

Sharing with you another great thing our Foundation has done to serve adoption families this summer.

With less than 2 weeks before our departure in mid-June, the 2009 POPs Foundation China Cultural Trip for adoption families was abruptly cancelled by our Chinese government partner due to concerns regarding Influenza A (H1N1). However, POP's Foundation understood that many of the families who planned to attend had invested significant finances, time, and emotional effort into the planning and reservations for the trip, and much of the investment could not be recovered. Thankfully, POP's Foundation was able to connect the families with Ritz Tours to provide a way for the families to travel to China in the same time frame if they chose to do so. Ritz Tours was able to produce a similar itinerary, and the increased cost was defrayed by scholarships and donations given for that purpose to POP's Foundation.

The original group was to be 70 people, but after the cancellation we still had more than 20 families (55 people) from all over the US attend the trip with Ritz Tours from June 19-29th. Mr. Kenneth Yeung, POPF's founder, and his family were able to support us as they attended the opening dinner in Beijing. Though the trip was cancelled by the government of China, we were honored to have the presence of Mr. Wang Laizhu, Director-General of Legislative Affairs Office and the Deputy Director-General of the General Office under the Ministry of Civil Affairs of People's Republic of China, at our opening buffet dinner as well. Mr. Wang Laizhu welcomed us to China, with words of encouragement for the trip attendees.

The families were unable to participate in the cultural exchanges that were to have taken place during the invitational trip, but this time was used for more sight-seeing on the Ritz Tour. The tour included several days in the Beijing area visiting well known landmarks such as the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, and the Olympic venues. The remainder of the tour took place in Yunnan Province with visits to the Bai and Naxi minority ethnic peoples. All who attended the Ritz tour came away with a greater understanding of China, her people, and her culture.

Although we were unable to visit the POP's Children's home in Tianjin, those who had desired to volunteer were connected with Living Tree Foster Home, where they were able to serve children with special needs after the tour.

Volunteers from POP's Foundation traveled with the group, providing a connection between the tour and the Foundation. Volunteer Dorothy Liu willingly went with several tour members who had to be quarantined. No one from the Ritz tour group became ill, but contact with suspected Influenza A (H1N1) on a flight prompted the 4 day quarantine for several members. POP's Foundation would like to thank Dorothy Liu for volunteering herself to accompany these tour members during quarantine, bringing peace of mind to everyone involved.

Many thanks to Kirk and Wonda Qi who were invaluable in serving the quarantined group members, especially after their release in Beijing before they were able to rejoin the group in Kunming. The 'Q' group got a very special and personalized tour with Dorothy, Kirk and Wonda as guides, including the Great Wall, Ming Tombs, and Sacred Way.

POP's Foundation would also like to thank volunteer Carol Wang, who coordinated transportation for early arrivals to Beijing, and her many friends. Carol's father, the aforementioned Mr. Wang Laizhu, welcomed us to China and also helped Carol in her tasks. Carol's friendly smile was a welcome sight for early arrivals, especially for those whose flights did not arrive until late at night!

Katherine Pendleton returned to China on this trip as a volunteer after attending the 2006 POP's Cultural trip as an adopted child. Born in Yunnan, Katherine's knowledge of the local area, language ability, and connection with the adopted girls, served the group in special ways.

We also want to give special thanks to Mariah Sandborn's volunteer support in all phases of work from the Prince of Peace China Cultural Trip to the Ritz Tours China Trip, from behind the scenes work to leading the group. This trip has widened her Cross-Cultural experience, which is Mariah's major in college. She has earned an A+ in surprise crisis management!

It is our hope that the children who attended this tour came away with a better understanding of the country of their birth, recognizing the special position they hold as children of both China and of the US. Friendships were both begun and strengthened between the families who traveled and toured together, and many hope to return again soon! Below are some of their comments:

"...I just wanted to thank you (and everyone involved with POPs and all the volunteers) again. We had a wonderful trip and so many good memories. I am telling everyone in Missouri about POPs and the tour we took. I am hoping in a few years when my younger daughter Anna is old enough, I can get several families from her adoption group to take the POPs tour with us!..."
Teri Toler

"...We had our ups and downs and quarantines, but in the end, I think we and especially our girls got a better sense of connection to the country of their ancestry, pride in where they came from, and maybe an inkling to help build better relations when the time comes..." ~ Mark Chow

"...Addie has come home knowing a little Mandarin, appreciating what she has in the US and loving the people she met on the trip as well as the people from the country of her birth..." ~ Katherine Hamilton

"...We had such an awesome time and made lifelong friendships!..." Jan West

"...The girls had a wonderful time, which was the main reason for going. I am very glad that we were able to visit Dali and Lijiang, two very different parts of China. Our time in Chengdu was very nice also..." ~ Kevin Swanson

"...My girls came home wanting to learn Mandarin. They want to go back to China and serve next summer..." ~ Peggy Hurst

"...Thank you all so much for giving us the opportunity to participate in this tour it was great. We met a lot of really neat people and it's hard to think we will probably never see them again.

I hope all is well with you and everyone. I would love to be able to go back and help out on a tour. At first I didn't think the girls really paid to much attention but in the end they learned and observed way more than I thought..." ~ Kim McNaughton

"...Traveling to a foreign country can sometimes be intimidating, but from our wonderful welcome dinner to the beautiful sights, everyone from POP helped us with patience, understanding, and so much concern for all of us travelers...Even when we ran into a few unforeseen problems (swine flu), POP kept us and our welfare as the first priority..." ~ Bernadette Ho and Keira Atkins

If you share our vision and desire to help, we welcome your support. This ministry is totally funded by the gifts of our donors and sponsors who believe in this ministry. All gifts are tax deductible.

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