

Massage gives hope to blind

Visually impaired gain independence with own hands

By NAN YU
China Daily staff

It had been nearly two years since Zhao Bin's parents saw a smile on the 28-year-old's face.

Since serious glaucoma made him blind, Zhao's life fell into darkness too.

He had to give up his profitable job as a mechanic in southeast Beijing's Tongzhou District and he also felt he had little chance of finding a new job because of his sight problems.

"I felt life was completely hopeless at that time," recalled Zhao.

Thanks to a campaign initiated by the China Disabled Persons' Federation, Zhao's life brightened up thanks to a promising new job as a therapeutic masseur. He has a junior-level masseur's licence and is now studying for the next level.

He has already got an offer from a massage clinic in central Beijing with a monthly income of 1,000 yuan (US\$121).

Therapeutic massage has been used as a form of treatment in traditional Chinese medicine since ancient times. Since the federation's project began in late 1997, the job is increasingly being done by blind masseurs trained in special institutes to work in hospitals, clinics and hotels.

The nationwide project aims to nurture a healthy market for massage by the blind by setting up a system involving training, exams for professional qualifications, registration of clinics and tax preferences, according to Wang Tiecheng, director of the Beijing Instruction Centre for Massage by Blind People.

"The past six years was the period that saw the fastest development of blind masseurs and clinics for massage by blind people," Wang added.

There are more than 40,000 professionally qualified blind masseurs across China, according to the director.

Wang said Beijing used to have only 102 blind people working in massage hospitals, which was the birthplace of China's modern medical massage by the blind. The other 54 worked in eight small clinics.

"As of October 2002, 217 clinics for massage by blind people were registered in Beijing, employing over 1,000 blind masseurs," Wang said.

All blind people between the ages of 16 and 59 can learn the skills in local training centres at a very low charge and the supply of blind masseurs is still unable to meet demand, Wang said.

There are four different professional levels for classifying blind masseurs — junior, intermediate, senior and master. Local instruction centres host exams every year in which blind masseurs can try for a higher qualification level.

"Blind people regard becoming a masseur as a step forward, offering a chance of greater independence," added Wang.

Hope in their hands

However, the job is not an easy one. Zhao almost gave up after his first two days of classes.

"It seemed impossible for me to remember thousands of new words in the field of Chinese medicine that I had never heard of before," Zhao recalled. It is even harder to find dozens of accurate acupuncture points in a human body using just the hands, he added.

"It is not easy for able-bodied people, let alone for blind people," he said.

Zhao was lucky enough to meet Li Yuan, the 28-year-old director of the Beijing School for the Blind's Massage Training Centre. Li spent two days persuading Zhao to stay and continue his studies.

Li, who has taught massage for six years, said: "I've seen too many successful cases and I deeply believe massage can be learned by all visually impaired people and, so far, being a masseur is one of the most realistic and best choices for them."

Blind masseurs in Beijing widely recognize Li because most of them have learned their skills at her school, which



Training base: At the massage training centre of the Beijing Blind School, masseur students practise on each other or their

Li has trained several hundred masseurs.

The school has nine experienced teachers who teach more than 20 classes, said Li. The classes include basic Chinese and Western medicine theory and college-level courses in medical massage.

"I think this suits blind people well," she said. "They tend to have a good sense of touch."

Li admitted that the visually impaired students find it difficult to finish using only their senses of hearing and touch. They need more patience, willpower and persistence, she said.

"Sometimes, my students have to stand there for a whole day to practise massage techniques, no matter how tired and sore their legs, arms and fingers feel," Li said.

Qi Qingsong, 21, is one of the best students Li has taught. His excellent skills have already got him a senior-level qualification after only three years of study at the school.

When talking about his teacher, Qi said he always felt a little "guilty" because Li endured too much "pain" for the sake of his students.

Qi said the students usually practised in groups of two, with one giving and the other receiving the massage in turn. However, when it comes to the exam, the teacher has to be the one receiving the massage. He or she has to tolerate the students' technique in order to give them a mark and correct their errors.

Qi said: "After we graduated by learning how to massage using comfortable and useful techniques, first-year students came in again with the wrong techniques, so the teachers would never have the chance to enjoy the comfort of a massage."

Li seemed not to care too much about the "sacrifice."

"Compared with what the blind people have experienced, the little 'pain' we endure is nothing. It is worth it if it can help them find the way to a bright future," Li said.

Earning a living and respect

Not everyone — not even all blind people — believes that massage really can improve people's health.

For 22-year-old Wang Jiayi, becoming a masseur would be a last resort.

With his musical talent, singing ability and good training at the local school for the blind, Wang became a tenor in the China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe when he was only 16.

But his parents suggested that he learn medical massage when he got a



Teacher and student: Li Yuan (left), 28-year-old director of the massage training centre, instructs a student.

chance to enrol in Changchun University's Special Education College in September 1997 in Changchun, capital city of Northeast China's Jilin Province. They wanted to ensure their students would have a job with a stable income in the future.

However, during his five years of study, Wang showed little interest in massage although all his grades were excellent. What obsessed him was music.

Yet he changed his mind last October when he was taking part in the fifth National Art Festival for the Disabled. He found that massage could really help people.

He used his skills to relieve the pain felt by the troupe's make-up artist. The make-up woman told Wang that she would feel unbearable pain after standing for only 30 minutes and she felt the same pain when climbing stairs or getting up from her knees.

After one massage from Wang, the woman was able to stand straight up and the pain was greatly relieved.

After the week-long festival ended, her knees had totally recovered. "It was so amazing that I could really help others with my own hands," Wang said proudly.

Encouraged by his first successful massage, Wang found a job in a Beijing massage clinic after doing three months of practice in Changchun Massage Hospital.

He now earns more than 1,500 yuan (US\$182) per month. He said he is happy that he can earn a living on his own as well as win the respect of his patients.

"What is very encouraging is that we can bring health, comfort and relaxation to people, despite being blind." To update his theoretical knowledge and massage skills, Wang still reads medical books in Braille after work evenings and good manners when communicating with people but also a sense of responsibility for the people coming to us," Wang said when asked about the qualities needed by a good masseur.

"That's the only way we can protect the precious massage 'brand' with our own hands," he said.

Facts about the Chinese disabled

According to the China Disabled Persons' Federation, there are about 60 million disabled people in China.

Among them, 20.57 million suffer from hearing disabilities, 11.82 million from learning disabilities, 8.77 million from physical disabilities, 8.77 million are visually impaired, 2.25 million people have mental illnesses, and 7.82 million have combined disabilities.

The enrollment rate of children with visual and hearing impairments and learning disabilities into primary school rose from less than 6 per cent in 1987 to 64.3 per cent in 1997. A total of 10,884 people with disabilities have been enrolled into universities and colleges since 1985, and 14,475 students with disabilities have been enrolled by ordinary middle technical schools since 1989.

Special schools increased from 504 in 1987 to 1,691 in 2001, and 3,825 special classes have been set up in ordinary schools.

Founded in 1988, the China Disabled Persons' Federation is dedicated to protecting the human rights of disabled people and to ensure their equal participation in mainstream society.

Sources from the China Disabled Persons' Federation

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.
Venue: Chaoyang Theatre, 36 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing
Time: 7:15 pm, nightly **Telephone:** 6507-2421, 6507-1818

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. Now the star-studded cast are exhibiting the charm and elegance of the most professional comprehensive acrobatic art every night. Integrating superlative juggling, unicycling, balancing and jumping through hoops with the finest ancient Chinese dancing, the award-winning variety show will amaze you at every turn.
Time/Dates: 19:15 - 20:30, every evening
Location: Universe Theatre, 10 Dongzhimen Nanmijie, Dongcheng District (100 metres north of Piny Plaza)
Tel: 6502 3984, 6502 2649, 6416 9893 **Fax:** 6500 2743

Kung Fu Show The 70-minute performance displays dazzling skills of mysterious Chinese kung fu in a hero-plus-beauty story. Fifty kung fu masters amaze the audience with bare-handed practice, one-to-one competing and weapons practice.
 Presented by Beijing Detian Shunyi Culture Development Co., Ltd.
Venue: Xin Rong Theatre (16 Baizhihang West Road, Xuanwu District)
Time/dates: 19:30, nightly
Tel: 8354-0774, 8354-0775

STAGE
Monkey King: Two Peking Opera excerpts, one focusing on the Monkey King, are being performed every evening at the Zhengyici Theatre.
 "The Broken Bridge" and "Eighteen Arhats Fight the Monkey King" are featured on Fridays.
 On Saturdays, there is "Picking up the Jade Bracelet" and "Havoc in the Dragon's Palace."
 On Sundays, "Farewell My Concubine" and "Monkey King's Havoc in Heaven" are the featured pieces.
Time: 7:30 pm, daily
Place: Zhengyici Theatre
Tel: 1362-119-5714

mainland musicians Zhang Xinhua, Lei Qun'an and others will perform. Programmes include "Nights in the Outskirts of Moscow," "Merry Bordering Town," "Camel Bells on the Silk Road," "Songs with No Words," "Love Songs in the Torch Festival," as well as "Northern People's Life Sketches: Horse Racing, Reindeer Shepherding, Fishing and Hunting."
Time: 7:30 pm, March 30
Place: Concert Hall of China National Library, Zhongguancun Nandajie
Tel: 8854-5731

EXHIBITION
Art show: A collection of at least 40 realistic watercolour works by veteran artist Jiang Chun from Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, young artists Huang Youwei from Beijing and Yu Jiantao from Dalian are being displayed at the Wanfung Art Gallery in central Beijing.
Time: 9 am-5 pm until April 8
Place: 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing
Tel: 6523-3320

BRIDGE
 Many CEOs play bridge, the most famous being Warren Buffett and Bill Gates (all right, an ex-CEO). This deal was declared by Jimmy Cayne, now the head at Bear Stearns. It occurred in a match between the United States Congress and a corporate team in 1989.
 West, Arlan Stangeland, then a representative from Minnesota, led his fourth-highest spade against three no-trump.
 Cayne had only four top tricks: two spades, one heart and one diamond. He would obviously play to establish three club tricks and two more in diamonds.
 Cayne ducked East's spade jack, not realizing the distribution was so favorable and trying to annul the spades. Howard Neilsen, then a representative from Utah, returned his second spade to South's ace.
 Immediately, Cayne attacked clubs by leading honours from hand. East ducked until the third round, then exited with his last club to dummy's king. The declarer, not aware that he could afford to cash the spade king, played a diamond to his jack, hoping it would lose to the king and create a dummy entry via the diamond queen. When the finesse

North
 ♠ K 7 4
 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ Q 6 5 2
 ♣ K 7 5 2

West
 ♠ Q 9 8 5 3 2
 ♥ J 9 8 4 2
 ♦ 4
 ♣ 8

East
 ♠ J 6
 ♥ K 7 3
 ♦ K 10 8 3
 ♣ A 9 4 3

South
 ♠ A 10
 ♥ A 10 6
 ♦ A J 9 7
 ♣ Q J 10 6

Dealer: South
 Vulnerable: East-West

South 1 NT West Pass North 3 NT East All pass

Opening lead: ♠ 5

CROSSWORD (No 6850)

ACROSS

- Not spicy
- Cowpoke's sweetie
- Toad feature
- Garfield's canine pal
- Vanity
- Bates or Arkin
- Begin a hand
- Worthless coin
- Mo. bill
- Solos for Caruso
- Extreme degree
- Lie — (go to earth)
- Tattoo word
- Wordless actor
- Keeps Shaquille —
- Gift-giving time
- Make public
- Comfy
- Cleaning fluid
- Bldg. units
- Calendar divs.
- Wacky
- Alcott girl
- NBAer
- Alcove
- Gift-giving time
- Stimp's pal
- Newshawk's query
- Common metal
- Music or
- dance
- Rebekah's son
- Bunks
- Newlywed title
- Toolenient
- task
- Flavor enhancer
- Mud
- Seine moorages
- Ran into
- Serpent
- Veer
- Reshuffled word
- Shelley offering
- Author — Rand
- Word process sor choices
- Atlas abbr.
- Flock members
- Chan rejoinder (2 wds.)
- Page of a book letters
- Prevaricate
- "We — not amused"
- Grass
- Make a typo
- Weirdo

DOWN

- Trendy
- Notion
- Fact fudger
- Ham-on-rye source
- Painter's ground
- In the past
- Recliner
- Scrub
- Hgt.
- Play bumper-cars
- Explosive
- Little child
- Deep distress
- Tea herb
- Disagreeable
- 32 Veer
- 33 Reshuffled word
- 36 Shelley offering
- 37 Author — Rand
- 40 Word process sor choices
- 41 Atlas abbr.
- 43 Flock members
- 44 Chan rejoinder (2 wds.)
- 45 Page of a book letters
- 46 Prevaricate
- 47 "We — not amused"
- 48 Grass
- 50 Make a typo
- 52 Weirdo

TODAY'S TELEVISION

CCTV-1 13:05 Oriental Horizon 20:05 16-part serial: The Silence of the Aimin River (6) 22:00 World Report 22:57 Journey of Discovery	CCTV-4 14:55 Chinese Civilization 16:10 Oriental Horizon 18:30 About Taiwan 20:05 China Showbiz	19:01 Animal World 20:02 Prime-time Theatre 21:52 Jiayi Drama 22:48 Late-night Theatre 23:43 Japanese serial: The Brother's Choice (11, 12)	23:28 Common Ground
CCTV-2 19:00 Job Market 19:30 China Business Report 20:00 Life 20:40 Frontiers 22:10 Quiz Show	CCTV-6 14:24 US movie 18:11 Animation Theatre 19:08 Documentary: France 19:45 Chinese movie: Spice Girls 21:24 Watching and Talking 22:01 US comedy	CCTV-9 13:00 Financial news 18:15 Music Zone 20:15 Travelogue 21:30 Centre Stage	BTV-2 09:57 Performing Arts 14:28 Concert Hall 18:23 Chinese Top Music 19:40 Serial: The Kung Fu Master (10, 11)
CCTV-3 18:30 Elementary Art 19:31 The Same Song 21:16 Art Life	CCTV-8 17:36 Studio Express 18:11 Children's Theatre	BTV-1 18:30 News; weather 19:41 Focus Today 20:02 Amusement Park 20:38 Serial: The Unfilial Son (11, 12)	BTV-3 17:00 Serial: No 8 District 19:00 Saga 20:00 Supertasters 21:35 Science and Technology 22:10 Serial: Police World (27)

BTV-4
12:00 Serial: Forty-something Taxi-drivers (123)
13:05 Star Profiles
17:12 20-part serial: Urban Legend (17)
19:02 Entertainment Live
19:45 Serial: The Family from Northeast (119, 120)
22:32 Serial: Liu Laogen (8)

BTV-7
10:00 Luxury & Elegance
15:35 Life Express
19:00 Facing Life
19:35 Modern Times
21:55 Digital Life