

Angel Heart International

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AHI 10-Year Anniversary

On February 4, 2017, Angel Heart International (AHI) in partnership with Pacific Academy held our 10-year anniversary, with over two hundred guests in attendance. We collectively raised \$40,000 to fund for surgeries for underserved children with congenital heart disease. The success of such a memorable night is thanks to the many volunteers for kindly dedicating their time and energy. Thank you to all our performers, Pacific Academy Chamber Orchestra and pianists Umi Garrett, Phoebe Pan, and Allison To, for performing such magical pieces throughout the night. Thank you to all the volunteers! A big thank you to Dr. Tao You, the director of the Department of Cardiovascular Surgery at the Gansu Province People's Hospital in China, and Mrs. Niu, a lead volunteer in China, for their unwavering dedication to spreading AHI's vision! Thank you Pacific Academy for playing a major role in organizing the event! Lastly, nothing would be possible without you so thank you so much for your generous donation of your time and money! To read about more details about the 10-year celebration, check out the article by one of our UCI volunteers Celine Phong on our website at angelheartintl.org. For more frequent updates, check out our Facebook page.

We are proud that not only are we able to celebrate the success of 10 years through this anniversary, but we also are able to reflect on the impact and progress we have made on the lives of numerous children. Volunteers from different branches of Angel Heart wrote excerpts on their personal experiences.

UC Irvine Angel Heart Initiative Club

Comprised of both graduate and undergraduate students, the club works to provide financial aid and emotional support to underprivileged children. Both past and current members have attended Gansu trips to visit patients as part of the volunteer-patient journey of continuous support.

"The past three years in AHI at UCI have been eye-opening. Before I started AHI, I never knew how many children were affected by congenital heart disease in rural China, and how much AHI helps them. I am proud to be a part of AHI. I prepare care packages for the kids, and write letters to the children that have undergone heart surgery in the past to encourage them to do well in their future. Now after three years at AHI, I realize just how many children are affected by congenital heart disease and I am proud to be part of making that number smaller." ~**Kimberly Luu**

"The 10th anniversary meeting of AHI gave me an opportunity to learn and appreciate the efforts and services AHI has made for children with CHD throughout the 10 years. I joined AHI UCI in 2014, and the volunteer experience in China with the children and their family really changed me. I started to realize how much help AHI volunteers had brought to the children and their family both financially and psychologically. From the slide show during the meeting, I learned more about AHI community, the children AHI had helped, the volunteers who had devoted 10 years in the organization, and doctors who had helped so many kids. The volunteers moved me because I could imagine how hard it is to continuously devote love and care for such a long period of time. Talking to Zhu Lina, the girl who was helped by AHI, made me realize the change AHI



From left to right: Kelly Chu (CEO of Pacific Academy), Umi Garret (pianist), Allison To (pianist), Phoebe Pan (pianist), Lina Zhu (past patient and AHI representative), Dr. Tao You (Director of Cardiovascular Surgery at Gansu Provincial Hospital)

can bring to a patient's life. She is in college now and she told me that she has become a volunteer in AHI to help more kids like her. She is passing on the love to more people. The meeting was heart-warming and I wish the love of AHI will continuously spread to more people.” ~**Cherry Ren**

“The annual meeting was a great way to truly celebrate the accomplishments that AHI has performed throughout the years. It was a way for every kind person who has donated to AHI at some point to see all of the children that they helped, celebrate life. It was an honor to get to meet up with part of the Lanzhou team that has assisted many different groups of volunteers in their journey to deliver care for the children who are truly in need. Witnessing many great performances from all kinds of past students and volunteers was an eye opening experience. Hearing different testimonies from volunteers and past AHI beneficiaries showed me how big the hearts of everyone there and everyone who has helped in the past are. I am looking forward to contributing more to AHI in hopes that we keep helping the children that truly need it.” ~**Ruben Alanis**

“The annual meeting is like a family reunion for all the AHI volunteers. I like the round table design the best and we are lucky to have our own UCI team table. The performances from the Pacific Academy are always impressive as usual. Also, amazingly, we have the medical team from China joining us this year. To be honest, the volunteer trip to Gansu is the most valuable experience in my life. It has been two years since our last visit to China, but those great moments are still vivid in my mind and constantly recur to me. It’s also more than happy to see those kids, especially the one we helped were able to get back to their normal life. Hopefully, they will grow up healthily with AHI’s support and pay this forward to others.” ~**Jie Zheng**



UCI club members pose for a picture before the anniversary meeting.

“As a member of the UC Irvine team who visited Gansu in the summer of 2014, I was very honored to be a part of the 10 year anniversary celebration. Even though around 2.5 years had past since my last meeting with Dr. You, Teacher Niu, and Lina Zhu, seeing them in person brought back memories of Gansu that are still vibrant in my mind. As a graduate student in biomedical engineering, being part of Angel Heart enabled me to work together with undergrads from all backgrounds and community members outside of UC Irvine. Our team of six who went to Gansu together still tries to catch up with each other at least once a year. Whether we are working or going to school, all of us are tied together by our Angel Heart experience.” ~**Jessica Hsieh**

“I started out as a shy member of the UCI Angel Heart chapter more than two years ago, and since then I have grown with my involvement in the club. I have learned so much about Angel Heart and our mission from the Gansu trip that I went on, as president of the UCI chapter organizing activities with the UCI club, and from working with the international board members these past two years. However, the presentations at the 10-year annual meeting taught me so much about the background of Angel Heart and how and why our organization started. I have so much respect for everyone who has poured their time and love into making this organization what it is, and I’m glad that they all received recognition at the annual meeting. It was amazing to see people come together from all over the country and even from China to attend. This really shows how special this organization and how closely so many people hold our cause to their hearts.” ~**Celine Phong**

Alina Yang

Former AHI President in 2014, Co-President in 2015, Current M.D. candidate at the Yale School of Medicine

I began my AHI journey in 2008 as the nonprofit’s first student volunteer. A junior in high school, I started by working on our website and later by helping to write articles and grants. I wanted to meet the children we served and their families, as well as our amazing physicians and volunteers on our China team, so I volunteered on one of the first AHI trips to Gansu that same summer. That was a game-changer for both me and the organization – since 2008, more than 200 volunteers have had the opportunity to go on similar trips.

There, I met patients and doctors who played a crucial role in inspiring me to pursue a career in medicine. Reuniting with so many of them at the anniversary celebration, almost 10 years after our first meeting, was truly moving. In catching up with them, I found some things have not changed. Dr. Tao You (Director of the Department of Cardiovascular Surgery at the Gansu Province People’s Hospital) and Mrs. Niu (lead volunteer of our China team) are as kind and passionate as when we first started working

together. But I also learned that one of the first AHI patients I'd made a connection with, Lan Xiao Hua, is now expecting a child! Zhu Lina, whom I met in 2009, is already attending college! In turn, I was able to share some of the major milestones that have occurred in my life since I first met them as a high school junior. It was a night of exclamation marks and reflection for me, unforgettable all the more for the chance to reconnect with our precious visitors.

Looking back on this anniversary, I am proud of AHI's growth and my personal journey with AHI. With this, I ask you to reflect on how you, too, have put your best foot forward. 10 years from now, what will you remember? How will others remember you? I hope that your journey with AHI will be something that still remains meaningful, that you can be proud of, 10 years from now.



Reunion with AHI volunteers and Lina Zhu, a past patient, years after a summer Gansu trip

Pacific Academy AHI Club

In addition to the club's continuous fundraising efforts, Pacific Academy also helps host the anniversary.

"I've been the member of Angel Heart for one and half years and went on the Gansu trip last year. I was surprised by how many people were there during the annual reunion, each individual helping the world. The spirit of the many volunteers from the club touched me. The planning and thought that was put into the event immediately impressed me. The donation, by far, exceeded our goal and expectation. I think all the people donating their time and effort are very kind and strong." ~**Mindy Jin**

"Although I didn't attend last year's summer Gansu trip, I joined this organization because my dream is to become a doctor to help cure children. I am very touched and impressed with this organization's mission because I

understand that not many people selflessly donate time and money to help others." ~**Angel Gao**

"When I was putting down the name tags, I saw many families donating before even entering the venue. Guests continued to surprise us throughout the night with generous donations. The speeches that night were very touching. Even though I haven't been part of the AHI club at Pacific Academy for very long, I am extremely thankful for the opportunities the organization provides for children. I want to become a doctor in the future so this event inspired me to pursue my dream to help children in need." ~**Irene Xu**



Guests listen to speeches from current and past AHI presidents about their journeys and experiences.



Some of AHI's many dedicated volunteers gather for a group picture after the reunion.

Be sure to check out our website at angelheartintl.org and our Facebook page for more updates.