

# morning tears newsletter

Volume 5, No 4, October 2010

## In this issue

Editorial

News

Strategy

Volunteer story

Three countries ...three tears

Financial Barometer

News from the world



## Editorial

Dearest Morning Tears Friends,

After a brief break of introspection and carefully listening to informational needs of our readers, we are now proud to present to you our new concept of newsletter!

New elements include:

- The house style - notice the fresh new colors, including the changing colors in our logo. Actually, our whole house style has changed. We believe it perfectly reflects our dynamism, desire for expansion and zeal to fight for every child.
- The publishing dates – the newsletter will now be sent out every quarter, starting in the last quarter of 2010.
- More images and colors
- Space for responsible advertising
- More pages

We very much appreciate your feedback and please send us more!

Koen Sevenants

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# Morning Tears News

## Morning Tears starts the Morning Dew Program in Russia

Morning Tears has recently created a partnership with the Russian NGO Shelter for Children and the Belgian non-profit organization Vrienden voor Kinderen to start a pilot program for social orphans and children of convicts in the greater Moscow area. The Morning Dew program cares for 36 children at the outskirts of Moscow and is the country's first program assisting children whose parents are in prison.

Some of the children live on our premises, but we're still undertaking reform work. We hope to call companies in Russia that produce useful construction materials and to donate materials. Contact Katya in Moscow for details at [ekaterina.podolskaya@morningtears.ru](mailto:ekaterina.podolskaya@morningtears.ru).



## Updates about the Coming Home Project

- The children can write letters to our social worker to tell us their wishes and what they want for their birthdays. We'll follow up on their letters and organize a nice birthday party for them.
- Four volunteers visited in the summer to teach our children music, drawing, sports and kung fu.
- Three new children arrived at the project site — one boy and two girls, aged 6 to 9. We took the kids for hospital checkups, set up file for every child and conducted a basic psychological evaluation, as is our practice for newly arrival children.
- We have had many visitors: People from Action Aid, 16 American volunteers, policemen from Zhengzhou's prison and 16 Belgians visited the children. They took the kids and our staff to the Shaolin Temple.
- Four of our children went to Hainan to participate a summer camp organized by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs and UNICEF.
- We took 16 children to visit their homes in August and September.



## Morning Tears opens Shanghai office

Morning Tears recently officially opened an office in Shanghai's old French concession. It will be an intersection point for volunteers, coordinators and people who are interested in what we do. It is a small, low-budget venue, but we happily accept this, because we prefer to spend our money on kids. Contact our dynamic Shanghai office through Ilona: [ilona.volken@morningtears.org.cn](mailto:ilona.volken@morningtears.org.cn), Tel. (+86) 1360 1658 691.

## Good to know!

- Russian children often cannot see their imprisoned fathers and mothers, because the parents often lose parental rights upon incarceration. This is typical internationally in cases where the parent is convicted of a crime that poses a direct threat to the child but the policy applies for many other crimes in Russia.
- Russian children younger than 4 can stay with their mothers in prison if the women do not lose parental rights. Upon turning 4, most children are sent to "state shelters". Consequently, most kids do not see their mothers from their fourth birthdays until their mothers are released, usually after the children have grown up and their childhoods are over. Happy birthday.
- Morning Tears has launched a program providing quality care for children who live with us because mothers are in Russian prison colonies in the Moscow area. Children frequently visit their mothers in prison, ensuring their family bonds are maintained, which has been proven to be integral to later life success. Contact us for more info about the Morning Dew Program.

## Morning Tears starts US branch

Morning Tears USA Inc is proud to announce that it has officially formed into an organization with nonprofit status pending upon United States government approval. It has also opened a bank account. It's President, Julian Dossche ([jdossche@morningtears.org](mailto:jdossche@morningtears.org)), and Treasurer and Secretary, Rachel Halligan ([rhalligan@morningtears.org](mailto:rhalligan@morningtears.org)), are excited about joining and expanding Morning Tears' global presence from Belgium, Spain, The Netherlands, Denmark and China. The US Morning Tears chapter's mission is fundraising and creating awareness about "unrecognized" Chinese children's needs and rights. By funding overseas projects to provide education, homes, therapy, and, most importantly, family, Morning Tears USA will help create a new and inspiring life for these rural Chinese children.

Morning Tears would like to thank all those who have made Morning Tears USA a reality, especially Donna Crawford, Steve Farris and Perry Coker. Morning Tears plans to embark on its fundraising campaign and awareness strategy in the coming month.



## **Tennis serves charity**

Shanghai Racquet Club's June 2010 charity tournament brought together more than 40 tennis enthusiasts and auctioned off a polo shirt signed by Rafael Nadal, raising more than 60,000 Yuan in total for Morning Tears.

Thanks ladies!



## **BISS raises nearly 100,000 Yuan for Morning Tears**

The British International School of Shanghai (BISS) raised about 100,000 Yuan in support of Morning Tears at its annual charity ball in May 2010. The donation will be used in the "community sponsor" program to support children's education and basic needs. We are thankful to BISS for engaging in educational programs in support of Morning Tears children.



# Morning Tears strategy

In previous newsletters, we explained that Morning Tears uses research-based minimum standards for child-care and protection. According to our standard, we differentiate seven quality areas — planning for care; protective care; personal care; health; environment and safety; caregivers; and management and administration. Here, we discuss environment and safety, a quality area for which we use one standard: Children live in homes that provide physical safety and security.

## **This standard's basic points are**

- *There is sufficient space to allow for a comfortable night's sleep*
- *There are adequate levels of heating and ventilation*
- *The caregiver shall follow appropriate guidelines regarding the installation and appropriate use of smoke detectors*
- *Usable space, equipment, and exit arrangements shall be adequate for the number, ages, and abilities of the children*
- *Indoor and outdoor play areas shall be checked for hazards.*
- *Paint on both interior and exterior premises shall be free from hazardous quantities of lead.*
- *A plan shall be in place to ensure routine maintenance, and sanitation procedures shall be conducted to keep the structure clean, sound and in good repair.*
- *Poisons, toxic materials, cleaning supplies, sharp or pointed objects, plastic bags, matches, flammable liquids, drugs of any kind, insecticides, guns and other hazardous materials shall be stored and/or locked, covered or removed so as to be inaccessible to children.*
- *All water hazards, such as pools and permanent standing water, shall be enclosed with a fence or otherwise safeguarded to ensure that they cannot be accessed.*
- *Electrical outlets accessible to children shall be covered with child-resistant safety plugs or made inaccessible to children wherever possible.*
- *Smoking and/or alcohol consumption shall be prohibited on the premises when children are present.*
- *Persons under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs shall not be allowed in the childcare setting.*

## **Why is this important?**

- The quality of accommodation conveys a message to the individual about how he or she is valued, and a feeling of care can be generated by the environment in which we live.
- In group-living situations, illness and infection can spread rapidly, and close attention needs to be paid to standards of hygiene.
- Proper attention to the issues of safety and sanitation protects the health of children and caregivers, and prevents injuries.

We discuss the sixth quality area — caregivers — in the next issue.



## A volunteer shares his story

With four months of summer vacation, my first real break from college demanded that I do something productive, lest I spend the entire time dallying around Pinnacle's Starbucks, Lido and Sanlitun Village.

Searching for something that was in line with my studies (sociocultural anthropology, and international and humanitarian affairs), Morning Tears was a perfect fit as an NGO that aids and supports underprivileged children in China and around the world; rejects the expansionist business model; and promotes an open dialogue of philanthropy between itself, its benefactors and the local community.

According to MT director Koen Sevenants, "At Morning Tears, everybody does everything", something that became increasingly evident as I settled into what might loosely be called a routine of working there.

After I organized thousands of pairs of donated shoes, traveled around Beijing putting up posters for MT's 4th annual Charity BBQ and discussed the possibility of cooperation with the International School of Beijing, Koen decided it was time for me to really get acquainted with the efforts of Morning Tears. He asked me to accompany him to the Henan Coming Home Project, where 32 children are looked after and cared for.

The ensuing two-day trip illuminated my understanding of the structure of Morning Tears and the nature of its work. After a long drive to Beijing West Train Station, I joined Koen and Regula Hwang Ma-Koller, a Beijing Rotarian and former Vice President of Credit Suisse Beijing, for the five-hour express train to Zhengzhou, Henan. There we were met by Kou Wei, one of the founders of Morning Tears and the director of the Henan Coming Home Project, and stepped into the *mianbaoche* (van) recently donated by the Rotary Club of Beijing to go to the Children's Village. On the way, we drove down a chiefly Uyghur street, where Halal butchers sell fresh lamb meat. As a barbeque was planned for International Children's Day the following day, Kou Wei suggested we stop to make a purchase. So we did, while the rest of us stood with mixed expressions of shock and tentative curiosity at a rather unabashed display of meat preparation.

We reached the *aitongyuan* (the place where the children live). Regula and I met the children for the first time, while Koen and Kou Wei each accommodated up to five children clinging to their waists. Some of the children demonstrated their affection, while some were more reserved. Overall, though, the *aitongyuan* atmosphere was playful and happy. I had started helping one little girl who had difficulty with characters as she wrote a letter to her mother, when we were interrupted by the entrance of a second group of visitors — the teachers and headmaster of the children's school, accompanied by the local official in charge of child protection and a high-ranking Henanese *zhangguan* (government official) and his entourage, who had come to help commemorate the first anniversary of the Henan "Coming Home" Project.

After a round of speeches, the children were given new backpacks and educational materials as gifts. The MT staff, Regula and I were ushered toward the *mianbaoche* to head for the restaurant where the *zhangguan* had invited us to dinner.

The biggest reason I had chosen to work with Morning Tears was my interest in learning how a foreign NGO could legally conduct affairs in China, and this dinner illustrated the deep personal ties involved in dealing



with local government agencies and civic bureaus. After a feast of a meal and countless *ganbeis* between everybody at the table, our stomachs came dangerously close to exploding. And (much to everyone's bemusement) in an effort to divert the locals from filling our glasses further Koen decided to enjoin the entire table in singing a Flemish/Dutch ode to the Earth. We then left to go back to the Children's Village for an early night; the children wake up at around 6 AM to begin playing.

I woke up to the sound of the *aitongyuan* boys playing basketball outside at 6:30 AM sharp, and it was Children's Day. A special visit was in store for four of the girls – four mothers were scheduled to come to the Children's Village from Henan No. 7 Women's Prison. Police cars arrived at 8 AM and parked outside, and the children and I watched as the four women walked through the gates, accompanied by almost solely female guards and staffers as well as the prison director.

Contrary to my expectations, the presence of the mothers and police brought with it no tension, unease or sadness. Instead, the tears on the mothers' and their daughters' faces were those of joy. The prison director (a mother herself) was overcome with cheer and hopefulness, sympathizing with the mothers' separation from their children but confident in their well-being. She went as far as to promise that after retiring, she would come to work for the Coming Home Project, too. After they had left, we returned indoors to have lunch with the children in their family-unit living rooms. I hoped the mothers who had come would tell the other mothers in prison about how their children were doing, so that they could at least have some peace of mind.

Regula and I then caught the afternoon train back from Zhengzhou to Beijing, knowing the children would come to Beijing as well in a couple of days for the Charity BBQ.

During my visit, what never escaped my attention is that at Morning Tears, everybody really does do everything, in order to "rebuild worlds for children who have lost their own".

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## Three countries ... three tears

### **Belgium**

*Ten-year-old Veerle has to take a break from writing in her diary. A tear melts on the paper when she thinks about how she misses her father. Yes, she understands that he did something wrong, but she does not understand why visiting him in prison is not possible.*

Veerle's mother divorced her father when he went to prison. In Belgium, children need to be accompanied by adults during prison visits. But no one is willing to accompany Veerle. She is only told that visiting her father is not possible.

To help children like Veerle, Morning Tears is setting up a volunteer network of adults to accompany children to visit their parents in Belgian prisons. And it will soon put up a website to provide relevant information to these children, too.

### **Russia**

*Nine-year-old Dimitri does not understand why he is in a state shelter. They are hard on him here although he did nothing wrong. His father is, indeed, an alcoholic but would still make sure to occasionally take Dimitri to visit his mother in prison. Every time he thinks of her, a silent tear escapes his eyes.*

Russian law dictates that children with a parent in prison must be "placed" in a state shelter if their other parent cannot take proper care of them. These children can legally visit the imprisoned parent but it's very rare for shelter staff to take them. Morning Tears is setting up a home for children of prisoners in Russia and will make sure its children frequently see their imprisoned mothers.

### **China**

*Eight-year-old Xiao Zhou cries because the aunt with whom she lives is angry. Xiao Zhou used to earn high scores at school. But her latest report card shows she has fallen behind the rest of the class. Xiao Zhou sniffls and says that she just wants her mom. It has been nearly a year since her mother was incarcerated and Xiao Zhou hasn't seen her since. Her well-intentioned aunt is convinced the prison is not a good environment to bring children to.*

Children are traumatized when their parents are imprisoned. The trauma has many serious consequences, such as shortened attention spans and declining school performance.

Morning Tears trains adults in China to — among other things — help children cope with their trauma. Bringing Xiao Zhou to visit her mother would definitely help her overcome her trauma — and lift her grades at school.

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# Financial Barometer

## *The Coming Home Program, balance of the first half of 2010*

The Coming Home Program currently houses 30 children. In the first half of 2010 we spent 201,931 Yuan (about 24 000 euro). This went toward all expenses – food, clothing, salaries, medical costs, schooling costs, parties and events, land lease, etc. The second quarter was 18,000 Yuan more expensive, largely because of increased prices for basics like food. Most of the funding was generated from Belgium, although money from Shanghai and local donations is starting to play a bigger role.

We expect increasing operational costs in the second half of the year, largely because of the need for heating in winter and rising inflation. And, last but not least, we are bracing for the impact of the pending currency war.

Exchange rates have seriously affected the value of our overseas funds and this problem is set to worsen.

Our Coming Home Program will host meetings in which Chinese policymakers and experts will participate. These will likely result in endorsements of new laws protecting children of prisoners in China. The budget for these meetings is 110,000 Yuan. The new laws will likely dramatically decrease our operational costs in the medium and long terms.

We expect increasing donations from Shanghai and the continuation of income from Belgium. The Netherlands team is set to record its first fundraising results and Spain's donation landscape is undergoing a revival.

The essence of all this is: we are coping with the financial crisis. We are in a safe zone – maintaining what we have but not building reserves. We perform a tricky balancing act between expansion and security – so far, so good. But it will require an increase in donations to realize our ultimate ambition – putting the pain of children whose parents are in prison on the global agenda.





## News from the world: Focus on US

### **Out4Life — A helping hand to prisoners and their families Virginia, USA**

Every year, 13,000 prisoners are released in Virginia. But one in three is back behind bars within three years. But the state is determined to change this statistic. To this end, various agencies held a conference involving government, business and social services to address issues related to prisoners' re-entry into society. The conference aimed to begin a dialogue about how to help the released in terms of housing, relationships with others and finding jobs.

Source: [www.demosnewspond.com/pf/news/july\\_26\\_28\\_virginia\\_govt\\_and\\_community\\_leaders\\_work\\_to\\_stop\\_revolving\\_door\\_/](http://www.demosnewspond.com/pf/news/july_26_28_virginia_govt_and_community_leaders_work_to_stop_revolving_door_/)

### **Grant for mentoring children of Ohio's inmates Ohio, USA**

About 56,000 children in Ohio have a parent in prison. Some of these children are already involved in mentoring agencies, such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters. These provide the children with role models, in whom they can confide and seek comfort. The US Department of Health and Human Services recently granted \$1.5 billion to the mentor agencies, not only enabling them to continue their work with the children already in the program but also making it possible to find mentors for an additional 433 children of prisoners.

Source: [www.vindy.com/news/2010/oct/07/grant-expand-mentoring-ohio-inmates-children/?new](http://www.vindy.com/news/2010/oct/07/grant-expand-mentoring-ohio-inmates-children/?new)





### **morning tears Belgium**

BNP Paribas Fortis

Account No: 001-4495454-65

IBAN: BE 18001449545465

BIC/SWIFT: GEBABEBB

### **morning tears Netherlands**

ABN Amro

Account No: 45.75.13.764

Stichting Morning Tears Nederland

IBAN: NL81ABNA0457513764

BIC/SWIFT: ABNANL2A

### **morning tears Spain**

La Caixa d'Estalvis i Pensions

Account No: 2100.0233.99.0200332319

IBAN: ES28 21000233990200332319

BIC/SWIFT: CAIXAESBXXX

### **morning tears Denmark**

Danske Bank

Account No: 10490189 Reg. Nr. 1551

IBAN: DK14 3000 0010 4901 89

BIC/SWIFT: DABADKKK

### **morning tears China**

Bank of China, Beijing Branch [中行北京分行]

No.8 Ya Bao Lu, Beijing, China [中北京雅路8]

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, The Netherlands, Denmark, the USA and China.

**morning tears** is run mainly 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.