

China

Provisional club heads AIDS charity event

Members of China's provisional Rotary club recently took a significant step toward raising AIDS awareness by hosting the country's first major AIDS charity event. The black-tie affair, organized by members of the Provisional Rotary Club of Beijing, established in 2001, featured a formal dinner and performances by some of the country's top entertainers. To plan and promote the March 2003 event, Rotarians partnered with several local and national foundations, including the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), the Chinese Foundation for the Prevention of STD and AIDS, and UNAIDS.

"As responsible members of the business community, we see it as our duty to support existing education and awareness efforts, especially among fellow business people who do not see the threat that AIDS [poses] to their business," explains Serge Dumont, chairman of the organizing committee for the event and 2002-03 president of the Beijing club.

More than 500 people, including prominent business people, celebrities, and government leaders, attended the gala. Tickets were sold for between US\$75 and \$600 a piece, and an auction brought in additional funds. The event raised about \$100,000, the most ever generated by a nongovernment charity event in China. Proceeds will be used to support organizations working on behalf of AIDS orphans and coordinating education efforts in China, such as the China Youth Development Foundation and the Chinese Ministry of Health's Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Both beneficiaries provide educational opportunities and support programs for children affected by AIDS in the southern region of Shanxi province. Barry and Martin's Trust and the Chi Heng Foundation, organizations that support AIDS orphans in Henan province, will also receive funding.



Chinese actor Pu Cunxin (left) and Chinese-American TV personality Yue-Sai Kan host the AIDS ball.

"It is beyond our means to provide medical assistance to the AIDS victims," explains Beijing club president Regula Hwang Ma. "We therefore want to help their children, most of whom are not infected, to have a proper school education and a decent environment to grow up in."

China is home to one of the most rapidly expanding HIV/AIDS epidemics in the world. Estimates released by the country's ministry of health at the end of 2002 indicated that more than one million people there are living with the disease, and UNAIDS estimates that figure could rise to 10 million by 2010 without adequate intervention and education. Despite recent government recognition of the disease and increased publicity, many Chinese, particularly those living in rural areas where many disadvantaged peasants contracted the virus in the 1990s while donating blood to earn money, remain uneducated about modes of transmission.

"Villagers refuse to buy vegetables from HIV-positive farmers out of fear of becoming infected by eating them," says Hwang Ma. "Some don't even want to be the neighbor of an AIDS victim, as they are afraid the virus might penetrate the wall separating the two homes."

In addition to coordinating the successful fundraiser, AIDS ball organizers sponsored a publicity campaign designed to raise awareness of the disease.

"The media must be educated to talk openly about AIDS," says Dumont. "Without their support, there is no way we are going to get change on this issue in China." Organizers also hope media attention will help reduce stigma and slow the spread of HIV, which is now transmitted in China primarily through sexual contact.

"The greatest needs are awareness campaigns in rural areas and in cities among the migrant workers, sex workers, and to a lesser extent, among the homosexual population," says Hwang Ma. "Fortunately, the government does not keep silent anymore on the problem, and various institutions have done a great job in compiling educational material."

— M. KATHLEEN PRATT

Ethiopia

Rotary Foundation grant helps fight HIV/AIDS

A Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) Grant from The Rotary Foundation of RI is helping to combat the spread of HIV in Ethiopia. The three-year grant, worth nearly US\$300,000, was awarded in April 2002 for a project to establish six testing and counseling centers in Addis Ababa, the country's capital. Members of the Rotary Club of Columbia-Patuxent, Md., USA, cospon-

Glossary

This article was edited by Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian) on 15 Dec. 2016

- (1) Beijing Rotary Club (provisional) = 北京扶輪社(臨時社) = Transformed from the Beijing Fellowship Group, which was affiliated to Hong Kong Rotary Club (香港扶輪社), the Club was granted “provisional” status in 2001 to be supervised by Rotary International District 3450. Until 2005, the Club was officially granted the Charter and became a full member of Rotary International, but was non-districted in the Chinese Mainland.
- (2) Serge Dumont = 杜孟 = a French businessman and one of the pioneers in China’s corporate and marketing communications industry.
- (3) Chinese Foundation for Prevention STD and AIDS = 中國預防性病愛滋病基金會
- (4) UNAIDS = The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS = 聯合國愛滋病規劃署
- (5) China Youth Development Foundation = 中國青少年發展基金會
- (6) Chinese Ministry of Health’s Center for Disease Control and Prevention = 中華人民共和國衛生部疾病預防控制中心
- (7) Shanxi Province = 山西省
- (8) Henan Province = 河南省
- (9) Barry and Martin’s Trust = 貝利馬丁基金會 = Barry and Martin’s Trust is an English registered charity active since 1996 between England and China to support HIV prevention, education and care in China. It was founded in memory of the late Barry Chan.
- (10) Chi Heng Foundation = 智行基金會 = Chi Heng Foundation, founded in 1998, is a charity registered in Hong Kong.
- (11) Regula Hwang Ma = 黃曉蕾 = a Swiss commercial banker; Participant and initiator of philanthropic projects.
- (12) Pu Cunxin = 濮存昕
- (13) Yue-Sai Kan = 靳羽西 = an Emmy-winning television host and producer, successful entrepreneur, fashion icon, bestselling author and humanitarian.

