

Yang Yujie and Yang Yang

Volunteering at a museum has been a mainstay for a group of Jiading youths, from their primary school years until they enter the job market, enabling them to share cultural heritage and introduce cultural venues to the public.

"The Confucius's Temple in Jiading was built in 1219 in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279)," Chen Yujiao, a cultural docent, said to the visitors. "It is a cultural landmark of the district, representing Jiading's emphasis on education."

It is the 16th year since Chen became a volunteer of Jiading Museum. When she first joined the museum, she was a primary school student from the Jiading Putong Primary School. She is now an officer with the district's market regulation administration.

"I still remember the day when I first visited the Confucius's Temple as a primary school student, looking at its towering memorial archway and admiring the motto 'The more I have looked up to it the higher it appears. The more I tried to penetrate into it the more impenetrable it seems to be,'" Chen recalled.

"The motto has inspired me through the years as I practice my volunteer work and explore the culture and history of Jiading."

For Chen, volunteer work benefits both volunteers and the visitors.

"Sharing is about giving and receiving," said Chen. "The visitors learnt through my explanation. I also progressed through every volunteer work."

Children would ask questions spontaneously and passionately, whereas senior visitors would share their understandings about history with her. Both serve as an encouragement.

In May 2002, Jiading Museum partnered with the Jiading Putong Primary School to invite students to serve as volunteer guides. This initiative allowed the students to delve into the history and culture of their hometown.

Over the past 20 years multiple



Jiading Museum has been recruiting volunteers from society each year starting 2010. — Li Qi

Inset: All volunteers are part of the Jiading Museum's big family, sharing tips and experiences related to culture. — Yang Yujie



Young volunteer museum guides exhibit right attitudes

little guides have benefited from the fertile cultural soil of the museum. They are professionals contributing to society through their different trades, yet they frequently return to the museum and continue to tell stories of Jiading to visitors, now with their matured profile and deeper voice.

Zhou Rongqian, a teacher with the Jiading Putong Primary School and the organizer of the Jiading Youth Volunteer Guide Team, feels proud of her students.

"Each group of our volunteer guides have been strictly selected and they have received professional training," said Zhou. "We taught them how to narrate, understand the exhibition layout and intention, as well as how

to guide the audience."

The students apply for the position when they reach the third grade. After the selection, they receive training. During their summer or winter vacations, they learn tips from the elder students with richer experiences. When they are fully skilled, they practice the volunteer work at the museum till they reach the fifth grade and graduate.

"It is a memorable experience for the majority of the students," Zhou said.

"Even later in their academic and professional lives — whether in junior high, senior high, college, university or the workplace — they often find time to return to the museum and continue their volunteer work."

In recent years, as enthusiasm for culture and museums has grown among the general public in Shanghai, more people are looking forward to participating in museum or art gallery volunteering.

In addition to the elementary school students volunteer team, Jiading Museum has been recruiting volunteers from society each year starting 2010.

"We receive plenty of applications," said Yuan Yejun, director of the general office at Jiading Museum. "Our volunteers come from diverse backgrounds and share a passion for volunteering at the museum. The volunteers are not substitutes for our workers; they are our partners. Together, we promote the culture."



Over the past seven years, Xu Yinyi (right) has treated each volunteer opportunity as a great chance to expand her professional boundaries.



With nearly 16 years of experience, cultural docent Chen Yujiao (left) remains enthusiastic about sharing cultural insights with visitors.