

**Closing Ceremony Remarks – Dr. Gary W. Singleton, President and CEO, Heartspring School –  
Recognition of Director Tian**

This is the first international conference on special education that I have attended. When I came to the conference I expected to share knowledge from our experience at our education and rehabilitation center in Kansas and I expected to learn even more from the experience of others. I have not been disappointed. I have learned so much and I am impressed by how much we share in common.

Prior to my trip, I read an article that explained that the Chinese word for *autism* is “gudu zheng” meaning the lonely illness. I have met many families at Heartspring who have experienced great isolation and hardship because they have a child with autism. The families tell me of their frustrations of not knowing how help their child, and how difficult it is to find help for their child in their community. Some share how they must sleep in shifts to keep their child safe, they tell me about the impact that autism has on their relationship with their other children, they tell me how difficult it is to work and care for their child with disabilities and what a financial burden it is for the family. I now know first hand from my conversations with many of you here that families in China and other countries have similar challenges. Gudu Zheng/Autism is a problem that creates isolation for the child and for the family no matter what country, no matter what culture.

At Heartspring we believe that it is important to recognize the work of programs that can break through that isolation for families and bring about change for the benefit of all children. We believe that by doing so, we can provide encouragement for a people who have sacrificed much to make a difference for children, but more importantly, we believe that we can bring attention and awareness of their work so that others might be inspired by and learn from their commitment to the cause of children with autism and other special needs. We believe that through awareness, people of similar interests and dedication to children can come together to encourage, challenge and sustain each other. And most of all, we learn so much and are inspired by the work of others to make a better world for all children.

So to that end, the Shaklee Teacher Award was created. The Shaklee Teacher Award is more than just a statue or a moment of recognition. It is really an invitation to join together with a growing assembly of 60 exemplary programs and to participate in a group of diverse, talented and committed professionals working together for the common cause of helping children with special needs and their families. Today, it is an honor and with great pleasure that I share the Shaklee Teacher Award to honor the work and sacrifices made by Director Tian and her staff through the Beijing Xingxingyu Education Institute for Children with Autism. This is our first opportunity to recognize the work of a program in another country. It is so appropriate to be here in China. In several weeks we will have the honor to recognize the work of dedicated professionals in Croatia. Each year we hope to have the opportunity to honor other programs around the world and to recognize and learn from each of them.

Director Tian and her staff have made great sacrifices to serve children and the families of children with autism. Through her efforts and the efforts of the dedicated teachers and staff at the Institute, many families have come together to learn about how to teach their children. Director Tian has opened doors for children -- to new independence, to greater understanding, to improved communication, to a better quality of life for the child impacted by autism, for the child's family, for the Chinese people, and this program and the sacrifices of staff serves as an example for us all.

So I ask that Director Tian join me now. Director Tian, please accept this sculpture and small donation as a token of our appreciation for your sacrifices for children. It symbolizes the special dedication between a teacher and a student. We thank you for your work to help your son, and to give beyond your family to help other families with similar challenges. We thank you for your sacrifice, your leadership, your example, and for making the lonely illness a little less lonely. I thank the people of China for having this conference and for our common dedication to build a brighter future for children here and around the world.