

Evergreen Yangqu Projects
Shanxi Evergreen Service
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Evergreen's Purpose statement and core values

Evergreen's purpose is to assist Shanxi and other Chinese Provinces by developing public benefit services for the common people, continuing the good works of Ye Yongqing (Peter Torjesen), acknowledging God's gracious calling in our lives, and reflecting the credibility of Christ.

Our core values are:

- Excellence
- Integrity
- Faithfulness
- Teamwork
- Local Appropriateness

Three periods of time

As they buried her husband's body into the frozen soil of northern Shanxi Province, Valborg Torjesen must have wondered what God was trying to accomplish through this tragedy. She and her husband Peter (Chinese name meant Leaf Evergreen) had arrived over twenty years earlier in 1919. They had learned the language, moved up to the northern most border of the province, and settled in to raise their family. Peter, in addition to preaching and church planting, helped start a school in the area. Meanwhile, Valborg's nursing background proved valuable in helping her provide medical care for the local people. Their four children were also born on the field. They were well-established in the community, and were looking forward to more fruitful ministry. The Sino-Japanese war caused much concern, but also provided many opportunities to provide care and aide for the injured. Little did they know that the care they provided injured soldiers made them a target for the Japanese military. On December 14 1939, a squadron of Japanese bombers flew overhead and released their load. As their house was hit, the force of the explosion threw Valborg clear of the collapsing walls. Peter however was hit and died instantly. Valborg and the children were left wondering how God would work through the loss of their husband and father.

Almost fifty years later, God answered their question. In 1990, the Torjesen children were invited to return to Shanxi Province to attend the dedication of a memorial to their father. Peter Torjesen's children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren arrived from various parts of the world to attend this ceremony. At that time, the vice-governor of the province extended an invitation for the family to return to Shanxi and "do what their grandfather had done." After three years of planning and prayer, the first team of three families from the Evergreen Family Friendship Service ("Evergreen" for short) moved into Taiyuan, the capitol of the province.

Now, ten years later, we can look back and see God's hand in moving and changing us to work and provide meaningful and relevant services to the communities in which we live. Those initial plans bear slight resemblance to present realities. The following paragraphs will chronicle some of the advances, changes and turns that God led us through, as well as what directions He seems to be pointing us toward.

Yangqu County

In 1995, the Yangqu County Public Security was called to investigate the sighting of some foreigners at one of the township hospitals. Apparently, these foreigners were asking a lot of questions about the local healthcare system, as well as about the health of local farmers. Upon arriving at the scene, they discovered that the foreigners were part of the Evergreen Medical Team, and that they were at the township hospital by invitation of the Provincial Public Health Department! This team had spent the previous two years looking for an opening into the system. They first knocked on the doors of the large provincial level hospitals, but soon found out they did not have the degree of specialization nor the financial resources to interest the leaders of these institutions. In a rather fortunate turn, the opportunity for training village doctors came up. This initial investigation marked the start of the work in Yangqu County.

Yangqu County, located in the north east corner of Taiyuan prefecture, is only 30 km from the capitol of the province. Despite its close proximity, rural health conditions, educational opportunities, and the overall level of the population seem far removed from the provincial seat of power. According to 1996 numbers (the year Evergreen began work in Yangqu County), the county has a total population of 138999, the majority of which live in the 245 villages. The hilly terrain and lack of water (annual rainfall of 44 cm) make farming difficult for most, as confirmed by the average annual per capita income of 1415 RMB (USD 171.30). Educational opportunities are also limited, as there were only 64 people in the county with a bachelor's degree level education or higher.¹ About 10% of the county's population is professing Catholics (13,000), with about 250 Buddhists, and a smattering of Muslims, Daoists, and Christians.²

Yangqu Profiles

Dr. Peng has occupied practically every position available in the medical system in Yangqu County. He was in the inaugural class of the Yangqu County Public Health School. He has worked as a township doctor, township hospital director, County Hospital doctor, County Hospital administrator, Public Health Department manager, and teacher at the public health school. He was set to close out his working years as a teacher there when a stroke cut is career short. This too, turned out to be an opportunity, as his retirement allowed him to manage Evergreen's Well Baby program. His knowledge of the system and relationships within the network allow him to carry out his life's work without the limitations he experienced while in the system.

As Mr. Wang looked over his small plot, he remembered his desperation of a few winters back. His wife had fallen on an icy road, fracturing her hip. He immediately brought her to the hospital where she was put in traction. He had spent all that he had, but ran out of money a couple of weeks short of discharge. At that point, he somehow heard about Evergreen's Samaritan Fund. Through the assistance given, his wife was able to complete her treatment and recover quite well. Mr. Wang maintained contact with Evergreen, so when the opportunity came up to manage one of Evergreen's experimental agriculture plots, he readily agreed. Now, he is not only learning about new techniques and strains of vegetables that would improve his family's income, but is also involved in studies with our staff.

¹ P. 2-3, Yangqu County Statistics, Shanxi Guji Publishing Company, 1999.

² p. 466, *ibid.*

Mr. Liu was amazed as Dr. Alice Chen, one of Evergreen's doctors, brought several bags of formula to his home. His twin infant girls had become increasingly weak, and were quite malnourished by the time Dr. Chen had found them during a Well Baby visit. While Mrs. Liu cared for her children, she was distracted by her mental illness, and was unable to provide them the care they needed. Mr. Liu had just recovered from tuberculosis, and had also been unable to care for them. Through Dr. Chen's care, and later through the introduction of some drip irrigation equipment, the Liu's were able to improve both their health as well as their economic situation.

Mrs. Wang had been sent home to die. Although she had just turned thirty, she had already been ill for several years. She had been treated at several of the provincial level hospitals in Taiyuan, and her family had spent more money than they had to assist her. As her pneumonia progressed and her kidneys failed, the family finally decided to take her home rather than letting her die in a city hospital. When Dr. David Leung visited her the next day at her village home, she could only weep over the fact that she would not have the opportunity to care for daughter or mother. After praying for her and sharing about the way, truth, and life, Dr. Leung returned home. One week later he returned to find her sitting up and much improved. When they discussed the previous week's topics again, she asked she might enter into that way. Some months later, we found that Mrs. Wang had not only joined some regular meetings, but had brought her mother as well!

Medical Work

Evergreen is in Yangqu County due to the kind invitation of the Provincial Public Health Department. They initially requested that we provide training for township and village level doctors.³ Research for this training began in 1995, and the actual training began in 1996. Since the initial class, over 140 students have come through 8 separate training courses. The first five were residential programs, lasting from two to three months each. The main focus was on commonly seen problems, with an emphasis on clinical training and interactive teaching methods. The last three courses were conducted at the actual township or maternal child health hospitals. The training and clinic was done at the doctors' usual work site, lasting 10-12 days. During most of these trainings, Evergreen doctors provided about 2/3 of the training, and local doctors made up the remaining 1/3.

Due to the emphasis on clinical training, Evergreen doctors began providing regular care for patients through the outpatient department of the Yangqu County Hospital. Patient numbers slowly grew, as did the number of established patients. This, along with a continually increasing degree of acceptance in the hospital, is a great encouragement to us. The ongoing clinical presence in the Yangqu County Hospital also provides opportunity to promote Continuing Medical Education (CME). In 2002, we worked with the County Hospital administration to provide training an upgrade for ACLS training, upper endoscopy, topics in gynecology, COPD, and Tuberculosis.

³ The governing structure for China is mirrored by its educational and medical systems. The highest level is national, followed by provincial, prefecture, county, township, then village. Most people spend the majority of their time trying to move up this ladder.

The Well Baby program also began in 1996. Since then, the program has spread to include seven of the County's ten townships. The goals for this project include providing basic health education for the parents, screening for high risk children, prevention of rickets, and improving the teaching skills for local village doctors. The number of children examined and parents educated has steadily grown over the past seven years, for a total of about 4200 infants over the first six years. Twelve hundred infants and toddlers received care through the Well Baby program in 2002 alone. As the workers hone their skills in providing individualized care and patient education, we continue to challenge them to improve. The project is jointly managed by Evergreen and Dr. Peng, and run in cooperation with the County Public Health Department, the County Maternal Child Health Department, and eight of the local township hospitals.

After several years of cooperation, the County Maternal Child Health Department approached us about starting an antenatal care project. As this was a logical extension to the Well Baby work, we agreed. However, it became clear after a short period of time that they could not follow through on their initial project proposal. At that time, Evergreen was fortunate enough to find a midwife with excellent teaching skills to coordinate this program. Petra de Ruiters provides the leadership to make this program successful. The goals are similar to those of the Well Baby program (improving the village doctors' health education skills, providing pregnant women with basic care and education, and screening for high risk pregnancies), but the scope is narrower. We are targeting 100 to 150 pregnant women per year located in twelve predetermined villages. During several work evaluations last year, the workers showed considerable progress in their knowledge base, their practical work skills, and their level of self-confidence. Several high-risk mothers were discovered and given appropriate treatment. These successes gave a degree of confidence in all the workers. Focusing around the topic of breast-feeding, we created opportunities this summer for the township doctors to train the women of their villages. This was well received.

In all of our medical projects, we come across patients who are too poor to afford even the most basic form of medical care. From this very concrete need, we were moved to start a Samaritan Fund. This project purposes to provide assistance for local financially disadvantaged patients so that they might recover, escape a cycle of poverty, and be able to contribute again to their family and community. Because of ongoing economic depression in this area, the Samaritan Fund continues to play an important role in subsidizing medical care to needy families. 30 people were helped in 2001, and 28 patients in 2002. About \$5,000 was distributed to assist these 28 patients during this period. Administrator Bai Yongen (her name means eternal grace) not only supervises the program, but also provides compassionate counsel.

While most of our work is focused in Yangqu County, we also do some urban-based medical training. We generally have 3-4 Short-term foreign medical experts come through each year. We also cooperate with the Provincial Level Ministry of Health to help train physician to provide primary health care. The national level Ministry of Health determined that 30% of China's physicians be trained in Family Medicine by the year 2015. In 2001, the Provincial level Public Health Bureau invited Evergreen to take part in the training of the first class of these doctors. The first formal Family Practice training in Shanxi began in

September 2001 with a class of thirty-four students. Evergreen's three Board Certified Family Practice physicians participated in this course, providing clinical instruction, practical classroom teaching, and clinical simulations for these doctors. We repeated this course in March 2003, and recently taught in the inaugural Family Practice Teacher Training Course in August 2003. The Evergreen Medical team plans to continue this participation, and hopes to continue to contribute significantly to this strategic work in Shanxi Province for years to come.

An explosion of opportunities

Over the past two years, an influx of skilled leadership and the addition of many qualified local staff have combined to make up the basis for many new opportunities. Evergreen started a small micro loan project in 1999 in an attempt to help local farmers supplement their meager income. However, because the banking regulations would not allow private entities from making loans, the project was shut down. With the lessons learned from the loan program, we realized that the people in this area are so poor and poorly educated that even with loans or other development projects, they were not able to succeed in pulling themselves out of the cycle of poverty. At that time, we turned our focus to educating the next generation so that they would have a better chance to break out of their poverty situation.

At this point, Evergreen pays scholarships for over 200 students in order for them to stay in school. We also run a bookmobile to 10 village schools in order to provide village children with extracurricular reading material. At the county seat, Huangzhai, we have opened a community center which provides library services, computer training and English programs for students.

In Yangqu, we have also started agricultural work in order to help bring information, technology and training to the local farmers. We have opened an Agricultural training and demonstration center which currently houses a pig raising unit, green house, demonstration field, and biogas digester along with classroom, dormitory, and agricultural library. We have introduced better crop strains, initiated a farmers' cooperatives, trained farmers in better pig management, and placed piglets or sows in poor homes to promote income generation.

Through our service to the common people, we have striven to demonstrate the love of God to the people of Yangqu. Transformation takes time. When we first arrived, Dr. Peng told us that it would take five to ten years for the people to understand why we have come to this place. We have found his statement to be true. It has taken a number of years for us to establish ourselves and our work in this place. Over this period of time, we have had small numbers of people coming to faith because of our work. In the last couple of years, however, we have seen doors opening in this place. As people see us in the hospital, in the school, in the fields, we have been able to touch their lives in a number of places. As we care for various aspects of their life, spiritual care is a natural component. People who have been touched by the Samaritan program, the scholarship program, teachers in the bookmobile program, have made life changes. We have seen the effectiveness of our work extended by our Chinese co-workers who are not constrained by language, culture, or government regulations. Also, a cooperative effort with the local body has provided follow-up in situations where we are unable to follow-up. We have far to go, but we have seen enough success to excite us on to see what else God has in store.

