

A PLACE OF LOVE, HAPPINESS AND HOPE

August 14, 2009

Megan Gao has been volunteering at our China Care Home in Beijing for the last two weeks. She embarked on her journey there to learn more about the needs of our children. She is about to enter her senior year at Canada's McMaster University, where she started that school's China Care club and will be the president. In her first few days in Beijing, Megan learned a lot from both the children and their caregivers. She shares more in these initial impressions.



I often take for granted how I grew up with a loving family, not realizing that all around the world there are parentless children just waiting to be nurtured and loved. You could say that I was sheltered - hidden under a blanket of love which has prevented me from seeing the despair on the other side of the road.

And yet, as I walked out of the elevator and entered each room, I still could not see the despair. What I saw were the faces of normal children, living a normal childhood. It was difficult to realize that they were once abandoned. Here, there is love and happiness and hope.

Having worked with at risk children, who face neglect from parents and estrangement from their peers, it was not a challenge to adjust to the children here. However, these children have life threatening disorders. Most of them have undergone rigorous surgery, while others are still waiting to. I should feel sorrow, but I do not. When a smile stretches from cheek to cheek, it eradicates all those negative feelings. These are normal children. They are no different than any other. My initial heart-ache disappeared almost immediately. They just want company.

It was an exhausting first day. I can't imagine how the mothers were able to take on so many kids at once, but they manage to do it and I am glad I'm of assistance. I can tell that by the end of the 10 days, my attachment to these children will intensify. To feel that I have made a ripple in the pond, no matter how small, is the most incredible feeling.

All the children stand out to me, even if the names don't. But I will work towards learning the names and personalities of the children. The range of personalities is astounding. I even found a baby who has a temperament curiously and frighteningly similar to mine. I guess that's why I tend to gravitate towards her. The children in the first room I visited are older and their ability to speak enhances interaction. One girl cried the first day I picked her up during introduction, but now she wobbles over to me when I call her name and gives me her toys.

I will set forth to explore more rooms and more children. You can never learn enough from them.