

BOH Families Speak Out



Bridge of Hope

We have now completed our 5th successful Bridge of Hope program for children from Chinese orphanages! The children who have returned home to their families are too young or too new to the English language to write themselves, so their parents (or soon-to-be parents) are sharing their stories about the miracle of strangers becoming families due to our efforts.



Max

What a year it has been! After many years of trying to adopt from other agencies, an email popped up about 13 boys being hosted in the USA in summer 2014. We didn't apply to host, but we signed up to meet them.

A week before our meet and greet, we were asked to step in to host one of two boys who were staying with a host-only family. The other boy had become ill and required more attention, so the family asked for "our" child to be moved to a family where he could better enjoy his visit. A little nervous, we said yes. Boy, were we happy we did!

We picked up Guo De in Maryland and had an instant connection. During his short visit, we wanted to show him a New York experience. We didn't want to overwhelm him, but that turned out not to be a problem. As soon as we said let's go to the car, he grabbed his hat and shoes and went to the front door. Guo De was very curious and quiet, but when he went to concerts in the park, he stole the show. He would dance and clap and smile from ear to ear.

This program truly was the best fit for us. We are sitting on the plane to go to China, and instead of reading and watching movies, we are looking at the pictures of our two weeks together. He has truly changed our lives.

2 weeks later..... Gotcha Day will be forever in our hearts. We love hearing Guo De's (now Max's), laughter throughout the day. We had the best trip of our lives. The staff at Cradle of Hope did an amazing job, from coordination of drivers and interpreters, to checking in on us daily to make sure we were doing ok. The preparation that we were given before the trip was on target and fully prepared us for China. Cradle's goal was to have us focus on the bonding with our son while they handled the rest. I can't imagine doing this trip any other way. We are truly thankful for this agency and how they changed our lives forever.

Matt & Maureen, NY

BOH Families Speak Out

Huang Xin

One day during the spring of 2014 I was going through e-mail when a message asking for host families caught my eye. I opened it and read about a program, Bridge of Hope, that was looking for families to host children from an orphanage in China. I read the description of each child. I got to one that described a little boy, 7 years old, who was deaf. I showed it to my husband and we decided to call and get more information. Our daughter, Grace, is deaf and we thought it would be a great idea to have someone like her. Our family decided to host Huang Xin.

On July 4th we drove to the airport and anxiously awaited the arrival of Huang Xin and his two escorts. Grace was thrilled that for at least 3 weeks she would have a younger brother who was just like her. Our first encounter in the airport was less than we had expected. Huang Xin cried and hid behind his escorts.

Grace and Huang Xin got along wonderfully! Huang Xin loved playing with Grace and our dogs, after he got comfortable with their size - they are gentle giants. We went to swimming lessons, played on the swing set, played on the iPad with Grace and tried new foods. We started teaching him American Sign Language and he began picking it up quickly. Huang Xin and Grace got along just like they had always been together. Huang Xin fit in with our family easily.



Soon our time together came to end and we had to pack up to take him back. Although we knew our time was limited from the beginning, we had no idea how attached we would become in such a short time. We all flew to take him back to Virginia to re-join his group and travel back to China. It was a sad day but we began to count down all of the steps we would go through to bring him home, a day we are all excited about. *(The family is now together again in NY after adoption!)*

Nancy & Roy, NY



Huang Shu

We may not be the typical BOH host family. I am not sure that we would have previously considered adoption. But after losing our nearly 13-year-old son, we realized that we were not done parenting. Nearly two years after he died, we hosted a seven-year-old boy from China.

My husband and I both love children, and Huang Shu brought moments of joy again into our home. He loved to draw with our daughter, explore our nearby playgrounds and was mesmerized by simple pleasures like blowing up balloons and taking bubble baths. He learned to ride a scooter and enjoyed having scooter races. He was a bit mischievous and one day decided it was more fun painting me with chalk than decorating our sidewalk. He liked riding on my husband's shoulders and fell in love with the book *Rainbow Fish*. Even though he probably did not understand the words, he would not go to sleep without being read the book before bed. And he charmed all of the Mandarin speaking adults he met. The cook at one Chinese restaurant even asked if he could keep him.

Despite these pleasures, it wasn't all easy. Huang Shu was initially terrified and not entirely happy being here. He missed familiar foods and being readily understood. And the jet lag really takes its toll on such a young child. He was exhausted as were we. But by the end of the three weeks, we realized he was slowly becoming a part of our family. He finally slept well when curled up against me. He relaxed in my arms after getting his back rubbed. And he seemed to be as sad as we were when he had to return to China. *(The family is now together again in NY after adoption!)*

Amy & Gary, NY

BOH Families Speak Out

Hong Fu

As a Bridge of Hope volunteer family for many years it is not all that unusual for us to have a summer visitor who does not speak English visiting our home. In years past the language spoken has been Russian, but this summer we were asked if we could be a host-only family for a little boy from China. How fortunate our family was to experience a new language, a new culture and to fall in love with a little boy from China.



Our summer visitor arrived a little apprehensive of this family of five smiling at him and speaking very strange words, but he was quickly put at ease with a large plate of Lo Mein Noodles, a bright yellow banana and a Red Lighting McQueen remote control car. In a very short time he was laughing, running, jumping and playing with our 3 teenagers. We were all amazed at how easily our guest blended seamlessly and blissfully into our family. At bedtime he joyfully marched up the stairs to put on pajamas and brush his teeth with our youngest son. He loved movie night, snuggling on the couch with a big bowl of buttered popcorn surrounded by family. He was amazed and filled with laughter to learn that pushing pedals on this strange wheeled object propelled him forward. Apprehensive at first about the swimming pool, once he learned he would always be caught in our waiting arms he leaped with such faith knowing he would be embraced and swirled around the pool in our arms! "Again! Again!" were words he learned quickly.

What a gift it was to watch our Bridge of Hope visitor experience so many firsts this summer. He experienced riding a bike, playing basketball, building sand castles, and then smashing those castles back into small granules of sand only to start building all over again. He was thrilled to journey to the amusement park with us and laughed joyfully as these two 55+ year old parents tried to squeeze themselves into a safari jeep that was at least five times too small for them to take a ride with him.

But of course the greatest gift of all was introducing Hong Fu to his forever family. Because of Bridge of Hope, this adorable, smart and joyful little boy with an incredible sense of humor will now have a big sister, a big brother, a little sister and a mom and dad to call his very own—a family who will love and cherish him for the rest of his life and open arms always ready to catch him. This is just a dream for many of the kids who languish in orphanages, dreaming about the day a mom and dad will come for them; but you can help make that dream come true for many of these waiting children by supporting Bridge of Hope.

Kathleen & Chuck, CT—Hong Fu's Host Family



We are so thankful for the Bridge of Hope program. This past July we saw a post on an advocacy FB page about children being hosted in Connecticut. One particular little boy, Hong Fu, stood out to us. We saw something in his eyes and sweet smile.

We contacted Cradle of Hope and spoke at length about driving 16+ hours to meet him. We decided that meeting this precious boy face to face was a unique opportunity. We packed our bags and made a road trip out of it. We played at the pool with this child at his host family's beautiful home and instantly connected with him.

His host family was taking wonderful care of him and it showed! It was truly love at first sight. Our 3 children who joined us for the road trip were able to meet and play with him too. As we pulled out of their driveway at the end of our meeting time he stood in the driveway holding his host mom's hand and blowing us kisses. As a family we all knew that we wanted to pursue his adoption. Because of his host family and the Bridge of Hope program we are thrilled to share that we will soon be adding him as a son to our family. We are forever grateful for the opportunity to meet him and to pursue his adoption. *(The family is now together after adoption!)*

Rainer & Mitch, TN—Hong Fu's Adoptive Family

BRIDGE OF HOPE 2016 SPEAK OUT

Waiting for Ezekiel

Without overstating it, our lives were forever changed by the Bridge of Hope Program. In the summer of 2014, we were invited by friends to visit a family that lived near us. We were told that they were hosting a little boy from an orphanage in China, but they were not in position to add him to their family. While we had not seriously considered international adoption, we were happy to meet this family and the little boy.



Our visit was short...perhaps 90 minutes, and came one day before the Bridge of Hope kids were scheduled to return to China. The little boy was a playful, cheerful and inquisitive four-year-old who quickly warmed up to the strangers. Little did we know, then, how that short 90-minute visit was going to change our lives.

We were not immediately convinced to pursue the international adoption, but after discussion and prayer, we agreed to begin the process. We proceeded cautiously, knowing that there were a number of personal hurdles that had to be overcome before we would be approved as adoptive parents. As we were soon to find out, the initial approval would be just the beginning. A mountain of paperwork still lay ahead. Fortunately, Cradle of Hope helped to guide us through the administrative maze that consumed us for the next nine months.

As we cleared each requirement and moved a step closer to completing the adoption, our emotional investment also grew. We were eager to get news, photos and updates about our little boy and to continue to monitor his development back in his home in Datong.

Our trip to China to complete the adoption was in August 2015, exactly one year after beginning the process with Cradle of Hope. The agency's expertise prepared us well as we encountered very little during our visit to China that was unexpected. Gotcha Day went smoothly, and as he had done a year earlier during our first meeting, our little boy warmed up to us quickly. Perhaps drawing on his prior Bridge of Hope experience, he adjusted seamlessly to the unfamiliar environment and the two grown-ups who were constantly showering him with love and affection.



Despite our attempts to help him understand that the last orphanage visit was simply a chance to say good-bye to his teachers, classmates and friends, he couldn't wait to leave. He clung to us throughout the brief visit, crying much of the time, and his cheerful demeanor reappeared only after we returned to the van for our four-hour trip back to the Shanxi province capital of Taiyuan. It was the seminal moment when we knew that he was now ours, and perhaps, when he also knew the same thing.

Now, a little over a year later, we can't imagine our life without this little boy. Ezekiel reveals more of his personality each day and remains the playful, cheerful and inquisitive little guy that we met on our very first encounter during the Bridge of Hope Program in 2014. He loves to learn, to try new experiences and to conquer new challenges. He is affectionate, obedient, considerate and charming. He has the cutest giggle in the world and a perpetual smile on his face. He captures our hearts in new ways each day, and his joyful spirit is a true blessing to our family.

Garo and Sherry, Maryland

BRIDGE OF HOPE 2016 SPEAK OUT

In July 2014 we hosted Liam, who would become my second son and a brother to my oldest son Mark in December 2015. Mark was adopted from China when he was 27 months old and I had envisioned having several children at the beginning of parenthood. However, the time went by quickly before I was in a position to adopt a second child. Mark was eight years old and I wanted a child close in age so that they could have a close relationship. It was important that the new child and Mark would be compatible and be able to have a real brother bond. I was excited to learn about the opportunity to host a child through Cradle of Hope as a way of getting to know the new member of our family.



We live in the US Southwest but spent three weeks in Maryland at a long term stay motel and enrolled both boys in a day camp there. It was a great time for everyone because that was the longest vacation we have had together. We all got to explore Washington DC, Baltimore and Annapolis. The boys hit it off from the start with Mark resurrecting his long forgotten Mandarin. Mark was used to being the only child but took to having a sibling well although he did want to stay "top dog." Liam has a very sunny disposition and is very easy going so they were a good fit. Summer hosting let us all know one another and laid a foundation for our becoming a family. For me I don't think I would have had confidence to adopt an older child without meeting him first. For Liam, it was a chance to see life in America and avoid his fear of being adopted by strangers and going to a new country. Overall, things have been very smooth integrating Liam into our family and into life in America. We are big fans of the Bridge of Hope program.

Chavonne Yee, Arizona



My name is Katya Hickey, I am 16 years old and a junior in high school. Over the years Bridge of Hope has become a very important part of my life. Our family has been volunteering for Bridge of Hope for as long as I can remember.

There are many reasons why I volunteer for Bridge of Hope. The biggest reason is that I was once an orphan. I was born in Russia and spent the first 18 months of my life in an orphanage in Tyumen, Russia. I don't remember those months but I understand how lucky I am to be here in the United States with a family who loves me and supports me through the many challenges of life. I also understand that there are millions of children around the world who do not have a family and may never have a family; programs like Bridge of Hope can change that. I cannot imagine life without someone to love and people who love and care about you. All children should have a family to love, support and nurture them. Bridge of Hope

has brought hundreds of children to the United States from Russia, Ukraine, Colombia and now China. I have met and played with many of these children over the years, and I am so happy to say most of these children have found their forever families because of Bridge of Hope.

I want to do everything I can to help these children meet and ultimately find a permanent loving family. I want all the children who come through Bridge of Hope to see that somewhere out there a family is waiting to hug them and love them forever. I have watched my mom work and play with so many of the kids who visit through Bridge of Hope my entire life. I would love to follow in the footsteps of my mom and be a living example of hope for these children and families that they can have the same opportunities that I have and find the love that all of us deserve. I love my family and cannot imagine living my life without them. *Katya Hickey, Connecticut*

BRIDGE OF HOPE 2016 SPEAK OUT

We got the call in early July of 2014. Our caseworker Mary had reached out to us with a unique proposition. My wife Kelli and I had gone through a home study the previous year and were preparing for a domestic infant adoption, but on that fateful day, Mary was calling to ask if we'd consider adopting a 9 year old boy from China. *Not only if we would consider an international adoption but whether we would actually like to meet this specific 9 year old in a few days!*

Kelli and I hung up the phone and proceeded to do some very real soul searching. The prospect of adopting an older child was daunting to say the least and made even more so by the fact that he spoke no English. Kelli and I had readied ourselves for a domestic adoption up to the age of 4. As an adopted kid herself, Kelli was thrilled with the idea of an open adoption where the child might eventually get to know their birth parent. The idea of international adoption threw that notion completely out the window.

We agreed to meet with Mary and the little boy who had flown all the way from China to be here. CHAC had asked Mary to host him as part of Bridge of Hope so that he could have his right eye looked at by a specialist and possibly find a home for him in the US. Without this amazing program, Kelli and I wouldn't have had the chance to meet such an amazing kid. We never would have had the life changing experience that has stretched and grown us not only as parents but as people.



Our first meeting was fantastic and the most singularly memorable experience I have ever had at Chuck E Cheese! Over the course of the next three weeks, we got to know Kangnian through picnics, swimming parties, and even going to multiple eye exams. I was so impressed with the courage and tenacity of one little boy to operate in such a distinctly foreign environment. He got to spend time in our home even meeting and befriending our three cats. Kelli and I almost immediately began to fall in love with him.

Meeting Kangnian (who is now officially Gregory Kangnian Sincock) gave us the chance to get to know what a special little personality he is and gave him a chance to get to know us. While we were only able to spend three weeks or so with him, that time gave us the courage and the fortitude to see through the complex process of international adoption. Having pictures with him, having experiences with him, and having a burgeoning love for him let us truly see the vision that would be realized with our little family.

On our Gotcha Day, Gregory looked so small and scared as he entered the office of the Chinese adoption authority. The nervousness etched across his features mirrored the anxiety that we were feeling in our hearts. However, that anxiety quickly passed as he began to recall the time that we had spent together in the United States. Kelli and I could feel the trust begin to build almost immediately. He had already visited the house that would become his home. He had pictures we had taken together. He had the knowledge that this would be a family to love him.

Without meeting Gregory in advance, Kelli and I would not have had the confidence we did to see the adoption through. We are truly grateful that Cradle of Hope and Bridge of Hope enabled us to start the amazing little family we've always dreamed of having!

Austin & Kelli Sincock, Virginia

ADOPTION FROM CHINA
CRADLE OF HOPE ADOPTION CENTER

We'd love to help your family grow!



CHILDREN AVAILABLE: Children of all ages with minor/moderate to severe special needs are available through the Special Focus program. Some conditions may be relatively minor or have already been surgically corrected, others will require further intervention once the child is home. A checklist of all special potential special needs is available for your review and you are able to indicate what special needs you are open to. Comprehensive medical and developmental information provided as well as photos and usually video.

LENGTH OF PROCESS: The length of wait for a referral of a young healthy child now exceeds 7 years. ***But the processing of special needs adoptions is substantially expedited and can often be completed within 12 months.*** Most special needs children are matched with families before they begin their adoption paperwork. Once a family has accepted a referral and submits an adoption dossier to Beijing, they travel to China to bring the child home in about 7 to 9 months.

TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS: At least one parent must travel to China once to finalize adoption but both parents traveling is preferred. Families will be assisted by bilingual coordinators during their two week trip. Internal travel logistics including hotels, domestic flights and ground transportation will be arranged by our China office.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Adoptive parents must be at least 30 and there is no upper age limit. Couples must be married at least 2 years (longer if previously divorced). Married applicants with health or mental health diagnoses are eligible if symptoms are minor and well controlled by medication and one spouse has no issues, including those substantially overweight. Single women are eligible to adopt children with special needs from China. China can also accept highly qualified single men. Additional criteria exists for potential adoptive parents and can be provided in detail. Some flexibility on some criteria is available on a case by case basis.

HOSTING: *Our Bridge of Hope hosting program offers families opportunities to host children for 2-3 weeks during winter or summer US visits. We prefer host families interested in adopting an older child. All children must return to China at the end of the host program, but families proceed with the normal adoption process to bring them home.*

See descriptions, photos, and video of our waiting children at www.cradlehope.org Waiting Child link. For more information, contact Cradle of Hope.

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