

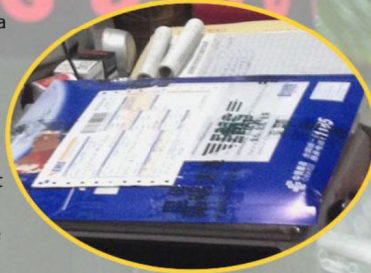


Nic, Sarah, Ayla & Seren

Newsletter August 2014

As part of the adoption process we had to choose 6 photos that summed up our lives. It meant we had to articulate our priorities. We listed; honouring commitment (to each other), serving others, making memories, being part of community, personal achievements and celebrating life.

The last couple of months have felt like a crazy blend of all these things at once! Even Sarah's maternity leave has been repeatedly interrupted by 'unavoidable commitments'. There have certainly been times when tempers and sleep have been too short, and we readily acknowledge that rest isn't optional. But for the most part, we're ok with the craziness, because these priorities aren't a description of how life is, but of who we want to be. And to live a life that 'ticks all the boxes' is a privilege that we don't take for granted.



Last three months



Nic: Juggling work, Uni and the occasional afternoons with the two girls has made life busy and exciting. Seeing the girls at the institution excel and be excited at work and also watching as they struggle through dates, days and months; seeing my girls having fun, laughing and playing together as well as intervening in the usual fights and spats both sets of girls have been fun and frustrating to witness.

Refining my dissertation on employment of the disabled in a developing city has been challenging and stimulating and will be interesting to see it progress. And of course there's always a little time to relax with a game of football with Chinese friends.

Sarah: It was great to have our intern, Hayley, here for a month helping to reinforce what we'd been teaching the adult orphan girls. The last 3 months have been a blur and I can barely remember what life was like without our 2 daughters. It's been so much fun introducing Seren to the people in our world. With just 2 weeks of maternity leave left, I'm so grateful for the time to focus on my girls but also really looking forward to getting back into the foundation work and language study.



Ayla: There's been so much change lately; starting kindergarten (and being immersed in Chinese language), becoming a big sister, travelling to 4 cities in the last 8 weeks... She's done so well! She's (mostly!) kind and considerate and likes to tell people her and Seren are twins. Unfortunately, she now thinks that trains, planes and parties are commonplace with her regularly asking; "If I have a good nap, can we have a party/sleep on the train/etc/etc. I'll help move the sofas/pack the bags!"

Seren: Words can't describe what a gift she's been, or the challenges she's had to overcome in the last 2 months but has (mostly!) done it smiling. She understands so much and has learnt about books, sharing and how to tease in a kind/fun way. She's just 2 weeks away from her 2nd birthday and we can't help but feel there's a lot to celebrate.



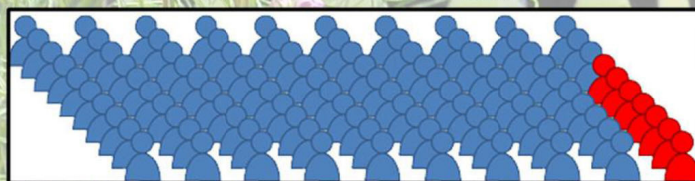
The coming quarter:

- 1) Our project with the Foundation is welcoming a 22 year old boy who is profoundly deaf. He will be trained in carpentry alongside a company that employs deaf workers as well as being trained and equipped to eventually live independently. Despite his disability, he communicates well through reading and writing.
- 2) A possible trip back to the UK. This will be our first time home as a family in almost 2 years and, as well as hopefully finishing the processes for Seren's citizenship and British passport, will be a time to rest and catch up with friends and family. However, this is conditional on the visa application for Seren being successful.

Update on work with the Social Welfare Institution and Xiao Wu and Xiao Guan:
We recently asked the girls how they spent their first month's wages. Xiao Wu spent half on a pair of jeans – a perfect way for a 19 year old to spend her first, well-earned salary!

We also had a team of American students here in May helping with weekly craft activities and running a carnival for some of the institution's 800 residents; everyone had such a great time!

'Jobs connect adults to their societies' (Ban Ki-Moon)



In Guangzhou 7.5% of intellectually disabled people are employed. Sources: Global Times and United Nations

Despite both the UN and China's commitment to see more disabled people in the work place, even in China's most developed province, currently only 7.5% of those with learning disabilities are employed.

Keep us in mind as:

- 1) We start working with Kunnan, the lad studying carpentry, in the next few days.
- 2) We continue to work through the visa, citizenship and British passport processes for Seren.
- 3) Sarah returns to work and language school in the next fortnight.
- 4) We help support a couple of families – not connected with the Foundation work – with special needs children.