



Newsletter

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Editorial

To many who first meet some of the Morning Tears children, they seem like any other children. They love playing, hate doing homework; enjoy the occasional ice cream and candy. But once you get to know them a little bit better; once you dare digging a little deeper, you will sense some of the burdens they carry around; you will see their invisible tears and feel them trembling under the weight of their fears.

'The forgotten children', 'the hidden victims of the imprisoned', 'the orphans of justice' are all terms that painfully apply to the children of imprisoned parents. They are so often overlooked and yet they make up a huge group in society that suffers emotionally, socially, financially, educationally and health-wise. In addition to this, compared to other children, they are five times more likely to come into conflict with the law.

These are the children Morning Tears works *for* and *with*. Starting with this newsletter, we want to give these 'forgotten children' a voice; we want to bring these 'hidden victims' to the foreground.

'Impressions' is a new corner in our newsletter where pictures, drawings, poems, letters, and songs will give you an impression of the souls behind the faces. Call it a creative corner, if you like. In this month's newsletter, we show the faces of playing Morning Tears children through the lens. As Anita Wadley says it so beautifully: "Play is not just play. When you see me learning to skip, hop, run and move my body, please don't say I am just playing. For, you see, I'm learning as I play. I'm learning how my body works."

Coincidentally, in 'Morning Tears' Strategy' we also explain why it is so crucial for a child's development to encourage and promote play and recreational activities.

'Duet' is another new section. Duet will feature two voices, two minds, two

opinions, or two stories about a similar topic. These can be written by Morning Tears children, Morning Tears volunteers, experts, etc. This time you will read compositions written by two young Morning Tears adolescents that share their three deepest wishes.

In 'Heart2heart', you will read a story about one of our children, about the traumas they went through, the emotions that burden them, and the accomplishments they achieve. Some of their stories might be hard to stomach; stir emotions or make you cry. And although names might have been changed to protect the children's privacy, their stories are raw and real.

For the past few months, you have been reading about the progress on our brand new Ai Tong Yuan Project in Zhengzhou, Henan. On May 31 we finally had our official opening. In 'News from Ai Tong Yuan Children Village', we will keep you updated about new children arrivals, their progress, their school results, prison visits, etc.

And even though we have given our newsletter a slightly newer coat, you can still read about relevant news and changes within Morning Tears as an organization, relevant news from the world, psychological insights and our financial barometer. We still welcome donations, initiatives, open minds, ideas, etc.

We like the new coat, the fresh approach. We hope that you take the time to *really* read the stories, see the drawings and pictures so that these 'forgotten children' are no longer that forgotten!

Katleen Mentens
Liaison Officer Beijing

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News from Ai Tong Yuan Children Village

By: Kou Wei and Katleen Mentens

- The Ai Tong Yuan Children Village currently houses 4 girls and 4 boys between 6 and 12 years old. They are already enrolled in the local primary school and are now enjoying their summer holiday.
- All eight children took their physical at a local hospital and they were all found in very good physical health.
- The Coming Home Project is now compiling individual files on each child; including the child's basic information, physical health record, psychological record and the prescribed action of therapy if needed.
- In August we will have 24 children living in Ai Tong Yuan Children Village.
- Currently we have 4 caregivers in the project. All of them are female and went through the orientation program before they started working with the children. They will need to attend various additional training sessions in the future.
- The project now has a new Director. Kou Wei is one of the founders of Morning Tears and has been with Morning Tears since the beginning. The Ai Tong Yuan project will only benefit from her deep understanding and insights on the project.
- We are currently looking for two volunteer teachers that are available over the summer months and are experienced in teaching the arts (painting, music, etc).

Financial Barometer

Tax Deduction for donations to Morning Tears

Donations to Morning Tears are in several countries tax-deductible expenses. With other words, donations to Morning Tears can reduce your taxable income and lower your tax bill. Bear in mind that only very few charity organizations can actually offer this advantage. Morning Tears qualified for issuing tax-deductible invoices after rigid screening of our activities and financial and administrative audits in the countries where we are registered.

Currently Morning Tears can offer invoices for donations that can be used for tax deduction purposes in the following countries:

- China (for donations of 1000 RMB and higher)
- Belgium (for donations of € 30 and higher)
- The Netherlands (for donations of € 30 and higher)
- Spain (for donation of € 30 and higher)

Invoices or certificates that can be used for tax-deduction purposes are not automatically issued. People who need an invoice or certificate need to request this at the time of the donation. In China, the invoice will be issued within 2 months after the donation. In the other countries a tax-deduction certificate will be send to your home address in the first quarter of the year following the donations. This is well in time for your tax declarations.

Note: If you use your credit card to make an donation with our secure system on our webpage then automatically a tax certificate will be send if you have provided us with your address.

Morning Tears' Strategy

In the previous newsletters we explained that Morning Tears uses research-based minimum standards for childcare and protection. In our standards we differentiate seven quality areas, namely: planning for care; protective care; personal care; health, environment and safety, caregivers; management and administration. Here, we will continue to discuss the third quality area: personal care. For our personal care we use 10 standards. In this newsletter we discuss standards 7 and 8 of this quality area.

Standard 7: Play and recreational activities are encouraged and promoted

- Caregivers are aware of the need for children to develop through play and leisure activities. Children are encouraged and supported to engage in stimulating activities according to their age, abilities, and interests.
- There is adequate time to provide opportunities for spontaneous and planned, individual as well as small and large-group activities for boys and girls.

Why is this important?

- Play and recreational activities are a child's work. They provide opportunities for physical, social and emotional development and as such should be incorporated into daily life
- Play is a learning experience and as important as formal education; it can help children learn to make choices, solve problems and develop physically
- Shared activities promote the development of attachments.
- A stimulating program of activities is vital and can counteract boredom and aggression in children as well as help reach children through their interests rather than their problems

Standard 8: Children have access to education and are supported in their learning

- Caregivers ensure that children receive formal, informal and vocational education in accordance with their needs, irrespective of their sex, disability or social circumstances.
- Caregivers recognize the importance of educational experiences where school represents an environment rich with potential relationships to stimulate both social and academic development of the child.

Why this is important?

- Children can gain self-reliance from a sense of achievement, which increases with a higher level of attainment in basic educational skills
- School can be a source of friendships and peer relationships and serve as asylum from other painful areas in the child's life
- Services need to be innovative in the way they provide education, or access it on behalf of children, to ensure that the most socially excluded groups receive some form of education

Feedback

This is the third issue of the fourth volume of our quarterly newsletter. Your feedback will help us to improve. Also, we will be happy to include your contributions or announcements. We look forward to hearing from you. Please mail to: info@morningtears.org.

If you want to get our previous newsletters, visit our website at www.morningtears.org, You can download them from the site.

Duet

Duet...

a place where two voices speak, shout or whisper;
a place where two minds agree, disagree or clash;
a place where two songs sing harmoniously or create a cacophony;

We asked two Morning Tears Children, Li Xiaodong and Hu Junyan to write an essay about their three deepest wishes...

If I had three wishes...

By: Li Xiaodong (9 years old)
Translated by: Esther Yu

The first wish I would make is that my parents could be released from prison soon. Some people might think this is a selfish wish, but I deeply miss my parents, their smiles, and their love for me. I wish someone would give them another chance so that we can be together and share our love again.

My second wish is that I could find true friendship that will bring me happiness and give me a full life. I have been living by myself since my parents were taken from me eight years ago. I have been heart-broken and surrounded by sorrow and loneliness ever since. I never allow people into my inner-world and I feel lonely. If this wish came true, I would be able to cherish life again.

My third wish is that everyone in the world who needs help gets it. I really appreciate what people have done for me at the Children's Village.

I don't think my wishes will ever come true; it's too difficult. But I can dream about them and in my dream world they do happen and I feel happy and safe.

If I had three wishes...

By: Hu Junyan (12 years old)
Translated by: Esther Yu

If Heaven granted me three wishes, I would cherish them.

My first wish is that my grandfather Guo would come back to this world. I am an orphan and used to live with my grandparents, who were poor and couldn't afford to send me to school. We had to help people mow their grass and pick up garbage to make money. In 2001 my grandpa Guo brought me to San Yuan Children Village of Morning Tears. Grandpa Guo worked hard his whole life and his white hair and wrinkled face were proof of this. Although he was old, he tried his utmost to offer me a sense of family life by bringing me to this children village.

My second wish is that I had enough money to help other people. On September 12, 2008, thanks to the generous donations to the San Yuan Children Village, we all went to the Wild Animal Zoo in Tai Lang in Xi'an. It was a great day but it was also the day I got some bad news. My grandpa Guo suffered from a serious illness. I spent several days with him until he was feeling better. Two weeks later though, I got the horrible news that he had died from a blood disease. The caregivers drove me home. When I saw my grandpa lying in his coffin, I screamed: 'Grandpa, look at me, I'm here. Please open your eyes! Look at me!' He never did; I had lost him forever.

My grandma comforted me and told me that she had borrowed 20,000 yuan from neighbors and relatives and asked for a governmental loan of 10,000 yuan to pay for the operation Grandpa Guo needed. They had gone to the hospital but he died before he received any treatment. I couldn't help but cry and realize that even though money doesn't necessarily bring happiness, it does open doors. If I had had the money, my dear grandfather would still be alive.

My last wish is that I can become a successful doctor. My grandfather's death has encouraged me to save people's lives. I am sure this would make Grandpa Guo very proud.

Psychological Insights

Developmental Effects and Coping Methods of Children of Incarcerated Parents

We thought it would be interesting to have a closer look at how the incarceration of parents effects the children and what mechanisms children turn to, to cope with their situation.

Table 2				
Possible Developmental Effects on Children of Parental Crime, Arrest, and Incarceration				
Developmental Stage	Developmental Characteristics	Developmental Tasks	Influencing Factors	Effects
Infancy (0-2 years)	Total dependency	Attachment and trust	Parent-child separation	Impaired parent-child bonding
Early childhood (2-6 years)	Increased perception and mobility; incomplete individuation from parent	Sense of autonomy, independence and initiative	Parent-child separation; Trauma	Anxiety, developmental regression, acute traumatic stress, survivor guilt
Middle childhood (7-10 years)	Increased independence, ability to reason, importance of peers	Sense of industry, ability to work productively	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Acute traumatic stress and reactive behaviours
Early adolescence (11-14 years)	Increasing abstract thinking, future-oriented behaviour, aggression, puberty	Ability to work productively with others, control of emotions	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Rejection of limits on behaviour, trauma-reactive behaviours
Late adolescence (15-18 years)	Emotional crisis and confusion, adult sexual development, abstract thinking, independence	Achieves identity, engages in adult work and relationships, resolves conflicts with family and society	Parent-child separation, enduring trauma	Premature termination of parent-child relationship; intergenerational crime and incarceration

Source: Dr. Denise Johnston, "Effects of Parental Incarceration," in Gabel and Johnston, p. 68

Table 3				
Intergenerational Behaviors, Crime and Incarceration				
Childhood Trauma	Emotional Response	Reactive Behavior	Coping Pattern	Criminal Activity
Physical abuse	Anger	Physical aggression	Fighting with peers	Assault
Parent-child separation	Sadness, grief	Withdrawal	Substance abuse	Drug possession
Witness to violence	Anxiety	Hypervigilance	Gang activity	Accessory to homicide
Parental substance abuse	Anger	Verbal aggression	Asocial behaviour (lying, stealing)	Fraud
Sexual molestation	Fear, anxiety	Sexualized behaviour	Promiscuity	Prostitution

Source: Dr. Denise Johnston, "Effects of Parental Incarceration," in Gabel and Johnston, p. 81.

Impressions

Impression...portrayal, depiction, rendition, interpretation

Impressions... a new corner in our newsletter where pictures, drawings, poems, letters, songs give us impres-

"When you see me learning to skip, hop, run and move my body, please don't say I'm "just playing". For, you see, I'm learning as I play. I'm learning how my body works. I may be a doctor, nurse or athlete someday." (Just Playing by Anita Wadley)

Photos by: Katleen Mentens



News from Morning Tears (./..)

Fundraiser BBQ at the Belgian Embassy

By: Katleen Mentens

As tradition wants it and as a sign that people have their hearts in the right place, Morning Tears welcomed a huge crowd in the garden of the Belgian Embassy of Beijing for an afternoon filled with great food, ice-cold beer, fun and laughter. For the third year, ambassador Bernard Pierre opened the gates to this garden paradise for the Morning Tears Fundraiser Barbeque. After days of pouring rain and violent thunderstorms, the skies of Beijing opened up, welcomed the sun and set the perfect scene for the delicious food, the children's games and face painting. We had a fortuneteller, free manicures, a gypsy jazz band and a lucky draw with fantastic prizes. The event started at noon and went on till long after the sun had set. People went home with round bellies, well-groomed nails, sleepy children on their arms, but more importantly knowing that they supported a great cause and already making plans to be there next year! And Morning Tears was smiling at the thought of what it could do with the more than generous contributions and donations!



Families enjoying themselves (photo: Luc Poppe)



Thanks to hospitality of the ambassador and his wife (left) (photo: Luc Poppe)

Opening Ceremony of Ai Tong Yuan Children Village

By: Tom Song



Key Speakers at the Opening Ceremony (photo: Katleen Mentens)

On May 31, 2009 Morning Tears formally inaugurated the Coming Home program. The Ambassador of Belgium, the Ambassador of Spain, the Ambassador of Luxembourg, the Consul General of Holland, the First Secretary of the embassy of the UK, leaders from Chinese department of Civil Affairs and Justice and about 30 prominent international businesspeople attended the opening ceremony. The Mayor of Zhengzhou hosted the inauguration. In addition, domestic and international press gave extensive coverage of the day.

This program runs in cooperation between Morning Tears and the Zhengzhou Children Protection Centre, which is the first program taking care of children who are suffering difficulties;

News from Morning Tears (../..)

and whose parents are in prison. It is also the first project of its kind that is entirely in line with Chinese laws and regulations and under the supervision of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The objective of the program is to explore a new model and to develop new standards for caregivers who care for vulnerable children in China. Possibly, it will be extended to other countries in the world.

In his inauguration speech, General Director of Morning Tears, Koen Sevenants expressed that this program has been by the government, and that children's rights can only be protected adequately through the substantial participation of the government. Meanwhile, the Mayor of Zhengzhou, Zhao Jiancai added that "Morning Tears Zhengzhou Ai Tong Yuan" helping children, whose parents are in prison, could be an innovation for the Zhengzhou Children's Protection Center and even become a nationwide model.



One of the Children currently living at Ai Tong Yuan Children Village
(photo: Katleen Mentens)

Currently, the Ai Tong Yuan Children Village can house 48 children in two buildings. The second phase, which will allow an additional 96 children, is already on its way. This program provides units where 8 children and one caregiver live together as a real family. In their family unit they will learn life skills and the ability to adapt to society. Meanwhile, they have the right to make decisions for themselves. All the children will enter into the local schools. We strongly believe this family-based care can promote a child's development.

News from the World (../..)

Former imprisoned woman deserves attention

The court condemns approximately three thousand women to prison every year. There is not enough attention for this group from politics and government, believes director Roland Wolters reintegration agency Zorgconcept.

An estimated 4400 children are the victims of the detention of their mother. According to Wolters it still happens that women, after their release, end up on the streets without work, money, a home and without care for their children.

Source: De Telegraaf, July 2009, http://www.telegraaf.nl/binnenland/4311122/Ex-gedetineerde_vrouw_verdient_aandacht.html

Kids of jail inmates, no longer prisoners of fate

Life for the children whose parent is in jail is equally torturous. Like abandoned children, child labourers, and kids of prostitutes, government aids kids of jailed persons. The families of jail inmates are often ostracised or treated badly by society. In such condition, it's an ordeal for a parent to bring up a child. But inclusion of these children in foster care scheme has proven to be a boon for parents. Under this scheme, each child gets a monthly aid of Rs 425. The scheme has given lease of life to many children and secured their future.

Source: Vaidehi More (Times of India), July 2009, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Nagpur/Kids-of-jail-inmates-no-longer-prisoners-of-fate/articleshow/4750364.cms>

Heart2heart

Building Blocks

By: Katleen Mentens

She's eight, Yuan Yuan. Raven hair covers her eyes, which at times stare at the horizon, seemingly looking for...something. Her mind replays all the memories she unwillingly had to endure. Every day she sees dad bronze-yellow fingers clench into a hard fist so that his knuckles turn white. Every time the fist hits mom's face, Yuan Yuan squeezes her eyes. She doesn't want to see how mom's face swells up as if balloons have nailed themselves to her cheeks and eye sockets. She doesn't want to see how mom's tears spontaneously mix with blood, painting stripes on her face. She doesn't want to hear how with every blow mom groans and screams and begs for mercy. She doesn't want to hear, but no matter how tightly she squeezes her eyes, how tightly she covers her ears with her hands, how far she hides in a corner, the sounds continue to penetrate.

"Dad! Stop!"

She can hear his heavy breathing; sees his mouth, blowing heavy clouds of alcohol. She feels his eyes pierce. She hears mom softly mutter her name. Dad's eyes glance over the room; over the chair on the floor, the broken bowl and a bit further some grains of rice. His eyes find hers. Her body wants to run towards mom and find comfort in her arms. Her mind stops her. She doesn't dare to move. He looks at her, uncomfortable as if guilt and shame are pulling on the corners of his mouth. He looks down and whispers: "dui bu qi" "sorry". His warm hand takes hers and brings her to mom who has stood up. He leaves the room. She will not see him again that night.

"And then he was dead. Mom did it, killed dad. The police never listened to mom. They saw her red and blue and purple face and they didn't do anything to protect her; they just sent her home. And then she did it... because no one ever wanted to listen; no one wanted to help. I should have done something. I should have helped."

Yuan Yuan's mom is arrested and while waiting for the trial, she ends up with her aunt. She is alone and scared. Her aunt isn't kind, doesn't have warm arms that hug her, comfort her or offer protection. She has hard eyes and a hard voice. The voice roars: "Do the dishes! Clean the floor!" but keeps silent when Yuan Yuan asks when mom will come home again. She looks at Yuan Yuan as if *she* is the guilty one, or at least an accomplice; and overwhelm her with shame and disgust. At night in bed, she cries softly: "Come back mom, come back!"

The sentence is given. Mom will not be executed but is incarcerated for 21 years. A relief for Yuan Yuan? She doesn't have time to feel, think, or realize what kind of impact this verdict will have on her life. Her aunt packs her bags and hard-handedly drops her off at the Morning Tears Village. Yuan Yuan's whole world collapses and disappears. She is in free fall and nothing; nothing seems to offer her any support. Her dad is dead and she will never see him again. She will never feel his steel fist against her face or hear his voice roar. But she will also never hear his laugh or feel his warm lips against her skin when he kisses her goodnight. And mom, will Yuan Yuan ever see her again? Will she ever feel her arms hug or hear her words lull gently? In her new Morning Tears home she is surrounded by strangers. Strange kids who curiously stare at her; strange adults who try to offer her comfort when she, once again, wakes up in a wet bed or when she cries herself awake at night.

"Here at Morning Tears, they give me building blocks so that I can rebuild my life. The people are nice and together with the other kids I can go back to school. That's nice. I think that with these bricks I have already built a small wall, but I still miss my mom a lot. They told me that I might go and visit mom in prison soon. What I want to do when I see her? Hum, the only thing I want to do is... hug her. Yes, that's the only thing, and maybe tell her how much I miss her."

When Yuan Yuan, under the supervising eyes of the guards, walks through the endless prison corridors, she feels her heart beat in her throat and her hand tightly grabbing the one of her caretaker. She can hardly breathe. All of a sudden she sees mom, whose eyes have locked onto her. Yuan Yuan is nailed to the floor. She doesn't know what to do. But when mom reaches out her arms, Yuan Yuan runs to her and willingly allows her to put her arms around her. Here she's safe, here she cries and smiles at the same time; here she whispers: "I miss you..."



morning tears Belgium

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morning tears rebuilds the world for children who have lost their own world.

morning tears rebuilds the world for children who have suffered or are suffering heavy emotional pain.

We focus particularly on:

- children whose parents are in prison;
- children whose parents have been sentenced to death;
- children who have been abused or neglected;
- orphans;
- children who haven't been registered at birth, and thus have no rights;
- street children.

morning tears has been operating since 1999 on an informal basis without legal structure. However, in March 2005 **morning tears** became a formal non-profit organization registered under Belgian Law. Currently, **morning tears** has offices in Belgium, Spain and China.

morning tears is run entirely by volunteers. These volunteers are mostly professionals from the social sector or development aid workers, although we also have journalists and engineers in our group.

The running costs of **morning tears** are kept very low, so that donations can go almost entirely to the children in need.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

WWW.MORNINGTEARS.ORG

News from the World (./..)

Compiled By: Mirjam Lambooj

Children Visit Dads in Prison for Father's Day

More than 500 children and their caregivers will travel in 17 buses from major cities across the state to California Men's Colony (CMC) in San Luis Obispo and Correctional Training Facility (CTF) in Soledad on Friday, June 19, departing in the early morning.

Maria Palmer, Director of the "Get On The Bus" program, knows first hand the pain caused by having a father in prison. "I believe that every child should have access to their parents no matter where they are. Your dad will never stop being your dad."

Source: EGP News Services, June 2009, <http://egpnews.com/?p=10628>

Camp for kids of incarcerated parents born in MU class

There are kids across the country who struggle everyday with learning disabilities, anger or low self-esteem. Bethel AME Church hosted Camp Determination – a day camp for kids with a parent or parents, who are incarcerated who deal with these issues.

"Our goal was to increase their self esteem, communication and their anger management," Dr. Yvette Harris, psychology professor and camp director, said.

Source: Samantha Friedman (Oxford Press), June 2009, <http://www.oxfordpress.com/news/camp-for-kids-of-incarcerated-parents-born-in-mu-class-183962.html>