# CHINA

# Nightingale service a lifeline for seniors

## Nursing team aids elderly residents in Shandong

By **ZHAO RUIXUE** in Jinan
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Cao Yingjuan (middle) and a member of Qilu Hospital of Shandong University's Nightingale nursing service volunteer team introduce a medicine to a senior resident at a community in Jinan, Shandong province.
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On a hot summer day in Jinan, Shandong province, 87-year-old Wang, an elderly woman who lives alone on Nanxin Street in Lixia district, clutched Cao Yingjuan's hands as she anxiously explained her predicament.

"The air conditioner is broken, and it's so stuffy inside. I got anxious and my heart started acting up, so I took the medicine twice," said Wang as her voice trembled.

Cao listened patiently until Wang finished talking. She then carefully reviewed the medical report and reminded her repeatedly to keep her blood pressure stable during the summer heat and to eat more fruits, vegetables, and quality protein.

Cao, 54, is the director of the nursing department at Qilu Hospital of Shandong University and team leader of the hospital's Nightingale nursing service volunteer team. Founded in 2011, the team has expanded to 12 specialty divisions, including organ transplantation and emergency rescue.

Their services reach all age groups, not only limited to empty-nest seniors but also aid children with autism, children in welfare homes, patients with chronic diseases, and people with disabilities.

Their footprint spans the 16 major cities across Shandong and extends far beyond the province to Qingjian county in Shaanxi and remote villages in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

"Nursing is about empathy that puts yourself in another's shoes," Cao said.

Cao graduated from nursing school in 1991 and joined the pediatric department at Qilu Hospital. She later worked in blood purification, organ transplantation, and general surgery departments.

Over decades of dedication, she came to understand meticulous care, deep empathy, and unwavering commitment as the essence of nursing.

But it was a challenging family experience that led her down the path of the psychological care of empty-nest seniors.

After the death of her nephew in 2016, Cao watched in despair as her sister and brother-in-law struggled with their grief. That experience opened her eyes to the struggles of many empty-nest seniors and families who battled illness and loneliness in the wake of the deaths of their only children.

Since then, Cao has led volunteers in regular home visits to provide psychological companionship and emotional support to the elderly.

Another resident, Yang, 73, lost her husband and elder son in succession, while her second son lives abroad. The losses resulted in Yang isolating herself from the world.

Cao and her team visited her repeatedly, listened patiently and offered support. Today, Yang has emerged from the shadows and become a volunteer helper for the service team.

"Thanks to Cao and the others, I want to live a good life again," Yang said.

When volunteers are due to visit, many elderly people sit by the window early, waiting quietly and offering reluctant goodbyes at the end of visits. Through daily engagements, Cao and her team have developed a psychological support model suited to elders, guiding them from the confines of their homes to join neighborhood social activities, with depression and loneliness gradually dispelled.

"Attention to adolescent mental health is growing recently, but emotional support for the elderly cannot be overlooked," Cao said.

Since 2025, the volunteer nursing team has partnered with the Baotuquan subdistrict office to launch a medical-network partnership project.

Community workers and specialist nurses form one-on-one support pairs, jointly serving as dedicated health stewards for empty-nest and solitary elderly residents.

Cao said the team also plans to introduce an online artificial intelligence therapy system, using AI to assist in psychological counseling. Emergency rescue training is another key work of the team. In May 2025, a life education base at Qilu Hospital officially opened, with a 400-square-meter teaching space equipped with an AI-powered teaching system offering tailored first-aid courses for different groups.

To date, it has trained 175 rescue instructors and over 2,350 certified rescuers.

Wang Wenjun, head nurse of Qilu Hospital's emergency department and one of the team members, has volunteered for 15 years.

"Seeing more and more ordinary people master first-aid skills makes all the efforts worthwhile," she said.

The team has developed standardized first-aid courses for children and gradually extended them to rural areas and elderly groups.

"Some people think volunteering is about what we give, but we gain far more. Being needed is also a form of healing," Cao said.

In recent years, under the coordination of Shandong University, Cao has helped medical schools and hospitals in Tanzania, Pakistan, and other countries develop targeted assistance plans.

"Medical care exists not only in hospital wards but also in ordinary households. The moving acts of care happen not only at the bedside but also at the windows where empty-nest seniors watch and wait, and in every heart longing for companionship and warmth," Cao said.

Bai Zhining plays Gao Junyu at the theatrical production, *The Long Song of Iron*, in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. CHEN ZHIMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Drama honors Shanxi's pioneers, rail workers

By **ZHU XINGXIN** in Taiyuan
and **CHEN LIANG**

In Taiyuan, Shanxi province, the heroic tales of rail workers who helped build the province's railways came alive on stage at the Jin Opera Art Research Institute through the theatrical production of *The Long Song of Iron*.

The captivating production vividly recreated the century-long history of the Communist Party of China and the development of Shanxi's rail system, weaving together powerful stories of railway workers.

At the center of this narrative is the character of Gao Junyu, a revolutionary pioneer of the Party, portrayed by Bai Zhining, a 26-year-old employee of the Taiyuan Railway Vehicle Depot of China Railway Taiyuan Group.

Gao's life, marked by his passionate commitment to revolution and a profound patriotic spirit, posed a challenging role for Bai. "When I was cast in this role, I felt an overwhelming sense of reverence," Bai said. "Gao Junyu and I share the fervor of youthful revolutionaries. Yet, capturing the essence of such a vivid historical figure required a delicate balance in performance."

At the show's premiere on Aug 20, Bai stood at the center of the stage and boldly portrayed the character with a deep sense of respect. "Gao was a native of Taiyuan, deeply rooted in the revolutionary soil of Shanxi, carrying the weight of local Red history and the memories of his era," Bai said.

Looking back, in 1924, Gao spearheaded the establishment of the first Shanxi Party organization, marking a new phase in the region's revolutionary movement. This year, as the Party celebrates its 105th anniversary, it also marks the 130th anniversary of Gao's birth. He died in 1925. Through the drama, Bai was able to connect with the spirit of his predecessors, reinforcing his own beliefs and ideals.

The play, divided into nine acts, blended ideological depth with artistic and visual appeal. After a number of tours across multiple cities in the province, the play concluded in September, having brought to life the century-old Red legacy of the railway, making the rich history tangible and resonant with the audience.

Bai's performance was rooted in a deep understanding of the principle "from the masses, to the masses". During his performance, clad in traditional attire, he crouched beside workers, gazing into the weathered faces of the laborers. It was at this point, Bai said, that he truly understood the profound bond shared between the revolutionary pioneers and the working masses.

Among the audience was Wang Yaozhang, a railway attendant who was deeply moved by the performance. He remarked on the unwavering dedication of railway pioneers across different eras who, amidst the chaos of war and harsh conditions, shouldered the responsibility of ensuring transportation and communication. This legacy of dedication has been passed down through generations of railway workers who remain committed to their mission.

"This performance not only revealed the century-long struggle of railway development, but also inspired me with the strength to persevere in my own duties," Wang said.

The cast of the play comprised grassroots railway workers, with a creative team responsible for writing, directing, and performing. To authentically capture history and ensure the quality of the performance, the team consulted extensively with experts in the Party and railway history, undergoing numerous revisions to bring this Red cultural drama to the stage.

*Sun Hao contributed to this story.*

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# Blending Ethiopian beans into China's coffee culture

By **SHI BAOYIN** and **QI XIN**
in Zhengzhou

Coffee beans, originating from the highlands of Ethiopia, travel thousands of kilometers to Central China's Henan province, quietly building a bridge for cross-border industrial cooperation between Henan and Africa.

Upon arrival at the Advanced Manufacturing Development Zone of Puyang county, Henan, beans from the African Plateau undergo a transformation: after roasting, grinding, cold extraction, and freeze-drying, the green beans turn into a fragrant freeze-dried coffee powder that is sold to consumers across the country and abroad.

Wang Shuiyong, 44, is chairman of Huichuan Industrial Development (Henan) Co, a coffee enterprise located in the development zone.

In Wang's coffee production base, a cold extraction freeze-drying coffee production line operates at a low temperature of minus 40 C. While the coffee bean roaster roars, the coffee liquid is transformed into evenly distributed freeze-dried coffee powder through vacuum freeze-drying technology.

Nowadays, the company's installed production capacity stands at 400 metric tons, with a projected increase to 1,000 tons in the next three years.

Wang, a Henan resident, returned to his hometown in 2012 after spending six years working in Beijing. He launched his agricultural processing business in Puyang, focusing on agricultural integration and freeze-drying technology.

Years of producing dried fruits, nutritional soup products, as well as beverages helped his team build mature manufacturing systems. In 2019, amid China's booming coffee consumption upgrade, Wang identified packaged freeze-dried coffee as a "blue-ocean" market and established Huichuan.

"At that time, domestic coffee brands were scarce, and the market was long dominated by imported instant products. Unlike the freshly ground store model of chain coffee in the market, I chose to delve into the deep processing track of prepackaged specialty coffee, focusing on high fidelity flavors, convenient experiences, and high cost-effectiveness," he said.

Wang established a direct procurement supply chain with the local government in 2020.

As the core origin of Arabica coffee worldwide, Ethiopia has top-notch coffee germplasm and flavor resources. Ethiopian coffee is popular among Chinese consumers. In 2025 China became the fourth-largest importer of Ethiopian coffee, according to a Xinhua News Agency report.

Despite its popularity, Wang identified a structural weakness in the Ethiopian coffee industry: coffee is mostly exported in the form of primary green beans. In order to connect the source supply chain and fill the gaps in the industry, he led a team that would embark on a years-long mission of industrial integration between China and Africa.

Technicians work at a laboratory of Huichuan Industrial Development (Henan) Co in Puyang, Henan province.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In July, Wang's company signed a memorandum with the Ethiopian Investment Commission in Addis Ababa, with the aim of constructing a modern full-cycle coffee deep-processing industrial park in Addis Ababa, integrating bean procurement, sorting, warehousing, deep processing and export.

"We are one of the earliest freeze-dried coffee companies in China to use coffee beans from Ethiopia's entire production area. Nowadays, over 80 percent of Ethiopia's freeze-dried coffee powder is produced through our company," Wang said.

Powered by the industrial chain, Wang's team developed its own coffee brand named Rami Coffee in 2022, targeting consumers aged 18 to 35, mostly females.

"Our freeze-dried coffee can dissolve at any temperature, such as ice water, room-temperature water, or milk, within three seconds. It can perfectly be used to make Americano, latte and various signature drinks," said Lee Hyunkoo, a general agent of Rami Coffee in South Korea.

"The freeze-drying method of cold extraction focuses on maintaining physical freshness. The taste is fresher and the layers are richer, displaying an advantage in traditional categories."

The company also customizes flavors to suit local residents' preferences.

"The maturity of coffee consumption in Zhongyuan is not as high as that in major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. We have developed localized innovations based on the regional characteristics of Henan, such as Jingjie Americano, Kaifeng chrysanthemum coffee, Luoyang peony flavored coffee, and other specialty products," said Lu Ying, founder of Rami Coffee.

Looking ahead, Wang said they plan to integrate high-quality African raw materials with Henan manufacturing technology, and build an "African raw materials, Henan manufacturing, global sales" model.

Wang added that they also plan to develop more machine-free coffee shops, which mainly rely on brewing freeze-dried coffee powder.

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