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On the Road to China IWU Alum Unites Orphans with Adoptive Parents

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On the Road to China

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--On a job interview, she was asked, "Would you be willing to go to China?"

The job interviewee was Pam Gaston, a 1968 Illinois Wesleyan University sociology graduate from suburban Chicago.

She was being interviewed for a social-worker post with the Sunny Ridge Family Center's adoption program, a Wheaton, Ill.-based organization that places Chinese children with American parents.

A profile of Gaston, who has accompanied three groups of adoptive families to China and hopes to take another trip early next year, is featured in the Fall, 1999, edition of *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine*. The article, "Have baby, will travel," was authored by free-lance writer Sharon Huck of Wheaton, Ill.

"Education is a big component of what we do," Gaston explained. "When I work with adoptive families, it's not just an assessment of their abilities, it's an educational process to help prepare them for the challenges they will face as adoptive parents."

And, Gaston cautions potential adoptive parents: "The road to China is paved with paperwork."

China opened its door to foreign adoptions in 1994. Since then, Sunny Ridge has sponsored more than 30 trips, placing about 300 Chinese youngsters.

"I still tear up when they bring those babies out," Gaston said. "It's such a roller-coaster ride for these families. Sometimes it can be bittersweet because the foster parents are handing the children over, and they've loved the children. The babies also go through a grieving period because they've been attached to other people."

A sidebar focuses on Kenneth Lock, a 1966 IWU graduate, and his wife,

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Susan, and their experience adopting a Chinese youngster. The Locks have launched a foundation to help other Christian couples through the process of adopting children from other countries. This article was written by Heather Hahn, a student who will graduate from IWU in 2000.

Commenting on her job, Gaston said: "I love helping people find their children and helping children find their families.

"It's wonderful to be part of that. What a gift!"

Editor's Note: A copy of "Have baby, will travel" is attached to this news release. Permission is given to reprint excerpts or the entire article. Please send copies to: Bob Aaron, Director of University Communications, Illinois Wesleyan University, P.O. Box 2900, Bloomington, Ill. 61702-2900.