

Letter of Introduction, Pang BaoLiang*

Guanlan Mama,

Greetings. Please forgive me for writing to you out of the blue.

My name is Pang BaoLiang [Anthony], I am a general assistant at Catholic Charities in Shaanxi Province. I heard about you from Pang Lina (one of the early Guanlan Sisters). Pang Lina and I are from the same village, my home and hers are on the same face of the hill. Actually, I heard about your sponsoring poor students in my home village when I was in college. Knowing you are continuing helping poor students in China, I am very excited to introduce Xian Ren Ai Qing Nian Hui [Xi'an Love & Benevolence Youth Association.)

Similar to many other kids, I grew up in a poor peasant family. I have 4 other siblings; I am the youngest. My father studied at a Catholic Divinity School, then due to the Cultural Revolution, my father returned to the village. After the Opening and Reform, some religious liberties were reinstated. My father has been organizing music, bible study, and clinics for local folks in our home village. Influenced by our father, my 2nd elder brother and 2nd elder sister studied in Xi'an Theology School, now they are a priest and nun in the Xi'an Catholic District. My mom passed due to illness when I was 10, my father passed away in the year I sat for the national college exam. My eldest sister has married out. Now at home in the village, there is only the eldest brother, his wife and two nephews.

Like our neighbors, we make a living by farming. When there is no farm work, my eldest brother leaves to do construction labor to earn an income. Because I went to high school and college, the high tuition accumulated and put a lot of pressure on the family. Then 2 nephews dropped out of school; now they like my big brother are day laborers in the city, doing the dirtiest and hardest work their life long, being looked down on by city people. Even if I could help my nephews find suitable jobs, there are so many more who need help around us.

My family is an exception because my family and society gave me opportunities. Receiving the sponsorship and scholarship from the Xi'an Catholic District changed my destiny. I became the first college student from our village, later on one other one followed in 2006. Now there is Pang Lina who graduated from high school (senior secondary) with your Scholarship. Now there is one studying for an associate degree, but the great majority of others drop out of school after primary, though many drop out before they finish it, and only a very few can finish junior middle school. My research data shows that in Anjinggou village in 2005, out of 117 elementary and junior secondary school students, only 24 went on to senior secondary school and above (including one college student). In 2006, only 10 went beyond junior secondary school, 1 in academic senior secondary, 1 in technical vocational senior secondary

* Translation from Chinese.

Knowledge is the key to change one's destiny. These kids in poor villages who don't graduate from primary school are almost all illiterate and then try to make a living in the cities. All they can do is wash dishes in small food stalls until they are strong enough to do hard physical labor.

Lack of culture produces poverty, poverty only lets people see a future of making money through hard labor, further ignoring the cultivation of their kids because they do not know how to create opportunities for children's development that could change their destiny, struggling in this vicious cycle, living this poor life.

Résumé

Male, born July 1st, 1981, now living in Xi'an.

Sept, 2001—June, 2005, Ningxia University, botanic protection major

June, 2005---Jan, 2008, social work for Xi'an Catholic District, professional social work training

Manage project—German “mission”(preserving drinking water for Shaanxi poor rural population, vegetable and organic agriculture, mini library, organization newsletters, handouts. Participating in promoting health in rural area

Training participation: Beijing Beineng center training term 5 (NGO management and assessment. German “mission” China NGO training, Northwestern NGO training.

Attended the 3rd Asian Farmers' Conference & training for Sustainable Agriculture, Philippines, July-Oct of 2007

Xi'an Ren Ai Qing Nian Hui [Xi'an Love & Benevolence Youth Association]

This association was founded by farmer's children who after graduating from college worked in cities. We aim to build a loving platform for families and children of Shaanxi mountainous areas, to provide them with development opportunities. Through a series of activities to help this marginalized population discover their capacity, promote self development and eventually improve development in western rural region in China.

“Practicing love, building hope” is our mission. Currently, we are working as volunteers doing all we can to help. Zi Qiang foundation is our current plan for sponsoring education. Since 2005, we are sponsoring 2 poor kids from single parent households to go to school, there are more and more families who need our help. Besides donating clothing, in 2007, through our own savings, we provided 5 elementary students with 300 RMB stipends for living expenses. Due to the economic crisis this year, everybody's budget is tight, so we can not do anything for many kids.

We are very excited to know you Guanlan mama through Pang Lina, one of our volunteers, and we hope to receive your support. Our advantages are:

- (1) Being students from poor villages ourselves, we understand better about the change of one's destiny wrought by education. We also understand more what these kids are thinking, it is easier for us to use our life experience and stories to encourage them to study.

- (2) Growing up in rural areas lets us understand better the behavior of rural parents. It is easier for us to approach them, intervene in their attitude towards education.
- (3) We, more or less, were able to finish school with others' help. We know, we appreciate, we pay back, which makes our service sincere.

If you are interested in us, we can collaborate via e-mail. Our thoughts on the Scholarships are that they provide opportunities for going to school, where through their studies and other activities the kids love for reading and study will be stimulated. Also necessary is to intervene with parents to enlist them in better supporting their children's education.

Looking forward to your reply.

Pang Baoliang.

Dec. 30, 2008