

# CHINA

## Child's play for fashion award winner

Designer honed her skills making dolls' clothes before winning international competition in Russia

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Playing with dolls may seem childish, but for 21-year-old Wen Caiyun it set her on the path to a world championship in fashion skills.

A graduate of Baiyun Technician College of Business and Technology in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, Wen won the fashion technology competition at the 45th WorldSkills Competition held in the Russian city of Kazan in August.

The four-day contest was staged over 18 hours and covered four modules — drawing two formal items of attire, making a pattern for a skirt, designing and making a coat, and draping a dress.

The requirements for each module were only revealed to the contestants shortly before the contest started.

According to the website of the competition organizer, a fashion technology practitioner "designs and creates garments based on an understanding of aesthetics".

The practitioner must also have a strong foundation of technical skills including "design, pattern-making and use of specialized equipment for pattern-making, cutting, and manufacture".

Wen's interest in fashion started when she visited a doll-making company in Chaozhou, Guangdong, age 3, where her aunt Wen Li designed dolls' clothes.

When she was about 13, Wen Caiyun also visited a doll plant in Shantou, Guangdong, which her aunt had moved to for work.

"She liked the different designs. She liked to ask questions about designs and made one or two pieces in the design room," said Wen Li, a self-taught designer.

When she was about 7, Wen Caiyun started sewing dolls' clothes by hand at her home in Zhanjiang, Guangdong, using the materials from her old clothes. She started using a sewing machine when she was about 11.

Wen Li brought home dolls of different sizes for her niece to dress up. "Caiyun's grandma would tell me with joy over the phone that Caiyun had made a new and better piece of clothing," the aunt said.

Wen Caiyun said she liked playing with dolls and making clothes for them.

"It's a rather simple process," she said. "If I think a design is beautiful and convenient to make, I make it."



Wen Caiyun makes a coat during the 45th WorldSkills Competition held in the Russian city of Kazan in August. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Wen uses a sewing machine to finish a project.



Wen attends the competition's award ceremony.

### Learning her craft

After junior high school Wen Caiyun failed to get into her preferred high school. Once again Wen Li was her guardian angel, accompanying her on a trip to Guangzhou to select a vocational school.

Based on her interest in fashion,

Wen Caiyun landed a place in a five-year program in fashion brand design and brand planning at Baiyun Technician College of Business and Technology.

"It was interesting and fun. In design classes, we drew pictures together. The atmosphere was nice.

In craft classes, we made clothes and some small items like animal patterns and bags. My favorite clothes are evening dresses," Wen Caiyun said. She also learned the latest trends from fashion magazines in the school library.

A teacher recommended she try

to compete in the 44th WorldSkills Competition in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in 2017.

She became one of the 10 national candidates, but failed to secure the top place needed to qualify for the competition.

Wen Caiyun then took a one-year

internship at an evening dress company, designing in lace and patterned cloth.

When the qualifying events for the competition in Kazan approached last year, teachers persuaded Wen Caiyun to try again. Jiang Shaorong, head of the fashion department at the college, said she was feeling discouraged by her previous failure.

The training was tough, both for Wen Caiyun and the teachers, who spent plenty of their spare time helping her perfect her skills and preparing her to cope with the psychological ups and down.

Training in the last few months before the contest was tough, with more than 12 hours' work a day. "Sometimes I felt tired and bored. Then I took a rest," Wen Caiyun said. She also prepared herself through simulated contests. "Every day, a teacher gave me a picture and I started to work on it immediately. This was meant to test my on-the-spot capabilities."

The training helped Wen Caiyun become calm and her performance during the contest in Kazan was steady, except for one incident.

During the last module, with 10 minutes left to complete the task, she found she could barely sew up the back of the dress because she had hastily made the cut at the hip too straight. She fixed the problem by reducing the seams.

Winning the contest was not only reward for years of training, but also a result of the teamwork involving teachers, Wen Caiyun said.

The training helped her improve her knowledge, techniques and communication skills, which helped her overcome her natural introversion. It also gave her access to some of the best teachers in the country and has been financially rewarding.

Wen Caiyun has received more than 1.6 million yuan (\$227,100) in awards from governments and the school.

Jiang Shaorong, head of the fashion department at the college, said: "Caiyun is now outstanding in skills, design, pattern-making and manufacture. I hope she can further improve her design knowledge and theories."

Wen Caiyun will soon apply for admission to the Guangzhou campus of a French fashion school to further her studies. She is also considering setting up a workshop at Baiyun Technician College of Business and Technology where she hopes to make designs and help train students.

## More crop farmers turning to drone use

URUMQI — An increasing number of drone operators are helping farmers across China harvest their crops, reducing the costs of pesticides and increasing yields.

One drone operator, Ma Yangyang, brought more than 30 drones from eastern China's Anhui province to spray defoliant on cotton fields in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region this autumn.

Ma purchased an unmanned aerial vehicle for agricultural plant protection and joined a UAV squad last year. The 25-year-old learned to operate the drone skillfully, and soon became a team leader.

Over the past year, he has traveled to the eastern province of Jiangsu, the northeastern province of Heilongjiang and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region in the north, using drones to spray agrochemicals for different crops, including wheat, corn, soybeans, sorghum, sesame, cotton and even forests. "Everywhere the team arrived, we were warmly welcomed," he said.

Ma and his team spent more than a month in Xinjiang, the most important cotton-producing



A drone is used to spray pesticide on a wheat field in Bayingolin, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. YAN ZHIJIANG / XINHUA

region in China, with over 2.5 million hectares of cotton fields.

October is when the cotton is harvested. Defoliant must be used in advance to remove the leaves before the cotton is picked.

Zhang Lin, a major cotton farmer in Xinjiang's Yuli county, was skeptical about the small flying machine when several representatives from XAG, a leading agricultural high-tech company with its headquarters in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, introduced the drones to him in 2016.

"They said the drones can spray defoliant, consuming much less water than tractors do. They also promised that there would be no fee if I was not satisfied with the results, and the crops would not be damaged. So I decided to have a go," Zhang said.

An operator positioned himself on the edge of the farm, Zhang said. Manipulating the controls with his fingertips, the drones took off,

sprayed chemicals along the route and returned automatically.

"It's amazing," Zhang said. "It costs less than renting tractors. Drones use less water and chemicals. Tractors used to damage around 8 percent of the cotton and also harmed the soil. Now, drones can solve all those problems."

Since new technologies have won the acceptance of cotton farmers in Xinjiang in recent years, more drone operators have come to the region to offer their services.

Statistics from XAG show that more than 4,500 of the company's drones helped local farmers defoliate 866,666 hectares of cotton this year.

The regional agricultural administration said that by the end of this year, the number of UAVs for farm use operating in Xinjiang is expected to exceed 5,000.

XINHUA

## 'Legendary' teacher is not the retiring type

By MA ZHENHUAN in Hangzhou and YANG JUN in Guiyang

After working as a principal at a top school in a prosperous province, it was not an easy decision to pack up and move to a rural high school in an impoverished area — especially when you have just retired.

However, for Chen Liqun, a renowned high school headmaster in Zhejiang province, taking over a village school in southwestern China's Guizhou province was a good way to give back to students.

Chen, now 62, worked as a teacher and principal at high schools in eastern China's Zhejiang province for 34 years. He retired from Hangzhou Xuejun High School, a top-ranking school in the provincial capital, in 2016, and like many of his peers could have gone on to make a lot of money.

Educators with Chen's experience are in high demand at private schools, and have the potential to rake in an annual salary of more than 2 million yuan (\$283,000).

He instead volunteered to take charge of Minzu High School in Guizhou's Taijiang county, 1,400 kilometers from his home.

"I'm much happier to see an impoverished student enter the gates of a university rather than earn much more money," Chen said. Brought up in a rural part of Lin'an county, Hangzhou, Chen said he hoped to help children who are in the same situation that he was once in.



Chen Liqun at Minzu High School.

Taijiang is home to the Miao ethnic group and still regarded as a poverty-stricken area.

Minzu High School is the only public school in Taijiang. Before Chen's arrival in

2016, only about 100 students, or 10 percent of the school's population, obtained high enough scores in the national college entrance exam to enter college. At top schools in Zhejiang the rate is as high as 100 percent.

The student's parents had low expectations for their children and teachers struggled to implement their goals, resulting in a low college enrollment rate, according to Chen. Every year, more than 100 students dropped out and others, with brighter academic prospects, transferred to better schools.

Su Gaosheng, the school's deputy principal, said: "Rather than being a good place to study, the school couldn't ensure its students received an adequate education due to its chaotic management."

Chen began with the basics. In the first two months of his tenure, he took measures to improve the cafeteria and dormitories with the aim of providing better dining and living conditions for students and teachers. He then focused on improving students' academic performance by getting teaching roles back on track.

A slew of regulations on campus

management and teaching standards were introduced, and teachers were sent to Hangzhou for training courses. Chen visited classrooms from time to time to supervise teachers' preparations for classes.

Ren Weijuan, an English teacher at the school, said stricter management and better training significantly improved the learning atmosphere in the classrooms. "The school's 55 classrooms became orderly, with more students dedicated to their study missions," she said.

Chen encouraged students to make learning and hard work their priorities in order to achieve their life goals. "As educators we need to help our students make their objectives clear and strive to grasp more knowledge on their path toward higher academic institutions," he said.

Last year, 450 of the 901 senior students were enrolled in universities and colleges, proof that Chen's methods worked.

In Taijiang, most students are left-behind children from poor families, whose parents have moved to cities in search of work.

At the beginning of his tenure, Chen visited these students and their families and tried his best to help them. Many students call him "father" for the care and affection he has shown in both words and deeds. "Taijiang's education sector feels so proud to have such a legendary teacher and principal like Chen," said Long Feng, director of Taijiang's education department.

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