

YOUTH

UK university program is a class act for pupils

Students from British college teach and make friends in a primary school in Guizhou province, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

It wasn't the presents the visitors brought with them, nor the time off classroom lessons that made the biggest impression among pupils at a rural primary school in southwestern Guizhou province. It was something much more valuable and intangible — meeting people from a faraway land and making new friends.

Li Chuanlei was thrilled when volunteers from a British university visited his school, Anqing Primary School, in Baide town, the Qianxinan Buyi and Miao autonomous prefecture, in late May.

They brought presents, including textbooks, stationery, sports goods and souvenirs but the key memory from the special day for Li was learning to play basketball and sing English songs with these "big brothers and sisters" who came all the way from the United Kingdom.

"It was fun and really different from my usual school days," says the 9-year-old boy.

The feeling that this day was a special day was reciprocated.

"For the children, it was a joy to see people from another country, but for me, it was to see kids who mean the world to me," says Neha Jasmine Rodrigues, one of the volunteer students from the University of Huddersfield who visited the primary school in May.

"These little kids had a twinkle in their eyes and their faces were glowing with smiles," she says. "A little time with them just made life seem complete, and the little knowledge and love that I could share made me feel accomplished."

Rodrigues is currently pursuing a master's degree in education at the University of Huddersfield, whose China office was behind this philanthropic program in Guizhou.

Children at the Anqing Primary School in Guizhou's Baide town welcome a volunteer student from the British university.



Students from the University of Huddersfield and a local official, Sun Jianxia (fifth from left), visit a rural primary school in Guizhou province in May. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

“These little kids had a twinkle in their eyes and their faces were glowing with smiles.”

Neha Jasmine Rodrigues, a volunteer student from the University of Huddersfield

It was the seventh visit that the university has organized over the past three years, according to Allen Qi, chief brand officer of the China office with the British university that was founded in 1841. The pri-

mary school where these students volunteer to teach is the biggest of its kind in Baide town and has more than 500 pupils. Most of them come from nearby villages. Many are living with their grandparents, because their parents have left to work in the cities.

"We want college students to do something meaningful in their spare time," says Qi. "Most of our pupils are orphans or 'left-behind children.'"

The goal is to enable them to experience a life vastly different from their own.

"In this way, they can better appreciate life, learn to respect others and be grateful," Qi says.

To date, the University of Huddersfield has developed coopera-

tive relations with more than 400 institutes of higher learning in China, according to Qi.

It has staged nearly 100 charity events for rural young students on the Chinese mainland since 2015, involving many volunteers from domestic colleges.

"Every year we would recruit elite students from Huddersfield and our partners to join our volunteer programs," Qi adds.

Students visit children in need and engage in a two-week teaching program at the school.

"Afterward, they will get our volunteer certificates, living allowances, and even scholarships," Qi adds.

Some Chinese students of the domestic colleges who participated in the volunteer programs, opted to study at the University of Huddersfield after joining those philanthropic events, while some students at the university continued to engage in rural teaching even after graduation.

Shi Zhonghui has already planned to visit the Anqing school soon after his graduation from Huddersfield in July.

Shi had his first interaction with the pupils back in 2017, when he came here to work as a volunteer teacher.

"I immediately felt a bond with them," Shi says.

Although Shi and his team helped the children in the week-long program, including teaching them math, literature, music and paper-cutting, he felt he received a lot more from them.

"They taught me how to love, respect, stay curious and be kind," Shi says.

For Rodrigues, she had a special wish for the pupils.

"May they learn more with each passing day and feel loved and really cared for," she says.

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People of all ages take part in a reading competition at a local library in Jinhua, Zhejiang province. SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Reading race hopes to spur on bookworms

HANGZHOU — More than 7,000 Chinese bookworms in the Yangtze River Delta region took part in this year's reading marathon, or "readathon", on May 25 to promote reading among the public.

The event has gained popularity in China over the past few years, with this year's iteration attracting 1,400 teams who competed in 115 public libraries across Shanghai, and those in Jiangsu, Anhui and Zhejiang provinces.

All participants were required to collaborate with their team members to finish the same book in six hours before they had a closed-book test on what they had read.

In Zhejiang Library, competitors could organize their observations by mind mapping using electronic devices.

It is a good way to nurture a reading habit and show people the pleasure that can be found among the pages of a book in this era of fragmented reading, according to organizers.

The book used in the contest, translated but not yet officially published in simplified Chinese, was *How to Find a Habitable Planet* written by James Kasting, professor of geosciences at Pennsylvania State University.

Zheng Yongchun, a researcher with National Astronomical Observatories of China who won the 2016 Carl Sagan Medal, spent two weeks revising his translation after the book's future publisher informed him that it had been selected for the reading event.

"Searching for a habitable planet like Earth is a topic that interests people," says Zheng, who also set and modified some of the test's questions.

The latest national reading report conducted by the Chinese Academy of Press and Publication showed that in 2018, Chinese adults, on average, each read around 4.67 books.

XINHUA

Book on entrepreneur debuts at New York expo

NEW YORK — A book featuring the story of a Chinese entrepreneur made its debut at BookExpo America on May 29 as the annual gala of the publishing industry kicked off in New York City.

The English-language book, *Work Is Life — How to Perform to the Best of Your Ability*, tells how Che Jianxin, also the author of the book, fought his way from a village carpenter to the chairman and CEO of the Red Star Macalline Group, a leading furniture retail chain in China.

The launch of the book also marked the inauguration of the global promotion of the Chinese Entrepreneurs Series books, co-published by the China National Publications Import and Export Corporation and the New York-based Pace University Press.

"We hope Che's work will be an inspiration to people from all walks of life," said Manuela Soares, the director of the Pace University Press, at the launch ceremony.

"His philosophy that people striving to be successful in business can use this opportunity not just for material wealth, but an opportunity to cultivate oneself and to progress spiritually, is a message much need-

ed in today's world." Huang Ping, the Chinese consul general in New York, lauded Chinese entrepreneurs as trailblazers and pioneers in China's economic and trade cooperation with the rest of the world.

"The 40-year journey of Chinese entrepreneurs is a window on our hardworking people, on our reform and opening-up, and on the stories of these visionaries who have grown to find their place in the global economy and made their own contribution to globalization," says Huang.

The diplomat also adds that the book series will help American readers better understand what has been going on in China during the past four decades, calling for more communication and cooperation between China and the United States.

BookExpo America, one of the largest book events in North America, ran from May 29 to 31 at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, and attracted some 500 exhibitors from both the US and internationally, according to organizers.

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International Education Column

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