



# Hunan Foster Care Program

## Families Thru International Adoption

*November 2005*

### National Adoption Month

November was designated as National Adoption Month in 1990 and is a time to raise adoption awareness as well as a time to celebrate adoption.

Here is a brief history of National Adoption Month from Adoption.com (<http://national-adoption-month.adoption.com/>):

*The first major effort to promote awareness of the need for adoptive families for children in the foster care system occurred in Massachusetts. In 1976, then-Governor Mike Dukakis proclaimed Adoption Week and the idea grew in popularity and spread throughout the nation. President Gerald Ford made the first National Adoption Week proclamation, and in 1990, the week was expanded to a month due to the number of states participating and the number of events.*

*During the month, states, communities, public and private organizations, businesses, families, and individuals celebrate adoption as a positive way to build families. Across the nation, activities and observances such as recognition dinners, public awareness and recruitment campaigns, and special events spotlight the needs of children who need permanent families. It also includes National Adoption Day, traditionally a Saturday, which is observed in courthouses across the nation as hundreds of adoptions are finalized simultaneously.*

### By Nikki Bilderback

National Adoption month may have many people asking. "How can I help a child in need?" There are many ways to do this, and you can definitely help out by donating to the FTIA Hunan Foster Care Program! The last page of each of our Hunan Foster Care newsletters is a donation form. Please feel free to copy this page and pass it along to friends and family -- to anyone willing to help out.

On our website ([www.ftia.org](http://www.ftia.org)) we have included some ideas on raising awareness as well as ways to celebrate during November under our "Hot News" section. Here are some additional resources for information on National Adoption Month:

Adoption.com <http://national-adoption-month.adoption.com/>

National Adoption Information Clearinghouse <http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/general/adoptmonth/index.cfm>

North American Council on Adoptable Children [http://www.nacac.org/resources\\_adoptionmonth.html](http://www.nacac.org/resources_adoptionmonth.html)

National Adoption Month <http://www.nationaladoptionmonth.com/>

National Adoption Day <http://www.nationaladoptionday.org/2005/index.asp>

Presidential Proclamation <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051102-9.html>





## *From Hunan to Home*

Because it is National Adoption Month we sent out a special email (or letter for those we do not have email addresses for) asking for stories and pictures. The response was great! We have included as many stories and pictures in this newsletter as possible. If you do not see yours, it will be included in an upcoming issue! Thank you everyone.

### *Ella (Zhang Nan Nan)*

Ella turned three this summer and continues to delight and amaze us. We first held her when she was just about 9 months old in March 2003. She was a good sleeper and a good eater right from the start. Though we had some rough nights when we first came home, we became bonded as a family very quickly. She was comfortable with being held, never rejected eye contact and was confident enough to play on her own and explore. I feel her time in foster care gave her a secure, loving start in life. The care she received from her foster mother will benefit her through her whole life. When we ask her who looked after her in China, she will answer that the *ayis* (nannies in the orphanage) and 'foster mom' took care of her. Ella started preschool this fall and loves it. She is very social, though she is shy at first. We take Chinese class together once week with three other adoptive families. My husband speaks Mandarin fluently (he is half-Chinese and was born in Taiwan) and Ella is picking it up so quickly. I just try to keep up. Ella is becoming more and more opinionated, but in general is a very easy-going child. She loves painting, playing with her friends and watching Mulan and Lilo & Stitch.

Ella is adored by her uncle and grandparents and other extended family members.

Thanks again for all you do!

Cristy, David and Ella Nan Nan G.



*Then*

*Now*



*Ella going back to school 2005*



*Emily (Zhang Yan Yao)*

We adopted our daughter Emily Yan Yao in February 17th of 2003. We were told she was at the Changsha SWI #1 She was born May 10, 2002. We were DTC Nov. 8th and received our referral on December 31st, 2002. Because of Chinese New Year we did not travel until February 14th. We worked with Children's House International.

We met two wonderful families who also worked with CHI who travelled with us and we still keep in contact with them, in fact we have reunions every year around the gotcha day. They live 1/2 hour apart in South Carolina and their two girls were crib mates. So it made perfect sense that these two girls should be placed with these families. Leslie and Randy adopted Gracie, and VJ and Dave adopted Jada. Our girls will be friends for life... there is such a strong bond. It was one of these friends, Leslie, who happened to see a posting on one of the web groups about FTIA foster care. She emailed us and VJ and suggested we check and see if our kids were in foster care... We wrote to FTIA and low and behold Emily had been in foster care, though the other two girls had not. We were so fortunate to then receive photos of Emily's first 9 months — what a precious gift. In hindsight it made sense that she had been in foster care because when we visited the orphanage none of the Nanny's expressed a real interest in Emily.

What is more ironic is that we live in a very small community, Grandview a suburb of Columbus Ohio and we have become very good friends with a single mom who also adopted from Changsha through a different agency. She went over about a month after us. She also found out later that her daughter Leila was also in foster care through FTIA, and her and Emily are now best friends and go to preschool together. Quite a red thread!

I can not have imagined a more perfect match for us... we are both architects. Emily loves to draw and has a real talent for art. She brings joy to our lives every day and is a happy outgoing child. It was such a great experience that we went back last year and adopted a second daughter Anna. Anna grew up in an orphanage and for the first time we really appreciate what wonderful care Emily had in foster care. We got Anna at 13 months and she weighed less than Emily did at 9 months. She was delayed physically and did not crawl till she was almost 18 months old. Anna has caught up now one year later, but it really made us appreciate the care Emily received.

Julie B.



*Emily in 2003*



*Emily in 2005*



*With Friends 2005*



### Vanessa (He Li Hui)

I don't know where to begin to thank the whole Hunan Foster Care Program or any foster care program.



*Foster care picture*

Our daughter Vanessa Yvonne Ke was institutionalized only for the first 5 months of her life. After that, she was involved in your Foster Care Program for a short 6 months and what a difference. Our Vanessa's development as compared to the other children with our travel group was so noticeable. Let me explain. Our adoption file was expedited so we were added to this trip as a last minute act. The ten other adopted babies were from the same orphanage in rural Hunan while our lone Vanessa was from Changsha. Our Vanessa benefited tremendously from what we assume to be the intimate care that she received. Her emotional and developmental milestones were all on track. Imagine to our surprise as we were expecting this tiny little China doll of a baby girl and then on Gotcha day, our tiny Vanessa weighed in at a whopping 26.5 pounds! The international medical doctor revealed that not only was she not behind developmentally, she was in fact well ahead of most adopted girls that he had EVER met. In fact, to paraphrase the doctor, he said, **“of all the children I have completed medicals for international adoptions, I can count on one hand the number of times I have seen this. She is right on track developmentally both physically and emotionally. She has not missed a beat! This is highly unusual!”** She was healthy, happy, very well adjusted.



*October 2005*

Because she was already used to being in a family setting, integration into our family was made that much easier. Often with adopted children, one is always concerned about attachment issues. We can only conclude that since Vanessa had already attached to her foster mother, it made her transition to connecting with us that much easier. Her social skills of attachment, caring, eye contact, emotion, intimacy and response to stimulation were most noticeable in contrast with the other children in our travel group. An example of this was when we went to see the Chinese Acrobatic show, the other children simply sat there with their families while Vanessa stood almost the whole time (45 minutes) on our laps; swayed to the music; clapped to the beat; laughed and generally had a great time!



*A happy family!*

We also would like to mention that after only a short eight months at home, our little Vanessa as well as the other adopted girls from our travel group are all progressing very well. They all seem to fitting into each of their new families with varying degrees of delayed development.

Yours truly,

Paul, Laura, Spencer, Justin, and Vanessa



*Sarah (He Yong Mei)*

Sarah's mother, Sandra, sent these photos and wrote that Sarah can now count to 20 in English, Mandarin and also French. She is a bright girl whose favourite activity is dancing. It is now over a year since she was adopted and the difference is amazing in her. She is great fun to be with.



*Enjoying a fall day*



*A day at the beach*



*Sarah and Mom*

*A "Spicy" Girl!  
Sydney (He Jia Jia)*

When Sydney gets tired or hungry or just plain mad she will pick on her bigger sister.

Suzanne (jie jie) is almost four and a half, and Sydney will pick fights with her all the time. Suzanne just sits there and takes it. It is kind of funny to watch and sometimes we will try to let them work it out on their own. As you can guess, sometimes that works and other times it just doesn't.



*11 months old*

Jeff and Elizabeth S.



*Sisters*



*All dressed up*



*Journey to Payton (He Yu Mei)*

We were very excited to receive the referral for our second daughter from China, Payton Li (formally He Yu Mei) in July. Before we got our referral I had a dream that she would be from Hunan Province and she would be in foster care. I was truly shocked when our coordinator, Kate, called us and told us just those things! We had such a great experience adopting our first daughter, Savannah Mei, that we were immediately talking about coming back to China to adopt her sister. Savannah had been in a foster care system in Hubei Province and at that time I realized the importance of foster care for children. I was thrilled to find out that Payton was not only in foster care but in a foster care system sponsored by our adoption agency FTIA.

In the weeks before our journey to Payton, we received updated pictures and information about Payton's general health and development which were very helpful in our preparation for our trip. It also helped Savannah attempt to connect to her sister who was so far away. She could now point to pictures and tell people that was baby Payton. The more information we received the more anxious we were to travel!

Gotcha Day was much different with Payton than it was with Savannah, as it is with most other families' adoption experiences. Savannah bonded with us immediately. Payton bonded with my husband Gary quickly and bonding came a little slower when it came to me, but after a couple of days we were all doing fine. Payton was so sweet and loving and had a smile that could just melt your heart. She was very alert and even though she was very small, she was very strong and at 9 months was able to pull her self up and stand. We knew that the extra attention and love she received while being in foster care was beneficial to her development. We were very excited to bring her home.

We have been home with Payton since the end of September and she is just doing great. She eats well, she smiles often and she sleeps through the night. It took a little adjusting for Savannah to get used to her little sister, but now they are so sweet together. We are so blessed to have 2 daughters with similar life experiences and the benefit of foster care to give them the jump start in life that all children should have.

Gary and Elizabeth F.



*Payton on Gotcha Day*



*Halloween sisters*



## *Where is my Little PingPing? Makana (Zhang Ping Ping)*

As I peer at her beautiful little face, nestled and snuggled next to me, I can't believe she is 3. Where did the time go? I always ask her "where is my little Ping Ping, where did she go?" Ping is quick to respond "she is in here Mommy" as she points to her stomach. I just stare at her and think, my precious little Ping has grown and developed into a beautiful, smart, compassionate little girl.

Our story began on March 18, 2003, when Ping was 9 months old. Ping didn't cry when the caretakers brought her to my hotel room but I was braced for the worse case scenario. Would she accept me, would she miss a particular care taker, how would she adjust under the circumstances?

All these questions were answered very quickly. Ping responded very positively as she was placed in my arms and within a matter of minutes I was "mama." Only then, when I wasn't in her sight did she cry and get upset. I knew then, some how she knew we were meant to be together.

It was upon our return home that I discovered she had some physical delays and stranger anxiety. Through early intervention and limited contact with non-family members she has conquered both issues. Ping now attends Tae Kwon Do, to continue her with physical exercise and is very social, outgoing and loves people. People love her too, no matter where we go, someone has to stop and tell her how beautiful and friendly she is. She has a way of making everyone smile.

This past February I had another remarkable day come to pass as a part of my adoption story. FTIA had pictures of Ping Ping in foster care. Ping was indeed a part of the wonderful Hunan Foster Care Program that FTIA sponsors. I was so excited I contacted Nikki, sent her my Fedex account number to overnight the package to me. Nikki was so gracious in accommodating me with the request to have my package overnighed. I can not put into words what having those pictures means to me and for Ping's adoption story.

October 21st, marked another joyous event in my adoption story, OUR Re-adoption Day!

Thank you FTIA for your foster care program and for my Ping Ping having been apart of the program.

Julie R.



*Ping Ping - foster care photo*



*Halloween 2005*



*Readoption Day*



## *Unexpected Moments Natalie (He Xiao Li)*



*Foster Care*

We adopted our daughter Natalie XiaoLi on February 23, 2004. When she was placed in my arms there was a sense of peace that came over me like I have never experienced before. It was then and there that I realized that our family was complete. She was the missing piece. Natalie is the youngest of the three of our children. We have journeyed down the international adoption path twice before her. I thought that we were seasoned pros. I knew that I have seen many ups and many downs along the way. I was prepared for the unexpected. Little did I know that our first year with Natalie would be full of many more unexpected moments than we ever could have imagined.

A few months after we arrived home with Natalie XiaoLi I was reading through some messages on the Changsha First SWI message board. I saw a post explaining that if your child was adopted from Changsha First SWI to contact FTIA to find out if your child was in foster care. At first I thought that there was no way she could have been in foster care, but there were many hints over the past few months that suggested to us that there was something more to her than we thought. I decided to go ahead and contact FTIA. A short time later I got a reply that said she was in their program. It was a moment I will never forget. When I read that they had monthly photos of Natalie I started to cry. I never thought that I would ever get the chance to see what my child looked like as a baby. It was a dream come true. A few days later the photos arrived in the mail. I quickly walked inside and sat down at the kitchen table. I remember taking a deep breath and then opening the envelope. My hands were shaking. It was as if I was receiving her referral all over again. I was holding something absolutely priceless. There are many “things” that we can give our children, but these photos represent something I did not think was ever possible to give her, a piece of her past.

Over the following weeks, I thought a lot about the relationship Natalie XiaoLi and her foster mother had. I knew it had to be very special. I could tell from the photos that she was very happy and well loved. I wanted to find a way to honor that relationship that they shared, so I decided to write a children’s book about it. At first it was just to be a gift to my daughter, but when friends began to read it, they encouraged me to share it with the world. After careful thought and consideration, I knew that there must be many more children that shared a similar story with XiaoLi. This was the start of another unexpected journey.

A few months after the story was completed and sent on to the illustrator, I ran across a photo of a little girl on the Changsha First photo group. I remember my jaw dropping and saying,

“NO WAY!” I could not believe how much this little girl looked like my daughter. I decided to contact her family. I did not know where this discovery was going to head, but if I did not at least make contact with her family, I could someday regret it. Over the next few months, PingPing’s mother and I exchanged many photos, video and phone conversations.



*Winter 2004*



## *Unexpected Moments Continued...*

The girls talked on the phone and were able to communicate through the web cams we set up for them. Their interactions were amazing. They truly enjoyed their “chat” times. We knew if our hunches were correct, this was going to impact them for the rest of their lives. We did not take this decision lightly. We researched DNA testing and decided to move forward with this route. On April 1, 2005 XiaoLi and PingPing’s red thread became a little less tangled. We discovered that our daughters are birth sisters. A couple months later PingPing and her mother boarded a plane for the West coast for our first visit. They had a wonderful time together. It was amazing to see them interact. At times, we found ourselves comparing their feet, fingers, toes, ears, etc. I remember sitting in the living room watching them play together and thinking, I never would have guessed a year ago that I would be in my living room watching my daughter play with her birth sister. This is once again, one of those unexpected moments that you can never prepare yourself for.

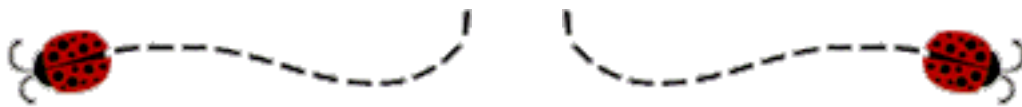
Through Natalie’s adoption, I have realized that everyday is an unexpected day and I am so thankful for everything she has taught me and everything I have yet to learn from her. I look forward to our journey through the “unexpected moments”.



*Makana and Natalie*

## *A Quilt of Wishes*

Natalie’s mother, Teresa Werner has written a beautiful tale about adoption. Her book is called *A Quilt of Wishes*. A portion of the proceeds from her book sales will benefit the FTIA Hunan Foster Program. You can learn more about the book and order it from the website [www.aquiltowishes.com](http://www.aquiltowishes.com). I want to thank Teresa for such a wonderful story and helping out the foster program!



In each issue of the Hunan Foster Care Program newsletter we would like to share stories and pictures of children who have been adopted and were in our program. If you have adopted a child who was fostered in our program, please feel free to send us stories about your adoption experience or about how your child is doing now that they are home. We will try to feature 2-3 stories and pictures in each newsletter. The *From Hunan to Home* section is really a sharing place for families!



## *Continuing Needs*

2005 is drawing to a close. So far this year we have received \$7,297.15 in donations for the Hunan Foster Care Program. In 2004, our foster care program fostered 50-60 children at any one time and the total costs of the program were \$33,449.18. Costs will be about the same for 2005, however, we have committed to expand the program to serve 100 children at a time and are in the process of selecting and training new foster parents.

FTIA does cover all administrative costs for the program, so all donations we receive are benefiting the children in the program. FTIA will continue to cover any costs that are not covered by donations, however, to really make the program work and to meet our expansion goals, we will need greater support.

From July to September there were 72 babies in the program. Over the course of the four years the program has been in existence, 325 babies have been adopted; 7 adopted domestically within China, 94 to countries other than the United States, and 224 adopted to the United States. There have been 153 foster families involved in the program.

Please consider the Hunan Foster Care program when deciding on a cause to give to. Please remember that monies donated to the Hunan Foster Care Program are completely separate from other adoption related expenses. Also note that 100% of all monies donated to foster care go directly to the care of the children as FTIA covers all administrative costs for the program.

## *Contact Information*

FTIA has been keeping track of the contact information for all families who adopted a child through our Foster Care Program. If you have moved since you requested the photos of your child, or if you've added an email address or changed your email, please let me know and I will update your file. Once in awhile I will get in contact with families to ask for stories or photos, or just to let you know the new newsletter is up. I would like to keep in contact with as many of you as possible. Please send me an email to let me know of changes, or if you just want to check that the information we have is current, you can email me too. My email address is [nbilderback@ftia.org](mailto:nbilderback@ftia.org). Thank you!



# Hunan Foster Care Program

## Families Thru International Adoption

### Contact Information



If you would like more information on the Hunan Foster Care Program, or would like to check to see if your child was fostered through the program, please contact Nikki Bilderback by calling 888-797-9900 or emailing [nbilderback@ftia.org](mailto:nbilderback@ftia.org).

Families Thru International Adoption is located at:  
400 Bentees West Court  
Evansville, IN 47715



[www.ftia.org](http://www.ftia.org)

If you would like to contribute to help give a child a better start in life you may do so by completing the form below and mailing in a check or money order to the address above. It does not take much to help out. A donation of \$50 will provide food, clothing, and other necessities for a child for one month. A donation of \$350 can provide food for a child for an entire year! We appreciate your support!

*Donation*

### *FTIA Hunan Foster Care Program*

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: (     )

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ PLEASE CHECK ONE:

ONE TIME GIFT

MONTHLY GIFT