



# Angel 'aunties' nurture home-alone boy through 40 days of lockdown

In this way, a new WeChat group, named 'Fraternity and Care Among Neighbors,' was set up consisting of seven caring neighbors, who became his default 'aunties,' and Youyou's 'lockdown family.'

Wan Lixin

When a medical worker couple were enlisted in the fight against the pandemic, they had to leave their 12-year-old son Youyou alone at home, until their neighbors, learning of the boy's plight, helped him with daily meals for 40 consecutive days.

Many medics faced a similar situation, having to work at medical facilities, makeshift hospitals or quarantine sites under "closed-loop" management, meaning they could not return home — often for a couple of months — until relieved of duty and were then subject to a period of quarantine.

Given that Youyou's parents were called to duty at the start of the anti-pandemic fight in late March, the boy had to spend the first three or four days of the new outbreak at home alone, in the company of a dog, eating fast noodles and managing his online study.

The unusual situation began to be noticed by neighbors who ultimately joined hands in supporting the boy through a neighborly feeding drive that lasted for about 40 days.

Youyou first came to the attention in early April of Sheng Xiaoyuan, a volunteer

helping with routine nucleic acid tests in the community. Sheng noticed the boy was taking the test alone.

"Why do you take the test by yourself? Where are your mom and dad?" Sheng asked the boy who, at 170cm tall, appeared to be an adult at first sight, but whose babyish face at closeup was a giveaway.

Sheng learned that Youyou's father was an ICU doctor at a hospital and his mother was head nurse in the Emergency Department of Yangsi Hospital in Pudong. Both were working at the forefront of the anti-pandemic fight, and their relatives and grandparents, all placed in lockdown, were unable to be of any help.

When Sheng posted the news about Youyou in the WeChat group for volunteers in the community, seven neighbors, acting on an initiative first suggested by Shi Lan, and after securing agreement from his parents, decided to launch a "Love Feeding Group" that would be responsible for Youyou's daily three meals.

The seven neighbors include a teacher, employees of foreign enterprises, artists and business people. They set up a weekly schedule whereby each of the seven, in addition to their volunteering