We spent a lot of time talking about listening well, about learning how to use art and other methods to enter the world of the child. As part of the Reggio process, I asked the trainees to document their own daily observations and we spent time discussing these comments. This helped the teachers-in-training improve their own processes of observation, helped them to know the individual children better, and helped them to become familiar with the overall value of documentation as a powerful tool for learning and reflection. I used videos and photos to introduce the Project approach. We talked about how to come up with ideas for class activities that grow out of the children’s curiosity and interest. The biggest challenge the trainees faced was the idea that curriculum should emerge this way. They were so accustomed to following ready-to-do models.

I invited the teachers who had already taught for a year to come to the training sessions to share their experiences. It was evident how strongly attached the first-year teachers were with their children and how much compas-

sion they felt for their students. Their presentations went a long way toward answering the new teacher’s doubts. They still wondered how to measure active and effective learning in such a setting. Chinese traditional teaching emphasizes rote memorization of material introduced by the teachers. As we watched slides and videos of the children at work, the train-

ees began to reevaluate their definition of active learning for young children. They learned to judge the level of children’s learning not by how quietly they sat or how much they could recite, but by how engaged they were or how much language they were using in a given activity.

One of the trainees shared her insight about the tug between old and new: “I felt my brain was always torn between the old and the new, even at night. I’d dream about the training experience. But every day I discovered something new, both in class and as I was working with my special child. I am getting more and more excited and happy because what I learned here really is working.”

Another told us, “Before, I expected the children to sit still and listen to me, but most of the time I found it was very hard for me to keep them focused on what I wanted them to learn. The children remained unresponsive and didn’t say much. That made me to think that the children in the institution were far behind in their development compared to ‘normal’ children.

“Now that I am using the new teaching approach with my special child,” she said, “I have seen the improvement in her language use, as well as in her emotional development and social skills within such a short period. Within a few days, she began to smile at me when I came to see her. She began to talk with me about the pictures she and her friends

“It made me realize that it was the environment, including the way the adults behaved, that had caused the developmental delays in our children...”

had made. She even invited her friends to play with us. It made me realize it was the environment, including the way the adults behaved, that had caused the developmental delays in our children. This came as a real shock to me.”

In Chuzhou, we continued to work on the direct relationship between our trainees—who had made so much progress that I now was calling them “teachers”—and the children. When we first met the children there, many, especially the younger ones, showed no facial expression or responsiveness and avoided eye contact. The older children tended to be aggressive when they met frustration, and showed little empathy toward each other.

Breakthroughs were made in a very, very short period of time. By the third day, the children would come to the door when school was over while the teachers and I were still in the classroom. They would knock on the door and ask us when school would start again. This happened every day till the training was ended.

We worked a lot on helping the children learn to help each other. At snack time, for instance, each child was given the opportunity to serve the snack for others. This became a favorite activity for all the children.

The older children were encouraged to serve the water for the younger ones at snack table and it was clear how proud and happy they were to help. It was thrilling to watch these children change into more and more positive little human beings each day, happy with themselves, their peers and their environment.

And even when there are setbacks, there can be transformations: One morning the teachers noticed that some of the new books had been torn up by a group of the oldest children. I took this opportunity to help teachers and children alike practice some problem solving skills. First, I called a meeting with the children’s group and explained that we couldn’t have the activity we had planned because we had “a problem.” I showed the torn-up books to the children and told them how sad I felt. They repeated the word “sad” and then started to laugh and giggle.

At this moment I realized that these children had difficulties in even recognizing basic emotions, such as feelings of sadness. To help them visualize the feelings, I drew a happy face and explored some happy feelings with them. Then I drew a sad face and told them I was sad at the moment because I was hurt when I saw that the class materials were not being taken care of.

This time the children seemed to understand. Together, we worked out rules for

taking good care of the books. When I asked the older children what they could do to fix the books so that younger children could still read, one of them said, “We can sew them.” And another said, “We need a needle and thread.” (Apparently they only had sewing experience as the way to put the pieces together). When I introduced the idea of tape, they were eager to try. With some teachers’ help, three children worked very hard to tape the torn books together. Next, I let the older children help the younger children learn about taking good care of the books. Since then, no more books have been destroyed.

There were lots of other successful encounters as children learned to share materials, recognize each other’s feelings, and even encourage each other. Throughout the training, the teachers and I used lots of positive words—“thank you,” “you are welcome,” “I like to play with you,” etc.—and encouraged the children to do so whenever there was a chance or an opportunity. The positive language had a tremendous impact on children’s self-confidence.

At the end of the last week in Chuzhou, I got an exciting comment from the caregiver in the children’s dorm area. She told me that the children seemed more cooperative and empathic toward each other. The older children were helping the younger children. It showed me once again how the Half the Sky program works not only in the preschool, but goes beyond the classroom to make a real difference in these children’s lives.☘



HTS Teacher trainees learn that building trust and the beginnings of true bonds is a slow, but ultimately gratifying process.

The Homefront – Volunteer News

by Jennifer Loane, National Volunteer Coordinator, Half the Sky

I stand in awe of the work of volunteers who have traveled to China to build HTS preschools and infant centers, and just as much in awe of the efforts of the many volunteers here at home! Although some volunteers have undertaken large projects and raised large amounts, please don't be daunted. HTS depends on the smaller-scale efforts of many wonderful people—and all efforts are very much appreciated! Here are just a few examples of recent projects, large and small, which have benefited our programs.

In Logandale, Nevada, Teri Waite and her daughters Ariel and Chantelle organized a group of friends to collect and make dress-up clothes for the Little Sisters Preschools. They've donated purses, wands, hairpieces, shoes, gloves, jewelry, boas, and dance costumes. Teri tells us that her friends got very creative in color choices—with the help of some of their daughters! And Teri's daughters Ariel and Chantelle personally donated the money to purchase shoes to accompany these wonderful costumes. Many thanks to Teri and her family as they "paperchase" for their upcoming adoption.

In Northern California, Kim Giuliano is also collecting dress-up clothes. Kim plans to travel to Chengdu on the next work crew and is preparing for her trip by holding an ice cream social for friends to benefit HTS. The admission price? A new costume in a preschool size. Her suitcase will be full of surprises for the new preschoolers there!

A supporter in Reading, Pennsylvania, Pat Trembly, has begun a prayer group to support HTS's activities. The idea spread through e-mail and Pat quickly had over 100 people who wanted to offer their prayer support. If you'd like to participate, please contact Pat at persistentpat@altavista.com.

Debbie Simmons of Arlington, Texas, has a great fundraising idea for those with children who enjoy slumber parties. Debbie plans to host a slumber party with an admission price of \$15 per child. This is a fund-raiser with almost no overhead—just a few pizzas or hot dogs, popcorn, movies, and perhaps, some lost sleep for host parents for that night!

In North Carolina on August 26th, Lesley Elias held a BBQ in memory of her late husband, Ben. Lesley decided to make this memorial a fund-raiser for Half the Sky since Ben had been so devoted to their daughter Joliana and active in fundraising to assist children still remaining in orphanages. This year Lesley raised over \$1,000 and hopes to make this an annual event.

Steve Whan, an adoptive dad in Vancouver, British Columbia, author of the Autumn Jade Mystery Series for young readers, is making a donation to Half the Sky for every copy sold. The series features Autumn Jade, an enterprising girl adopted from China. For a preview chapter and ordering information, visit the author's web site at www.autumnjade.com.

HTS is fortunate to have volunteer fundraising coordinators across the US, in Canada and in Europe and Asia. In each issue, Jennifer Loane, our eastern US coordinator, gives us an overview of fundraising activities, new ideas, ways to get involved.

Eat, drink, and be merry—all for a good cause. Bob and Ida Ku, volunteers in Northern California, hosted a Half the Sky night at a local BBQ restaurant, Armadillo Willy's in San Jose. In their Dining for Dollars program, Armadillo Willy's will donate 20 percent of the proceeds for food and beverages ordered on a given night by supporters of HTS.

Doug Thomson and Laurie Day, volunteers in Minneapolis, recently held an ice cream social for family and friends to honor the adoption of their daughter, Lia Xiao Tian. See story at right.

Brenda Mellon, a volunteer in the Pittsburgh area, is organizing a group of volunteers in her area to brainstorm ideas and work together for Half the Sky. What a great idea, since there's nothing like a group effort to make the most of any project! If you'd like to network with HTS volunteers in your area, please contact us, and we'd be happy to put you in touch with others in your area.

Two Canadian families, Angela and Jim Halinda and Mary and Kevin Lawless, adopting in September, raised nearly \$6,000 Canadian from friends and parish members to aid children in Chinese orphanages. They have selected Half the Sky to receive these funds. Many thanks to our northern friends!

In Los Angeles, Roxann Dawson, adoptive mom, actor, and author, has been a steady supporter of our preschools and infant centers, and is co-hosting the Galaxy Ball fundraiser this November with actor Robert Beltran. Both Dawson and Beltran have appeared in the Star Trek TV series, and the Galaxy Ball is a major fundraising event in Los Angeles. A quarter of the proceeds from the Galaxy Ball will benefit Half the Sky!

A number of FCC chapters have been wonderful in their support of HTS. We are especially grateful to the supporters who have been instrumental in developing these relationships:

Volunteer Connections

If you'd be interested in joining HTS' volunteer effort to raise the funds we need to serve more children, please contact the HTS Volunteer Coordinator nearest you: If you don't use email, please call or write HTS for contact information.

Eastern States

AL, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, MA, MD, ME, NC, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, SC, TN, VA, VT, WV
Contact: Jennifer Loane
jloane@homecomingbooks.com

North Central States

IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, ND, NE OH, SD, WI
Contact: Laurie Kaufman
lekaufman@home.com

South Central States

AR, CO, KS, LA, MO, MS, NM, TX
Contact: Eva Smith
els97@flash.net

Western States

AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY
Contact: Suellen Grenko
sgrenko@peoplepc.com

--Thanks to Brenda Mellon and Jenny Rairigh for their work with the Three Rivers FCC chapter in Pennsylvania. The Three Rivers FCC chapter will be including Half the Sky brochures in their next mailing and including a mention of HTS in the next newsletter. At a recent picnic, they also made brochures, newsletters, and T-shirt and poster order forms available.

--Many thanks to Sharon Cochran and the FCC-Capital Area for hosting an informational table at their second annual Chinese Culture Day.

--Thanks also to Kathy Dittrich and the FCC chapter in Fairfield, Connecticut, who distributed HTS literature in their gift bags at their Chinese Culture Day celebration.

--A note of appreciation to Carla Seidel and the FCC Chapter in Reading, Pennsylvania, who hosted an Angel Tree at their Autumn Moon Festival.

--Thanks, too, to the West Los Angeles FCC chapter which will be assembling theme baskets for a raffle, hosting an Angel Tree, and offering HTS products for sale at their annual holiday benefit. We very much appreciate the child's quilt donated for the raffle by the Weeks Ringle FunQuilters.

Among our adoption agency supporters, many thanks to Michael Han and Jenna Bonie of Associated Services for International Adoption in Portland, Oregon, for inviting HTS board member Joan Spano to address a reunion of their China adoptive families on August 25. ASIA generously underwrote travel expenses for Ms. Spano. In addition to this and several individual donations, Half the Sky received a \$500 check from FCC Oregon/SW Washington to support our next building projects. ☘

If you have questions about fundraising ideas or need any support, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator in your area. We'd be happy to help in any way we can.

To announce an upcoming event in the newsletter, send a brief notice to karinevans@halfthesky.org. For help in coordinating a Walk-a-Thon, check with our coordinator, Ginny Smith of the Central Ohio FCC at tgsmith@infinet.com.

If you'd like to sell Half the Sky T-shirts, holiday cards, or posters at a local event, contact JoanSpano@halfthesky.org.



Minnesota Fundraiser Nets \$1,600 for HTS

Our daughter Lia Xiao-Tian Day Thomson was adopted on April 17, 2001. She is from the Wuchuan SWI in Guangdong Province, and was born February 5, 2000.

On August 25th, 2001, our family was able to raise \$1,600 for Half the Sky by holding an Ice Cream Social in honor of Lia. On a beautiful afternoon, about 80 people gathered on a hill above Lake Harriet in south Minneapolis. HTS provided an eye-catching 20-foot red and yellow banner for the event. The banner had been used for a HTS event in China.

A large contingent of other families with children from China attended the fundraiser, including several who, like us, had worked with GWCA of Texas as their China agency. Activities for the kids included face painting, crafts, and "bubblecrackers". What are bubblecrackers you might ask? Simply duct-tape bubble wrap to a cement floor. The kids can jump on it, producing a perfectly safe, but satisfyingly loud, "fire-cracker". They were very popular with the younger set as I'm sure you can imagine!

--Doug Thomson, HTS Volunteer

A HALF THE SKY CENTER OF YOUR OWN

Many families who have adopted from a particular orphanage have expressed interest in sponsoring a Half the Sky center at their children's first home. We are working on a project that will allow this to happen: If your SWI is selected, Half the Sky will research and secure government approvals, do a site survey, and plan how to best install classrooms, infant room, common area, outdoor playground, etc. We will provide all supplies and equipment, build all furniture to specification. We will work with the orphanage director to hire qualified Little Sisters Preschool teachers and to select local retired women for the Baby Sisters/Infant Nurture Program. We train both teachers and infant nannies. Your group raises start-up costs, perhaps in partnership with a corporate sponsor that HTS will try to help you find. The costs range from \$25,000 to \$40,000, depending on the number of children. We are working on some materials that can help you with fundraising efforts.

Your families can come to the institution for two weeks and help to build the indoor portion of the center. Your group will receive regular progress reports on all of the children in the program. If your group is interested in such a program, please contact JolieBales@halfthesky.org or call 510/525-2077.

Half the Sky Community Page

Longing for a Past

by Melanie Parks, *Half the Sky Supporter*

I read through the winter 2001 issue of the Half the Sky newsletter with tears in my eyes. Amazed at the progress of the “Little Sisters” preschools and “Baby Sisters” infant programs at the Hefei Children’s Welfare Institute, I pored over each picture looking for a likeness of my daughter, who came to us from that very place six years ago.

By all indications Lia is an All-American girl. She is a happy child who loves school, soccer, swimming, scooters, dancing, and the Disney Channel. Unlike most other all-American girls, she also loves and is deeply attached to a country far away. Although she was only six months old when she left, I believe that a part of Lia’s heart will always remain in Anhui Province. The very mention of China excites her. She loves teaching her classmates about the Chinese New Year and was a Chinese gymnast last Halloween. She wants to know all about China and even more about who she was when she lived there.

One evening, when she was not quite four, she looked up from the photo album and said, “I want to go to China to find out about me.” When I asked what it was that she would like to know, she responded, “Oh, I would like to see my little crib and the sink that I took a bath in.” Sadly, I realized then that it was the things she saw in the pictures of our room at the hotel that she thought represented her life in China. Much sadder is that *she* now realizes that those pictures, along with a pair of little socks and pajamas, are the only clues that she has to her past.

When the heart-wrenching questions arise, I answer them as honestly and gently as I can. What I sense in my very affectionate, deeply sentimental child is that she wants to know that she was “*somebody*” who was loved by “*somebody*” in the country in which her heart remains. She needs to know that Jiang Qingyun mattered before she became Lia Parks.

I am very certain that somebody loved her, for the baby that was placed in my arms was robust and healthy. She had flawless, sun-kissed skin, a sense of curiosity for every-



Lia and Melanie Parks

one and everything around her, a sparkle in her eye and a smile that come only from being loved. We were told that she was with a foster family for some period of time, but we know nothing more about them. We were so taken with our new daughter that we didn’t have the sense to ask. I share all the information we have with Lia, hoping to reassure her that she was loved by and very important to someone in China. For her it is not enough. To want to know one’s past at only six years old seems so little to ask; yet it is a daunting request. I have no more of her past to offer.

Our younger daughter, Jodie, came to us from South Korea with a written and photographic history of the first six months of her life. On the head of her bed is a picture of her as a baby, being held by her Korean foster mother. Lia has expressed a great deal of sadness that she does not have a picture of any “mother” in China. As I look at picture after picture of the smiling babies in Hefei being cuddled by their Half the Sky Nannies, I wish that Lia had just one picture of the person who cuddled her.

Although every word of that winter newsletter touched me deeply, the words that touched me most appeared under the picture of a Hefei professor looking at the children’s memory books. The caption read: “*These portfolios will stay with the children—follow them even to their new homes should they be adopted—in effect giving a history to the child who lacks one.*”

If you have a story you’d like to tell, a question to pose, a subject to explore, please write to KarinEvans@halfthesky.org. We welcome photos, essays, letters, and random thoughts. Materials cannot be returned and we can’t promise publication, but we look forward to hearing from you and expanding our HTS community.

It is exactly that history that my daughter longs for. While I am terribly sad to think that it may always elude her, I am happy to know that it will be there for other little ones. Half the Sky and its presence at the Hefei Orphanage have become a “red thread” to my daughter’s past and a very personal link to China for us. Each newsletter allows me to give her a glimpse of what the remainder of her life in China might have been like. I show her pictures of the babies in Hefei and explain that she may have spent time in rooms like those in the pictures, or slept in one of the same cribs. I tell her that I believe somebody cared for, loved and cuddled her the way that the Nannies in the pictures now care for, love and cuddle those babies. I secretly wonder if one of those Nannies might have been her foster mother. I imagine the pictures of Lia that I’ve sent to Hefei hanging on the “wall of photographs” described in the newsletter.

On the sixth anniversary of the very day that we became a family in Hefei, a letter arrived from Half the Sky addressed to Lia. It contained an update on the “Little Sister” that we sponsor in Hefei, along with a photo. In that photo, clutched gently in her Little Sister’s tiny hand is the letter that Lia wrote to her, expressing hope that she would “get a new family,” and to which she attached her own picture. When Lia opened that envelope, her own face looked back at her all the way from Hefei. I cannot describe her joy when she realized what the baby was holding. I am truly grateful for the window that Half the Sky has opened to my daughter’s past.

Some day my family will travel to China. We will visit Hefei to search for clues to Lia’s past. Perhaps we will be part of setting up a Half the Sky preschool and Nanny program in some other city and make a difference in the lives of other little girls. Until then, I will help make a difference by raising funds for Half the Sky and by encouraging others to do so. We can give our daughters’ little sisters the warmth of a loving touch, the wonder of learning, and the sense that they, too, were “*somebody*” who was loved by “*somebody*” in China.☞

HTS Baby Sisters/Infant Nurture Programs 2001 Nanny Training



HTS Nannies from Hefei and Changzhou trained together.



"First I must tell you what a fulfilling experience this was for me personally. I believe it is one of the most important pieces of work I have done in a long time. To have worked with these loving and committed women and know that they will make such a difference in the children's lives is a great feeling. It can be said with certainty that I am 'hooked'"

With these words, HTS' Nanny Trainer, Janice Cotton, PhD, began her report on this year's Nanny Training Program....



left:Nanny Trainer, Dr. Janice Cotton and friend.



The Nannies enjoy their new job almost as much as their young charges.



We are proud to introduce...
A wonderful gift idea for the coming holiday season



One of the world's finest graphic artists. David Lance Goines, renowned artist and calligrapher, has created, exclusively for Half the Sky, a magnificent Chinese zodiac tribute to 2002, the Year of the Horse.

Goines lives and works in Berkeley, California, where he runs St. Hieronymus Press. His work is on permanent exhibit all over the world, in such venues as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Louvre, and the Hiroshima Museum of Modern Art. He has had numerous solo exhibitions throughout the United States, as well as in France, Italy, and Japan.

The 5" x 7" notecards (blank inside) commemorating the Year of the Horse, printed in full color on fine art stock, are now available in boxes of 10 cards with Chinese red envelopes for \$35 plus shipping. (Please see the order form on page 15.)

Here is a gift that your friends and loved ones will appreciate all year long. And best of all, the proceeds go to Half the Sky's work in Chinese orphanages!



Maya Woods

await the beginning of our labors. Maya asks, “Where are the little girls?” She is referring to the daughters of our work team. “What’s their names? Who’s the one in the red shirt?” So we review her new friends’ names: Jessa, Tai, Anya, Ali Fu, Marika and the other Maya. “Are they coming with us to the orphanage?” Yes. “Can I bring my toys?” Yes. You will play together all day, while we mommies and daddies work. Her face lights up. She is “home,” in more ways than she knows: she has her toys, she has us, she suddenly has a new community of friends, and most dramatically for us, her own orphanage is two hours away, the place she lived for one year minus 24 days.

Greetings and Ground Rules. As our van pulls up to the gate, a huge red banner comes into view: “Warmly Welcome American Half the Sky Foundation Relative Delegation to Chuzhou Welfare Institution.” More speeches. Mr. Dou, the orphanage director, speaks words of welcome, proclaims our mutual love for the children. Jenny welcomes, then cautions us in no uncertain terms: Personal cameras are forbidden. No photos of babies are allowed. The team leaders have one camera with which to photograph our project. We are not to depart from the work detail to wander the grounds on

our own. We are not to “choose” children or try to arrange for adoptions from this orphanage after we return home. These are the cardinal rules; if they are broken, we could jeopardize HTS’s mission.

After the proprieties are complete, we are given a guided tour, to be reminded why we are here. The babies are all in circular walkers, bumping and spinning, sitting and staring—a herky-jerky army filling the foyer of the building where we will work. We walk among them with our daughters, bending down, touching them, cooing, smiling. Our girls pat them gently, squeeze the brand-new, unused squeaky toys on their trays.

The toddlers don’t smile back. They stare at us, look around aimlessly. Bursts of crying erupt. “You’re OK, baby,” one of our daughters says. “Hi baby, hello.” Little bobbing heads of black hair at our kneecaps. Amid the coal black babyscape is one snow white head. An albino child, with pigmentless eyes and insect-bitten powdery flesh, glows like the moon.

Going to Work. The rooms we will work on are raw. David Howard, who with his wife Vicki McClay is leading this effort, lays out plans with the carpenters using sign language, drawings and the aid of an on-site interpreter.

We divide up into work details. The patchers sit on the floor of the foyer, the sanders toil over a set of bookcases in a hall, the table painters get to work with rollers and brush. The planners and carpenters build a step/ramp play structure and HTS’ signature climb-inside mirrored triangle. The bicycle and chair assemblers wrestle open the huge boxes



HTS Building Committee co-chair, David Howard shares plans with volunteers, Lynn Woods and Carol Odaniell

we’ve lugged up the stairs. We consume dozens of bottles of cold water (periodically delivered to us in armfuls by anonymous institute workers, bless them). The sweat pours off of us. The Water Carrier has become a holy figure.

Making Friends. As more and more color appears on the walls and bookcases, we become more and more excited. Playfulness is starting to edge out the glumness of the setting. The children are becoming more and more curious. I watch a child I call “Big Girl.” When I first saw her, she was bent over in a permanent hunch, bony and stiff, holding the hand of one of the little ones as they shuffled down the hall to the toilet, her eyes cast down, a picture of resignation. She appears to be about 7 and is the oldest. One day she and her friend, the next oldest, about 4 or 5, slip into the toy room where we are inventorying. A subtle transformation begins. Her back seems to straighten and at some point her granite face melts into human expression. Her thirst is far more profound than any of ours—a thirst for experience, knowledge, stimulation. She touches everything she can reach in the boxes, awestruck. We have to pry her from the room; we must complete our work before we can give out the toys (the teachers won’t arrive for another three weeks). Over the next few days, I see this girl more often; her step is lighter, her face brighter. She’s starting to smile.

More children appear now. They start by peeking around corners at us, frightened, fascinated, but soon start to respond to our *nihaos*. They smile. They want to watch us, hang out with us. We take any opportunity to interact with them. These are the best parts of our days. The



caretakers realize we want to be with the kids, so they've taken to setting up kids' chairs for us at the doorways to the toddlers' room.

A group of us soon huddle at the door of a drab washroom lined with a row of deep iron sinks. We ooh and ah at the cries and giggles of wet babies. Round plastic tubs are laid out on the stone floor. Three or four babies are washed at a time, every one gorgeous. The caretakers scrub them in soapy water, transfer them to the rinse tubs. An assembly line. One baby cranes her neck to stare at us. One screams. One coos with pleasure. We want to hold these babies, love them. I look away, think about my work upstairs. I make the necessary assumption that all of the girls in the tubs will be adopted. I wish I knew how to pray. On the way back to the hotel later, I hug my daughter tightly, breathless at having her, terrified at what might have been.

In the late afternoon, four of us sit on children's chairs gathered in a half circle at the entrance to the toddlers' room. The two caretakers smilingly oversee as the children venture toward us with three small rubber balls. They are wearing loose split shorts, bare bottoms mooning us as they waddle and shuffle.

Moonlight (my name for the 3-year-old albino child), walking like an old woman, is the boldest. She brings the ball and drops it at our feet. We pick it up and start teaching her to play. Soon Moonlight is awkwardly catching the ball when it's fed into her hands from an inch away. She tilts her head, her pinkish eyes sliding around in their sockets as she tries to focus. She giggles when she holds the ball, proudly displaying it to our



Chuzhou SWI's new Director Dou Ruhui spends some time each day with "his girls."

applause. Her smile is huge, greater than the distance to the other side of the world. I think of her with a family of her own. Why couldn't she be happy, successful? She is so beautiful. Yesterday she was outside in the molten sun with no sunglasses. Maybe we can at least send her some dark glasses.

Attracting Attention. The first of three newspaper articles about our work appears. The headline says something to the effect of "Chinese Children Return to Homeland with their American Mothers." A photo of a bunch of us is superimposed in front of a pagoda. The article describes the "blond, blue-eyed" mommies of Chinese children.

Last night the hotel threw us a party. Everybody sang, including Director Dou and

Zhang Zhirong, Half the Sky's wonderful China Representative, and some of our daughters (in Chinese). The Chinese love karaoke and are shameless practitioners of the art. In the middle of the dance floor sat an ornate crimson sedan chair. Our girls chased balloons around the floor, rapturous with delight, ducking in and out of the chair, peeking impishly through its window, whooping it up. No longer a vehicle to carry young women to arranged marriages, the sedan chair in our girls' irreverent and nimble hands had been transformed into a toy, a setting for anarchy.

Finishing Touches. Sitting on the hall floor, covered in splashes of paint, we play high and low fives with Big Girl's 4 year-old pal, who is beaming. The game is beyond heaven for her. At first she slaps our palms violently, stinging them, but when we show her how to be gentle she begins caressing. She goes around in the circle barking orders



left: "Moonlight" and her pals enjoy their new classroom

TO OUR SUPPORTERS OUTSIDE THE U.S.

We hope you're enjoying this edition of Half the Sky Foundation's quarterly newsletter. Due to the requirements of sending newsletters out of the country, if you would like to receive newsletters in the future, it will be necessary for us to request a small annual subscription fee of \$15 USD to cover the out-of-country costs of mailing. We appreciate your understanding.

*Please sent foreign subscription requests to
Half the Sky Foundation
541 Vistamont Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94708 USA*

or fax credit card info to (510) 525-7677

in Chinese for us to put out our hands palms-up. In turn, she tenderly slides her hands over ours. She goes faster and faster, unable to get enough of the skin game. We have to stop her before her energy blows us to dust. Someone has begun calling her Sky, for Half the Sky. She's becoming a daughter to us all.

In a small side room in two wooden-pallet cribs lie four babies who have just arrived. One is 7 days old. Around their waists are rags hanging down to their calves, serving as diapers. One of them is crying. Three of us mothers and our two oldest girls, Marika and Ali Fu, stand over them. The girls pat the babies' tummies.

Saying Good-bye. We have a short window of opportunity to do final touch-up on the Infant Nurture Center (where hired Nannies will rock in gliders holding babies and the babies can play at floor-level mirrors) and the preschool room. We look forward to letting the children in for their maiden encounter before we leave. Unfortunately, most of the toddlers are napping in the hour before our departure, so we open the room to those who are awake: four boys who live downstairs (ages 7 to 9), Sky and Big Girl, along with our own daughters. The scene is one of glorious bedlam. The kids dive into the toys. In a matter of an hour, the children seek to repeal their years of deprivation, teaching themselves lessons with Legos, electronic keyboard, a kitchen with a phone, and more. The girls line up the baby dolls along the wall, two to a crib. DongDong, a handsome, intelligent boy we've all come to love, smiles wryly when one of us puts a Groucho Marx wig on his head. Sky stares



"Sky"

in wonder at the mirror image of a glamour beauty in purple sparkles and pink boa. It's a sweet sight to our weary eyes.

I get up and wander the room, looking at the sleeping children splayed out in the heat. I will not see them again. Moonlight is on her back, her split shorts hanging limply, unaware that this is goodbye. "Zaijian," I say. I stare at her round face and snow-white hair. I begin to cry. Nancy, a fellow volunteer, is also circulating among the hard cribs; soon we are both sobbing. We hug the three children who are just waking. "Zaijian," we say to them, "we have to go." They look wide-eyed, uncomprehending. I look at the caretakers, whose tears are welling up. Soon we are embracing. "Zaijian, zaijian, it's been wonderful to be here with you, I wish I could say more, I wish we could talk."

Nancy and I pull away, arms extended in final finger touches with the caretakers and children. We turn away and walk back down the hall, homeward, these last images seared in our memories. ☞

HOW TO JOIN A HTS CHINA WORK CREW

Interested in volunteering to help build a preschool and infant nurture program in China? Here's a bit of what you'll need to know and what you'll be in for:

Volunteers pay their own way and expenses. Roundtrip airfare to China can range from \$600 to \$2,000 depending on carrier, starting point, when reservations are made, etc. A rough estimate of additional expenses within China for two weeks comes to \$1,800 for a single volunteer; \$2,500 per couple; with full payment due in advance. Children are welcome and, except for in-country airfares, there is no charge for those under 12. We are told that all of your travel expenses, because you are helping Half the Sky, are fully tax-deductible.



In August, HTS' 2001 Changzhou-Hefei Work Crew added an Infant Nurture Center to Changzhou SWI

The time commitment from leaving home to returning home is two weeks. The work is very hands-on. You'll be cleaning, painting, assembling and finishing cabinetry. You'll be putting together toys, taking inventories, and finally setting-up the preschool classrooms and infant nurture rooms. It's dusty and sweaty--the hardest work you'll ever wish wasn't coming to an end so soon. We guarantee that you will feel exhausted, fulfilled and very, very good about yourself.

The work crews are coordinated by HTS board members Vicki McClay and David Howard. If you'd like an application to join the crew, write VickiMcClay@halfthesky.org or call HTS at (510)525-2077.

At left: Half the Sky's weary youngest volunteers (l-r) Maya Woods, Maya Bowen, Anya Bowen, Marika Tindall-Ralph, Tai Odaniell, Jessa Howard, Ali Fu Sidun



ONE WORLD, ONE FAMILY

Continued from page 2

members on the other side of the globe. Donations, although fewer, continue to arrive daily. It is your kindness and generosity that allows us to keep Half the Sky's programs alive even in these times of not knowing what the future holds.

Regretfully, events have caused us to postpone our volunteer trips to build new centers in Chongqing and Chengdu until early spring. I want you to know, however, that our commitment to our family in China is not weakened. As much as it is within our humble power to affect, the little children in China's orphanages, among the smallest and weakest members of our world family, will not become victims of these dark days.

I thank you for your unwavering kindness and care. Peace to you and yours and to all of us.☸



Become a HTS Child Sponsor

It costs only \$300 per year to sponsor the nurture and early education of a child living in China's orphanages. You will receive a certificate with your sponsored child's photo, institution name and birthdate. We attempt to send you a progress report and new photo every quarter. Please note though that we're still perfecting our system and you can expect delays! If this doesn't deter you and the idea of sponsorship interests you, let us know on page 15

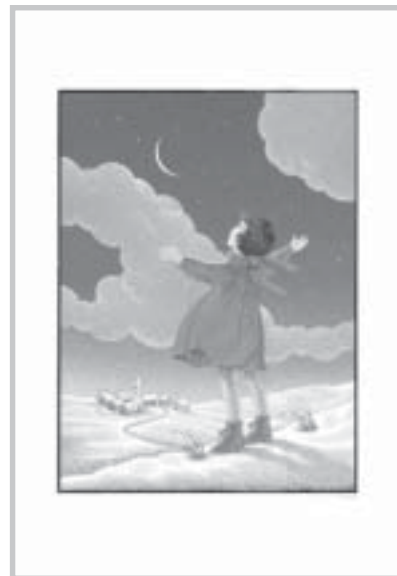
FUNDRAISING ALERT! — ANGEL TREES

If your organization, school, church, club, office or favorite restaurant would like to put up a HTS angel tree over the holidays, please drop a line to info@halfthesky.org and we'll tell you all about it.

HOLIDAY CARDS!



*"A New Dawn"
by Marla Baggetta*



*"Holding the Sky"
by Valerie Sokolova*

Introducing HTS' Holiday Card, 2001, "A New Dawn." Illustrated by Oregon artist, Marla Baggetta, the cards are 5"x7", in brilliant jewel-toned pastels. To see the card in full color, please visit our website: www.halfthesky.org.

Inside, the greeting, in both English and Chinese, says simply "Peace." Below that, the optional inscription reads: "A generous donation has been made in your honor to Half the Sky Foundation."

Also available is HTS' Holiday Card, 2000, "Holding the Sky," (above) by Russian artist Valerie Sokolova. The inside reads "Wishing you Peace and Joy" in English and Chinese.

Donation is \$35.00 for one box (12 cards/13 envelopes)

2 Boxes = \$65.00

3 Boxes = \$90.00

4 Boxes = \$110.00

5 Boxes or More = \$25.00 per box






Please see the order form on Page 15.

Yes, I'll help provide early childhood education and caring 'Nannies' for little children who wait in the orphanages of China. Here's my tax-deductible contribution to Half the Sky:

Mail to Half the Sky Foundation
541 Vistamont Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94708
or Fax to (510) 525-7677



- Enclosed is my gift of:
- \$50 \$100 \$300 \$600 \$1000 Other \$ _____
- I want to be a HTS Guardian. Here is my \$3,000 Promise--I will commit to a monthly pledge of \$83 per month (or \$1,000 per year) for 3 years.
- I want to be a HTS Nanny Sponsor. I will commit to a monthly pledge of \$50 per month (or \$600 per year) for at least one year.
- I want to be a HTS Child Sponsor. I will commit to a monthly pledge of \$25 per month (or \$300 per year) for at least one year. I understand that there may be no sponsorships available right now, but that I will be assigned a child when she becomes available.
- If Half the Sky is successful in raising sufficient funds to build additional new centers in 2002, I am interested in joining a China work crew. Please send me a work crew application.

<p>Please send me cards, t-shirts and/or posters:</p> <p>HTS Cards 1=\$35 / 2=\$65 / 3=\$90 / 4=\$110 / 5 or more=@\$25 S+H \$2 PER BOX</p>  <p>_____ Boxes</p> <p><i>S&H is doubled for orders outside the U.S.</i></p> <p>2002 Year of the Horse 10 Blank Cards Gift Box / 11 Red Envelopes</p>	<p>COST</p>	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p>
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 <p>1=\$35 / 2=\$65 / 3=\$90 / 4=\$110 / 5 or more=@\$25 S+H \$2 PER BOX OR PACK</p> <p>_____ Packs</p> <p><i>S&H is doubled for orders outside the U.S.</i></p> <p>* _____ GIFT BOXES PLEASE</p> <p>Holiday Card, 2000 Holding the Sky 12 Cards / 13 Envelopes</p> <p>** "GENEROUS DONATION" INSCRIPTION? ___Y___N</p>		<p>Zip/PC _____ Country _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p>
<p>HTS T-Shirts Child \$12 / Adult \$15 S+H \$4 FOR 1 SHIRT, \$5 FOR 2, \$6 FOR 3 OR MORE</p>  <p>Child XS _____ S _____ M _____</p> <p>Adult S _____ M _____ L _____</p> <p>XL _____ XXL _____</p> <p><i>S&H is doubled for orders outside the U.S.</i></p>		<p>Payment Method:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Check <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card</p> <p>We accept Visa, MC and Amex</p> <p># _____</p>
<p>HTS Poster \$25 each or \$50 Signed by the Artist and Numbered S+H \$3 PER ORDER</p>  <p>_____ Posters</p> <p>_____ Signed & Numbered</p> <p><i>S&H is doubled for orders outside the U.S.</i></p>		<p>Exp. _____</p> <p>Signature: _____</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">TOTAL</p>		<p><i>All amounts are US dollars. Please remember to include shipping and handling charges.</i></p>

*To conserve resources, holiday cards are packaged in shrink-wrap unless a gift box is requested.

** Please indicate whether or not you wish the inscription "A generous donation has been made in your honor to Half the Sky Foundation."



Helping her hold up half the sky....



Half the Sky Foundation

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