

A Heartwarming Gift At Year's End

By Nami Lee

Translated by Philip Lee

Born and raised in Los Angeles Leland Lee is a young artist who suffers from Autism. In September and October of 2005, he participated in a series of exhibitions in Taiwan that were organized by Taiwanese American Artist Association (TAAA). The exhibitions took place in Taipei and Kaohsiung. TAAA also supported a fundraising event for Taiwan Advocates, a think tank organization in Taiwan. Following the exhibitions, Leland was invited by Gale Beauty Art Gallery in Tainan to exhibit and sell his art works for charity. The fundraiser took place from December 17, 2005 to January 20, 2006 and the proceeds of which were donated to Autism and other disability focused societies.

The author of this article has known Leland's parents, Philip and Karen, for many years. One may sympathize with Lee family's plight in dealing with raising a child with Autism. But one could also take heart at knowing Leland had been raised in a love-filled family. Despite Leland's lack of verbal communication skills, God has given him the talents in fine art which allowed him to pursue his career as an artist and live a productive life. Perhaps we can't readily determine whether something is a blessing or curse based on what our eyes could see. Leland is going to be seventeen years old this year (2005). The challenges that he had to endure growing up were not something easily describable. Yet God has guided Leland and his family with love and strength such that even in afflictions their desires to respond to and serve God were not diminished. By God's grace Leland was able to raise funds through his artworks. Also with love he donated the proceeds to other people with special needs. Leland's grandfather Jin-Chue Chien, the owner of Astoria Café in Taipei, dropped his busy work schedule and went to Tainan to lend his support for his beloved grandson. What they have done was heart-warming, especially in the cold weather that usually comes at the end of the year.

Leland's mother Karen Lee has always been generous with her time. While living in Los Angeles she had actively supported Cure Autism Now, an advocacy group for people with autism. She also supported the similar types of organizations in Taiwan whenever she travelled there. Cure Autism Now has been around for more than 30 years and had been successful in their fundraising activities. They have contributed significantly to a scientific research organization called Agree. Research in Autism has made significant progress in Europe and America, which had yielded valuable insights

into the causes and treatments for Autism. When Karen found out that Autism research in the West often lacked data from Asian populations she began contacting the main advocacy group for Autism in Taiwan with the hope to include Taiwan in the database for autism research. The author has learned that Autism Society of Taiwan, formed 2 or 3 years ago, has 10 chapters and two thousand members in their organization. There are about seventy to eighty thousand people afflicted with Autism in Taiwan, which is a sizable group that requires care and support from the rest of society. Karen indicated that she has been in contact with Ms. Pan, President of Autism Society of Taiwan, Dr. Yu, the head of Institute of Cellular Biology of Academia Sinica, Dr. Wu, Developmental Psychiatrist of Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, and Dr. Kao, Developmental Psychiatrist of National Taiwan University Hospital to discuss the latest research on Autism in America. Although there is not much the author could do to contribute in this arena but I sincerely hope more people would support and care for people with Autism and become more informed about these types of disabilities.

From the time Leland began doodling at three years of age until now he has accumulated 13 years of experience in fine art. The artworks he created with his desire to express with strong contrasting colors had always made a strong impression on me even to this day. He had shown a noticeable progress toward maturity in his composition in terms of space arrangements and line placements. This author has learned a great deal from Mr. and Mrs. Lee in terms of life lessons. May the grace of God continue to assist them, not only be of help to their son but others who are suffering from Autism. Leland's artworks are being cherished by collectors in Taiwan and the U.S. His accomplishments are not only a blessing for the Lee family but also for the rest of Taiwanese American community.