

Keep on running even in old age

Senior athlete hopes to break world record for most gold medals won by an amateur

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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At 1.62 meters tall and weighing 52 kilograms, Chen Xuhua, from Jinan, Shandong province, looks much younger than her 77 years.

She thinks the secret to her youthful appearance is running — something she would have never taken up if not for her husband.

“I’ve been running for 31 years and it has not only cured my pains but enriched my life and helped me realize my dreams,” she said.

Before retiring, Chen worked as a teacher at a kindergarten owned by the Jinan Boiler Group, where she taught singing and dancing.

In 1985, her husband Li Zhipo was diagnosed with serious hyperplasia — a disorder that affected his ability to move and meant he had to give up his hobby of playing basketball.

“When he was deprived of basketball, he looked depressed,” Chen said.

“I thought the situation would be worse if he stayed at home all day long. I had to take him out.”

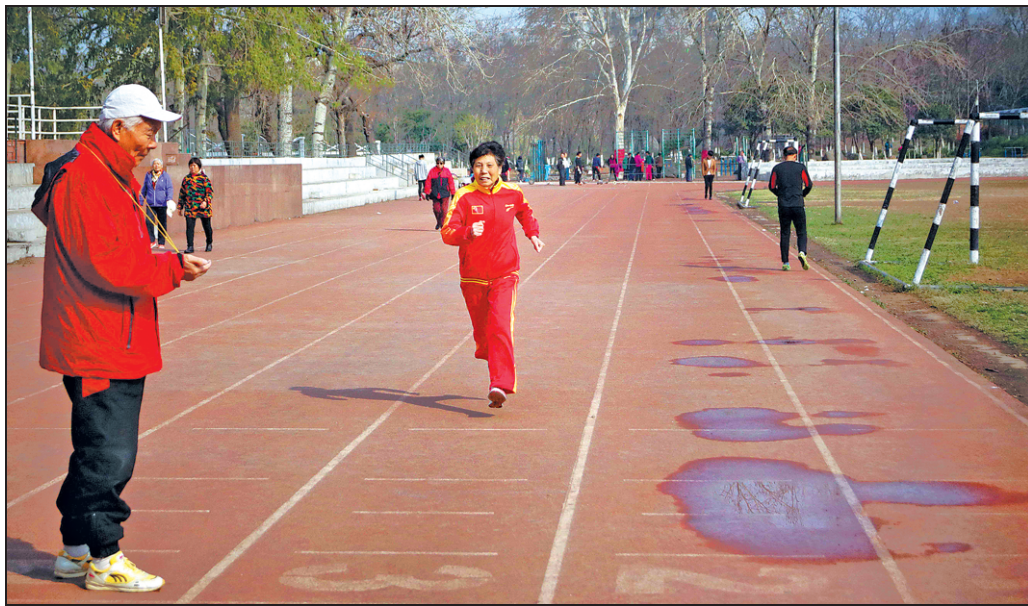
So the couple began taking walks, getting up at 5 am every day to do about two hours of exercise.

Over time, Li was able to walk further and further and eventually overcame his hyperplasia. Even now, age 82, he is still in good health.

“Thanks to him, I fell in love with running, which keeps me in good health. He recovered, but I can’t stop running,” said Chen, adding that she seldom catches colds and her backache disappears whenever she exercises.

“If one day I didn’t run, I would feel uncomfortable,” she said.

In 1988, Chen began participating in small-scale sports meets organized by her company. Within 10 years, she was being invited to attend the Asian Masters Athletics Cham-



Chen Xuhua trains with her husband, Li Zhipo, at a running track in Jinan, Shandong province. ZHAO XINGWU / FOR CHINA DAILY



Chen displays four of the medals she has won over the years at home in Jinan. ZHAO RUIXUE / CHINA DAILY

pionships held in Okinawa, Japan.

It was the first time she had taken part in an international-level competition, but still she triumphed in both the 1,500-meter and 5,000-meter races.

“When I first began taking part in races I had a dream of running at international-level

and winning a prize. My dream has been realized,” she said.

After the competition in Japan, Chen started training harder, running in the morning and strength training at home in the afternoon. She joined the Jinan Quancheng Running Team, which caters to amateurs, in 2002.

To date, she has participated in hundreds of competitions held both at home and abroad and has won 119 gold medals.

At the Perth 2016 World Masters Athletics Championships held from Oct 26 to Nov 6 in Australia, Chen won the 5,000-meter and 2,000-meter steeplechase for women in the 75-79 age group.

“To compete in tournaments held in foreign countries, I have to overcome many difficulties, like the food and the weather,” Chen said.

Years of running have also left her with a painful right leg, which limits her exercise to two hours per day.

“Although it hurts to run, I don’t want to give up. Running has become part of my life,” she said.

Han Zhaozhong, the 74-year-old head of Jinan Quancheng Running Team, said Chen sets a “positive example.”

“She shows us how to live in a healthy way, both mentally

and physically, after we have retired,” he said. “She has earned great fame for our running team.”

When the team was established in 2002, it had about 40 members, but now boasts more than 160. This increase in size has also attracted corporate sponsorship and the team now receives 150,000 yuan (\$21,743) annually from the Jinan sports lottery administration center.

Chen’s love of running has also influenced her neighbors and children.

“In the 1990s, when my neighbors saw me dressed in sports gear running every day, they laughed at me. But now they come running with me,” she said.

“My three sons also like sports, partly because of our influence. I will continue running. And try to realize another dream — applying to Guinness World Records for the most gold medals won by an amateur runner.”

Devoting decades to the care of others

By XIE CHUANJIAO in Qingdao
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For almost three decades, Liu Jingxu and his wife have cared for his learning-disabled elder brother in Qingdao, Shandong province. Despite having a son and daughter of their own to care for, the couple, now both in their late 70s, took on the responsibility after Liu’s parents died in 1989.

The elder brother had been raised by his parents his whole life and the only hobbies he had were reading comic books and eating snacks. Liu’s wife, Sun Dao-fang, would buy something for him every time she went shopping.

“My brother-in-law is a grateful man,” Sun said. “He receives a disability allowance of 400 yuan (\$58) from the government each month and he always insists that I keep half of it — if I refuse, he leaves all the money on the table and waits until I take it.”

This money was welcome at the time, as Liu made only a humble living working at a textile mill and Sun was a housewife, tending to a small parcel of land.

In June 2015, Liu’s son had a brain hemorrhage and fell into a coma. Every morning for four months, his parents took the earliest bus they could and traveled the 40 kilometers to the hospital where he was receiving treat-

ment. At noon each day, Sun had to go back home to make lunch for the elder brother.

After waking from his coma, Liu’s son was paralyzed and the couple now have to take turns caring for him and the elder brother.

Last November, the brother was hit by a car while out taking a stroll. Though not badly hurt, he was hospitalized for seven days.

Liu and Sun, now age 78 and 75 respectively, struggle to stay optimistic.

“My son is getting better, but what about my brother? What if something happens to me and my wife?” Liu said.

“I often joke with him that he dare not get sick, so that we can both hang on for a few more years and die in peace.”

Over the past 28 years, the couple have been told by community centers, governments, relatives and friends that they should put the elder brother in a nursing home, but Liu has always politely declined.

“There is no home sweeter than home. As long as my wife and I are able to, we will not send him away. We have been living together for 30 years and we know his temperament, habit, likes and dislikes, and he could not live a happier life anywhere else,” Liu said.

Last year, Liu and his wife were honored with a good Samaritan award from the city’s Chengyang district for their dedication to their family.



Liu Jingxu (right) and his elder brother at their home in Qingdao, Shandong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Around China

CHONGQING Woman risks life to see granddaughter



A grandmother, surnamed Xu, startled staff at a toll booth on April 3 when she arrived on foot at 1 pm and began looking inside every vehicle that drove by. She said she wanted to see her granddaughter, who was due to pass by at some point that afternoon. Xu had not seen her granddaughter for more than a year and missed her very much, she said. She was eventually persuaded to leave the area after staff helped her contact her daughter, who promised to visit Xu with the granddaughter the next day.

CHONGQING MORNING POST

Driver abandons wife by side of road



A man, surnamed Li, was fined 500 yuan (\$72) for abandoning his wife, surnamed Chen, by the side of an expressway on March 30. Chen had asked to get out of the car after having a quarrel with Li while they were driving along the city’s Tongyong expressway. Li obliged and slammed on the brakes, stopping by the side of the road. Chen was found by police at 3:10 pm and was taken to a nearby toll booth. Officers called Li, who returned to pick up Chen. Police said Li had violated traffic rules by stopping on the expressway.

CQNEWS.NET

SICHUAN Son wins praise for helping parents



A man in Chengdu has been widely praised for attempting to anonymously reimburse his parents, who lost a bag containing 4,000 yuan (\$580) in cash. When Lu Qianyong found out that his parents had lost the money, he approached the police for help. An investigation was launched, but to ensure they got their money back, Lu reached into his own pocket and asked officers to pretend they had found the cash. Upon learning the truth, his parents said they were deeply moved by their son’s filial behavior.

CHENGDU COMMERCIAL DAILY

ANHUI Fake boyfriend defrauds woman

A woman in Hefei sought police help after she sent more than 88,000 yuan (\$12,750) yuan to a man she had met online, who subsequently broke off all contact. The woman, surnamed Lin, said she had fallen in love with the man because of his handsome selfies and had sent the money in 85 separate transactions over the course of 14 months. However, every time Lin asked to meet, her “boyfriend” refused. Lin contacted the police on April 2, three months after she had last been in contact with the man.

ANHUI COMMERCIAL DAILY

Mud fight



Participants in a traditional fish-catching contest, held at Changtan village, Taijiang county in Guizhou province during a local folk festival of the Miao people, throw mud at each other on Tuesday.

TAO LIANG / XINHUA

Mother attacks security guard

A female security guard in Hefei was attacked on April 4 after she asked a boy to stop eating ice cream on the subway. Xiao Ci was repeatedly slapped around the face by the boy’s mother, who demanded to know why her son was not allowed to eat on the train. The assault, which lasted about five minutes, was only brought to a halt when police arrived and removed the mother from the train.

ANHUINEWS.COM

ZHEJIANG Sex for deposit gym scandal claim

A woman in Hangzhou claims

she was offered sex with a personal trainer in return for not attempting to get the money back she had paid for health club membership. The woman, surnamed Qian, bought membership to the club on April 4, but changed her mind a day later and attempted to get a refund. She claims a representative of the club told her she could have sex with one of the personal trainers if she stopped asking for her deposit back. Qian has sought help from the local government.

ZHEJIANG TELEVISION

Man shields wife from roof collapse

A man in Ningbo suffered serious injuries on April 10 when



he used his own body to shield his wife from falling rubble. The couple’s home collapsed at about 6 am following a night of heavy rain. Both were buried by the debris, but the man created enough space for his wife, surnamed Long, to use her mobile phone and call for help. They were dug out 40 minutes later, with Long sustaining only mild injuries, while the husband was hospitalized.

QNSB.COM

Farmers rake in profits from program

Zhang Zhiqin, a farmer in Northwest China’s Gansu province, will spend more time this year taking care of his family fortune: three cows and five lambs, which he bought with the help of local banks.

For many years, the people of Chisha village in Dingxi, Gansu, have made a living through farming, but steep mountainous terrain, frequent droughts and a hostile natural environment mean profit margins have always been slim.

Zhang dreamed of raising livestock, but lacked the money to buy any cows or sheep. “My neighbors were also poor. I didn’t know who I could borrow the money from,” he said.

In 2006, China started a loan program for poverty-hit villages to fund the development of new businesses. Every village was given between 100,000 (\$14,500) and 150,000 yuan, and farmers could borrow up to 10,000 yuan each.

However, due to quota limitations and short lending periods, the program was ultimately unable to meet the demands of many.

In 2015, the city of Dingxi upgraded the loan program and raised lending quotas, allowing villagers to borrow 50,000 yuan from banks after saving 10,000 yuan as a

credit guarantee.

“We also prolonged the repayment period to meet the long-term financing needs of farmers,” said Xu Binke, deputy head of Tongwei county in Dingxi.

Zhang was one of the beneficiaries of the updated program last year. He borrowed 50,000 yuan to buy his cows and lambs, as well as agricultural production tools to expand the area he has under cultivation. “I will sell six or seven grown sheep and one cow some months from now. The income will be much higher than from selling crops,” he said.

More than 1,800 villages in Dingxi have established special associations to help villagers obtain loans. Each receives 300,000 to 500,000 yuan.

By last year, about 530 million yuan had been lent to 867 such associations, benefiting 12,000 farmers.

The project has also allocated a sum of money to buy critical illness insurance for poor villagers to help cover their medical costs. As of last month, 166,000 people had been included in the insurance program.

“We are no longer worried about medical costs and can pay more attention to our farm work,” Zhang said.

XINHUA