

Blessings of loans and legal aids

Federation helps women in Qianxi improve their lives

Editor's note: In Qianxi County of North China's Hebei Province, rural women are making efforts to improve their lives and upgrading their social status with the support of the local women's federation. More and more women have helped their family shake off poverty and gained awareness of their proper legal rights. China Daily staff reporter Yu Nan visited the county this month to take a closer look at the women's lives.

This winter is not an easy one for Wu Xiuli. Within just a month of May, 3,000 black-bone chicken seedlings she had raised died. She had expected to sell the young chickens for a good price later in autumn.

As a result, the 38-year-old lost about 50,000 yuan (US\$6,100), or about half of her total income last year.

The chickens died from the dust and exhaust coming from vehicles driving on the new road in Qianxi County, Hebei Province, that was built just beside Wu's fowl-run.

"If I had known that they would build a new road here, I surely would have chosen another place to build it," Wu said outside her fowl-run that she built with a 200,000 yuan (US\$24,000) bank loan three years ago.

"I'm not scared of failures," said Wu, a rural woman who successfully developed her own career in the county town of Qianxi, about 200 kilometres northeast of Beijing.

"I would choose a cleaner place to build a bigger and better fowl-run next spring," she said.

She hasn't sat idle waiting for spring to come. After her disappointing loss, Wu opened a chicken breeding service shop that provides chicken seedlings and feed stuff to 50 poor families in the villages of Qianxi

When the chicken seedlings mature after 45 days, she collects them and sells them in Beijing.

In this way, the 50 families can earn about 20,000 yuan (US\$2,400) each year. Wu charges only 5 per cent of the earnings for her service.



YU NAN/China Daily

Beneficiaries of micro-loans: Zhou Lianmin (right), Tang Ruipo, and Li Shuling (left) are recipients of micro-loans provided by the Qianxi County Sisters' Mutual Aid Association. The three have used their loans to plant tree seedlings and Chinese dates.

"I just want to help them find a proper way to make money," said Wu. "I come from them so I know what they need best."

Wu was born in a poor peasant family. Her parents had to raise seven children besides her. In 1984, Wu married Zhao Guoyou, a driver, and moved from her home village to the county town.

But she soon found her new life was not much better than her old one — she had to face poverty again.

"I've long believed that if I want to live a better life, the only one I can depend on is myself," Wu said. "And I am not afraid of risk. I do not know if I will win or fail unless I try it myself."

It is the spirit of risk and independence that has sparked Wu's interests in different fields. In recent years, she has sold clothes, opened a fine noodles factory, raised pigs, planted Chinese dates and opened a three-floor restaurant, of which she is the owner and manager.

After about 15 years of hard work, Wu has become one of the first group of farmers in Qianxi County to own a car and mobile phone.

Wu, however, is not satisfied after successful pulling herself out of poverty.

"I didn't finish my high school only because my family could not afford the seven yuan (less than US\$1) tuition at that time," Wu said full of regrets. "I need to recharge myself, otherwise I will be washed out by society sooner or later."

At the same time, she wishes her son, now in middle school, can receive higher education.

"I told my son not to worry about money, just to study hard," Wu said with pride because her son is a good student at the school.

"I will save enough money to pay for his college tuition. If needed, I even could sell my res-

Women rely on selves

Wu is only one of many women in Qianxi County who have tried to improve their lives, although they often need money to get started.

This led the Women's Federation in Qianxi County to establish the "Qianxi County Sisters'



Hardworking woman: Wu Xiuli feeds her black-bone chickens at her fowl-run in the summer. Although the chickens died in the winter, she has not been discouraged and continues to make efforts to improve her life.

Mutual Aid Association" in March 1997.

The association is a local women's non-governmental organization responsible for collecting funds from different channels to help women in poverty-stricken villages develop with the help of micro-loans.

So far, about 300 women from poverty-stricken families in eight villages have each received a 2,000 yuan (US\$240) loan to develop their own business or production without any mortgage. They rely on the joint credit guarantee of a five-person group.

The borrowers should apply the loan to the selected item within two weeks and begin to pay back one-tenth of the loan each month after three months.

If any person in the group defers the repayment, the loans for the other four women are ended.

Despite the strict rules, "No one has deferred the payment yet," said Zhao Guotien, the vice-chairman of the Women's Federation, who is in charge of the micro-loans. "When five people's futures are connected, each one of them will be more responsible for their own future. Thus the loan can best help them."

Zhao said she travels miles from her home about 10 times a month to meet the women who have received the micro-loans. Wang Shuyu in Hong Geyu Village was only a housewife before she asked for a micro-loan from her association in 1997. Until then, her husband's family still owed 10,000 yuan (US\$1,205) in debts for preparing their marriage three years ago.

She didn't want to just wait at home to get out of poverty so she sought out the association for help. After receiving the 2,000 yuan (US\$240) loan, she raised 600 chickens and began to plant vegetables on her family's land. Two years later, she had paid off all the debts and had succeeded in bringing her family out of poverty. These days she is using the loan to enlarge her fowl-

run and to plant more profitable vegetables.

"With a car, we women can do even better than men," Wang said proudly, holding her 1-year-old son in her arms. "Women can support half of the sky."

"I am so glad to see that my sisters are working hard every day to get rid of poverty," Zhao said. "Most of them have taken economic independence. They are no longer relying on women's shoulders as much better than waiting for money from their husbands' hands."

A taste of legal aid

The last time Li, who wanted to be called by her family name only, ran away from home, her husband tried to force her down, kicked in the door of her hide-out and beat her black and blue.

Last week, Li was inside the Qianxi Women's Legal Service Centre. Her husband and her again, but he couldn't touch her. He is in a rage because in a few days, a court is likely to grant Li the divorce it denied her three months ago.

After that happens, she will stop hiding with relatives, return to driving her bus and maybe even perm her hair — the curls have half grown out since her last trip to the lawyer.

Li was thrilled to use the free legal services offered to women by the centre. "I couldn't afford a lawyer for my divorce," Li explained. "But the legal centre presented me for free. They even paid for my meals out of their pockets. Without even want to think about it."

Since 1979, reforms have brought about progress as well as conflicts.

A growing number of farmers are leaving their plots for work on township assembly lines. They get richer and have learned about the law, but women tend to find hiring a lawyer to be



Courtesy of WU XIULI

defend them an alien notion. People working with women's legal service centres are trying to change that.

"Law is a weapon," said Wang Shuzhen, head of Qianxi's Women's Federation and the driving force behind the county's legal aid programme. "Women must learn to wield the weapon."

A case strikingly similar to Li's finally prodded her to action. A judge denied a woman's divorce and sent her home to her abusive husband.

"He cut off part of her ear," Wang recalled. "We couldn't represent her, only negotiate for her, and we felt powerless."

Since the Qianxi Women's Legal Service Centre opened at the end of 1995, five consultants of the centre have handled more than 300 cases. Four more assistants advise on matters that do not end up in court.

"One family would not let their daughter marry her boyfriend because he only came up to her cheekbone," said Jiang Jing, an assistant. Jiang travelled 100 kilometres to talk them out of their objections.

After learning that most rural women are not aware of their proper rights in a divorce case and do not know how to protect themselves with the law, the centre opened a free "Pre-divorce Education Course" in 1996.

About 300 rural women seeking legal aid from remote villages and county towns have attended the class.

"Now I know that I also have custody rights of my son after divorce," said Wu, who wants to leave her abusive husband. "I had thought that my son was the root of my husband's family so I had to give him up to my husband."

"The class was very popular," said Yu Guixin, head of the legal centre. "Now they know they have the right to keep their babies and to leave their abusive husbands with half of all their property. They will no longer be powerless because the law is backing them."

any 13 years ago consisting of former sports stars.

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Time: 7:30 pm, December 21-25
Place: Poly Theatre, on northeast corner of the Dongsi Shiliao Viaduct
Tel: 6561-0651/52/53/54/55/57

Small scale: A group of Chinese artists are experimenting with moving opera performances into small theatres. The result is a new opera called "Goodbye Again, Cambridge!" Sharing the same name of a famous poem by late poet Xu Zhimo (1895-1931), the opera is about Xu's life experience and love affairs with different women.

Time: 7:30 pm until December 25
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Tel: 6513-5801

All that jazz! Free Ballet of Valery Tereshkin from Russia will stage a jazz dance show in Beijing. Once a successful acrobatics choreographer, Tereshkin estab-

TODAY'S RADIO

FM 87.6 MHz (all stereo)	12:00 Conversation
09:00 Traveller	15:00 Peking Opera excerpts
10:30 Movie Fans Club	16:00 Literature Cafe
14:00 Radio Drama	16:30 Popular CD
16:30 Chinese Folk Music	18:00 Chinese folk music
	20:00 Into Music
FM 97.4 (all stereo)	AM 603 kHz
13:00 Pop Concert	06:57 Weather report
14:00 Hello Taxi	07:00 News
16:30 Review of Old Albums	08:30 Reading Time
18:00 New Sound of Modern City	10:00 Community & Life
20:30 BBC Pop Music	12:00 Legal Times
FM 90.0 MHz (all stereo)	18:00 Travelling Guide
08:00 Chinese Billboard	20:10 English pop songs

TODAY'S TELEVISION

CCTV-1 Channel 2	19:35 Studio Express
12:00 News 30	20:00 Serial: Kangxi Empire (29, 30)
16:10 Drama Focus	21:48 Everyday Jiayi
19:00 News; Weather	BTV-1 Channel 6
20:06 20-part serial: Dr Sun Yat-sen (14)	19:53 Serial: Maids in Foreign Families (17)
21:25 Global	21:45 Focus Today
CCTV-2 Channel 8	23:14 Window of China
10:30 Road to Health	BTV-2 Channel 21
11:20 Life	18:57 Entertainment Live
17:25 Oriental Horizon	19:40 Serial: The Sword (15, 16)
19:35 China Financial Report	21:40 Sports news
21:00 Earth Stories	23:00 Gourmets Across the Country
22:05 Stock Market Today	23:55 Weekend movie
CCTV-3 Channel 15	BTV-3 Channel 27
18:30 Elementary Art	19:00 Animation World
19:30 Symphony World	19:30 Green Action
20:33 Performance Arena	20:40 Science Education Express
21:35 Music Bridge	21:00 News
CCTV-4 Channel 32	BTV-4 Channel 17
11:20 Traveller	19:32 365-part series: The History of the Communist Party of China
12:30 China Report	22:29 Series: Imperial Envoy (3, 4)
18:30 Focus Today	BTV-6 Channel 19
21:00 China News	17:00 Bodybuilding Everyday
CCTV-6 Channel 18	19:00 Live telecast of 2001/2002 Chinese Women Volleyball Championship
14:21 US movie	
19:40 Chinese movie	
21:38 US movie	
CCTV-8 Channel 29	
11:05 Animal World	
19:00 Around the World	

BRIDGE (By Phillip Alder)

During the bidding and play, you can draw inferences from the opponents' calls and cards. The better you are at it, the more successful you will be.

In this deal, you are South, the declarer in three no-trump. If you haven't peeked at the East-West hands, how would you continue after West leads his fourth-highest diamond to East's jack and your queen? If you have looked at the cards, you can finish out the winning spade play?

The deal occurred during a match between Poland and North America at the Forbo-Krommenie tournament in the Netherlands last February.

You start with seven top tricks: two diamonds and five clubs. A heart trick is establishable, but you still need a spade trick. However, if you misguess spades, East will return a diamond, establishing his partner's suit while he, West, probably holds a spade winner as an entry.

At the other table, West overcalled one diamond, making it highly likely that he had the spade ace. Declarer, Canadian John Carruthers, immediately played a spade to dummy's king. When that won, he led a heart to his queen and had nine tricks.

At this table, Cesary Balicki (Chezaree

North			
♠	K 10 6 4		
♥	K 6		
♦	9 7		
♣	A Q 8 6 4		
West			
♠	A 8		
♥	A 10 9		
♦	K 6 5 4 2		
♣	10 7 2		
East			
♠	Q 7 5 2		
♥	J 8 5 3 2		
♦	J 8 3		
♣	9		
South			
♠	J 9 3		
♥	3 2 1		
♦	A Q 10		
♣	K J 5 3		
Dealer: East Vulnerable: Neither			
♠	1 ♣	West	1 ♠
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All pass
Opening lead: ♠ 4			

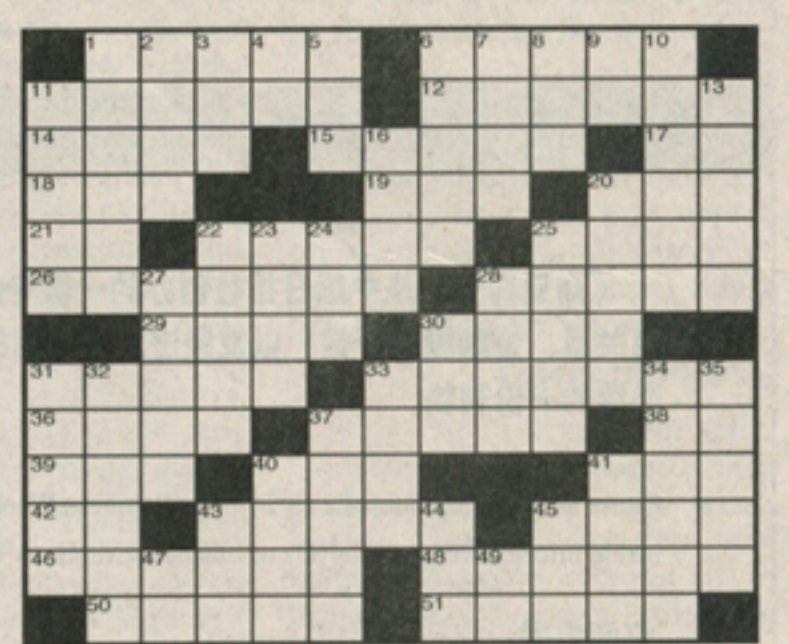
Balicki) didn't have that advantage. But at trick two, he led the spade jack. When West played low smoothly, Balicki called for dummy's king and also won nine tricks.

Balicki judged that if West had the spade queen, he would almost certainly have covered the jack, especially with the 10 in the dummy — or at least have thought about it. And if West didn't have the queen, perhaps he had the ace.

CROSSWORD (No 6470)

ACROSS

- 1 Stare
- 5 balefully
- 6 Cookie nuggets
- 11 Title
- 12 Wouldn't commit
- 14 Madame Bovary's name
- 15 Paper quantities
- 17 Roman eleven
- 18 Corduroy ridge
- 19 Fem. honorific
- 20 Hwy.
- 21 Memphis loc.
- 22 Political power
- 25 Put an edge on
- 26 Dulcimer cousins
- 28 Sets a trap
- 29 Made cloth
- 30 Sweater makings
- 31 Dirty
- 33 Bothers
- 36 Marshal



- Wyatt —
- 37 Boxes
- 38 Kind of current (abbr.)
- 39 None at all
- 40 Light brown
- 41 Md. neighbour
- 42 You and me, objectively
- 43 Swigs
- 45 Go by boat
- 46 Nets
- 48 Lily maid of
- Astolat
- 50 "No man is an island..." poet
- 51 Pie ingredient
- 23 Football coach Marv
- 24 Natural resource
- 25 Top features
- 27 Gyrate
- 28 Headquarters
- 30 Da or ja
- 31 Biological subdivision
- 32 Sweetened the pot
- 33 Twinge
- 34 Canyon
- 35 Ascend
- 37 Make happen
- 40 "And — some!"
- 41 Lament
- 43 Popular cable channel
- 44 Caspian or Bering
- 45 Maple-tree product
- 47 Moon of Jupiter
- 49 Record, for short

SAD TO NO 6469

SAD	RARA	RODE
HUR	AGES	ACRE
IRA	JOB	HUNTER
MAGMA	STOW	
DATE	FOY	MAIE
ELI	RUN	ASI
WACO	EKE	ANNE
MIR	RAM	
PIED	ITEMS	
COLLAPSED	PGA	
FLEE	OPIE	ERG
LOST	WAND	ESE

WHAT'S ON

STAGE

Keep it in the air: The Chaoyang Theatre is one of the Beijing theatres to present acrobatics all year round.

Top acrobatic artists invited from all over the country perform for Chinese and foreign tourists. The programme features trick cycling, leaping through hoops and Chinese magic tricks. Some of the artists have won prizes in international competitions.

Time: 7:15 pm, daily
Place: 36, Dongshanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6507-2421, 6507-1818

Joyful jugglers: The China Acrobatic Troupe is staging a nightly variety show at the Tiandi Theatre, where the seemingly impossible is made real.

Spinning plates, juggling umbrellas, contortionists and acrobats fill the air. Integrating superlative juggling, unicycling, balancing and jumping through hoops with the finest ancient Chinese dancing. The star-studded cast will amaze.

Time: 7:15 pm, daily
Place: 10 Dongzhimen Nandajie, Chaoyang District, Beijing

Tel: 6502-3984

Song and dance: Beijing's first original dance drama is staged by performers from the Beijing Song and Dance Ensemble.

Similar to the Hollywood movie "Pearl Harbor," the dance play is also about a sad love story set to a famous event in history: the burning down of Yuanmingyuan Garden by the eight-power allied forces.

The play is created by a group of outstanding Chinese artists. The story is written by Zhao Daming, a playwright from the Song and Dance Ensemble of the General Political Department of the PLA. Chen Weiya, who directed the opening ceremony of this year's Universiade in Beijing, directs the play. The music was written by composer Zhao Jiping.

Time: 7:30 pm until December 19
Place: Tianqiao Theatre
Tel: 6771-9124, 6303-2315

Zhang's ballet: "Raise the Red Lantern," a Chinese ballet based on Zhang Yimou's prize-winning movie of the same name, will be restaged in Beijing before its global tour next year.

With the joint efforts of such

outstanding artists as director Zhang Yimou, composer Chen Qiqang, choreographer Wang Xinpeng and stage designer Zeng Li, the ballet is set to create another sensation among Beijing's theatre-goers. The ballet is presented by the Beijing New Music Entertainment Co Ltd and performed by the National Ballet of China.

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Time: 7:30 pm, December 21-25
Place: Century Theatre, 40, Liangmaqiao Lu
Tel: 8427-9197, 6466-3005

CONCERT

Army orchestra The Brass Band of the People's Liberation Army will play a collection of world famous pieces at the Concert Hall to welcome the coming New Year.

Music from composers like Johann Strauss will be mixed with classical Chinese tunes.

Time: 7:30 pm, December 21-25
Place: 1 Beixinhuajie, Cheng District
Tel: 6559-8285

EXHIBITION

Picasso's print An exhibition of print works of

one of the world's most important artists, Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), starts at the China Millennium Altar.

Titled "Black and White Image," the exhibition will present 161 original prints that are free and flexible expressions of the artist's bold and wild imagination. All the prints were made during his time in Paris from 1942 to 1968, a spell which took in the Second World War and the following decade, said to be the artist's most mature and accessible period.

Time: 9 am-5 pm until February 15
Place: 9 A, Fuxing Lu, Haidian District
Tel: 6853-0257

Collective show: Two exhibitions are held at the Wanfung Art Gallery. The first is a collective show of Chinese traditional paintings. Artists including Wang Mingming, Feng Changjiang, Feng Linzhang, Du Yingqiang, Hu Yongkai and Feng Yiming will present their latest works. The other is a show of oil paintings and lacquers by a number of young promising artists like Cheng Xiangjun, Yin Kun, Xiao Se and Li Chunyao.

Time: 9 am-5 pm until December 31
Place: 136, Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 6523-3202