

## Village rises thanks to tiger power

When he learned to paint as a teenager, Xiao Yanqing, 52, a farmer in Henan province, could never have imagined it would lift him out of poverty.



Portraiture is a popular format for tiger paintings by farmers in Wanggongzhuang village. China Daily

Residents in Xiao's native Wanggongzhuang village used to draw and sell new year paintings. The business dates back to the early 20th century, when a retired Imperial Palace craftsman brought the skill to the village.

In the 1980s, Xiao practiced in his spare time after farm work and traveled to cities to sell his pieces, which sold so cheaply he could barely make ends meet.

But 1998, the Year of the Tiger, proved a turning point in his life when a client ordered a tiger painting. "I used to paint flowers and birds, but not once had I painted a tiger," Xiao said.

With no real tigers around, he borrowed a tiger painting from a neighbor to copy. His painting sold at a good price, and he realized he was onto something that could benefit his whole village.

“Chinese people love tigers. They hang tiger paintings in their homes because they believe the power of these animals can scare away evil spirits,” he said.

So he began to travel, not to sell paintings, but to zoos in northeastern China to observe tigers and dedicated himself to painting them.

It was a great success. In 1999, he was the first in the village to buy a color TV, and a year later a computer.

Using the internet, Xiao managed to sell his paintings abroad, first to Singapore, then to Japan, Europe and the United States.

He surprised the clerks of the local bank when he brought in US dollars to change for renminbi. “I guess they thought I was a criminal,” he said smiling.

Xiao’s success prompted friends to follow him, and more villagers joined later. Tiger painting is now a trademark of Wanggongzhuang. Over 60 percent of its 1,366 villagers are now in the business.

The village sells thousands of tiger paintings every year, with 40 percent going to overseas markets including Japan and Bangladesh. The total yearly revenue is 100 million yuan (\$15 million).

Wang Jiansheng, in his 30s, has done a lot of jobs, from construction worker to butcher. None of them allowed him to buy a house. But he earns 300,000 yuan a year by painting—enough to run his own workshop. He plans to buy a big apartment in the Henan capital, Zhengzhou, and open a gallery there.

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## **Former Shanghai shipyard’s CEO jailed for corruption**

Gu Tiquan, former boss of China’s biggest shipbuilder, has been sentenced to 13 years in prison for taking bribes and embezzlement.

Gu, former CEO of the state-owned Shanghai Hudong-Zhonghua Shipbuilding (Group) Co, was found to have taken 5.34 million yuan (US\$805,758) in bribes and to have embezzled 520,000 yuan over 15 years, according to No. 1 Branch of Shanghai People’s Procuratorate.

The 58-year-old asked his old friend Gao Liansheng to open a company in 1997. Gu took advantage of his position as a high-ranking official with Jiangnan

Shipyard Group to seek profits for the company. In return, Gao gave 2.3 million yuan “bonus” payments to Gu from 2002 to 2013.

Also, under Gu’s request, Gao bought more than 10 properties for him, and paid for overseas tours for Gu and his family.

Gu stood trial at Shanghai No. 1 Intermediate People’s Court in December 2014.

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## [Don’t bring your food to Shanghai Disneyland](#)

Visitors to Shanghai Disneyland cannot bring any food to the theme park.

The park’s operator said it has updated its rules, which are now consistent with other Disney operations in Asia.

Before, food kept in sealed commercial packing was allowed, while instant noodles and food in containers requiring reheating or home-cooked meals were prohibited.

Water bottles are also being monitored by the theme park. Beverages with volumes larger than 600 milliliters are forbidden, as is alcohol.

“Our park policy around outside food and beverage is consistent with our other destinations in Asia and many theme parks across China’s mainland,” according to the Shanghai Disney Resort.

Customers, however, have complained on social media that eating in the park is more costly than doing so outside.

The resort’s response is that visitors can enjoy their own food and beverages and dine outside the park in a convenient setting in Disneytown or the Wishing Star Park. They can then re-enter the park after their meal.

Shanghai Disney Resort features a variety of dining options that it said suits every taste and budget. The resort’s culinary team constantly reviews the menu and incorporates feedback from guests, the resort added.

Shanghai Disneyland said that in recent months it has expanded its selection of affordable food offerings, including fresh fruit and vegetables.

“We regularly review our park rules and from time-to-time make adjustments to meet the needs of our operation,” the resort said.

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## Retirees enjoy KTV as young play elsewhere

Peng Honghua, 76, felt like a star after she finished singing a piece of Yueju Opera, a form native to Guangdong province, and heard the applause of her audience. She was partying with friends at a karaoke bar in Guangzhou.

Every Friday afternoon, she and her friends and neighbors meet for karaoke, or KTV, near her home, all of them retirees.

"I would feel uncomfortable if I couldn't sing songs with them every week," she said.

More elderly people like Peng now visit KTV or music cafes regularly, to relax and meet friends. Previously viewed as entertainment for younger age groups, the venues are finding steady customers in the gray-haired crowd.

An employee at a KTV venue in Guangzhou's Tianhe district, who only gave her surname, Li, said senior citizens have become the primary customers at her business, particularly in the daytime.

"Senior citizens usually represent about 80 percent of the KTV visitors from 10 am to 5 pm on weekdays," she said.

Many KTV operators in the city are offering elderly customers discounts in the morning and afternoon. A KTV bar manager in Guangzhou's Liwan district, who insisted on anonymity, said a senior spends an average of only about 50 yuan (\$8) to sing for an entire morning or afternoon at the venue on weekdays. "And we offer a free buffet lunch," he added.

Businesses are reaching out to seniors because they are losing younger patrons. The manager in Liwan said the pace of business across the city has slowed since the central and local governments banned using public funds to visit luxury entertainment venues in 2012.

And those who once were willing to spend their own money at a KTV venue are gradually losing interest. "People now have more choices to entertain themselves than before," the manager said.

A businesswoman surnamed Chen who sold her KTV business in September after eight years' operation in Nanping, Fujian province, said the business is becoming difficult.

"The minimum cost for a room a night is 1,000 yuan including beer and snacks. In earlier times, all the rooms were full at night. But not anymore," she said. "Now, only those targeting low-end customers—at usually 200 to 500 yuan a night, and less than 200 yuan in the daytime—are still operating in my

city.”

The gray-haired singing enthusiasts now need only pay a fraction of the high price charged before to enjoy high-quality karaoke systems in a well-decorated room.

Chen Zhanwen, 61, a former business executive in Guangzhou who retired last year, said he and his wife meet their retired friends at KTV often.

“In addition to enjoying singing, I exchange views on domestic and international issues with friends and talk about life in retirement,” he said.

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## **90% fit for school after TB outbreak**

Nearly 90 percent of students infected in a tuberculosis outbreak at a middle school in August had returned to school or were able to do so by Wednesday, the government of Taojiang county, Hunan province, said on Thursday.

The outbreak occurred at Taojiang No 4 Middle School on Aug 19, prompting the Taojiang government to take emergency measures. It also immediately reported the outbreak to the Hunan provincial center for disease control and prevention, the statement said.

The government invited experts from the Hunan Center for Disease Control and the Hunan Tuberculosis Control Institute, to help with treatment. It organized four rounds of screening tests covering all staff and students at the school, as well as tests for other high-risk groups, including those who had close contact with the confirmed cases, the statement said.

The county’s health authority also sterilized the school, the statement said.

In addition, the government provided computers and internet access to infected students who had to stay at home, allowing them to study online alongside their peers.

The government has also covered all medical expenses beyond those reimbursed by health insurance programs, for all infected students, the statement said.

The county government will continue to provide treatment for infected students and watch closely those who had close contact with them to prevent new cases. It will also intensify education on preventing the spread of TB among residents, it said.

The statement did not give the number of confirmed cases or the cause of the outbreak.

Neither the county’s publicity department nor the school answered phone calls

on Thursday.

A staff member at the Taojiang CDC said more than 30 suspected TB cases were found at the school in tests conducted in August and September. More than 20 cases have been confirmed, Beijing Youth Daily reported on Wednesday.

TB, which can spread from person to person through the air, is curable. An infected person may not show symptoms for many months, which can result in transmission of the disease to others, according to the World Health Organization.

Although the incidence of TB is declining in China, about 900,000 new cases are confirmed every year in the country, which ranks third in the world, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.