

2012 Business China Young Achiever Award Recipient

Loh Cheng

Age: 37

Residency Training Coordinator

Kunming Medical University 2nd Affiliated Hospital

Background

Like most with the dream and the desire to volunteer, Dr Loh Cheng discovered the joy of moving from dream to action, albeit in an overseas context.

Dr Loh have always had a yearning for the path less travelled and therefore chose adventure over the familiar when he decided to move to China's Yunnan province, where he volunteers to train medical staff and provide free medical service for the less fortunate.

A graduate from National University of Singapore's medical school, Dr Loh has worked in various polyclinics and hospital rotations for seven years before packing his bags for Yunnan. In school, he had the privilege to meet another local doctor who started volunteering in Yunnan since 1996, Dr Tan Lai Yong.

Inspired by Dr Tan, Dr Loh moved to Kunming, a city in Yunnan, in 2008 to pursue his dreams of serving and loving those who are poor, in respectful collaboration with the local health authorities. His wife, a teacher, supported his decision and chose to move with Dr Loh along with their two young children to Yunnan, to whom Dr Loh is indebted to and in awe of.

Asked about his decision to move to China, Dr Loh explained that it was a very natural move. Having enjoyed Dr Tan's mentoring friendship for many years, he was the first one Dr Loh approached when it was time to venture out. Dr Loh's family have also been supportive, understanding the desire to do this while one is at his/her prime.

Besides that, Dr Loh's bilingual education also provided him an edge in communicating with the locals and serving as a bridge for visiting Singaporean volunteers, further encouraging him to pursue his dream as a people's doctor in China.

Dr Loh Cheng is currently working in the Second Affiliated Hospital, Kunming Medical University and takes charge of the Resident Training programme.

Achievements

Dr Loh was awarded the Yunnan "Cai Yun" prize in 2012 that recognised his contributions in the medical field for the people in Yunnan. He was the second Singaporean doctor who received the prize after Dr Tan Lai Yong.

Dr Loh volunteers in helping to provide post graduate continuing medical education to the local primary health care doctors in Yunnan as he believes that it would be a beneficial long-term solution to China's gargantuan task of providing equitable

health care access for all, especially the inland and border resource limited regions. Besides that, he also spends his time offering free medical services to those who stay in the inaccessible mountainous area, and helping these patients to access local health care services in Kunming.

Since 2008, Dr Loh has been involved in at least 127 training courses and has helped in the liaison and organization of more than 500 operations in Yunnan.

Dr Loh, an inpatient person to begin with, has learned the virtue of patience in interacting with the locals as there are inevitably communication gaps. He has since learned to smile more too, when patients with serious ailments remind him that hope and kindness is just as important as arriving at the right diagnosis and appropriate management.

Contribution to Singapore-China Relations

Besides contributing directly to the medical field in China, Dr Loh also plays the unofficial role as Singapore's ambassador. Many Yunnan locals, upon interacting with him, had a good impression of Singapore because of his genuine demeanour and warm personality.

Dr Tan spoke highly of Dr Loh. Dr Tan, who returned to Singapore in 2010 from Yunnan after volunteering there for many years, said he is very pleased that Dr Loh is continuing this tradition of local doctors volunteering aboard. He also said that Dr Loh, who has a strong Mandarin background, would definitely do a better job than he did because of his linguistic edge.

Being a Singaporean in Yunnan, Dr Loh have become part of a network of relationships that have had and will continue to provide many opportunities for Singaporeans and the Yunnan people to know and to respect each other, in the process making this part of Asia a better neighbourhood for all. Dr Loh has definitely helped raise Singapore's profile not only in terms of his capacity as a doctor, but also as a selfless and caring global citizen.

Selected Awards

- Yunnan province "Cai Yun" prize in 2012