

STORY: THE SSP 2011 OF MFZU

By Aobo Zhou

On May 3rd, after 5 hours on board, covering 220 kilometers, an aid-teaching team with 9 students of ZU arrived in Baiji, a small valley surrounded by mountains in Xiuning, Sichuan Province. They were here to carry out their Social Service Project (SSP) in the name of Melton Foundation.

Luo Xiao, junior fellow of MFZU, also the team leader, was the first one to meet Mr. Fang, the former head teacher of Centre Primary school of Baiji. He was right out the vehicle door and had been waiting at the side of the road for a long time.

After a short conversation, all team members started their work immediately. It took a while for team members to get all luggage off the vehicle and settle down in a home hostel near the school. Early the next day, they would begin the four-day aid teaching, and meet the children who started waiting for them days ago, so no one dear to rest, especially the four new trainees, Aobo Zhou, Chenlin Wang, Jialing Liu and Qin Xing, who were the first time to participated in the SSP of MF. This year's team of SSP was a little different with before. Members of AIESEC ZU and even two good friends of trainees and fellows took part, by the advice and effort of the trainees. They are Di Gao, Runsu Deng, Yanchen Liu and Zhen Zeng.

The following days, to those young teachers, were amazing. Well-designed classes were performed. Aobo's speech class encouraged those little students speak out their interests and dreams in front of classmates freely. Xiao Luo's design class made all the kids excited and created a lot of interesting "masterpiece". Xing's stories about math, Chenlin's knowledge of geography and Jialing's teaching of handiwork attracted all the kids, for most of them have never got the chance to study these.

To be honest, being teachers in a primary school is not easy, especially in such a school, which seemed isolated to the world outside the mountains. The school had only three classrooms for students from 6 grades to share. Walking into a classroom, the only electron sets were the lights. There was no Internet access, no TV sets, and the blackboard was painted on the wall. The reading material is not enough, conflicts for books occurred between younger kids often. Thus, every morning the team members went into the school gate, the children would soon surround them, asking for books or new knowledge. It usually took long time to make the excited children calm down at the beginning of class, even in the last day of the aid-teaching project.

During these days, Children learnt and enjoyed a lot, but our young teachers learnt even more, for they feel the sorrow and desire deep in the children's hearts. They lack love from parents as well as books and fresh information.

Xing says: "This experience taught me a lot. I began to realize that the existing of latchkey children is a very big problem in some remote area in China. Adults aging from 20 to 50 leave home and go to cities for labor work to bring more income to family. Most children live without their parents, so grandparents instead. When I step into children's dark and messy home with my teammates, we feel it's empty. I think it is not so good for the children's mental health, nor it is good for the children's relationship with their parents. What we can do to make changes? Children here own little but are still struggling for their future without complaints. Though we are not able to change the facts in a short period, we should start to be more thankful in our own life."

Chenlin agreed, " We want to show them the world they have been isolated from and the dream their innermost would like to live up to. Through during the courses of geography, dream, speech and so on, we actually achieve our goals partly. We are very happy to see our effects paid off, but one thing confused us a lot, that in most time they are shy to express themselves and prefer to stay in the world of their own. It's during a visit to the kids' home that we found the reason, the lack of love of their parents. The kids could only see their parents in Spring Festivals and probably once two years since the travel fee is literally a big fortune for the family. They longs for care and love. That is the main problem."

Information of children was collected and formed a database. The aid-teaching team hoped the project could last even after the four days came to an end, by finding mentors among students in ZU to trace the growing of these children. Right after the team left, all the children got a letter from their young teachers. They saw the sincere and inspiring words and cried, but they would never see the members of team discussing and writing letters till late, just to make each letter unique and instructional. But it's sure that they feel the heart, for some members continually receives phone calls from the children there, even a few months have past since that time.