

Extraordinary senior citizens who defy societal norms and expectations

Staff Reporters

MONDAY was the Double Ninth Festival in China, also known as the Senior Citizens' Festival. The festival, which falls on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, includes activities that show filial regard to the elderly.

How do you define aging? Slow and old-fashioned, with housework and neighborhood gossip? Do they play mahjong or dance every day? Over 36 percent of the population in Shanghai is 60 or older, but many of them defy such conventional notions since they are eager to try new things in fashion, art, sports, and business.

Meet four grannies in this "Ageless Wonder" series and check out the colorful lives of seniors in Shanghai, as well as their inclusive and imaginative spirit.



Chen Xingzhi

74, cultural heritage inheritor

The 74-year-old Shanghai resident has turned her childhood pastime of making scented sachets into a profitable business.

Her grandmother taught her to sew various styles of sachets and the technique for herb powder fillings.

Though there were challenges early on, including finding appropriate materials for the sachets, she pursued her dream after retirement. It was worth it as her creations proved popular and orders poured in from traditional Chinese medicine pharmacies, companies, and even individuals.

Over the course of nearly

two decades, Chen has stitched up nearly 180 distinct types of sachets. Her products were on display at the 2010 World Expo and the China International Import Expo from 2019 to 2022. It is a popular item as a Shanghai souvenir and is often presented to visiting important dignitaries.

Chen has passed on the scented sachet culture to her son, who left his well-paying work at an IT firm to join his mother in preserving the culture.

Even her 15-year-old granddaughter has picked up skills and offered ideas for the design of products aimed at attracting trend-conscious young consumers.



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