

# VOLUNTEERING AT THE CHINA CARE HOME - ANYA KELLY - DAY 2



July 14, 2011

In the weeks before I came to China, a pit began to form in my stomach. Not only was I dreading leaving my family and my home to travel halfway across the world, but the very thought of seeing children with serious medical problems worried me to no end. Dubbed “squeamish” at home, I was more than apprehensive about working in a center that had children with such serious medical problems.

However, while I’ve been here, not only have I not missed home - or even noticed that I’m away from it - but I’ve also been able to see and handle more than I ever thought myself capable of. This growing experience is all thanks to the amazing children, nannies, and staff that make up the China Care Home.

While here in China, I have grown particularly close to a beautiful little girl named Qing. She was brought to the China Care Home because of a cleft lip and palate, which has now been fixed and is barely noticeable. I had just washed my hands and put on my slippers in preparation for my first day of work when I saw her walking down the hallway with the rest of her preschool class. At 2-and-a half years old, she is undoubtedly the smallest child in her class; although her body is completely proportional, she is almost as tiny as the 1-year-old children. She has the same bob haircut as my sister Mya, who is adopted from China, a style that on Mya only worked when we put it in a “fountain,” or a pony-tail placed at the very top of her head that would make her hair stick straight up. Like my sister, Qing’s “fountain” was adorned with an adorable pink bow with white polka dots. What ultimately attached me to Qing (more so than even her physical similarity with my sister!) was that when I opened my arms for a hug she ran full force, with all the strength her little body could muster, into my arms. From that point on I was hooked.



Before I came to China, I thought that the language would not be just a barrier - it would, in fact, be a wall-- other than the occasional “ni hao,” everything else about the Chinese language eludes me. Despite this, Qing and I are able to communicate through one universal word “Mama,” which we both call each other. She loves being held up on the enclosed balcony so she can look out the window. Spending time with her, and all the other children and nannies, is more than I could ever ask for. Although this trip is considered volunteer “work,” it has never once felt like that. Being with the children is so effortless and natural that it should be



changed to volunteer “fun.”

Even though widespread medical ailments bring these children to the China Care Home, one common factor among them holds true: their immense ability to love and be loved.

Anya started a China Care Club at Quakertown High School in Pennsylvania last year and has a little sister adopted from China.