

Mom helps disabled son to achieve his dreams

Despite having cerebral palsy, 28-year-old has overcome physical challenges and proven outstanding English-language ability.



Guan Ping lifts Liguan onto an exercise machine in their home. [Photo by Tan Yingzi/China Daily]

Dressed in a green T-shirt and wearing a big smile, Liguan Yanping looks like a teenager. He likes to talk, both in Chinese and English, at a slow speed.

He spends most of his time in front of a computer translating or writing songs. Last year, he translated two books about Chinese calligraphy and painting into English.

When Liguan was born prematurely, in Southwest China's Chongqing in 1989, he weighed just 1.4 kilograms and was later diagnosed with severe cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy is caused by abnormal development or damage to the parts of the brain that control movement, balance and posture, leading to poor coordination, tremors and weak or stiff muscles. People with cerebral palsy may also have impaired senses of touch, sight and hearing as well as difficulty swallowing and speaking.

There are about 6 million people with cerebral palsy in China, according to the China Disabled Persons' Federation.

"A doctor told us that surgery may help alleviate his muscle spasms, but that

he would have difficulty sitting or walking in the future," said Guan Ping, Ligan's mother. "I had no idea what I was facing at that time."

Despite objections from family members, Guan decided not to have a second child, so she could focus on looking after Ligan.

In 1990, she quit her job as a factory worker and started looking after her son full time.

"I will do my best to help my son live a normal life," Guan said.

Guan has spent 20 years taking her son to see specialists across the country to help him improve body movement. Every day, she spends two hours massaging Ligan to help ease his muscle spasms, and supervising his physical training.

When Ligan was young, Guan was so strict with his training that no matter how much he cried, she would not allow him to give up. It led to people calling Guan "Tiger Mom", and some neighbors even told local authorities that they suspected Guan was abusing Ligan.

Under great pressure, Guan attempted to commit suicide twice. "Most people, including my husband, could not relate to me and criticized my actions," she said. "I believe that the only way for my son to achieve his dreams is through rigorous training."

Guan's hard work paid off. By age 16, Ligan was able to walk by himself. Now, he can conduct basic daily tasks, such as going to the toilet, washing his face, dressing himself and cooking simple meals.

"My mother and I have a very close relationship," Ligan said. "She is my best friend, teacher and coach."

Due to his physical condition, Ligan did not attend school. Instead, his mother, a high school graduate, educated him at home.

When Ligan was 12, he fell in love with learning English. Guan bought him a lot of study materials, and took him to local language training centers and English corners in the city.

Ligan has shown a great talent for learning English. He has passed China's Public English Test 4, demonstrating English language ability equivalent to that of a nonnative English major student.

However, his physical handicap prevents him from taking further tests, as he writes too slowly to complete examinations in time.

Last year, a Chinese friend at Oxford University recommended Ligan for a translation job for a picture book of Chinese calligraphy and painting.

His work gained recognition from the author who then asked him to translate the second volume of the book.

Guan is currently working on his third translation project: a book on the

origins of Chinese characters.

He also likes writing poems and songs. A poem he wrote in English, A Fruit That Was Loved By A Worm, reads:

I have no graceful appearance,

But a fine, pure spirit.

My dumbness illustrates intelligence.

My blemish makes you seem more complete.

The world is beautiful because of you,

And more realistic because of me.

“My dream is to become a professional English translator and song composer,”
Liguan said.