A Splendid Life for the Chinese “Forrest Gump”

GuliMire

Interview with Mr. Xiaobo Wang’s Mother and Xiaobo Wang

Xiaobo Wang, male, born in 1983.¹ The only child in his family. Level III intellectual disability. Finished studying in a regular school (Shanghai Pudong Zhangyang Middle School) in 1998. Registered and studied in a subdistrict Sunshine Home in Pudong New District in Shanghai between 2005 and 2015.² At present, he studies at home and goes travelling. He is a member in the dance team affiliated to the subdistrict Disabled Persons’ Federation.

Interviewee: Xiaobo Wang and his mother (Ms. Zhangdan Yan)

Interviewer and writer: GuliMire

Interview date: November 29, 2016

Interview place: Reception room on the first floor of Quanji Hotel, Zhangyang Road, Shanghai

Reacting Slowly and Enjoying Himself in Kindergarten

Q: When did you get married?

Bo’s mother: May 1982.

¹Xiaobo Wang was a volunteer in the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Shanghai. He was hailed as “a Forrest-Gump-like volunteer” by major media in China. Both Wang and the protagonist in *Forrest Gump* have intellectual disabilities (ID). Nonetheless, both have been optimistic and marched forward courageously overcoming adversity to keep making breakthroughs in their lives. They have set a good example for people.

²Xiaobo Wang studies at home. As a result, this case does not involve the observation part.

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Q: Were you pregnant soon after getting married?

Bo's mother: That's correct. Xiaobo was born on February 27, 1983. It was the Lantern Festival.

Q: Was prenatal testing available at that time?

Bo's mother: Everything went well before the delivery. However, Xiaobo suffered oxygen deprivation for a short time when he was born. The doctor adopted oxygen therapy as soon as possible and Xiaobo cried out loudly after a while. On hearing that, we were relieved. "The result is not bad. It would be troublesome if the infant were deprived of oxygen any longer," remarked the doctor. Everything seemed to be normal at that time.

However, later on, we noticed that Xiaobo was not lively. He was obedient and had an ordinary appetite, but he reacted slowly from time to time. We went to a doctor and were told that there was nothing to worry about. Xiaobo would be livelier after going to kindergarten and making friends. He behaved normally in kindergarten. He also performed properly and passed the interview to be admitted to an elementary school.

Q: Xiaobo, how old were you when you went to kindergarten?

Xiaobo: As far as I recall, I was 4 or 5 years old.

Q: Which kindergarten?

Xiaobo: The kindergarten in Jing'an District. It was located near my home.

Q: Was it a boarding kindergarten?

Xiaobo: No, I went there in the morning and returned home after school.

Q: What about your performance in comparison with your classmates?

Xiaobo: I remember not being able to take care of myself as well as other kids did. I would need a hand from the teacher to get dressed sometimes. Except for that, I think I performed like the rest of the kids.

Q: After school, did you go home all by yourself or were you picked up by your parents?

Xiaobo: My parents picked me up at first. I started to go home all by myself after knowing the way. It was not far. I just needed to cross the road and turn a corner.

Q: How were you treated by teachers there?

Xiaobo: Some teachers were kind and gave me a hand when I was in need.

Q: How did you get along with other kids in the kindergarten?

Xiaobo: I recall that I got along well with most of them. I was playful and energetic and liked playing with other kids.

Q: Did you make a lot of friends there?

Xiaobo: Sure.

Q: Were there any unpleasant memories?

Xiaobo: Not any I can remember.

Q: Every child has a hobby. What was Xiaobo's?

Bo's mother: I think Xiaobo was in a good mood after getting a high score when he was little. He was outgoing and liked reading. He also communicated smoothly with his classmates.

Xiaobo: My parents would take me out on weekends when I was in nursery and kindergarten. I enjoyed myself and took photos. I was happy before I enrolled in elementary school.

Willing to Work Hard, but Unable to Catch Up Since Grade Four

Q: Which elementary school did you attend?

Xiaobo: An elementary school in Jing'an District.

Q: Were you challenged academically?

Xiaobo: I performed well in the first three grades. On average, I got scores of about 80 or 90 in Chinese, math, and English.

Q: What about other subjects?

Xiaobo: Other subjects were set to cultivate our interests. We didn't have to take exams on these subjects in the 1980s. We learned to solve word problems in math courses in the second semester in Grade Four. It was obvious that I started to perform poorly in math. It was hard for me to understand and think logically to solve math problems.

Q: Did you still perform well in Chinese and English in Grade Four?

Xiaobo: The results were acceptable.

Q: How did you feel when you realized that you could not catch up?

Xiaobo: I was depressed and had a sense of inferiority. I thought I was not as good as my peers. I could not get a sense of achievement from my studies.

Q: How did your classmates get on with you?

Xiaobo: They preferred spending more time with well-performing students. I did not perform well in math and was not confident. Only a few students liked playing with me.

Q: Did your teachers treat you differently after you started to fall behind?

Xiaobo: I would consult them if I had any problems. However, they had to give classes. They couldn't spend much time to tutor me in their spare time.

Q: Have you practiced more to perform well in English?

Xiaobo: I may have a talent for languages. My spoken English is good.

Bo's mother: Xiaobo really could not catch up in math. He gave satisfactory performance in Chinese and English. For example, he could learn to sing an English song quickly. He might also be able to have a little chat with foreigners he met. He has been good at communicating with people. He has been outgoing and he had fun.

Q: Were you ever a course representative or a member in the class committee at the elementary school?

Xiaobo: Never.

Q: Being depressed, did you ever participate in any extracurricular activities?

Xiaobo: I liked these activities. I recall that I have registered in interest-oriented classes such as track and field and drawing. I might not have won any prizes, but I have tried to develop more interests. It was fun to enrich my life with extracurricular activities.

Q: Which one was your favorite? Which one were you good at?

Xiaobo: I preferred doing radio calisthenics.

Q: Why?

Xiaobo: I could stretch my limbs and extend my body to the greatest extent to boost my spirit. Our class used to participate in a radio calisthenics competition and win a prize.

Q: What about your performance in drawing?

Xiaobo: I merely drew some simple lines. Students are taught with more drawing skills now. I, on the recommendation of Mr. Tong, a novelist, bought a drawing book called *Cartoon Comic*.³ I have imitated drawing lines first and improved my skills gradually.

Q: How well can Xiaobo take care of himself?

Bo's mother: He can take care of himself well. I strived to cook meals at home for the sake of food hygiene. My husband and I had to work. We prepared meals before we left. Xiaobo could have meals, wash dishes, and go to school all by himself.

Father Insisting on Regular School After the IQ Test

Bo's mother: Xiaobo was in Grade Five and about to graduate. His class director suggested having Xiaobo tested in the hospital. She said that other kids might be naughty and perform poorly. On the contrary, it was hard for Xiaobo to learn and keep up even though he worked really hard.

My husband was told that it was normal for some naughty kids to fail to form good study habits and stay down. I also thought that some students performed as poorly as Xiaobo did or even worse. Nonetheless, it was obvious that it was hard for Xiaobo to keep up in his studies. However, we were embarrassed and kept it to ourselves. Hearing the teacher's words, I took Xiaobo to be tested at the Jing'an District Mental Health Center.

He got a score of 68, indicating mild ID. The doctor remarked, "Xiaobo would perform outstandingly in a special school. Why bother enrolling him in a regular school, putting him under so much pressure? Students are assigned jobs as soon as they graduate from the special school." I knew nothing about the disease and asked the doctor whether there was any medicine? Seeing that I was nervous, the doctor suggested I consult an expert. I had come around to the fact afterwards. The die was cast. It was unnecessary to see any more doctors.

I told the teacher frankly that the results of Xiaobo's IQ test were not satisfactory indeed. In fact, I wished to send Xiaobo to a special school. He would be less pressured and everyone would be happy. However, my husband was unwilling to do that. He was afraid that Xiaobo could achieve nothing in a special school. He also told me to keep Xiaobo's condition to myself.

³Lengren Zbigniew (1919–2003) was a famous Polish cartoonist.

Xiaobo: The special school was not equipped as well as it is now. I didn’t want to go there, either. I felt that I could learn nothing there.

Bo’s mother: We visited the special school. Neither Xiaobo nor his father approved of the idea. I didn’t insist and Xiaobo remained in the regular school.

Q: What about Xiaobo’s performance in the graduation exam?

Xiaobo: I barely passed it.

Bo’s mother: Tutored by a home tutor, Xiaobo passed the exam and graduated from elementary school.

Haste Making Waste

Q: Which middle school did you attend?

Xiaobo: We were assigned to middle schools randomly by the computer, just like the way you get a license plate in Shanghai. I was lucky to be assigned to a sound middle school in Jing’an District. I was enrolled in a preparatory class before I started middle school study. After the preparatory class, the school was relocated. As a result, I was transferred to a middle school in Pudong New District.

I went there alone from the very beginning. I thought my classmates were clever and concentrated on their study. They did not show great enthusiasm about my arrival. Nor did I take the initiative to communicate with them.

Q: Did you ask your classmates for help when you had trouble in studying?

Xiaobo: I was introverted at that time. I would not consult others even if I couldn’t understand. My classmates were busy after school.

Q: Did you turn to your teachers?

Xiaobo: Rarely. I was too embarrassed. Teachers charged for extracurricular tutoring, just like teachers do now. However, they would not necessarily teach students according to their merits.

Q: Would you consult your parents at home?

Xiaobo: My parents are not well educated. They could tutor me when I was at elementary school. Middle school knowledge was beyond them. Moreover, they had to work and could spare little time to tutor me. My father has worked as a technician and was busy. My mother prepared meals for me every day and was on the middle shift.

I often stayed at home alone, either doing homework or staring at trees out the window. I just muddled along in school and pretended to know. Gradually, I could not follow teachers at all and had an increasing sense of inferiority. Looking back now, it was really torture.

Bo’s mother: It was harder for Xiaobo to do math homework than Chinese homework. He often went to bed after 11 or 12 o’clock. My husband had a high self-esteem. He worried about Xiaobo’s performance. He went to work at five o’clock in the morning and accompanied Xiaobo to do homework till midnight. It was tough. For a while, he was not busy because the company he worked for was to be relocated to the suburb. As a result, he did not sleep at all, but studied all night with Xiaobo.

“Xiaobo, you will live a quality life if you work hard now. I hope you can live a better life than we do,” he told him. I replied, “You expect Xiaobo to perform well. However, Xiaobo cannot understand what he has learned at all. That’s very ironic!”

Xiaobo: My parents held high hopes for me and expected me to perform outstandingly. However, I did not do well in math, physics, and chemistry. It was impossible for me to meet their expectations all by myself.

Bo’s mother: Xiaobo was tutored by a home tutor until he reached Grade One in middle school. He was exhausted and slept little. As a result, we no longer forced him to study and let it be.

Q: Was Xiaobo tutored by other home tutors afterwards?

Xiaobo: I was tutored in English.

Bo’s mother: Xiaobo was tutored by an English tutor in the first two grades in middle school. We did that for the sake of his class director, who cared about Xiaobo’s performance and thought Xiaobo could catch up in English after being tutored. We were fully aware that it would put pressure on Xiaobo again. However, we followed the advice to spare her feelings. Moreover, we also thought that Xiaobo could perform better in English. In fact, I always believe that it was wrong to press Xiaobo to work hard. He could not sleep well because of that. However, we had no other choice.

Q: Did Xiaobo perform better after being tutored?

Bo’s mother: He could just pass English but still failed to catch up in math, physics, and chemistry.

Q: How did you get along with your class director?

Xiaobo: Just so-so. She thought that I performed poorly in study, but had a talent in sports activities. She would tell my parents when I was not myself in class. She had to press me to work hard. My performance might have affected the performance of the entire class. She also told my mother that.

Q: Did your mother tell you that after you returned home?

Xiaobo: Sure. My parents also hoped that I could perform as well as normal kids do. However, the reality was not satisfactory.

Q: How did you communicate with Xiaobo after talking with the class director?

Bo’s mother: I talked with Xiaobo about that. He was fully aware that he could not catch up. I understood him and said, “I know that you cannot catch up. You just try your best.” In fact, we knew that it was hard for Xiaobo to keep up because he has ID. My husband was reluctant to accept the fact.

My parents were college graduates. My mother worked as the class director in an elementary school in Hongkou District. My father used to be an official in Huangpu District Education Bureau. In 1957, he was sent down to Chongming. He worked there for 2 years. Later on, because of the family background, he was sent down to work as a manager in a restaurant in a grassroots work unit. He lied to me and my little sister that he asked personally to work there. He also cared about Xiaobo’s performance, “You should pay more attention and find the causes for Xiaobo’s poor performance,” said my father, “you must see to it that he performs outstandingly, otherwise he can only...”

We, like many other parents, liked to compare Xiaobo to other well-performing kids. Look, that child performs outstandingly. Xiaobo could not keep up and went to bed late at night. Consequently, he could hardly concentrate in class, resulting in a vicious circle. In retrospect, we pulled up seedlings to help them grow and caused damage to Xiaobo’s health unconsciously. We did not treat him well.

Xiaobo: I could barely get along with my normal peers. I just endured. There was no other solution for me to keep studying. We did not consider other options. Nor were we enlightened to follow another way to learn skills.

Bo’s mother: Xiaobo could not pass the graduate exam. The headmaster thought that Xiaobo could not make any progress even if he was asked to repeat a year. As a result, Xiaobo obtained his Certificate of Graduation of Middle School.

Xiaobo: I got scores of over 260 in all.

Q: What was the minimum passing score?

Xiaobo: I don’t remember.

I participated in few extracurricular activities. I recall that I was encouraged by a classmate to play a supporting role in a performance. The classmate was in charge of the performance and nice to me. Moreover, I would also ride a bike with my classmates in my spare time. I got along well with my classmates. My best friend was also my middle school classmate. On holidays, we would go shopping in malls and play table tennis and go skating. I was good at playing table tennis, basketball and golf and swimming. The teacher set me to lead the radio calisthenics in a contest because of my standard movements.

Q: Did you mean your class director?

Xiaobo: That is correct.

Doing What One Is Capable of and Becoming Confident

Bo’s mother: Xiaobo was relieved after graduating from middle school. However, my husband still hoped that Xiaobo could do further study.

Xiaobo: My father registered me in a vocational high school to improve my education level. However, I could not take it after 3 days. My mother persuaded my father, “We, as parents, must take it easy and be practical and figure out ways that are beneficial to Xiaobo’s physical and mental health. All roads lead to Rome.” My father came around to the idea and helped me to withdraw from the school. However, the tuition of over 3,000 yuan was not returned.

Bo’s mother: Later on, my husband convinced Xiaobo to learn electrical engineering in a technical school. He is a technician and works seriously. Today, he is still invited to train staff and give courses in other companies. My husband said, “Well, I will no longer push you with respect to academic achievement. Let’s take a step back and learn technical skills. Son, a sound technician is not replaceable.” “Xiaobo, it is beneficial to be a technician. You may not perform well at school. However, I will support you if you are willing to learn a technical skill. You have my word,” said my husband, funny and cute.

I didn't want Xiaobo to learn these technical skills. It was exhausting. Moreover, he would be frustrated again. I told my husband, "Xiaobo cannot perform well in school. Let's accept the fact. I think Xiaobo can learn other things. We must be flexible." My husband didn't agree and insisted on Xiaobo learning a technical skill. It turned out that Xiaobo could not do that well, either. My husband was depressed and no longer insisted on that.

Xiaobo: Well, I may not be good at that.

Bo's mother: The teacher remarked that his hands were too sweaty to learn electrical engineering. Moreover, he had an operation due to acute appendicitis. Xiaobo has been thin since he was little. He has also been exhausted by huge academic pressure and had bad digestion. I think it may also be the cause for the appendicitis.

Xiaobo: I was unhappy and aimless after the operation. I was unwilling to communicate with others.

Bo's mother: I took him to see a psychiatrist, who thought Xiaobo suffered from "schizophrenia" and prescribed medication. After returning home, Xiaobo told me that he would not take the medicine because the diagnosis was incorrect.

Xiaobo: We went to the Department of Forensic Psychiatry in a special hospital and the psychiatrist overturned the previous diagnosis.

Bo's mother: We were told that Xiaobo was just depressed after the operation. I was told that it was not serious. We should take him outside more often and he would be well. Well, Xiaobo was nearly diagnosed with schizophrenia. Thank God we believed that Xiaobo was healthy. We were lucky to meet a responsible psychiatrist the second time.

Q: Did you continue studying in a technical school after the operation?

Xiaobo: I withdrew.

Q: Have you received any rehabilitation therapy after the operation?

Xiaobo: My parents were anxious. They took me to Shanghai Research Institute of Acupuncture and Meridian, which is located on Wanping South Road. I accepted acupuncture, Tuina, applied plasters and had traditional Chinese herbs for several months. I gradually recovered.

Q: How long did you stay at home for recovery?

Xiaobo: Two or 3 years.

Q: How did you spend the time?

Xiaobo: I had an IQ test in a designated hospital and applied for the Disability Certificate. I was at a loss at first. My peers either went to work or did further study. When I was the most helpless, my mother was attracted by the serial story column called "A Tycoon's View" on *Finance and Investment*. Mr. Tong was the columnist.

Bo's mother: It is a weekly newspaper and released on weekends. Mr. Tong attracted readers with his humorous and incisive writing. I shared it with Xiaobo after reading it. What impressed us deeply was Chapter 21 of *Grandpa Caishen's Funny Stories* named *The Fallen Top and the Regretful Whip*. It tells the story of a girl in Grade Two in a key middle school. Unable to bear any longer her father's "whip-style" education, she committed suicide by jumping from the 18th floor. After reading the story, all of us felt that we would go through a difficult situation.

Xiaobo: The girl may have performed outstandingly. However, she must have been depressed and felt suffocated. That is why she chose to end her life. My mother was deeply touched. She thought that she had to stop pressing me anymore.

Bo’s mother: I contacted Mr. Tong via the email address published in the newspaper. He replied and encouraged us. He seeks a healthy and relaxed life, “Everything cannot be forced.” I think it means that “one just needs to go with the flow and not force anything.” After we came around to the idea, Xiaobo was no longer pressed and became more confident and happier. We started to live harmoniously and accept the world as it is. We have been content and happy and enjoyed a casual life.

Xiaobo: At that time, to cheer me up, my father bought the camera, the printer, and the computer to cultivate my interests. My mother took care of me and cooked nutritious dishes to help me recover as soon as possible. I am grateful.

Q: Did you learn anything, especially after you received these things, such as the computer?

Xiaobo: I signed up to a computer training school launched by Shanghai Jiaotong University to attend an office automation course at the primary level, which was given in our subdistrict. At first, I could not understand the theory. Nor could I operate in practice. The teachers were patient and tutored me. I gradually understood and could complete basic operations independently and pass the exam with a high score.

Q: Which basic operations?

Xiaobo: I am familiar with Microsoft Word and Excel and SQL solutions. I would input corresponding commands according to certain questions to input data and create a worksheet in Excel independently. The teachers appreciated my efforts and set me as the class monitor to encourage me. Afterwards, I also helped many other students learning computer skills and they were grateful. Consequently, I started to be confident step by step.

Q: Did you also learn photography especially?

Xiaobo: I had mastered basic photographic skills. Thanks to the introduction of the President of the subdistrict DPF, I could learn from Mr. Xue, Head of the Team Management Department in the Subdistrict Cultural Center, on improving my skills and selecting appropriate shooting modes. Later on, I practiced my skills by taking pictures in activities held by the CAPIDR.

Preparing for Special Olympics and Enhancing Capabilities through Home Visits

Bo’s mother: In 2004, the subdistrict DPF forwarded exciting news; that is, Shanghai would host the Special Olympics World Summer Games in October 2007. Athletes would be selected from all subdistricts to participate in the games.

Xiaobo: My mother and I saw regulations of the CAPIDR on the official website of the China Association of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and their Relatives and knew that such an association had also been established in Shanghai. My mother

called the person in charge. Chairman Zhang of Shanghai CAPIDR told my mother that the association had also been established in Pudong New District.

My mother and I paid a visit to the Chairman of Pudong New District CAPIDR to find out more about it. She invited us to join in the Association.

Bo's mother: The slogan of Special Olympics was "Going Outside and Socializing." Her son had studied at a special school and been a Special Olympics Global Messenger and a Special Olympics athlete who participated in numerous Special Olympics Games and won awards. She invited me to be the liaison of the CAPIDR in our subdistrict. Then I was promoted to be Chairman there and organized people with ID in our subdistrict to play a part in activities held by Pudong New District CAPIDR.

Xiaobo: From then on, my mother has become the initiator of the Lujiazui Subdistrict CAPIDR. The first job she did was to pay a home visit.

Q: What kind of home visit?

Bo's mother: When communicating with Xiaobo, it came to me that the primary task of the CAPIDR should be to understand basic situations in families with family members with ID. Then it would be much easier to promote Special Olympics.

Q: When did you start to pay home visits?

Xiaobo: We were prepared in the first half of 2003 and started to do that from the second half of 2003 till the first half of 2004.

Q: How did you get these families' contact information?

Xiaobo: Officer Lu from the DPF of the Civil Affairs Section, after knowing about my situation, thought that my mother was eager to help me and other people with ID and willing to work as a volunteer in the subdistrict CAPIDR. He took out a list of people with ID in our subdistrict from a desk drawer and gave it to my mother. My mother returned home with the list and told me that it could help us change ourselves and encourage other families with family members with ID to join in the Special Olympics movements.

Bo's mother: We started to follow the list to pay home visits and completed them smoothly in about 3 months. Xiaobo visited families with family members with ID in five communities independently. He had been transformed from being introverted with a sense of inferiority to being optimistic and outgoing. His life has been enriched.

It was time consuming to pay home visits. We would have a boxed lunch and drink mineral water to keep up with the schedule. I said, "Xiaobo, we should complete home visits in several months." A member in the CAPIDR commented, "Ms. Yan, you are a doer. You and Xiaobo have done some substantial work." I also think that Xiaobo and I have done a marvelous job.

Back then, I didn't know how we were pushed to complete all these home visits. Generally speaking, it is rare to see volunteers do that. I appreciate that the DPF trusted me and gave me the list. We might have impressed the person in charge with our optimism and enthusiasm.

Xiaobo: My mother and I would keep a record and write down our feelings on the computer after every home visit.

Q: What is the purpose of your home visit?

Bo’s mother: First of all, we cooperated with the DPF to promote that Shanghai would host the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games. We encouraged people with ID to go outside and participate in the magnificent games.

In our home visits, some parents would complain that people with ID have frequently suffered prejudices and been looked down upon. They had been upset when their kids were stared at and judged by passers-by. Some families also had a sense of inferiority as we did. I am a mother to a son with ID. I knew exactly how they felt and went all out to straighten it out. I told them to care little about what others may think. If they could not stand it anymore, they can stare back. We burst into hearty laughter and agreed that it felt good to take things as they come. Later on, families in our CAPIDR have united and bravely gone outside.

Xiaobo: Once in an outdoor activity held by the CAPIDR, individual passers-by looked at us strangely and whispered to each other. We stared at them collectively and laughed heartily. They were probably embarrassed and soon dispersed. Parents felt happy and stress-free taking part in these activities. Consequently, we achieved the goal of the “SO get into it” advocated by Special Olympics.

Bo’s mother: Second, I was told to report needs of visited families to the DPF, which would meet these needs according to available policies. Xiaobo and I just did our duties to act as a bridge between the DPF and the disabled persons.

Third, I wanted to keep Xiaobo busy and enhance his communication skills. It was indeed the only option to train him to be independent. We did not do it out of lofty ideas. I am Xiaobo’s mother. When I was asked to assume the responsibility, I believed firmly it was God’s will.

Xiaobo: At that time, I felt that I was capable of making contributions for the group.

Q: What information would you share at your home visit?

Bo’s mother: I would introduce myself first. I told them that I was mother to a son with ID and the initiator of the subdistrict CAPIDR. I was there to promote Special Olympics. The Special Olympics Games have been held for people with ID. Any persons with ID and aged from 7 to 80 can participate in the Special Olympics Games. These families were thrilled on hearing the information.

Q: How did you feel in your first home visit?

Xiaobo: I was confident. I think I was destined to help my mother do it.

Q: Did you complete your first home visit independently?

Xiaobo: My mother accompanied me for the first time. I completed the rest all by myself.

Q: Did you run into any difficulties during your home visits?

Bo’s mother: At first, some parents were reluctant to participate in Special Olympics activities. They claimed that their priority was to support the family. I told them honestly that my son was also with ID. The living condition of the disabled persons would be improved gradually following the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games. On hearing that my son was also with ID, they began to trust me and joined in the Special Olympics activities.

They had no idea about Special Olympics. I explained it as a kind of sports activity. I asked about their available time so that I could send them the “activity notice” if any

sports activity was held by the Pudong New District CAPIDR. They were happy to hear that. A large number of persons with ID joined in sports activities collectively. Children with ID were crazy about these activities. They also had great potential. Our subdistrict houses multiple Special Olympics athletes that outperform Xiaobo.

Xiaobo: They are natural athletes.

Bo's mother: They won first prize in games, especially track and field events such as high jump, long jump, and shot put.

Xiaobo: They also performed well in playing badminton and basketball. Most Special Olympics athletes have a strong physique.

Bo's mother: The parents were happy. They believe that their children are gifted.

Xiaobo: These children used to watch TV at home, just like I did. They had nothing else to do.

Q: Did you complete home visits independently except for the first one?

Xiaobo: I accomplished home visits to families with family members with ID in five communities all by myself.

Q: Did Xiaobo share information about these families with you?

Bo's mother: Yes, he did. He mentioned that some children suffered multiple disabilities. They could not go outside because of their physical conditions. Consequently, their character would change. Some parents were upset about a small living area and hoped to send their children to a nursing home. Some parents required nurses to look after their children. Xiaobo started to think after getting the information. He said, "Mother, it is significant to keep fit. I must cheer up." I am lucky in comparison with other families with family members with ID. I think it is especially important to have a harmonious and sweet home. Parents must believe their children and encourage them instead of scolding them frequently.

Q: Did Xiaobo share his thoughts?

Bo's mother: Sure. He thought that his mind-set had changed and he knew the area better. First, he learned about landmarks near the community. For example, we were to visit a neighborhood committee. He learned in advance that a large supermarket was located opposite the neighborhood committee. In that case, we would not detour. He learned a lot from these home visits. It was a unique and marvelous experience.

Xiaobo: I would also record the conversation and demands of the disabled persons (on this notebook). It recorded a piece of my life and accompanied me to develop toward a promising future. I will always be grateful for the experience, just like I was with the experience of being a volunteer in the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games in Shanghai.

Q: What about results of your home visits?

Xiaobo: A large number of families remarked that what we did was meaningful and brought changes to their families. Thanks to our home visits, people with ID and their parents in our subdistrict were willing to participate in Special Olympics activities held at all levels. Children with ID have changed physically and mentally after playing a part in these activities. Parents worked as volunteer teammates to encourage and cheer up athletes in the field.

Q: How did you feel after completing home visits?

Xiaobo: I think we, that is people with ID, can do wonders. I have proved with my experience that a person has great potential. We can prove our value with enough courage and confidence. The spirit of the Special Olympics has made a significant impact on 280 families with family members with ID that we have visited.

Making Progress via Multiple Courses at the Sunshine Home

Q: How did you enter the Sunshine Home?

Xiaobo: My mother took me there first. She hoped that I could join in activities held there to be confident and go outside and make friends.

I did not like going there at first. It was called the Work and Rehabilitation Center. Everything was strange to me. Few people were in there. They learned to string beads. I was not interested in that at all. I could not make use of my talent.

The place has been called “Sunshine Home” since 2005. It was one of ten practical projects launched by the Shanghai Municipal People’s Government in 2005. Taking the opportunity of Shanghai hosting the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games, the Sunshine Home launched various activities and programs, attracting an increasing number of students. Mr. Yan Hongyuan was in charge of the Sunshine Home at that time. Knowing that I enjoyed crowds, he came to our door to persuade me to register at the Sunshine Home. I recall that we talked for half a day. I have realized that students can indeed change intellectually and physically step by step at the Sunshine Home.

For example, doing handwork is a vital step of rehabilitation to train flexibility of limbs. Several students had already been there when the place was called the Work and Rehabilitation Center. I saw them stringing beads. They did that patiently. I could not do it at first. Then, I was able to complete a small task. In the end, I could make a small accessory. In the process, I have become more patient, confident, and concentrated. My mind has changed slowly. I started to be included into the group gradually. I felt that it would be promising to study at the Sunshine Home. At present, the Sunshine Home has provided a variety of courses such as PE, handwork, singing, dancing, drawing, sign language, and Japanese. Other public organizations will also give courses there. I may need to go on trips. When I spend time there occasionally, students tend to share anecdotes during their study. I can see satisfaction and happiness on their smiling faces.

Q: What did you do at the Sunshine Home?

Xiaobo: I would participate in regular activities and take and share photos.

Bo’s mother: Xiaobo is also a member in the dance team under the subdistrict DPF.

Xiaobo: Ms. Zhou, an experienced dancer, has been recruited to teach us. She is also mother to a Special Olympics athlete. She has taught us dancing every week for a decade since the establishment of the dance team in 2007. The team has participated in countless large dance performances, variety shows, and municipal and district-level contests and won plenty of first prizes. We also won first prize in the radio

calisthenics competition for people with ID organized by the subdistrict DPF and the Pudong New District CAPIDR. Officials of the DPF were concerned about us. They were solicitous about our health during the rehearsal. We were delighted to dance.

Q: Are you still a regular student at the Sunshine Home?

Bo's mother: To be precise, Xiaobo is a member of the dance team under the subdistrict DPF. He does not go to the Sunshine Home frequently. He has concentrated on keeping fit, reading, watching films, and learning to do housework. The teacher may ask Xiaobo to attend in cases of major performances. Xiaobo will actively join if he is in Shanghai.

Having a Good Appetite and Being Healthy After Joining in Special Olympics Activities

Q: How did you start to take part in Special Olympics activities?

Xiaobo: Once, my mother and I went to the preparatory group of the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games. It was a simple office located on Puyu West Road. Mr. Jisheng Chen, who was physically disabled, worked there. He was the first person that told us that Shanghai would host the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games. In 2005, I participated in the first community-level Special Olympics Games organized by the subdistrict office in Dongchang Middle School Affiliated to East China Normal University.

Q: The Special Olympics Games at the community level?

Bo's mother: That's correct. The community-level Special Olympics activities were launched in 2005 to be prepared for the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games. In 2005, the Pudong New District CAPIDR also organized Special Olympics activities in the Shanghai Pudong Special Education School. In 2006, our track and field team represented Pudong New District to participate in the Special Olympics Shanghai Invitational Games. Athletes from our subdistrict ranked at the top in various games.

Q: Which games do you usually play?

Xiaobo: Primarily track and field events such as shot put.

Q: What about other events?

Xiaobo: I have also taken part in long jump.

Q: What are other events available at the Special Olympics Games other than track and field events?

Xiaobo: Canoeing and kayaking and archery.

Bo's mother: Our subdistrict CAPIDR has only organized track and field events.

Q: Where did you get trained before the games?

Xiaobo: At Jianping West Middle School. We cooperated with the DPF to contact the school. The school was very supportive and sent a coach to train us.

Q: What was the training schedule?

Xiaobo: Athletes would sign in on site before they were trained. Then, we were trained for 2–3 h. If it rained, we would run along corridors in the school building. We learned skills and essentials in running. Coaches understood us and would communicate with us equally and smoothly. They kept cheering us on. The motto of the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games was “I know I can!”. Back then, I did not think it was tough at all. Instead, I was totally engaged in training and enjoyed myself.

Q: What exercises did you do?

Xiaobo: We warmed up and stretched limbs. Next, we were trained for track and field events such as running and long jump and ball games such as table tennis, badminton, and basketball.

Q: How did you get along with coaches?

Xiaobo: The coaches appreciated us and affirmed our talent in sports.

Q: Did Jianping West Middle School make the training plan?

Xiaobo: Jianping West Middle School volunteered to train us according to our requirements.

Q: How long did the training program last?

Xiaobo: We were trained once per week. The program lasted for 2–3 months.

Q: Did you go there by yourself or accompanied by your parents?

Xiaobo: My mother, being in charge of the subdistrict CAPIDR, had to be there during our training. Some parents would also be there from time to time.

Bo’s mother: I needed to take photos which would be filed or shared with athletes’ parents.

Q: Has the training program continued or did it end after the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games?

Xiaobo: Training at Jianping West Middle School ended before the opening ceremony of the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games.

We also had to receive the US Special Olympics delegation to the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games. Our unified activities only lasted for most of the day. The delegation was energetic and got along well with us. We had to speak different languages. Nonetheless, we communicated smoothly in activities and cooperated well when playing basketball, tug-of-war, and badminton at Jianping West Middle School. A farewell banquet was also held at the Intercontinental Shanghai Pudong. I also attended it.

Q: Could they speak Chinese?

Xiaobo: They would merely say “nihao” (meaning “hello”). We would encourage each other via hugs.

Q: Didn’t you talk in English?

Xiaobo (smiled shyly): We might say “Thank you” and “Hello.”

Q: Which municipal or community-level Special Olympics activities did you join in?

Xiaobo: In May 2005, I took part in the Special Olympics activity held at Meiyuan Community Subdistrict and won second prize in the men’s football event. In September 2005, I won third prize in the men’s 200 m in the sixth Shanghai Municipal Special Olympics Games. In October 2006, I ranked third in the men’s 100 m and fourth in

the 4 kg shot put in the Special Olympics Shanghai Invitational Games. In May 2007, my team came third in the team basketball set shot at the Lujiazui Functional Area Special Olympics Games. I joined in the Pudong New District Special Olympics Games and won a prize in the men's 100 m (Group B) on November 11, 2008.

Q: How did your life change after participating in the Special Olympics events?

Xiaobo: Thanks to sports activities, my appetite was stimulated. So was my metabolism. My internal organs can function better when sweating. My limbs also became more flexible and better developed.

After I began to participate in Special Olympics activities, I could obviously feel that I was full of energy and confident and able to communicate naturally with others. All in all, I think I have more options in life. I have been raised to perform well and take the initiative to do whatever I can. When I paid home visits, I learned that some children with ID could not go to the Sunshine Home due to various reasons. Consequently, my mother and I came to them to do basic exercises such as passing and dribbling the ball. They were happy and asked me to accompany them frequently. These movements might be simple. Nonetheless, I think parents were happy to see that their children have a companion.

Being a Volunteer as Optimistic and Positive as Forrest Gump

Q: How did you apply to be a volunteer at the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games?

Xiaobo: I contacted first Mr. Bi, who was in charge of the Volunteer Center under the Pudong New District Spiritual Civilization Office. Mr. Bi knew that my mother was in charge of the subdistrict CAPIDR and I worked as her assistant. He contacted my mother to confirm it. My mother asked me whether I was willing to be a volunteer. I said yes. In August 2007, I was asked to complete an application form at the Volunteer Center and joined other volunteers to be trained. Among 40,000 volunteers, I was the only one that was also a Special Olympics athlete.

Q: What was the content of your training?

Xiaobo: We needed to learn plenty of things. For example, we learned to receive global Special Olympics athletes, provide services and matters needing our attention. We also had to learn the concept and history of the Special Olympics, available sports events, matters related to ethics and religion, and international etiquette. I have participated in the volunteer training multiple times. My mother accompanied me once or twice. I joined in the rest all by myself.

Q: Were you required to speak other foreign languages?

Xiaobo: I can express myself basically in English. I was to serve a Special Olympics athlete from Jamaica jointly with a teammate. This was my first time being a volunteer in a major international event. I was not familiar with the process at first. My teammate guided me until I got used to it gradually. Later on, I could serve the Jamaican athlete smoothly. My job was to help him carry a basket at the Pudong New District Natatorium.

Q: Carrying a basket?

Xiaobo: Exactly. It was loaded with swimwear, towels, mineral water, and light refreshments needed by him. My duty was to accompany him at the site, carry the basket before the game, cheer him on during the game and help wipe him down and change clothes and supply light refreshments. I also presented awards to swimmers. At first, the Shanghai Special Olympics Organizing Committee did not arrange volunteers to present awards for athletes. Knowing that I was the only Special Olympics athlete as a volunteer, they made an exception and gave me the honor of presenting awards to Special Olympics athletes and outstanding volunteers. I was greatly encouraged by the honor. It also encouraged Special Olympics athletes to go all out in competition.

Q: Did you communicate with the Jamaican athlete?

Xiaobo: I mainly greeted him in English. We hardly communicated with each other verbally. Instead, I supported and encouraged him via body language such as a smile, a thumbs-up, or a hug.

Q: What impressed you the most during your volunteer services?

Xiaobo: I was interviewed by major media. I was even invited once to attend a press conference arranged by the Shanghai Special Olympics Organizing Committee. It was raining moderately. My mother accompanied me to the press conference.

I sat at the platform and was interviewed. I thought I must be in a dream. Ha-ha. Then, my thoughts as the volunteer at the Special Olympics Games were reported instantly on major news platforms and media. I was known as the “Forrest-Gump-like volunteer.”

I released my thoughts on participating in the Special Olympics Games on Sina Blog in succession. One article named *The Forrest-Gump-like Volunteer* was published on a Special Olympics feature page on *Jiefang Daily* on Tuesday, October 2, 2007.

Q: Who came up with the name of the “Forrest-Gump-like volunteer,” you or others?

Xiaobo: I was the only Special Olympics athlete serving as a volunteer there. The media gave me that name naturally when interviewing me.

Q: Which media used that name?

Xiaobo: Media such as China Central Television (CCTV), Dragon TV, and Phoenix TV.

Q: Why would they call you that?

Xiaobo: They thought I was as normal as regular people and capable of providing services I can to foreign athletes. “Forrest Gump” may not get double digits in the IQ test. Nonetheless, he still grows up to be an optimistic, positive, brave, and sincere person. These media outlets may have thought that I have these merits.

Q: Did you feel different participating in the Special Olympics Games as an athlete and as a volunteer respectively?

Xiaobo: As an athlete, I became stronger and faster and my limbs became more coordinated. I could also help my teammates within my power. I felt happy. As a volunteer, I felt I shouldered great responsibility to serve the athletes. First of all, I

had to be careful when taking care of my teammate. I think I became more careful in looking after my teammate.

Q: What other volunteer activities did you join in?

Xiaobo: I've done a lot of volunteer work with photography and video recording. Mr. Xue, my first photography teacher, has also taken me to photographic activities at all scales such as the 2010 photographic activity to welcome the World Expo in Shanghai. I joined in the "Smiling under the Sunshine" themed activity held by the Pudong New District Sunshine Home in 2011. I primarily took photos and shot and won the honorary title of the "outstanding volunteer." From 2009 to 2013, I also undertook the task of taking photos and shooting the annual staff meeting of the Pudong New District "You and I Helping the Disabled Service Society."

During the 2010 World Expo, I, together with another Special Olympics athlete from Beicai Subdistrict, joined the "Pudong Family Blog Saloon" team to serve as volunteers in metro stations on weekends. We promoted the escalator etiquette of "standing right and walking left." I also gave directions when asked. I helped people in wheelchairs to places they wanted to go to. I further shared my volunteering experience at the metro station in my blog.

Being Tutored to Pass the Preliminary Contest of the English Competition Named "Star of Outlook"

Bo's mother: When I worked as the Chairman in the subdistrict CAPIDR, a group of college students from the Department of Navigation from the Shanghai Maritime Academy visited the DPF in our subdistrict and offered to provide disabled persons volunteer services such as the door-to-door tutoring services, counseling services, and company services. The DPF convened community disability service assistants to investigate the disabled persons and their relatives in need of free "door-to-door tutoring services." I got the list and contacted college student volunteers. The "door-to-door tutoring services" have indeed brought dramatic changes in families with disabled family members and have been welcomed in these families.

Q: How?

Bo's mother: W was the first person to receive door-to-door tutoring services from college student volunteers. Suffering intellectual disabilities, she merely stayed at home and watched TV all day long or went shopping with her mother. She barely communicated with the outside. Both I and these volunteers were shocked when we visited her for the first time. She cried easily. As a result, volunteers were careful with words to avoid embarrassment. Starting from the actual situation, they tutored W in logical thinking and language. She was tutored in math in the first semester to enhance logical thinking. In the second semester, W was tutored primarily on verbal communication. After nearly a year's effort, W could get along well with volunteers. Her parents feel that her mental health has improved dramatically.

These volunteers thought they should explore further (methods to help and tutor people with ID) according to individual characteristics. The subdistrict DPF, the CAPIDR, and volunteers discussed it and made detailed teaching plans. Moreover, volunteers further tutored W to write short compositions at the request of W's father. A while later, W surprised us and made progress in all aspects. Her parents were grateful to these volunteers and invited the subdistrict DPF and the CAPIDR to send a silk banner to the Shanghai Maritime Academy. “The subdistrict DPF and the CAPIDR and Shanghai Maritime Academy cooperated to provide the service of tutoring disabled persons. It was timely help in our family. Thanks to door-to-door tutoring services provided by these volunteers, my daughter has become more optimistic and has made great progress,” written in a thank-you letter by W's father to the Youth League General Branch of the Shanghai Maritime Academy.

As another example, Y was weak because of premature birth. She was shy and could not open up easily to communicate with others. She studied in a regular school and had a sense of inferiority because she could not catch up. Later on, she was transferred to a special school in Pudong New District and performed very well there. In 2004, Y was to graduate from the special school. At that time, she was studying *New Concept English 3* and hoped to pass the English exam smoothly. Knowing about her needs, the subdistrict DPF and the CAPIDR arranged college student volunteers to tutor her at her home. The Department of Navigation organized students good at English to tutor Y on Thursday nights. Consequently, Y passed the English exam smoothly and enrolled in a junior vocational and technical school in September. She graduated in 2007 and worked in an information service company after a recommendation from the subdistrict DPF. Before Y started work, her mother invited me to send a silk banner to the Department of Navigation at the Shanghai Maritime Academy to thank these volunteers.

In 2008, two volunteers that already graduated and working visited Y. They called Y and said, “We are no longer tutors and students. We are friends. We will cherish our friendship. You can call us if you need any help in work and life.” Both Y and these volunteers started work. Y's mother was impressed by the consideration of these volunteers.

Xiaobo: I have also benefited from the service. On November 5, 2008, I read news on the education page of the *Shanghai Morning Post*: The CCTV “Star of Outlook” English Competition, which has been held for 9 years in succession, opened applications for the 2009 competition (Shanghai Division). I was interested in English recitation at school. Seeing the news, I wanted to participate and bravely express myself. My mother also supported my decision. According to requirements of the organization committee, every candidate should give a 2-minute speech without notes. I tried to select a topic. My mother also offered a sea of topics, which I thought was not suitable for me. Shanghai was to host the World Expo in 2010. In the expo garden, the “Life and Sunshine Pavilion” had been established for the disabled. As a result, I set the title of my speech as “My Wishes for the Shanghai World Expo 2010.” I think the title was the most appropriate there.

My Wishes for Shanghai Expo 2010

After browsing the official website of the Shanghai World Expo 2010 and visiting the Shanghai World Expo Display Center, I knew that the “Life and Sunshine Pavilion” will be established for the disabled at Shanghai Expo 2010. I am happy from the bottom of my heart that I live in Shanghai, a beautiful city.

During this period, we, the dance team under the Lujiazui Subdistrict “Sunshine Home” constituted by people with ID, were busy rehearsing a performance called *Haibao Dance*. The teacher was making tailored Haibao costumes for us. I think it will be a marvelous moment when we perform with these costumes.

I have a wish at Shanghai World Expo: in 2010, on a large and glittering stage covered with red carpet in the Life and Sunshine Pavilion for the disabled, all dancers with ID from the “Sunshine Homes” in Shanghai can dance and sing, in order to give a wonderful performance on behalf of Chinese people with ID for international friends on site.

I have a wish: I am a volunteer at the Life and Sunshine Pavilion for the disabled. I will do my best to serve the disabled persons, feel the theme of “equality, participation and sharing” in the pavilion, and get spiritual enlightenment, a vision of a better city life during the interaction and exhibition.

Q: How good was your English?

Xiaobo: I can express myself. I am confident. On November 11, 2008, Yang Zhimeng, a volunteer from the Department of Navigation, visited our home to tutor me in English speech. My first impression was that he was tall, easy-going, lively, and handsome with a sense of humor. He tutored me on pronunciation from phonetic symbols and taught me to memorize words according to their meaning in Chinese. I repeated after him and kept practicing. He was agile and smart, creating a relaxed study environment. Thanks to his tutoring, I could read correctly the speech several days later. Next, I managed to recite it.

On January 17, when I gave my speech of *My Wishes for Shanghai Expo 2010* in the preliminary contest, I saw myself expressing my talent to the greatest extent after brave efforts. I was confident and completed the speech correctly. With a storm of applause, I passed the preliminary contest smoothly. In the next contest, candidates were required to look at a picture and tell a story. I thought it was beyond me and quit.

Q: Were judges aware of your condition at the preliminary contest?

Xiaobo: Yes. I mentioned in my speech that “I am a student at the Sunshine Home.” Shanghai was to host the World Expo 2010. My speech was titled *My Wishes for the Shanghai Expo 2010*. The Life and Sunshine Pavilion in the expo garden was to display exhibitions related to disabled persons exclusively. As a result, I wanted to serve as a volunteer.

Bo’s mother (inquired Xiaobo Wang): How did your speech start?

Xiaobo: Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. (Mother laughs proudly.)

Q: What were the comments of the judges?

Xiaobo: After the speech, I checked the result on the computer. It showed “congratulations on passing the preliminary contest.”

Q: Didn’t they comment on the spot?

Xiaobo: No. All competitors left the classroom after completing the speech. They would check the results on the official website. Those who passed could prepare for the following competitions. Therefore, I believe more firmly that helping others is helping yourself. The volunteer must be guided by God to help me achieve my dream of giving an English speech. I am grateful for all of these things.

Marching Forward Courageously and Contacting and Cooperating with Over 20 Work Units

Bo’s mother: We have benefited a lot from the door-to-door services provided by college student volunteers from the Shanghai Maritime Academy. We have also been motivated to seek cooperation opportunities with enterprises and public institutions.

After completion of the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games, Xiaobo and I, being endorsed by the DPF, started to look for cooperative enterprises and public institutions. During the decade when I served as Chairman in the CAPIDR, about 28 enterprises and public institutions have established cooperative relationships with the CAPIDR. Xiaobo and I learned to communicate with others in practice (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Xiaobo Wang (in red) watching a billiards game in an inclusive activity

Shanghai Oriental Art Center was the first one we visited. It was on a National Day for Helping the Disabled. Pudong New District Disabled Art Troupe was about to perform there. The subdistrict office was allocated limited tickets. Families in the CAPIDR wished to watch the performance. Xiaobo and I went to negotiate with the Public Relations Department of Shanghai Oriental Art Center. We told them honestly our wish. Knowing that we were there to ask for tickets for the disabled group, the lady in charge was generous and brought out about 20 tickets from a drawer and gave them to the CAPIDR as a gift.

Q: How did Xiaobo contact these enterprises and public institutions?

Xiaobo: I searched their addresses and contact information on the Internet. Next, I called the persons in charge at the Human Resource Department and told them that we would like to cooperate with them. If they agreed, I would visit them personally and introduce the Sunshine Home briefly.

Q: How were you received? Did these people show a tendency for cooperation?

Xiaobo: Most of them were friendly and wished to offer public services.

I will list two examples. One was Shanghai Sibada Cultural Communication Co., Ltd. On July 17, 2012, it launched the “Sibada Cup Lujiazui Special Olympics Community Home” Summer Camp jointly with Special Olympics athletes and parents in Hongkou District and Pudong New District. We had a tug-of-war, kicked shuttlecock, and played table tennis and billiards. We got along well with each other.

Second is the New York University Shanghai (NYU). At first, I wanted to learn spoken English at NYU. As a result, I sent an email to the Office of Academic Affairs of NYU. Mr. Xu, who was in charge of public services, invited me to have a face-to-face conversation at the school and wished to launch activities at the Sunshine Home. I was highly thought of and shouldered the responsibility of connecting NYU and the Sunshine Home. I thought it was a mission from God. Everything went smoothly next. First, Chinese and foreign students from NYU visited the Sunshine Home and held a party. I recall that it was before Christmas. They got along well with students at the Sunshine Home. Second, students from the Sunshine Home were invited to a party in the classroom in NYU. We sang and performed a sign language dance. Students from NYU learned sign language with us. We could feel that they were inclusive and open-minded via body language.

I further contacted a business group. I met its president at a charity dinner held by Special Olympics East Asia. She was nice and appreciated my efforts.

Bo's mother: She was keen to offer public services. After Xiaobo contacted her multiple times, she took time to negotiate with the subdistrict DPF on cooperation. Regardless of success, we could feel her passion for charity.

Xiaobo: After the 2007 Special Olympics World Summer Games, we hoped that schools nearby would hold large Special Olympics activities for Special Olympics athletes. I turned to the Secretary of CPC General Branch of Dongchang Middle School Affiliated to East China Normal University, which was located nearby. The person in charge understood me and was willing to cooperate with the Sunshine Home to launch activities. However, its school time conflicted with ours. Their students could come to the Sunshine Home after half past three in the afternoon. However, the Sunshine Home is open from nine o'clock in the morning to half past three in the

afternoon. Lujiazui is known as a finance and trade zone that houses massive major enterprises and schools. Personally, or speaking from the perspective of Special Olympics athletes, it will be terrific if the Sunshine Home could cooperate with them to hold Special Olympics activities.

Bo’s mother: We have cooperated with numerous enterprises and public institutions to hold activities. For example, we watched *Swan Lake* at Shanghai Grand Theatre, listened to piano music at Shanghai Concert Hall, watched films free of charge at SFC Shanghai Cinema (Nextage Film Art Center) and visited Shanghai Ocean Aquarium and Shanghai Zhoupu Prison. Our Special Olympics athletes were trained at Jianping West Middle School. We have also cooperated with Shanghai Oriental Art Center and Shanghai Wild Animal Park.

When we went to Shanghai Flower Port for the first time, Pudong Public Transportation Co., Ltd. provided us with free shuttle services. We also visited Wusongkou Paotaiwan Forest Marsh Park free of charge. We were given a discount when holding the annual get-together of our association in Shanghai No. 1 Revolving Restaurant. We participated in an experimental and outdoor education program sponsored by Action Training in Qingpu District. We also had free lunch. Shui’ai launched Yoga training programs and held lectures at the Sunshine Home. Wuxing Ceramic Art Studio provided the venue and taught students at the Sunshine Home how to make pottery and sent ceramics to all students as a gift.

Xiaobo thinks that most enterprises are friendly and are willing to join in public welfare activities. He, on behalf of Special Olympics athletes, would contact these enterprises either by email or personally. His efforts are recognized by persons in charge of these enterprises. However, not all enterprises are willing to cooperate with us. I told Xiaobo, “You will encounter all types of enterprises. It is an opportunity to practice your patience.”

Xiaobo: I contacted a foreign-related enterprise. It is said that the enterprise is keen to do charity work in communities. But it is not true in reality. I visited the enterprise multiple times and communicated with the head of its Human Resource Department. He promised at first, they would try to launch charitable activities at the Sunshine Home. I was told that they had cooperated with a college club. They would cooperate with us at the right time. However, they kept paying lip service or putting off holding activities when I contacted them over the phone or face to face later on. Well, I think they could have been frank and told me the truth. It was unnecessary to fool me over and over. Despite that, I still communicated with them politely. From my communication with all types of enterprises, I can feel clearly their attitudes toward Special Olympics athletes and unified movements. I am also aware that it is not stipulated that enterprises must hold public service activities for the disabled. I have learned a lot when communicating with enterprises.

Bo’s mother: It is also a way to learn. Xiaobo can expand his vision and deal with all sorts of people.

In fact, in my opinion, if the enterprise does not want to cooperate with the DPF or the Sunshine Home, it can be frank with Xiaobo, “Wang, we have no such plans at present. We will contact you when we do.” Do you agree? On the contrary, they were misleading and just beat around the bush, dampening Xiaobo’s enthusiasm.

I comforted Xiaobo that it was a test by God. He should be honored to be tested. A large number of enterprises are willing to cooperate with us. This is the only enterprise that is not friendly. Xiaobo even visited its headquarters once.

Xiaobo: I was told that the enterprise was keen to do charity work in the community and suggested trying again.

Q: Did the headquarters contact the enterprise and ask it to cooperate?

Xiaobo: I was told that it was an independent enterprise.

Bo's mother: After this experience, I think Xiaobo has become more patient and can understand others when solving problems. I am happy to see his growth.

Xiaobo: Society is sophisticated. We need to have a strong mind.

Q: Does any of the cooperative enterprises mentioned above still hold activities jointly with the Sunshine Home?

Xiaobo: We still cooperate. NYU is busy and does not hold any activities at the moment. Students at the Sunshine Home hope that I can serve as a bridge and contact it again to launch activities jointly.

Q: Do enterprises need to sign cooperative contracts?

Bo's mother: We will (sign contracts) if these enterprises ask to. For example, we have entered into a contract with the Shanghai Maritime Academy.

Xiaobo: We may also enter into long-term cooperative contracts with enterprises such as SFC Shanghai Cinema (Nextage Film Art Center). People from the subdistrict CAPIDR and students from the Sunshine Home have been organized to watch films regularly.

Q: What is the impact of these activities on students at the Sunshine Home in your mind?

Xiaobo: Staff from these cooperative enterprises and public institutions and students from the Sunshine Home jointly made handwork, drew pictures, went on trips, and learned sign language. Thanks to their efforts, these students can enjoy a colorful life, find and develop their potential and talents, and become confident. They pass on positive energy and are optimistic.

Q: What do these activities mean to the Sunshine Home?

Xiaobo: Thanks to these activities, enterprises and public institutions can know students' mental state and routine study and life at the Sunshine Home. We can also tell them our needs and interests. They will do everything they can to help us and enrich our lives and encourage us. I think it is a virtuous cycle.

Q: Xiaobo, how did you change in the process of contacting these enterprises and public institutions?

Xiaobo: It makes me feel that I am competent when I start to communicate with potential cooperative enterprises and public institutions. On the one hand, I have contributed to better operations of the Sunshine Home. On the other hand, I can enhance my capabilities in communicating smoothly with all sorts of enterprises and express our intention exactly.

Q: You and Ms. Yan mentioned repeatedly the word "empowerment." When did you get to know the word?

Xiaobo: My mother and I learned it from our communications with an enterprise. It used the word as a sign of trust on the basis of my optimistic and aspiring words

and deeds. I could not understand clearly its meaning at first. After searching on the Internet, I knew that it is a new concept that refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people.

Bo's mother: I think Xiaobo has done a good job. He is eager to practice and improve social communication skills. In his words, thanks to the platform of the CAPIDR, he has learned things he could not learn in class. If the CAPIDR is compared to the “Whampoa Military Academy” and cultivates special talents, Xiaobo can stand up and exclaim proudly that he has already graduated from it.

Creating Opportunities for Everyone to Join in a Camp

Bo's mother: Several years ago, the Shanghai University of Sport invited Special Olympics athletes from Pudong New District to participate in “Camp Shriver.”

Q: Where did you learn about it?

Xiaobo: We read about it on the Weibo account of Special Olympics East Asia and *Lingzhicao* (meaning “Snake Jasmine”), the internal magazine issued by the Shanghai DPF. I took the initiative to contact Professor Xueping Wu from Shanghai University of Sport. She was very supportive and asked me to write her an email, explaining that I wanted to participate in the camp. Then, I received the invitation from Shanghai University of Sport, inviting Special Olympics athletes from Pudong New District to join it.

As a Chinese saying goes, it is more joyful to share joy than enjoying yourself alone. It is better to invite people from Pudong New District CAPIDR to play a part. On hearing the good news, I was empowered by the CAPIDR to be in charge of it. Professor Wu wrote in her email that I needed to create an Excel table with athletes' and their parents' name, gender and ID card number and athletes' age, height and weight. Uniform clothes would be prepared. My mother and I texted persons in charge of every subdistrict CAPIDR and asked them to collect information. Next, I created the Excel table and emailed it to Professor Wu.

Q: How many people with ID joined in the camp with you?

Xiaobo: All in all, 20 Special Olympics athletes from our subdistrict and Pudong New District CAPIDR went there. Moreover, 20 parents accompanied them as teammates to cheer on these athletes and provide logistics services.

Q: Did you join as the person in charge?

Bo's mother: No, the person in charge was the Chairman of Pudong New District CAPIDR. I worked as a liaison to promote successful completion of the activity.

Q: What was the specific training content at the camp?

Xiaobo: We accepted basketball training together with student volunteers from Shanghai University of Sport. Instructed and led by coaches, we experienced activities such as dribbling the ball, passing the ball and doing a lay-up and back-to-back basketball relays. We also played games such as puzzle games or held hands with hits and exciting background music.

Q: How long were you trained every day?

Xiaobo: We took the shuttle bus provided by the Shanghai University of Sport and arrived there at eight or nine o'clock in the morning and ended at three or four in the afternoon. We had free lunch at the Shanghai University of Sport. The cafeteria provided nutritious meals according to our training intensity. It was really warm and considerate.

Q: Did you feel tired after a day's training?

Xiaobo: No. I was happy to play with my companions.

Q: How did the coaches get along with you?

Xiaobo: They applauded and encouraged us that we were the best. I think Shanghai University of Sport has done substantive work for Special Olympics athletes. I give it a thumbs-up. I hope that Camp Shriver can be held continuously. It would be better if similar activities could also be held annually at the subdistrict level and the community level.

A New and Relaxed Life Featuring Reading and Travel

Q: What about Xiaobo's plans in the future?

Bo's mother: He was exhausted at school and helped me greatly in the CAPIDR. Now, he is grateful and starts enjoying a comfortable and happy life.

Xiaobo: The top priority for me is to improve capabilities to take care of myself and manage money. I can basically deposit or withdraw money from the bank and go shopping online. I hope I can be more efficient and have more time to practice and learn.

Q: Do you still plan on being a volunteer?

Xiaobo: I follow the concept advocated by Mr. Tong; that is, "focusing on family life and reading extensively." I concentrate on doing things I am interested in and good at and keep learning to enrich my knowledge.

After knowing him since 2004, my mother and I registered in Sina Weibo and recorded and released our experience there. Instructed by Marshal Tong, I have started to read e-books on WeChat Read to improve my capabilities in cognition, reading and commenting gradually.

Bo's mother: Xiaobo has made great progress. He can speak fluently and has improved writing skills.

Xiaobo: That is also one of the obvious improvements after participating in the Special Olympics. I could not write well at first. I have collected rich materials when joining in the Special Olympics and activities held by the CAPIDR and been inspired to write.

Q: Why do you call Mr. Tong "Marshal Tong"?

Xiaobo: He reads a lot and his idea is novel and avant-garde. He helps me dramatically in life and studies. He is like Marshal Canopy to me.

Q: Has Xiaobo ever considered finding a job?

Bo's mother: He is skinny and particular about food. Regarding work, Xiaobo, after meeting someone when serving as a volunteer at the metro station, passed an

interview as a normal person to work as a part-time metro station assistant. He worked for 2 h in the morning shift and two more in the middle shift. He worked there for a whole year. It was windy. However, Xiaobo could not wear a hat or scarf according to regulations. As a result, he went to communicate with his leader and was transferred to a post at the hall. He also recorded his thoughts for the whole year. It can be seen that Xiaobo can fit into society well. It was both a work and a training opportunity. However, he is not in good health. His condition will be improved with an easier life. Taking this opportunity, Xiaobo would like to thank those enterprises giving him an offer after receiving his CV.

Q: Xiaobo and you have been to many places. Do you like traveling?

Bo's mother: Sure. After I quit from being Chairman at the subdistrict CAPIDR, we were happy to go on trips. We can see different landscapes, customs and civilization in various cities.

During our trip, Xiaobo keeps saying, “Mother, I will protect you and help you with baggage.” It may be hard to buy water in scenic spots. Xiaobo will help me. He knows a lot about the route. He takes care of me. We take self-guided tours. When arriving at a place, Xiaobo will check the weather. If it rains, he will stay in the hotel and read and write down travel notes. If it is fine, we will go to scenic areas as he planned. Xiaobo observes carefully. He has many thoughts on seeing local customs and natural landscapes. He will record them after we return every day and share it on the Internet.

Q: Who makes plans before a trip?

Bo's mother: Xiaobo is mainly in charge of that. For example, the day before we went to Guilin, he searched scenic areas on the Internet. We would follow his travel guides. He suggested going hiking in the Two Rivers and Four Lakes Scenic Spot. Two rivers mean Taohua River and Li River while four lakes refer to Ronghu Lake, Shanhu Lake, Mulong Lake, and Guihu Lake. We followed him. The trip was awesome.

Q: How do you usually go on trips?

Xiaobo: By air or by train. We take buses to go to urban scenic spots and taxis to remote ones.

Q: Is your schedule busy during traveling?

Bo's mother: We don't want to rush. We want to enjoy ourselves and taste local food, experience customs and see local art and natural landscapes.

Q: Where have you been?

Bo's mother: We have been to numerous places such as the Three Northeastern Provinces, Fujian, Guangxi, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Hainan, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Hubei, Chongqing, Beijing, Hebei, Anhui, Jiangsu and Zhejiang. We have mainly taken self-guided tours.

Q: What is your favorite place?

Bo's mother: These places are distinctive. I think highly of Shenzhen. It has a pleasant weather all year round. A large number of barrier-free elevators are installed in the metro station. Passengers can use them directly without the need to press a bell and wait for assistance from the staff. Environment is sound on the street with multiple ramp ways. Travel feels comfortable and convenient there. We have

also visited scenic areas such as OCT East, Shenzhen Lianhuashan Park, and the Window of the World in Shenzhen. I also think that Weihai is an inclusive and clean city. Drivers yield to pedestrians. We visited fantastic scenic spots such as Liugong Island, Weihai Park, Xingfu Door Garden, Yangmadao Square, and Chengshantou Scenic Resort. These cities are better developed.

Q: Do you have any travel plans now?

Bo's mother: No. We play it by ear and go on a trip if we want to. We will select a package tour if we go abroad.

Q: What is the main source of income in your family?

Bo's mother: My husband is an excellent technician. He has been appreciated by his company. He is even invited to give lectures in a former company. I have a retirement pension.

Q: Does Xiaobo receive any allowances?

Bo's mother: People with ID such as Xiaobo enjoy a permanent allowance from the Shanghai Municipal People's Government. We are contented.

Q: Xiaobo is single, isn't he?

Bo's mother: That is correct. I think Xiaobo is realistic and mature about the issue. He told me, "For example, if I sit in a coffee house with a girl and we look out toward the same direction, it means that we are destined to be together. It may not be the right time now. When it should come, it will come."

Xiaobo: I just want my partner to run the household with me. We can do housework and take care of each other. God will plan it.

Q: Are you a Christian?

Xiaobo: We are polytheistic. We respect religions but are not religious. We firmly keep away from any cult. I think gods will help me and empower me at the right moment.

Q: What are your expectations in the future?

Xiaobo: I just want to live a rich and colorful life. It is the most practical thing. I also hope to enrich my spiritual and cultural knowledge via constant reading and studying.

I have an idea. I hope that the Special Olympics can organize Special Olympics athletes to take a 2-week luxury cruise tour accompanied by their parents. Participants pay for the trip at their own expense. We, whether parents or children, are keen to travel.

Q: Xiaobo, who do you want to thank the most for your achievements now?

Xiaobo: My mother. She has done a lot for me. You can't write that down. She is forthright, honest, and kind-hearted. She has raised me up as a normal kid and taught me to be independent and shoulder responsibilities in the family. She has also been engaged in helping other kids with ID. I also want to thank my father. He works hard. He may have been strict with me sometimes, but I know that he did that for my sake. I want to do the same for them. Moreover, I am grateful to the DPF at the subdistrict and district levels. I have been trusted and encouraged when I was at the most disoriented moment.

Q: What's your expectation of Xiaobo's future?

Bo’s mother: I am content with things the way they are. Xiaobo may be strict with himself and seek perfection. He may get that from his father. I told Xiaobo that he should let nature take its course. Now, Xiaobo can prepare his diet according to his needs and make deposits in the bank. These things may be trivial but essential in life. I am satisfied with his performance. I don’t expect more. Fortunately, after shifting focus on the family life, Xiaobo’s physical condition has been improved greatly. Regarding marriage, I believe in serendipity. I just hope that Xiaobo can be happy and healthy.

Xiaobo (laughs): Happiness comes from contentment.

Bo’s mother: That’s correct.

Q: All right, thank you, Ms. Yan and Xiaobo. I hope everything will be better for Xiaobo and he can be confident and live a happy life. I also wish that you will always be young and beautiful. Let’s conclude here today.

Interview with Domestic Worker in the Wang Family

Interviewee: Ms. Li (domestic worker)

Interviewer and writer: GuliMire

Interview date: December 20, 2016

Interview place: Wang’s home

Q: Ms. Li, when did you start to work at Xiaobo Wang’s?

Li: In around August 2015. My main task has been cooking. I have learned from Xiaobo’s mother which dishes to make and the family’s taste. It is a part-time job. I only work for 2 h. If there is still time after the meal is ready, I will do some cleaning, mop the floor, and clean the gas range and the toilet.

Q: What is your comment on Xiaobo’s performance during your work there?

Li: When I went there for the first time, I thought he was lively and cute. He was also diligent and capable of many things. He liked exercising. He would go to the vegetable market if he had time and buy some. He has been obedient and filial. He cares about his mother and pats her on the back. I told him that it was my duty. He said, “It’s okay. I will do that.” They take care of themselves well. Both Xiaobo and his mother eat Chinese yam and tomatoes. Their rooms and the kitchen have been kept in good order.

I am happy there. When I make dishes, Xiaobo may help me washing rice. After he is done, he goes to do exercises such as running. He may also play badminton with his mother if he is free. I think he has made progress every day.

Q: Except for work, do you spend any extra time with Xiaobo and his mother?

Li: We sometimes go to a karaoke bar if we have time. I like singing. Xiaobo’s mother is a good singer. She sings *Invisible Wings* the best. I recall that we went to Shanghai GalaCity a short time after I started working at their home. Xiaobo sang an English song.

Q: Will you keep the part-time job at Xiaobo’s?

Li: Of course. I've started to work in the domestic worker voucher company since 2001. I have (done) it for 7 years. I will certainly continue doing it.

Q: How long will you continue working at Xiaobo's? Did you sign any contract?

Li: We sign an annual contract. For example, we signed a contract this January. We will sign a new one next January. So is the contract with Xiaobo's.

Q: Did Xiaobo say anything considerate during your work?

Li: Yes. I ride an electric motorcycle to go to work. Xiaobo told me to drive slowly and be careful. Moreover, he also told me to think positively, eat well, and go to bed early. I am contented with these words.

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