

Elections gain vote of confidence

Neighbour committee serves the community energetically, vigorously

By YU NAN
China Daily staff

Phones ring one after another, people come and go from the office, while several women in purple suits answer questions with smiles. It is an image usually seen at a sales company or bank offering high-standard services to clients.

But this is neither a bank nor a business office and the women are providing services that are even more vital than any bank clerk or saleswoman.

The crew, from the Neighbourhood Committee of the Jiudaowan Community in the central Dongcheng District of Beijing, were the nine winners of 11 candidates that ran for election in the first ever multi-candidate vote of a local community chief and officials in the city in mid-August.

They were elected by 1,990 qualified voters among more than 2,700 residents from 1,145 households in the community — one of the oldest in Beijing.

"One of the first things we did following the election was to make a uniform for each of us," said 40-year-old Cao Jianjun, director of the Neighbourhood Committee, who was re-elected with the highest number of votes.

"These suits are for the development of high morale and unity."

Cao said most people think Neighbourhood Committees are comprised of retired and aged people with a red or yellow band around their arms. Local Beijingers jokingly call them 'daye' or 'dama', which means old uncle and old aunt.

"As younger people increasingly seek to do the job, the overall image of a neighbourhood committee staff will become

maintaining security, creating and keeping an agreeable environmental condition, and mediating in neighbour disputes. They also help the disadvantaged — such as disabled persons, orphans and elderly living alone — and organize entertainment parties and sports games for the local people.

"Most people in Jiudaowan community are retired or laid-off workers so they rely on community services more than in other areas," said Professor Li Fan, who was invited by the community to be an adviser for the election.

"The efforts in the Jiudaowan community have proved successful so far because those elected



Courtesy of the Neighbourhood Committee of Jiudaowan Community

Energetic and vigorous: The nine members of the Neighbourhood Committee of Jiudaowan Community in Dongcheng District of Beijing are (front row, from left) Feng Wenhong, Zhang Shuhui, Xu Chunling, Zhang Hua, (back row, from left) Cao Jianjun, Bai Nianfang, Zhang Qixia, Wang Shuqin, Yang Junrong.

have done and are doing what they have promised."

Li, who is head of the World and China Institute, one of the authorized academic research centres on the development of democratic reforms at grassroots levels in the nation, added, "This demonstrates that a virtuous circle has started to run."

A crew deserving trust

Feng Wenhong has no chance to watch prime time TV series or lull her 6-year-old son to sleep in the evening since she was elected a committee member and took charge of entertainment

a little park in the area.

At 29 she is the youngest member of the committee and retains youthful ambition and confidence.

Feng bravely ran for the position of director during the election but was beat by Cao Jianjun.

"I still remember the sad tears after the election but I feel strongly the encouragement and pressure from residents," Feng said.

"We were elected to serve the residents which means that the people trust us, and we should be worthy of the trust. The only way we can pay for such trust is to do our jobs better and better."

With a degree in finance from

a junior college, Feng campaigned on a theme of changing the old community into a modern one.

Since the election, Feng has successfully opened an "English corner" in the community, organized an open-air movie and held a lantern riddles party during the Mid-Autumn Festival, which were all welcomed by local residents.

"I can really feel that the new committee is doing what they say — all with the power of a thunderbolt and the speed of lightning," said Song Yang, 50, who has lived in the community all her life.

She is used to seeking help

to learn quickly, flexibility over new ideas and boundless energy.

But she admitted that senior members had more experience in contacting people.

"I admire Cao very much because she easily gets along with all kinds of people," Feng said. "That's a vital skill for us in the job and I should practice it and learn more."

Cao's looks belie her 40 years.

"I used to be an accountant in a company, dealing with numbers and money every day, and this made me lose my energy and enthusiasm little by little," she said.

Cao passed the exam organized by the subdistrict office of Beixinqiao Area in the

Dongcheng District in 2000 to recruit staff members for neighbourhood committees and was positioned at the Jiudaowan Neighbourhood Committee as its director.

"Working in the neighbourhood community offers me fresh challenges every day."

"Most people think that our work is trivial and insignificant and that we sometimes fuss like old women. But when I saw the satisfied smiles on people's faces after we helped them solve tiny but troublesome problems, I felt so honoured."

Li Yufang, 62, talked about plans to find Cao in the office."

Cao hasn't shaken her job but tries to spend most of the daytime with residents. "Basically, I visit 50 homes each week," said Cao.

"I cannot really help them unless I visit their homes and learn about their difficulties in life."

Cao admitted that the salary — about 1,000 yuan (\$120.5) each month in the neighbourhood committee which paid by the subdistrict office every month is a little lower than her previous job.

"But the pleasure the job gives to me some what covers the loss of money," Cao added.

For Zhang Qixia, another committee member in charge of

the social welfare sector, the income from the job really helps her to cover the daily needs because the factory she worked in before closed down two years ago.

"For a laid-off worker like me, the job in the committee is not a bad choice. And it enables me to do something meaningful for society," said Zhang.

A model to imitate

Zhao Hongcong, vice-director of the sub-district office at Beixinqiao Area, which encompasses Jiudaowan community,

Li Fan said he didn't expect people to have shown such high enthusiasm towards the election because previous efforts in Beijing a few years ago had failed to excite those who could vote.

"Urban Chinese residents are experiencing a growing sense of identity with the community they live in," explained Li.

"Whereas in the past few decades, most Chinese identified themselves with the place they worked in."

"Despite its possible far-reaching influence on the country's broad promotion of democracy, the community election offers local residents the best chance to practice their right of protecting their daily welfare by voting."

TODAY'S RADIO

Table with radio frequencies and program names: FM 97.4 MHz (all stereo), AM 640 kHz, FM 87.6 MHz (all stereo)

TODAY'S TELEVISION

Table with television channel numbers and program names: CCTV-1 Channel 2, CCTV-2 Channel 8, CCTV-3 Channel 5, CCTV-4 Channel 32, CCTV-6 Channel 18

BRIDGE (By Phillip Alder)

Joseph Conrad, in "Lord Jim," wrote: "It's extraordinary how we go through life with eyes half shut, with dull ears, with dormant thoughts."

At the bridge table, some players have their ears half shut, forgetting the deal and the cards they are dealt.

This deal is similar to yesterday's, but with one critical difference: Both defenders must find key plays. How should they defend against three no-trump?

As mentioned yesterday, North's jump to game is ambitious, but reasonable, especially if playing for money.

After winning trick one with the heart king, South runs the club eight, which East must duck smoothly. (If he wins with the king, declarer has nine tricks: two spades, two hearts and five clubs.)

Declarer will continue with his second club, and now West must make his contribution. He should put up the jack.

If instead West plays the club three, South will probably conclude that if West started with K-J-3-2 of clubs, the

Bridge hand diagram showing cards for North, West, East, and South, and a list of vulnerable cards for both sides.

CROSSWORD (No 6713)

Crossword puzzle grid with numbered squares and the word 'ACROSS' at the top.

- List of crossword clues: 1 Gator kin, 5 Fabricated, 9 Winter mo., 12 Potato skin, 13 St. Laurent, 14 Frothy brew, 15 Kinky coil, 16 Famed loch, 17 Bleachers shout, 18 Ms. Thurman, 20 VCR button, 22 Battery terminal, 25 100 centavos, 27 Little kids, 28 Use experimentally, 29 Fall planting, 33 Caesar's 1002, 34 Downhiller Tommy -

- Down crossword clues: 1 Spreadsheet pro, 2 Sports "zebra" output, 3 Above, to poets, 39 Threaten, 4 Rain brings, 5 Chatty pet, 6 Blvd., 7 - Plaines, Ill., 8 Double curves, 9 Actress - Dunaway, 10 KWh bill, 11 Cop's rounds, 19 Touch - -not, 21 Daily work, 22 Cash dispensers, 23 Workbench item, 24 Comic-strip dog, 25 Fork part, 26 Got a load of, 28 Feds (hyp.), 30 River in Asia, 31 Sprawl out, 32 Liver's output, 37 Put in a kiln, 39 Threaten, 41 Common phrase, 42 Prefix for two, 43 S&L protector, 44 Pantry item, 45 Walleye, 46 Attention getter, 49 Lobster eggs, 50 Orangutan, 52 Admin. head, 53 Dog days in Dijon, 54 Fox's abode

Solution to No 6712

The solution grid for crossword puzzle No 6712, showing the words filled in the grid.

WHAT'S ON

Acrobatic Show: Chaoyang Theatre is a theatre which specializes in acrobatics all the year round. Many top acrobatic artists from all over the country are invited to perform for the Chinese and foreign tourists.

China National Acrobatic Circus: China National Acrobatic Circus was the first State-level acrobatic troupe of New China and has won lots of gold medals in various well-known international acrobatic contests in places such as Monaco, France, Hungary, Russia and Italy.

Kung fu show: "Hidden Dragon, Crouching Tiger," a performance which demonstrates the best of the mysterious Chinese kung fu, is being staged at the Xinrong Theatre in Beijing.

Award-winning drama: The American Community Theatre from Hong Kong and the Mad City drama troupe from Beijing will jointly stage "Wit," a theatrical play about discovery, anger, compassion and humour.

Monkey King: Two Peking Opera excerpts, one focusing on the Monkey King, are being performed every evening at the Zhengyici Theatre.

Ming-style theatre: The Liyuan Theatre presents traditional Peking Opera excerpts specially packaged in short programmes for foreign audiences in its original style.

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Cross-Strait co-op: The Taipei Chinese Orchestra will visit Beijing to give a concert of traditional Chinese music with the China Film Philharmonic.

Italian art show: Ditan Park will be lit up by an Italian art show —

G hits the spot: American saxophonist Kenny G will give a concert in Beijing during his China tour this month.

German pioneer: German painter and sculptor Jorg Immendorff's art exhibition is on at China Millennium Altar.

Gongbi on focus: Zhou Zhongyao, a master of gongbi, will present his latest works at the Wanfung Art Gallery this month.

EXHIBITIONS: Gongbi on focus: Zhou Zhongyao, a master of gongbi, will present his latest works at the Wanfung Art Gallery this month.

Dali again: The imaginative art works of Spanish artist Salvador Dali are again on show in Beijing at the China Millennium Monument.

Italian art show: Ditan Park will be lit up by an Italian art show —