

'Protect the lights of thousands of homes.'

On April 4, Zhou Wenxiu, a volunteer leader in Xinzhuang Town's Vanke community, Minhang, shared a plan for nucleic acid tests made by community volunteers, including flow charts, grouping plans and precautions.

With the process, they completed tests for 9,000 residents in three hours.

'When I see volunteers packing food and delivering it to us, I just want to say thank you.'

One of my friends took photos of volunteers and posted them on her WeChat Moments to show her appreciation for their help.

'Living in Shanghai, what I feel most is love, care and help.'

A friend shared these words with a story — "I have lived alone in a convenience store for 23 days."

The protagonist of the story is Li Na, manager of a Lawson convenience store in Minhang. Originally from Anhui Province, she came to Shanghai when she was 13 and has been in Shanghai for 20 years.

In order to ensure supplies for nearby residents during the lockdown, Li chose to live in the store, which is open 24 hours.

From March 9 to 31, Li ran the store herself. There was no bed or shower and she slept on the floor.

'I have the best neighbors in China.'

In a building in Mandarin City, Minhang, residents set up a corner shelf on the first floor with vegetables, fruit, snacks, paper towels and other daily necessities. Neighbors share their supplies to help each other.

Elizabeth, who lives in the building, told me the corner has become a "wishing pond." For example, when someone said in the building's WeChat group: "I really want to drink Coke now," a Coke soon appeared on the shelf. "When I saw someone said his dog couldn't go for a walk, I took my baby's urinal pad and put it on the shelf."

'The lockdown is tough, but people are warm.'

On March 30, several FamilyMart employees were locked down in the convenience store in a compound in Xinzhuang Town, Minhang. Jiang Ying, a volunteer in the compound, heard they didn't have hot meals and decided to cook them a chicken. However, frustrated by her poor cooking skills, she asked for help in the community. An auntie volunteered to cook for them. Two hours later, a hot, braised chicken was delivered to the staff.



A cartoon to thank volunteers

Expat resident rises to the occasion in his community

Zhou Anna

"RESIDENTS, it is garbage disposal time; please return home immediately after dropping your garbage!" This could not have been more common, except that the announcement, enunciated in standard Chinese, came from Michael Oldfield, an Englishman living in Minhang District.

The expat is called "Lao Tian" — literally what his last name means in Chinese — by his friends and neighbors, who are getting used to the exotic face Lao Tian has come to signify.

Oldfield met his wife, a native of Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, in the United Kingdom, and moved to China nine years ago. He is the head teacher at a bilingual preschool and kindergarten in Xuhui District.

Since his wife did not accompany him back to Shanghai after they visited her parents during Spring Festival, Oldfield is living alone amid the resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having got a lot of help from his community's neighborhood committee, he felt compelled to assist in its work during this challenging period.

On March 26, when many locals took their first antigen tests, Oldfield began volunteering. He spent more than four hours assisting the neighborhood committee by distributing test kits and tallying results.

When he learned that volunteers were also needed during the lockdown, he immediately signed up.

In no time, a 25-person volunteer team was created right before Puxi was locked down. Oldfield was assigned to handle delivery work every



Michael Oldfield, a British resident of Minhang District, poses in protective clothing as he does volunteering work in his community. — Ti Gong

day for four hours beginning at 8am.

"I was summoned at 6:30 this morning. We had to conduct a new round of nucleic acid testing, and I had to take the loudspeaker and call residents down in batches for the testing," Oldfield said. It was close to 2pm when he finished.

Ironically, even though he has been handling deliveries every day, prior to volunteering, Oldfield wasn't familiar with group buying and purchasing vegetables on food-delivery apps such as Dingdong Maicai.

Because he didn't stockpile a lot of food before the lockdown, he occasionally got by on nothing more than instant noodles.

However, volunteer work has changed that.

Oldfield said he has recently joined several WeChat groups, which have helped acquaint him with his neighbors and other residents in

the community.

"I used to be unfamiliar with many of my neighbors, and I rarely spoke with them when I saw them," he said.

The silver lining of the pandemic and lockdown is how it has brought people together. "My neighbors were genuinely concerned and assisted me with group buying. One of them even sent me 30 eggs," he said.

Oldfield has an account on streaming platform Bilibili under the username "Newcastle Lao Tian." Recently, he posted a video of himself as a volunteer, dressed in protective clothing worn by *dabai* (literally "big white," a nickname for medical personnel in protective suits) against the backdrop of deserted streets.

The Briton admits to sensing people's depressed state because of the pandemic but hopes everyone can work together to get through this difficult period.