

## **SEP Team Leaders Report for Suining, Sichuan Province, 2011**

The Leeds based Friends of the Church in China, Amity Team of four-Jane, Mike, Andy and Norma were placed in Suining, Sichuan Province for the July 2011 Summer English Teaching Programme. Suining is a small town of around 500,000 people but supplemented by a further two and a half million people in the Suining new town and surrounding districts. Suining has a small, friendly and rural feel as it sits alongside the beautiful river area and it is easy to walk around the town and shopping areas. It has the feel of a holiday resort as there is a long promenade along the river where the locals stroll along in the evening and where the ladies and couples join in with the dancing at numerous points along the way.

The teaching took place on the local TV University Campus a short and convenient ten minute walk from the Hotel where we were staying. We had the luxury of freedom and independence as we walked to and from our teaching site and around the town unaccompanied and we were able to spend mealtimes, evenings and most of the weekend on our own as a team. We had one link/translator/ liaison official who linked with us by the cell phone that we were provided with as and when needed and who would attend on several mornings to ensure that we had everything that we needed. However to our great delight and joy we had Mr. Wu the Head of the TV University- a truly gracious and amazing host who was anxious to meet our every need. His English was very limited but the minute he became aware of a request from the team would speed into action in order to provide it for us. He was on site every morning and afternoon without fail and he provided everything from a private staff toilet to blackout curtains, paper and photocopying to water and a comfortable staff room for break times. If a computer was not working-it was promptly replaced. If we needed a different room for dancing or film projection for a larger group of Teachers then he was on the job straight away. The wonderful Mr. Wu! Mr. Wu made sure that the three week teaching programme was an excellent experience not just for the Team but also for our 100 Teachers. He had been well briefed by Amity and he in turn had prepared the Chinese Teachers well for the English Course. We had an almost one hundred percent attendance by the Chinese Teachers.

Suining counts as one of my most successful Summer English Programmes. We had a mature and experienced Team of professional Teachers and a very capable, mature young Graduate who took to the teaching role competently and easily.

There were several teaching highlights-the barn dancing in the large and empty dining room-an ideal ballroom. We explored English culture by having lessons on the Royal Wedding, the Union flag, the cities of York and London, and a DVD of Yorkshire from the air. There were practical sessions when the Teachers followed instructions on how to make attractive cards using paper folding and quilling techniques. A lesson about the festival of Easter was brought to life by the teachers making their own decorated and filled Easter eggs. Active sports and team games were very popular in spite of the heat in the afternoon sessions and once again the indoor dining room came into its own. The Teachers will fondly remember the final celebration surprise party when we provided drinks, snacks and sweets for them along with the usual party games and finishing once more with the really popular dances and of course the Hokey-Cokey! It was so good to see the teachers enjoying themselves, laughing and having fun together. Chinese

Teachers work very hard and they expressed their great delight to us in that many of the lessons involved cooperative work, games, fun and enjoyment-in addition to well planned content. Each of the four class groups took the four UK Leaders to restaurant meals as a final celebration and as their way of thanking the Team for their support over the three teaching weeks. It was so good to meet them socially and to relax together in the closing days of the programme. Some of the Team were even tempted to join them in karaoke! On each of the available Sundays we attended the local Christian Church in the town. On our first visit we met a young man who had come to faith only one month earlier. He was a joy to meet especially as he was the only member of the congregation who had even a basic level of English and so was able to help us with hymn numbers and readings. To his delight and surprise we were able to give him a bi-lingual New Testament. We met the Minister of the small congregation on our second visit to the church- a faithful lady Pastor who has great vision for the church in Suining including their approved plans and building site for a brand new church building and grounds in a newer part of Suining. She is very positive about the future of the Christian church in Suining and in China. She would have very much liked Andy, as a Baptist Minister, to return to Suining to support her own ministry and the training of others! We felt that the pastoral life and ministry must be a lonely one for her.

Our Team worked very well together. We shared meals together in the hotel- apart from two visits to KFC when we were hungering for some western food to bite into. We had two Saturday excursions out to the riverside and to two famous Buddhist sites and parks. Our hosts were very sensitive to our needs and the visits were not extensive time wise leaving us with parts of our Saturdays as free time, relaxation time or time to explore on our own.

The closing ceremony was a very grand affair-but we introduced a very informal element by having four of our Teachers present a role play that they had prepared. This was humorous, fun with an element of song and farewell and clearly demonstrated to the Officials the improved level of confidence and skills in English that our wonderful Chinese Teachers had developed. The Team Leader also broke with expected formality by joining with the Teachers on the floor of the hall in order to give her closing speech instead of from the platform with the other dignitaries-to loud hoots and cheers from the hall! The final formal photo call, the incessant calls for photos from the teachers, the final banquet and then it was suddenly all over for another year.

A successful Suining experience. I feel sure that those members of the team who were new to China this year will look for opportunities to return to China in the future-whether as travellers or Amity supporters who can tell-but they have been enchanted by the China experience.

10.08.2011