



# Newsletter

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## Editorial

### A call for help in the year of the ox

The year of the rat has been rather challenging for the Morning Tears children, and the forecasts for the year of the ox show that the months ahead will not be any less intense.

In 2008 we did overcome many obstacles. The start of the 'Coming Home' program in Henan (China) and our involvement in relief for children of imprisoned parents in the Sichuan earthquake zone have put Morning Tears as an organization under substantial financial stress. Thanks to the Dutch community in Shanghai, associations of adoptive parents in Spain, the Benelux Chamber of Commerce and the Belgian province of Antwerp, we can proceed with rebuilding the worlds of more than triple the number of children compared to previous years. In the run up to the Olympic Games we received considerable media attention. Media attention can be tricky. Yes, it provokes financial contributions and creates awareness about the pain that children of imprisoned parents suffer; but on the other hand media can endanger the projects, and consequently the well being of the children. No government likes negative coverage on sensitive issues and there is no denying that anything to do with imprisonment is still a sensitive issue in China. As a result, the handling of security for the children and for Morning Tears as an organization was particularly hard in the year of the rat. Moreover, the children did get emotionally hurt by the ban on visiting parents in prison during the Olympic year.

In the year of the rat we planted trees and their fruits will be ripe in the spring of the ox

year. This year, children will move into the Coming Home Program; Morning Tears will expand the numbers for prevention and treatment of sexually and physically abused children; and training materials for helping traumatized children will be compiled for use by the national government.

Internationally, Morning Tears will complete its registration in Denmark. In Spain we will be able to provide tax deduction certificates for donations. We will finalize the registration of Morning Tears UK and Morning Tears US. Projects for children whose parents are in prison will be launched and expanded in Belgium, Ecuador, Bolivia and Ukraine. Financially, we received a large grant from the Belgian Government in part for activities like the Coming Home Program. If we can combine this with donations from companies and people, then our impact on the lives of many children will be enormous. But the global economic crisis causes us to have many restless nights. There will be a worldwide slowdown in charity actions from companies. It is in this context that we hereby launch a call to all the friends of Morning Tears: we need people, clubs, associations and schools to organize fundraising activities to compensate for decreased corporate donations. So far, results have been achieved with sponsored walks, parties, auctions and X-mas markets. All actions are welcome, and our team will be happy to support you with publicity materials and ideas. Please contact: [events@morningtears.org](mailto:events@morningtears.org).

Koen Sevenants,  
on behalf of the children and Morning Tears  
[koen.sevenants@morningtears.org](mailto:koen.sevenants@morningtears.org)

Visit our booth!



## Happy 'Niu' Year

In the Chinese Zodiac this year is the year of ox and we've already said goodbye to the year of the rat.

Since 'niu' (the Chinese word for 'cow' or 'ox') has the same pronunciation as 'new', people have been wishing each other 'Happy Niu Year'!

'Niu' is a pun; it does not only refer to 'cow' or 'ox' but it also means 'good' and 'strong ability'.

'Niu' is the second animal of the twelve animals in the Chinese Zodiac and comes right after the rat. The rat comes first as he supposedly won the race between all the other animals, not because he was the fastest, but simply because the ox took sympathy to the rat and allowed the rat to ride on his back. As slow as the rat was, he made up for it with his cunning personality. Just before the finish line, he jumped off the ox's back and crossed the line first. And so it was that the ox got second place.

The word 'niu' often comes up in people's conversations. It can be used to describe a person who is good at doing things. It is used to describe a climbing stock market but it does not only have positive connotations: 'chui niu' means 'boasting', and 'niu piqi' means 'bad temper'.

Still, the 'niu' or ox stands for positive personality traits and is the symbol of diligence, dedication, and perseverance. And it is this spirit that Morning Tears possesses as well. So many people love with selfless dedication; countless volunteers work in support of the team and with the children in mind. And this is how we make progress day after day.

Let us join hands this year so that the ox may plough the land and make this year a fertile one!



## The New Danish Intern at Morning Tears

My name is Nina Ingvarsten. I'm Danish and currently living in Shanghai. I was hired as an intern for Morning Tears in December 2008 for six months. I studied Chinese for three years at the Copenhagen University in Denmark and I lived and studied in Beijing. When I heard about Morning Tears I was instantly fascinated and interested, and I'm very much looking forward to working for the organization until the summer of 2009.

The main purpose of my employment at Morning Tears is to help the organization get registered as a charity organization in Denmark. Furthermore I will be translating different materials into Danish; getting a Danish webpage up and running; and taking care of whatever matters that will occur connected to Morning Tears Denmark and Shanghai.

Morning Tears is still a rather small organization. However, when we get registered in Denmark, we will be on our way to getting bigger. The experience I gain from helping Morning Tears getting registered in Denmark will be useful when Morning Tears registers in other European countries – at least that is something I hope for.

For the time being I'm still just at the beginning, so if anyone out there has any experience on the matter or has good ideas that can help me on my way, then don't hesitate to write to me at [nina.ingvarsten@morningtears.org.cn](mailto:nina.ingvarsten@morningtears.org.cn).

## Morning Tears' Strategy

In the previous newsletter we explained that Morning Tears uses research-based minimum standards for child care and protection. In our standards we differentiate seven quality areas, namely: planning for care; protective care; personal care; health, environment and safety, caregivers; management and administration.

Now we will discuss the third quality area: personnel care. For our personnel care we use 10 standards. In this newsletter we discuss the first tree of these standards.

### **Standard 1: Children are treated with dignity and respect at all times**

- *All caregivers should clearly demonstrate their belief in the intrinsic value of children regardless of circumstances, behavior and background. They recognize the uniqueness of individuals and their personal needs.*
- *Caregivers initiate and maintain communication with the children, and their communication conveys respect and promotes equity*

Why is this important?

- *Orphans and vulnerable children in difficult circumstances may often hold little or no value in their individuality or their intrinsic worth as people. Many will have suffered experiences which have actively worked against the development of self-worth*
- *Treating children with care and respect, regardless of their background, will go some way to improving the child's self-esteem. Self-esteem is widely accepted as a valuable protective factor against the adverse effects of negative experiences*

### **Standard 2: Children are supported to make informed choices**

- *Children are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run, taking into account acceptable risks and the child's age and abilities. No child, however, is assumed to be unable to communicate their views.*

Why is this important?

- *To develop as individuals, children need particular help to understand their options, to choose from them, and to know the implications of their choices*
- *Children will respond better to adults when they feel safe and trust that their wishes and feelings are being actively sought and acted upon*
- *Promoting choice among children helps them develop decision-making skills and resilience factors essential for moving to independent living*
- *When developed, managed and monitored appropriately, the promotion of choice contributes to the safeguards that protect children*

### **Standard 3: Children are supported to voice their opinions and views**

- *Caregivers ensure that mechanisms exist whereby children can speak out about how they feel, and such views are taking into consideration by caregivers.*
- *Caregivers value what children have to say and are prepared to listen to criticisms about the way they are being looked after or the way the helping programs provide service to them. Such views are written down or recorded in some way and the action taken in response to complaints or concerns is also recorded.*
- *Children are encouraged to form groups to share and debate their views and make informed decisions about actions. Particular attention and support for children to voice their opinions is given to those who are least able to do so, such as younger children or those with disabilities*
- *Systems exist that allow children to make complaints in confidentiality and complaints are acted upon without jeopardizing this confidentiality.*

Why is this important?

- *Allowing children a voice is an effective method of child protection*
- *Children can assist caregivers greatly in identifying both their needs and the ways to help meet them*
- *It is important for children to develop skills in self-advocacy if their are to become more independent and self-sufficient in the future*

## **About Basic Needs of Children (part 2)**

This article has been removed at the request of the author.

## There Is Love and There Is Hope



December 9, 2008 may have been an ordinary day for most of us, but for Liu Tao and Yan Bo, two hearing-impaired children from Xi'an in Shaanxi province, it was quite an unusual day.

On this day, Morning Tears accompanied Liu Tao and Yan Bo and their parents to "Hearing the future" of the International Audiology and Training Center (IATC). IATC audiologists conducted extensive hearing tests; provided one-on-one language rehabilitation training; and donated a pair of Sparx super power hearing aids to Liu Tao.

Mr. Koen Sevenants, General Director of Morning Tears, made the meticulous arrangements needed to set up this generous offer. Koen said 'we need to do

everything in our power to help children like Liu Tao and Yan Bo. Just to see the smile on their faces when they could finally hear their parents' voices and communicate more effectively was priceless'.

Simple hearing aid gives people a voice. A voice carries love; and where there is love...there is hope, always!



## Feedback

This is the first issue of the fourth volume of our quarterly newsletter. Your feedback will help us to improve. Also, we will be happy to include your contributions or announcements. We look forward to hearing from you. Please mail to: [info@morningtears.org](mailto:info@morningtears.org).

If you want to get our previous newsletters, visit our website at [www.morningtears.org](http://www.morningtears.org). You can download them from the site.

## Our Main Projects in China

Currently Morning Tears has two main projects in China: the set up of the new Ai Tong Yuan Centre in Zhengzhou (Henan Province) and the renovation of the San Yuan Children Village in Xi'an (Shaanxi Province). In 2008, Morning Tears made dramatic progress in the programs set up to improve the life of children of convicts and we will continue to do so in the New Year.

### Henan Project



In the past year, Morning Tears successfully signed an agreement with the Zhengzhou Protection Centre, which indicated that the project to assist children of convicts in Henan formally commenced. After searching for a proper project site for almost half a year, Zhongmu County of Zhengzhou, with more than 6,600 square meters was chosen to be the best place for the children to grow up.

In August 2008 the construction of the two main buildings started. 'The Referral Centre' will be used for children to undergo health checks and for contemporary housing of newly arrived children while looking for more permanent housing solutions with family. 'The Family Building' will be used for long-term

housing of those children who no longer have any relatives that can support them. At the end of last year, the construction of these two building was completed as well as a basketball court.

The buildings are still undergoing final decoration, which is expected to be completed by the end of February 2009. This project has received much support from different sectors: China Floor donated the entire wooden floor; HCG China provided the sanitary facilities; Akzo Nobel/ Dulux provided us with paint; Trespa China made the wardrobes for the children.



The opening ceremony is planned on International Children's Day. At the appointed time, all guests are welcome to participate in and enjoy this celebration.

### Sanyuan Children Village Project

45 children of convicts currently live in the Sanyuan Children Village. Due to various reasons, they can no longer live with their families.

In the beginning of 2008 the living conditions in Sanyuan Children Village were dire. Doors didn't close properly, cold air entered through cracks in the windows, etc. The children had to wear thick layers of clothes and still were cold most of the time. Morning Tears decided to take action.



Morning Tears found that many companies were more than willing to help. Akzo Nobel/Dulux brought paint to Sanyuan; Trespa China provided wooden panels to attach onto the walls; other companies donated money for labour, etc.

With the arrival of all these products, the renovation of this Children Village started. Currently, all doors and windows have been replaced; the boys and girls' rooms have been painted in different colours; wooden panels have been installed. The children moved into their new rooms just before the Chinese New Year. Meanwhile, other parts of the renovation work continue: the renovation of the meeting room, the study room, the TV room and the music corner. Even though not everything was finished by Chinese New Year due to the cold weather, children will live and study in a totally new environment soon.

Thanks to the generous donations and everyone's hard work, we are really making good progress to rebuild the world of children who lost their own.

## A Change of Concept...

### "Sponsoring of a Morning Tears Community"

It took multiple hours of careful consideration with our board committees, and also our child sponsorship coordinators, to decide upon an important change within our current sponsorship system. Reason for this needed change is the increasing number of new sponsors, for which we are extremely grateful!

So, here we are, ready to go and Eager to Present to You... Our new concept of 'child sponsorship' - henceforth titled "*Sponsoring a Morning Tears Community*".

#### A brief introduction

From now on, our new sponsors support a whole Community, instead of one child. Within China, this community comprises the children villages of Xi'an, Sanyuan and Henan.

- In return, as a continuing thread of communication, sponsors will receive a quarterly *Community Newspaper*, containing the children's stories, their dreams, drawings, news, pictures, ...
- This way, we involve all children within the children villages, and encourage them in a more creative way to participate in this new exciting sponsor project.
- In addition, we hope to expand our search options for new sponsors towards schools, boy/girl scouts, and other organizations ... and herewith make more & more people aware of the problems and numerous challenges children of convicts face.

#### The message we want to give to our current sponsors, is

We wish to give you the choice

- You can continue to correspond through letters with your own sponsor child,

or

- You have the chance to get to know some of the other children of the Children Villages better

Take some time to think about it and soon Morning Tears will contact you in a more personal way.

Irini Bontenakel

Coordinator Community Sponsoring

Shanghai, February 2009



## The Story of Snowflake

*“No snowflake ever falls in the wrong place” (Zen Saying)*

Snow tightly wraps the hills outside Xi'an in a thick winter blanket. What could have been a peaceful landscape leaves one young anonymous woman in agony. In her world, the birthing pains don't make place for the joyous tears that come with the birth of a beautiful baby girl. In her world, the labor screams are not followed by the loving congratulations of friends and relatives. She is surrounded by desperation and can't even bring herself to name her baby, for a name would give her newborn a face, a soul, a connection to herself that reaches beyond the womb. She leaves her baby behind on the hospital steps hoping someone will take care of her. One nurse takes it upon herself to name this baby Xiao Xue, Snowflake.

38 days after Snowflake was born and abandoned, she is dropped off at the Morning Tears Village of San Yuan, where she is welcomed and accepted. However, since the children's village in San Yuan is not equipped with a nursery and qualified staff to look after infants, Morning Tears looks for a loving local couple that is willing to take Snowflake under its wings and to offer her a safe environment. And even though Snowflake does not know her real parents; she seems to have plenty of guardian angels that live far beyond the borders of her little village. Rosa, a Spanish woman has taken Snowflake's story to heart and finds donations that ensure Snowflake and her adoptive parents do not experience hunger and are not deprived of warm clothes and toys and doctor visits.

Snowflake is a happy healthy toddler. She charms her way into the villagers' hearts with her heartwarming smile and the sparkle in her eyes. She knows the joys of play, the comfort of a warm bed, the safety of a mother's hug and her father's encouragement while taking her first steps. But the path that lies before her is not one without problems. Since her biological parents are unknown, Snowflake does not have a legal identity and therefore also not an official residence permit. And without these, she will not be allowed to go to school or enter university; she will have great difficulties finding a job; it will be impossible for her to get married. Without these documents, she will be non-existent in the eyes of the law and chained by limitations that will prevent her from having a life that is filled with choices. Her adoptive parents, Morning Tears and her many guardian angels are looking for ways to obtain these documents, as they are for many other Morning Tears children who are burdened with the same problem. It will be a journey that might not always be easy, that will ask commitment and love from everyone in Snowflake's life. But for now, Snowflake smiles and reaches for her favorite doll.

Katleen Mentens

### News Briefs (../..)

#### Child brings joy to jail

It was a long way to travel to see her mother, but worth it for 11-year-old Josavini Rakavosa, whose arrival in prison yesterday brought on an onslaught of emotion.

For yesterday was the first Christmas of the eight her mum has been in jail that the pair was allowed to spend the day together.

It was a meeting the Tailevu child had been hoping for for a long time - now made possible as part of the inmate reform Yellow Ribbon Program.

Source: Harold Koi (Fiji Times), December 2008, [www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=109856](http://www.fijitimes.com/story.aspx?id=109856)

Additional information: [www.corrections.org.fj/pages.cfm/yellow-ribbon/](http://www.corrections.org.fj/pages.cfm/yellow-ribbon/)

#### New rule allows stays of execution

Execution of death row criminals should be suspended for review if new relevant evidence is found, even if the Supreme People's Court (SPC) has reviewed the cases and upheld the death sentences, according to a new judicial interpretation taking affect on Friday.

Source: Xie Chuanjiao (China Daily), December 2008, [www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/27/content\\_7346373.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-12/27/content_7346373.htm)



#### **morning tears** Belgium

Fortis Bank  
001-4495454-65  
IBAN: BE 18001449545465  
BIC/SWIFT: GEBABEBB

#### **morning tears** Netherlands

ABN Amro  
45.75.13.764  
Stichting Morning Tears Nederland  
IBAN: NL81ABNA0457513764  
BIC/SWIFT: ABNANL2A

#### **morning tears** España

La Caixa d'Estalvis i Pensions  
2100.0233.99.0200332319  
IBAN: ES28 21000233990200332319  
BIC/SWIFT: CAIXAESBBXXX

#### **morning tears** China

Bank of China, Beijing Branch [中国银行北京分行]  
No.8 Ya Bao Lu, Beijing, China [中国北京雅宝路8号]  
Account No: 4160300-0188-026239-0  
Beneficiary: Guo Zhi Hong (郭志弘)  
BIC/SWIFT: BKCHCNBJ110

**morning tears** rebuilds the world for children who have lost their own world.

**morning tears** rebuilds the world for children who have suffered or are suffering heavy emotional pain.

We focus particularly on:

- children whose parents are in prison;
- children whose parents have been sentenced to death;
- children who have been abused or neglected;
- orphans;
- children who haven't been registered at birth, and thus have no rights;
- street children.

**morning tears** has been operating since 1999 on an informal basis without legal structure. However, in March 2005 **morning tears** became a formal non-profit organization registered under Belgian Law. Currently, **morning tears** has offices in Belgium, Spain and China.

**morning tears** is run entirely by volunteers. These volunteers are mostly professionals from the social sector or development aid workers, although we also have journalists and engineers in our group.

The running costs of **morning tears** are kept very low, so that donations can go almost entirely to the children in need.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

[WWW.MORNINGTEARS.ORG](http://WWW.MORNINGTEARS.ORG)

## News Briefs (./..)

### **Diane Dennis: Mom is still mom, even in prison**

We rarely think of the words "inmate" and "mother" in the same sentence. It is even more uncomfortable to add the word "Christmas" without conjuring up an agonizing picture. In 2001, the Rotary Club of Wilsonville started a program called Through a Child's Eyes (TACE) with a goal of throwing a Christmas party to unite children with their inmate mothers at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Two-thirds of the prison population of about 1,200 women at Coffee Creek are mothers.

Source: Diane Dennis (The Oregonian), December 2008, [www.oregonlive.com/clackamascounty/index.ssf/2008/12/diane\\_dennis\\_mom\\_is\\_still\\_mom.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/clackamascounty/index.ssf/2008/12/diane_dennis_mom_is_still_mom.html)

### **Where Children Count the Years Before They Rejoin Their Mothers**

As they marked the 31st birthday this month of their mother, Thet Thet Aung, her three young boys asked their grandmother how many more years would pass before they see her again.

Thet Thet Aung was sentenced to 65 years imprisonment in November for her involvement in the 88 Generation Students movement. Her husband Chit Ko Lay, also a member of the pro-democracy group, was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment in a separate trial in November.

Source: Saw Yan Naing (The Irrawaddy), December 2008, [www.irrawaddy.org/highlight.php?art\\_id=14822](http://www.irrawaddy.org/highlight.php?art_id=14822)