

CHINA

Charitable barbers give free cuts and care

Liu Jianjun and his team of 3,700 volunteers do their part to make life more pleasant for seniors, deliverymen and others

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHOU HUIYING

For the past 28 years, barber Liu Jianjun and his team have been volunteering in Changchun, capital of Jilin province.

In that time, he and his team, which has 3,700 volunteers, have given free haircuts to around 80,000 people.

They also volunteer to help those in need, such as seniors who live alone, and send them daily necessities during festivals.

The 53-year-old has been helping others since he opened his barber shop in 1994.

"I lost my mother when I was 6, and my father left home soon after," he said. "I was raised by my grandmother and was cared for by my neighbors."

So when he opened his barber shop, he decided to repay some of the kindness he had been shown.

Every day, he arrives at his shop an hour before opening to give free haircuts to people in their 70s. He also spends his spare time providing door-to-door service for those who have difficulty walking.

His team members visit seniors to help them buy daily needs, move heavy objects and make repairs. They also offer free haircuts to deliverymen and sanitation workers.

At a time when most people were canceling traditional celebrations to stay home and prevent the spread of COVID-19 during Spring Festival in 2020, Liu worked hard to collect protective gear such as masks and disinfectant for those in need, funding the purchases using donations from his team members.

"Fortunately, I got a lot of support from my team, friends and relatives," he said. "Several drug companies also helped out when



A member of Liu Jianjun's team of volunteers takes care of a senior at a nursing home in Changchun, Jilin province. Liu Jianjun gives a free haircut to a senior at the man's home in Changchun. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



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Liu Jianjun, founder of a team of volunteers in Changchun, Jilin province

they learned about my plan.”

Liu spent about 5,000 yuan (\$730) on 2,000 face masks, 200 thermometers, 1,200 pairs of disposable gloves and 33 bottles of disinfectant.

He even picked up the donations himself to minimize the need for others to leave home.

Despite the cold, he'd stand at bus stops giving masks to anyone not wearing one.

Liu's charity goes beyond haircuts for seniors, home visits and handing out anti-epidemic supplies. In June 2018, he launched an initiative with a local media com-

pany to help children with cancer who have lost their hair from chemotherapy.

He offers free haircuts for donors and also collects hair donated by other means.

"It is then made into wigs by a company in Shanghai free of charge," he said. "Over 100 children have been given free wigs, which gives them back their self-esteem and self-confidence during treatment."

The youngest member of his team of volunteers is 7.

"Several students have joined, and they volunteer with their par-

ents," he said. "When we visit nursing homes, they sing and dance, bringing the elderly residents a lot of pleasure."

Many of the volunteers are elderly people who have been the recipients of the team's services in the past, including their oldest member, 87-year-old Zhu Yaokun.

"He joined our team after getting a free haircut four years ago," Liu said. "Despite his age, he is still in good health and is able to cut hair for other people."

Inspired by the enthusiasm of the volunteers, the seniors are determined to do what they can to

give back. "The team is like a big family and its members, especially the elderly, care for and help each other," he said.

In 2014, Liu joined the Communist Party of China at the recommendation of his community.

"Being a Party member is not only about status, but is also a heavy responsibility and a lifelong commitment," he said.

"I am determined to progress further along the road of voluntary service."

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Shandong looks to boost tourism

By XIE CHUANJIAO in Qingdao and ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan

Shandong province, the home of ancient philosophers Confucius and Mencius, is making a great effort to leverage its many natural and cultural resources to boost the development of tourism and turn itself into an international tourism destination, according to officials at a high-profile conference recently.

"The tourism sector, which is a critical contributor to socioeconomic development, will play a major role in bolstering market consumption and accelerating economic growth," said Lin Wu, Party chief of the province, during the 2023 Shandong Tourism Development Conference, which concluded on Monday in Qingdao.

Lin said that Shandong has an abundance of cultural and tourist resources and that it's the right time to roll out favorable policies to stimulate the sector, as the implementation of new COVID-19 controls at the beginning of the year has laid a solid foundation for economic recovery.

According to the province's department of culture and tourism, 10 measures have been taken to promote tourism in Shandong.

Given the fact that travel was difficult, if not impossible for much of last year, the number of visitors to State-owned scenic areas in the province in January and February of this year alone increased by nearly 200 percent.

Shandong is considered a key region in Chinese civilization, having nurtured many preeminent philosophers, writers and inventors during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and the Warring States Period (475-221 BC).

It is home to four UNESCO World Natural and Cultural Heritage sites, including Mount Tai, and has 244 4A and 5A tourist scenic spots and 45 tourist resorts at the provincial level or above, as well as famous annual events such as the Qingdao International Beer Festival.

Lin stressed that more effort should be made to develop a number of leading tourism projects, and companies should be encouraged to become conglomerates.

He said these are two examples that could improve tourism in the province.

During the conference, Shandong launched 18 key projects with a planned investment of 44.96 billion yuan (\$6.53 billion). They cov-

er sectors such as leisure and vacations, nighttime sightseeing, ecotourism and cultural creativity.

Wang Lei, head of the province's department of culture and tourism, said that Shandong will deepen cooperation with other provinces to develop tourist brands, share resources, create new products and hold special events to showcase the scenery and customs of the nine provincial-level areas along the Yellow River and work together to boost the development of the cultural tourism industry.

Since March 15, a series of performances and exhibitions have been held in streets, museums and squares in Qingdao's old town to celebrate the conference.

Some 160 performances are scheduled through mid-May, as part of efforts to revitalize Qingdao's historic areas.

Zhao Haozhi, the city's mayor, said that Qingdao is continuing efforts to protect historical areas.

"The city has also established a smart platform, 'Cloud Tour in Qingdao', to make tourism and leisure more convenient for residents and tourists," he added.

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Musicians stage a flash mob performance in the old town of Qingdao in Shandong province. WANG XIAOLI / FOR CHINA DAILY

