

CHINA RESOURCE JOURNAL

Analysis of Current Trends in China



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PIONEERING AN APPROACH TO SERVICE IN CHINA

One of our favorite Western organizations in China is Shanxi Evergreen Service. They are on our favorite list for a number of reasons. We love their work in China, their strategy in China and their staff in China. We've been able to partner together with Evergreen staff on a couple projects, and they've been a great help to us. We also love their long-term approach in China. For example, going on staff with Evergreen means from a 10 year to lifetime commitment. From their website, here's their mission: *"Our purpose is to assist Shanxi and other Chinese provinces by developing public benefit services for the common people, continuing the good works of Peter Torjesen, acknowledging God's gracious calling in our lives and reflecting the credibility of Christ."* Started by Finn and Sandy Torjesen in 1993 on the invitation of the Shanxi Executive Vice Governor's Office to continue the work started by Finn's grandfather Peter, who was a Norwegian missionary in the 1930's and 40's. Today, Evergreen China has a number of projects and ways that they've developed to be a benefit for the common people of Shanxi. Their main work in China revolves around their agricultural, medical, community development and English programs, which are each in partnership with local government and Christian groups, and each of which are having a great impact in Shanxi province. More information about Evergreen's work can be found on their website at www.EvergreenChina.org. In the space that we have in this Journal, we'd like to hit on two things that we think Evergreen does really well.



Evergreen Staff enjoying each other as they together serve the Chinese!

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Evergreen China's philosophy of ministry and strategy is second to none. Much of this philosophy is outlined in a document called the Evergreen Compass. In the Compass, they outline their Core Values:

Excellence: Evergreen strives to maintain a high standard of professional excellence in all of our work. We want to give our best.

Integrity: Evergreen wishes to be known as a trustworthy organization. In all situations we endeavor to be honest and forthright, our words matching our actions.

Faithfulness: "Acknowledging God's gracious calling in our lives," we are committed to persevering in the work before us, doing so in a way that honors God and his Word and respects all human beings.

Teamwork: We recognize that accountability for both work and character is best developed in intentional community. To that end, local and expatriate workers are expected to function as healthy contributing members of a cohesive team.

Local Appropriateness: We acknowledge that effectiveness is a concept that is locally determined. In all that we do we seek to act and speak in ways that honors the cultural context of the places and people we work with. Emphasizing local appropriateness throughout all aspects of our lives and our work yields greater results while also demonstrating respect for the communities in which we serve.

It is this local appropriateness that makes their work go so well. Knowing that the founding individuals are not native Chinese, they seek to make sure that they don't come into China with their own agendas. Questions within their organization as they are working in China look like this: What is it the local Chinese need? How can we meet this need given our time, talents, and resources? The end of their mission statement succinctly states the key to this appropriateness that they want to reflect 'the credibility of Christ.' As we've dialoged with Evergreen staff about this need to reflect the credibility of Christ, it is clear to all of us it is well understood in

government circles that most Westerners are Christians. The implication is that how we as foreign Christians act in China will reflect negatively or positively on Christianity. Most China watchers agree that there is no longer a need to hide our identity as Christians. We all believe that in our attempt to be relevant, we all need to evaluate if we positioning our message about Christ in reference to what the Chinese people are asking for. Much of this thinking has been developed by Evergreen staff, and passed along to organizations like ours and we are thankful for their contribution to the larger Christian community in China.

Secondly, we are impressed with the model for ministry. Evergreen's Executive Director, Finn Torjesen, has described to us that if God brings expertise in a area of need in Shanxi, they are free to develop that area of service. This is one reason why Evergreen's work in China is so diverse. This philosophy has taken Evergreen in areas of service that Finn never could have imagined. But it allows God to work in areas of need, as they've allowed Him to use them as a vessel. One good example of this is the work of Marc De Ruiter, an Evergreen staff in rural Shanxi, and his cheese factory. Mark, a Dutch agriculturalist has been in China since 1997. Mark's heart for service has been in helping rural farmers find ways to sustain their families through agriculture. His Agricultural Training and Demonstration Center, which is primarily a pig raising center, is used to give farmers a good quality pig, so that they too could start a farm and make a living. The agricultural center has a sow breeding unit, an artificial insemination center, and a training center for rural farmers. The Center provides basic training in pig raising skills, and acts as a low cost extension service for farmers. With the great success of the Agricultural Center, he is now on to a new way to help and assist rural farmers.

In his daily life in rural Shanxi, Marc and his wife have had to be creative in making some of the foods that they eat themselves. Marc is quoted as saying, "Basically, we were far away from the real world, and we were making our own yogurt and bread, and so I said to my wife, 'I should make my own cheese,'" This process of learning how to make their own cheese has been a long one, but as they continued refining the process, they learned they has actually could make some pretty good cheese. For those of you who aren't aware, Chinese people don't normally eat cheese, so for the foreigner who lives in China, good cheese is hard to come by. As Marc continued to refine the cheese making process, he brought over cheese makers from Holland, training his staff and building proper facilities, de Ruiter has created a small cheese factory, called Yellow Valley Cheese, that benefits the impoverished farmers in the Shanxi countryside. "We buy the milk from small-scale farmers they have between two and 15 cows each," he says. "We also pay them more than the market price as an incentive to produce quality milk." They are then able to sell the cheese not only to the expatriate communities in China, but also to Hotel chains throughout China, who were continually looking for a good source of cheese in China. More information about the Marc's cheese factory can be found at www.CheeseinChina.com.



A Yellow Valley Cheese employee doing one of the steps in Cheese making

Introducing The China Resource Podcast!

We are thrilled to introduce to you our latest effort to clarify Western Perceptions about China! Over the last 6 months or so, we've been hearing about the benefits and opportunity of this fairly new technology called the Podcast. If you don't know what a Podcast is, it actually is quite simple. It is a audio file that you can transmit through a website or the internet. In our case, our Podcast is a half-hour radio-type show that covers the latest news from China, the latest positive trends with Christianity in China, a bit about Chinese culture, and some analysis from our President, Mike Falkenstine. We also have space on the Podcast for you to call in with comments. There are two ways you can listen to the Podcast: Either go to our website at www.ChinaResourceCenter.org and click on the Podcast page, or subscribe via iTunes. Many people who listen to Podcasts subscribe to them, and then when a new episode is released it comes directly to our computer. You can then listen to the Podcast on your iPod or other Mp3 player. Hope you enjoy it!

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1. We exist to serve the growth and development of the Church in China through theological training, Bible distribution, Church building and other partnership opportunities.
2. We exist to enhance the China ministry culture and clarify Western perceptions of Christianity in China through extensive research and education, thereby equipping China ministry leaders, workers and the Church in the West to more effectively advance the kingdom of God in China.

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