

Reserved parking encourages visits to elderly parents

A large residential community in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, has begun to reserve parking spaces for people visiting their elderly parents, making it easier for children to drop by on a regular basis.

The Cuiyuan community in the eastern city's Xihu district is home to about 10,000 residents, almost 20 percent of whom are age 60 or older—and most of them live alone.

To encourage people to visit elderly relatives, the community management office has marked 18 parking spaces that can be preordered and used for free on Saturdays and Sundays from 8 am to 7 pm. The maximum stay is five and a half hours, according to Shen Yifan, director of the office.

"We visited many families to do research and found that the average family visit lasted for about that length of time," Shen said.

Cuiyuan, which was built in the 1980s and has room for 600 vehicles, charges 4 yuan (60 US cents) an hour to park, or 20 yuan for a full day. It's small money, but the management office said it is aimed at improving convenience, so people with limited time will be encouraged to visit lonely loved ones.

"Care for the old is a traditional virtue and part of Chinese culture," Shen said. "By doing our part, we want to encourage young people to show more love and devotion to their parents. Good culture should be carried forward."

The service, which started on Thursday and could be extended after a trial run, was used by three people last weekend, including an elderly resident surnamed Yu who reserved a spot for her daughter.

"She and her husband visit every Sunday, but they seldom find a parking space, which means my son-in-law has to wait in the car and my daughter comes to the house. They bring me some fruit, but she always has to leave after a few minutes," Yu told Qianjiang Evening News.

"This Sunday, they didn't need to worry about that. My daughter even cooked for me and had dinner with me."