

Celebrating SYA China's

欣欣向荣
祝賀海外學子在京建校二十週年
癸巳大雪
胤魁寫



Commemorative watercolor by
SYA China faculty member Cui Yingkui

Ping-pong players became first Americans to officially visit China since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC)

April 1971

President Nixon visits Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai

Diplomatic relations established with the US; Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping visits Washington, DC

January 1979

US and PRC establish embassies in Beijing and Washington, DC

March 1979

President Reagan and Premier Zhao Ziyang make reciprocal visits

1984

President Li Xiannian visits the US, the first such visit by a PRC Head of State

July 1985

Stock markets open in Shanghai and Shenzhen

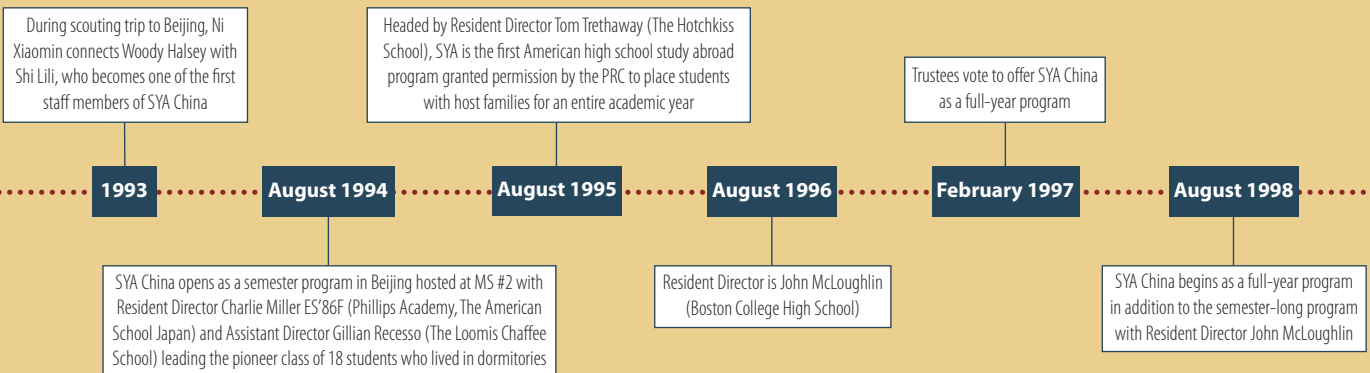
1989

SYA Executive Director Woody Halsey explores possibilities for an SYA school in China while on a Phillips Academy faculty trip led by Ni Xiaomin to Beijing

1991

20th Anniversary

On March 29, 2014, just a week after First Lady Michelle Obama's visit to SYA China, 300 attendees including trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, parents, host families, local dignitaries and representatives from Middle School #2 Attached to Beijing Normal University (MS #2) gathered to celebrate SYA China's 20th anniversary.





Alex White ES'00 and his wife Ping Zhang



Guests enjoying a tour of the Forbidden City led by SYA China faculty and students



Alumni speaker Kaitlin Solimine CN'97 and her baba (Chinese father), Chen Guanmiao



Student Andrew Medina performs a piece from Peking opera



Members of the first SYA China class Gabe Seydewitz CN'95 (l) and Clinton Wu CN'95 (r) with SYA China Host Family Coordinator Shi Lili



Board of Trustees Chair Douglas Renfield-Miller FR'71 CN'01P IT'05P ES'10P presents Cao Baoyi, principal of MS #2, with a bonsai tree on behalf of SYA



MS #2 Principal Cao Baoyi presents a carved, red lacquer plate to SYA President Jack Creeden

As a symbol of the two-decade-long relationship with its host school and the importance of cross-cultural education, the event was held in MS #2's library. SYA China Resident Director Hilde Becker welcomed the group in both Mandarin and English, then talked about the role of SYA as a cultural bridge between China and the United States.

Douglas Renfield-Miller FR'71 CN'01P IT'05P ES'10P, chair of the Board of Trustees, noted the importance of the occasion: "For twenty years," he said, "Middle School #2 has been instrumental in the success of SYA. We couldn't be here tonight to celebrate this anniversary without the support of and our wonderful relationship with Middle School #2." On behalf of SYA, Renfield-Miller presented a bonsai tree to

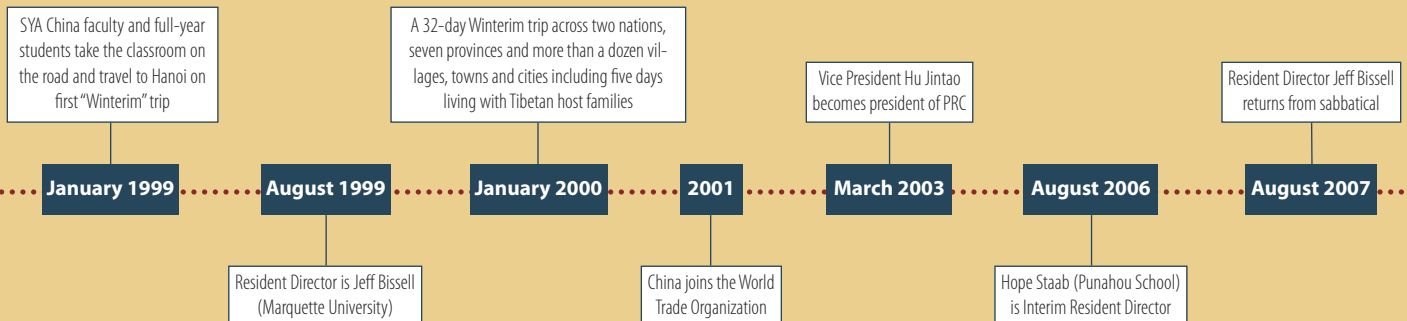
Cao Baoyi, principal of MS #2, in appreciation of the longstanding support of SYA and in recognition of MS #2's former principal Lin Fuzhi, who initially forged the relationship. SYA President Jack Creeden then accepted, on behalf of School Year Abroad, a carved red cinnabar plate, a gift from Principal Cao and his school.

Creeden spoke of the founding of SYA China, dating back to the summer of 1991, when then president Woody Halsey joined a Phillips Academy faculty trip to Beijing led by Ni Xiaomin. There Halsey explored possibilities for an SYA school in China. In 1993, Halsey again scouted in Beijing and found what would become the home for SYA China: MS #2.

It was also through Ni Xiaomin that Shi Lili, host-family coordinator, was intro-

duced to SYA. Shi Lili began as a volunteer and has worked with SYA China since its opening in August 1994. Creeden paid tribute to the trio and presented each with a framed watercolor of the 20th-anniversary commemorative artwork. Said Creeden, "Without the extraordinary commitment of Woody Halsey, Ni Xiaomin and Shi Lili, SYA China would not exist today. Each of these committed educators worked tirelessly to make the dream of SYA China a reality. We're forever in their debt for such outstanding and visionary efforts."

Two of the pioneer students from SYA China's first class, Gabe Seydewitz and Clinton Wu, were in attendance, and former president Halsey acknowledged them and others. "It was a great pleasure to reconnect with families, colleagues and stu-





Student Alex Wade plays the guzheng, a traditional Chinese stringed instrument



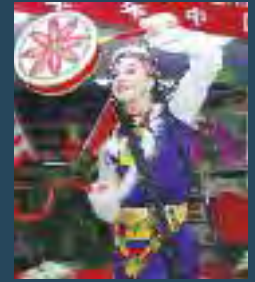
SYA China Host Family Coordinator Shi Lili with Michael Disner CN'00 and his wife, Nora, and children Jackson, Reagan and Samuel



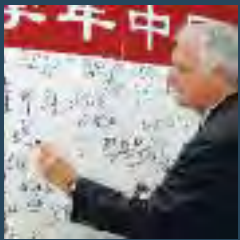
Jean and Board of Trustees Chair Douglas Renfield-Miller FR'71 CN'01P IT'05P ES'10P with son Carrington CN'01 and his wife Carla



SYA China faculty member Li Xuedong interprets for host mom Liu Suhong



Jong May Urbanya CN'12 performs a Tibetan dance in traditional costume



SYA President Jack Creeden shares a message on the anniversary banner



From left, Ivy and Matt Tang CN'99, Miguel Payano CN'99 and SYA President Jack Creeden



From left, SYA President Jack Creeden, former President Woody Halsey, Ni Xiaomin, SYA China Host Family Coordinator Shi Lili and SYA China Resident Director Hilde Becker

dents who never fail to say how much SYA has meant in their lives,” said Halsey. “What else could a teacher ask for?”

The sense of family permeated the room as host parents met up with their SYA children or with the parents of their SYA children and alumni greeted their host siblings. Liu Suhong, Chinese mom to Josie-Dee Seagreen CN'09, Anna Hewitt CN'10, Victoria Chen CN'11, Nia Hamilton CN'12, Sophia Bremer CN'13 and Maya Dornbrand-Lo CN'14, spoke to the crowd on behalf of all host families as she fondly recalled her experiences parenting the girls. Since SYA opened its doors, nearly 1,000 alumni have studied in Beijing and more than 425 Chinese families have hosted SYAers.

Kaitlin Solimine CN'97 flew in from

Singapore to participate in the evening's program. She and her Chinese sister, Chen Xi, talked eloquently about their lifelong relationship and being a part of each other's milestones. Kaitlin's proud *baba* (Chinese father), Chen Guanmiao, beamed from the audience as he listened to his daughters.

Students Conrad Young and Meghan Murphy spoke on behalf of their fellow classmates. Alternating between English and Mandarin for the benefit of everyone in the audience, they thanked their teachers and host families for helping them to understand the language and the culture of Beijing and, more importantly, for broadening their global horizons.

The crowd was entertained by Jong May Urbanya CN'12, who performed a Tibetan

dance in full costume. Current students also shared their talents. Alex Wade, son of Charlene Ying FR'81, played the guzheng, a Chinese stringed instrument, and Andrew Medina performed a piece from Peking opera, a form of traditional Chinese theater that combines music, song, mime, dance and combat. Student and campus photographer Michael Chen presented a slideshow he had put together of images that provided memories from SYA China's earliest days.

As the evening concluded, Creeden said, “Tonight we celebrated the vision and tenacity needed to establish SYA China. It's wonderful see how the groundbreaking, cross-cultural associations formed in 1994 are stronger than ever twenty years later, in 2014. We look forward to many more years of collaboration.” 🇺🇸

