



← **Elijah** (about 4 ½ years old with albinism) joined a family of his very own at the end of March after being in our care at "Shekinah Shalom" since he was about one week old. His friends, Joy (about 5 ½ years old with spina bifida) and Samuel (about 7 years old with a vascular condition of brain and neck), giggle and peek out from under their covers as staff tuck them all into bed on their last night together.

**Elijah** has had a special bond with **Lindy F.** (Acting Manager at Shekinah Shalom) since Lindy joined the work in the fall of 2003. Since they also share some similar physical features, bystanders in town or in the hospital often assumed that they were from the same family! →



**Elijah** Thoughtful, bright, inquisitive and active, Elijah has left a big mark on many of our hearts and numerous stories to share! As we share some of them with you, may you be encouraged to lift him up as he adjusts to his new family and life in the United States. Also remember the other older children who remain in our care who still give us smiles, as they wait to be matched with families.

When we first tried to send Elijah to the local kindergarten, it broke our hearts that he was denied acceptance by the school authorities. They feared that albinism (the lack of pigment in his skin, hair and eyes) is contagious and that the other children in the class might catch it. Once it was explained that it's a genetic condition and we pointed out to them that no other children in our care had caught this, they allowed him to join the class...and it would never be the same!

One evening, Elijah's head dropped lower and lower as his "ayi" (auntie, caregiver) back at Shekinah Shalom asked him what he had done to be suspended from school for a few days. His silence spoke of the regret he had of standing on the classroom piano keyboard! He loved school and it certainly was punishment not to be able to attend. Sometimes, we would hear Elijah and the other school children, after they had been tucked in at night, sharing with the younger children in their room what they had learned at school that day. The conversation would progress into discussions about their "ayis". "Which one is tallest? Which one is most beautiful?"

Elijah was quite diplomatic. Whichever of his ayis asked him which ayi he thought was the most beautiful, he would always say to her "You!"

When he found out that he was matched with a family in the United States and would be adopted soon, he promised to buy each caregiver a ring, promised X.Q. (driver) a new van and promised Vivian (translator) a Mercedes Benz!

But it seems Elijah forgot all about this once introduced to his new parents! Grace G. (Executive Officer of Personnel), present at the adoption, retells how joyous the event was that day. "While he was playing, he laughed happily. Most of us in the room didn't understand why he was so happy. Now I think it's our father who gave him such laughter that day, which [assures]...us that Elijah was and is in His hands and this little boy is not only secure but blessed by the father of the fatherless."

**Please join us in lifting up the remaining older children in our care, especially those who are not able to be adopted. We believe father has plans for them, plans that are bright and which will reveal his love in magnificent ways. Thank you for uniting with us in seeking the next steps in their care.**

**How** do you compress 6 years of memories and experiences into one article? The task is absolutely impossible so we will just give you some highlights:

Don't take that child. She is too disabled. She will never walk. No one will ever want to adopt her. No, we will not accept that! Father says to take her so we will not listen to the opinions of other people. That was six years ago and every prediction proved false. Today, this darling does have a family who loves her. She did walk and now, after several surgeries, she can almost stand straight. She loves ballet class and wins the heart of everyone she meets with her sweet smile and optimistic attitude. Father has a plan for this little life, we just know it. We are grateful to have been part of that plan.

PTL, two children have just been adopted! Now we have beds free to bring in two more little ones. Walk into the admission room and try to make a choice. How to choose from among the twenty or so children? They are all so small and helpless. Each one is an adorable little creation with their life ahead of them. We can take two, only two. This one has a heart problem. Those three born with cleft lips and palates. The one in my arms does not look like she will survive the night. Oh, you are a big boy over there, already walking. Of course, that is when your parents realized something was wrong with your legs. I want them all. They each deserve love. Father, we have space for two. Which ones do you want us to take? Which two have you already decided will come into our care? Yes, I believe you want me to select this one and the little one over there. The rest I command into your hands. What else can I do?

"Our child is so precious. She brings such joy into our lives. Last night she did the cutest thing..." These are the e-mails that make my job so enjoyable. Sometimes I think I have the best job in the whole Childcare department. Almost every day I receive another success story from some adoptive family. "My child has started school. Our son's operation went so well. Little Jenny is so well adjusted. Thank you for the work that you are doing." How many people in the world spend much of their working day receiving compliments and good news? What a blessing!

Good-bye little one, you were with us such a short time. Just a few weeks ago we brought you into our care, into our hearts. You were so fragile- too fragile it seems. Now we have to say "good-bye". Your eternal Father has called you home. We know you are happy now. You no longer feel the pain. It is hard to say good-bye, it always is. We will miss you, but we will see you again. For now, there are other children that need our love.

Oh, did you hear so and so is going home next month? Another friend leaving?! One more close relationship that will now have to be kept up through e-mail. We will miss you. Of course someone will come to fill your position- even though no one could ever take your place. What to do then? Try and build another relationship. How many people have come and gone in the last six years? So tempting to put up walls-keep everyone away. Be nice, be friendly, but do not let anyone into your heart. They will just go away in a year or two. That is the nature of the work we do- people come, people go. No! That is the way the enemy wants us to feel, defeated, isolated. We will not give in. Welcome the next person. Invite them over for dinner. They must feel alone in a new land. I am sure they can use a friend.

Now we are the ones that are leaving. Time to move on to the next step. Excitement at facing the new challenges. Sadness at leaving people behind. How does one say good-bye to the children? Father knows what He is doing. After all, our lives belong to Him. We will trust and obey. As long as He is the lamp for our feet we will walk in the light to where He leads. To Him be the glory.

~Thanks for the memories, Tom and Delphine

## ELA Social Welfare

We give grateful thanks for the very special day on March 25, 2004 when we celebrated the opening at the Bethesda Drop-In Center.

In the morning nearly 30 local & overseas people gathered together in the new centre to give thanks and to praise our faithful God for the new work with drug addicts in a city in the North-West of China. We were inspired by the preaching of a local brother, and we broke bread together as the family of God.



In the afternoon we joined together with the local officials of the Charity Federation who have been so supportive. From the very beginning these very experienced, mainly retired, high level officials, who have a strong and sincere concern for the poor and needy in their province have encouraged us in our desire to help drug addicts. The warmth of welcome and interest has surpassed anything we have known in other provinces. The new lady director has very high level responsibilities and is exceptionally dynamic. When she heard of our work in other provinces she extended an invitation to us to become involved with them in the care of others in need for example orphans who have none to care for them, the elderly and the homeless. We need to seek God for His guidance and wisdom for the way ahead.

There is an exceptionally strong relationship between the local and overseas believers and also a unity amongst the local believers which is an answer to the many prayers over many generations.

We believe that the door has been opened wide for His work to grow in this province and to be established according to His purposes. We are all delighted to support Wendy and her small team as they seek Him for the way forward. We are particularly thrilled for Wendy as we see a vision that she has held in her heart since 1991 begin to come to fruition. She already has 5 clients who have expressed a desire to stay off drugs and 3 of them have recognized the very real possibility of relapsing into drug taking. She would value prayer for them and for their weekly visits to the detox center.

For those of you who read the Health for China update for March you will have seen the write up of Wendy's vision. Since then she has become the head of a new department with a primary emphasis on social welfare.

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