

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CHINESE MINDS SERIES

“最美中国人”丛书

# VOLUNTEERS: MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

## 志愿者：让爱传递到每个角落

“最美中国人”丛书编委会 编著



**Sinolingua**  
华语教学出版社

First Edition 2022

ISBN 978-7-5138-2278-7

Copyright 2022 by Sinolingua Co., Ltd

Published by Sinolingua Co., Ltd

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Printed by Beijing Hucais Culture Communication Co., Ltd.

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

## 前言

“最美中国人”丛书以中英对照的形式向外国读者讲述新时代中国人民的奋斗故事。本丛书用细致生动的笔触介绍了志愿者、创业者、90后、普通百姓和老年人这几个不同人群中的典型故事，反映出中国人民在中国共产党的领导下实现全面小康的逐梦历程。丛书一共五册，分别是《志愿者：让爱传递到每个角落》《创业者：幸福是奋斗出来的》《出彩90后：我的青春不后悔》《平凡老百姓：把日子过出精气神儿》《中国“传家宝”：那些可爱的老人们》，每册包含八到十个真实故事。为了让外国读者更加直观地了解中国社会的发展和人民生活的巨大变迁，丛书除了文字故事之外，部分故事还配有视频二维码，读者扫描二维码即可观看与文章配套的人物故事视频。

## FOREWORD

“The Most Beautiful Chinese Minds” is a book series for international readers featuring stories of Chinese people from all walks of life in today’s China. Presented in both Chinese and English, the series reveals the vivid and personal stories of the everyday lives of volunteers, entrepreneurs, post-90s youth, ordinary people and senior citizens as they strive to realize their own dreams and the national dream of building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. The series includes five volumes: *Volunteers: Making the World a Better Place*, *Entrepreneurs: Striving for Happiness*, *Born in the 90s: Never Regretting Our Youth*, *Ordinary People: Living a Vibrant Life*, and *Charming Seniors: Keeping Up with the Times*. Each volume consists of eight to ten true stories about real people. It is a must-read for those wishing to better understand the true experiences of everyday Chinese people in today’s China and the remarkable changes taking place in their lives. We have also provided QR codes for some stories which can link to online videos about the people from the passages.



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# 刻在生命里的生命热线

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The Life Hotline Worth Living For

作者：江 山  
翻译：卢 敏



## 刻在生命里的生命热线

曹文英的世界正在一点一点缩小。小儿麻痹症的后遗症把她锁在成都家里不到3平方米的床上，56年的卧床时间让她的心肺功能越来越差，咀嚼和吞咽对她来说也非易事。她全身瘫痪，依靠60岁的丈夫才能活动，丈夫出去工作时她不敢喝水吃饭，因为90岁的父母已无力再移动她。

她的体重在不断减轻。她剩余的几乎全部力量都被她用在那部电话上。

电话是1999年开通的。那时曹文英和同样因为小儿麻痹症瘫痪的妹妹开通了“曹氏生命热线”，专门为陷入困境的人提供咨询和帮助。

不断响起的来电仿佛在书写着一部人生问题的百科全书。从青年的恋爱烦恼到中年夫妻离异、出轨、家暴问题，为这些事犯难的人纷纷打电话给她们。有耄耋老人打电话诉说孩子不赡养自己，还有7岁



的孩子怯生生地问她，想为开出租车的父母分担点家务，打扫卫生时不小心打碎一只花瓶怎么办……

一天深夜，她们接到一位男士的电话，他倾诉的是无法接受自己是同性恋的苦恼。曹文英傻了眼，那时刚刚进入21世纪，在中国，同性恋话题依然隐匿而神秘，她根本不知道该如何应对。她打电话给认识的大学生，询问他们对同性恋的看法。最后她得出结论：“同性恋不是病，只是一种状态。”当男子再次打来电话时，她如此告诉对方，结果，从电话中传来了哭声。

2005年，与她相依为命多年的妹妹因为肺衰、心衰离开人世，她也在同年被医生下了死亡通知单，预测寿命只剩下两年。

她一度想关停“生命热线”。电话打进来时，她总是会想起妹妹，心里堵得慌，但她却只能强忍着悲痛去宽慰别人。她在报纸上登出自己这一想法，一位16岁的打工小伙儿打电话过来，带着恳求的口气说“能不能不要关，我给你打钱”。曹文英最后还是放弃了这一念头，只是，以前的“曹氏生命

热线”变成了孤零零的“曹文英生命热线”。

后来，“曹文英生命热线”的名气逐渐大了，海报也进了校园、上了报纸、上了网站。只要打进电话，她来者不拒。而在电话线的那头，许多人并不知道，给予他们希望的声音来自一位全身瘫痪的残疾人。

曹文英4个月大的时候就因为罹患小儿麻痹症而瘫痪。但在生命的头20多年里，她始终憋着一口气学习、治病。她最喜欢教师、医生这两个职业。

那时，当地流行一种“穴位强刺激疗法”，即在肩胛、股肱主要的穴位打上麻药，用刀子割开，直接刺激主干神经，“像和饺子馅一样搅”。麻药失效，曹文英痛得死去活来。她不喊，心里想着，治好病就能和同龄的孩子一样上学去。剧痛之下肢体出现的应激反应一度让家人惊喜，但是最终收效甚微。

辗转几家医院后，和曹文英同一个院子长大的伙伴都上了学，喜好文学的曹文英的胳膊依然举不起来，妹妹的双腿也无法动弹。



没法去上学，姐妹俩就查字典认字，读哥哥的课本自学，在家里合写文章投稿。后来，她们的作品发表在当地报纸上，许多人写信来交流。一个残疾小伙子讲述自己的女朋友家庭无法接受他，信的末尾写着：“3天内收不到你们的回信，我就要离开这个世界。”在拆阅信件时，信已经寄来一星期了，曹文英和妹妹赶忙回复，然而过了不久，这个小伙子的家人回信说他已经自杀了。

这件事极大地触动了曹文英姐妹俩，“如果有部电话机就好了”。提出这个想法后，父母觉得“只要她们能开心”就好，于是掏了3600元，接来一根电话线，从此曹文英开始了在电话机旁长达19年的坚守。

出乎意料的是，打电话来咨询的人不少。一部白色的老式电话机在她们的枕头旁边摆着，铃声一响，妹妹曹文君马上拿起电话接听。曹文英和曹文君一个白天接，一个夜晚接。“这个热线就好像是一扇我们了解世界、了解社会的窗口，让我们明白这个世界上还有许多不幸的人，还有比我们更不幸的人。”

给她们打电话的人各种各样。有工地上干活的年轻小伙儿，也有大学里的教师。从没进过一天校园的曹文英担心自己没水平辅导别人。她买来心理学教材苦读，但是一接电话还是发现，“要是照着心理学教程就做不了这个”。

2002年，一位男子打电话过来，说自己明天想要自杀。她一下子蒙了，又马上镇定下来，告诉对方“你如果真的要死，明天也要打电话告诉我妹妹一声”，她希望用这种方式拖住他。第二天这通电话没有如约而至。姐妹俩很着急，根据对方透露的一些线索，一个单位一个单位打电话去问，可对方用的是化名，音信全无。

直到一天晚上，这个男人才再次打电话过来，道歉说那天过后他就没再想这件事，直到听说姐妹俩在找他。

为寻找这个人，曹文英家的电话费花了100多元。有人劝她们不必花这冤枉钱，她一开始也有些气恼，但转念一想，如果100多元能换一条生命，那这钱就花得值！

她逐渐摸索出自己的一套方法，关键的



秘诀是“看人、看事真要用心”。一些人打来电话就骂骂咧咧、语无伦次，她会好言好语地安抚对方，让他一点一点讲，末了自己再总结，问一句“你想表达的是不是这个意思”。

只要有电话打来，几小时她都陪着聊。她曾经创下的纪录是聊了58个小时，对方喋喋不休地说着他朋友的爱情悲剧，曹文英在电话线这边陪着一起长吁短叹，只有对方吃饭或者上卫生间时，她才能抽出空隙来解决自己的问题。

妹妹去世后，曹文英没法自己拿听筒，就新配了一部手机。要用手机时，她只能像一只布偶一样被家人摆弄着，右手卡着手机，靠在两个枕头上，头往右倾斜，左手一直举到额头上，向外翻转弯曲，将触屏笔夹在虎口、顶着屏幕，才能用有限的力气点触。要把笔挪到其他位置，曹文英得调动左脸的肌肉，夸张地努着嘴，才能让触屏笔前进几毫米。

即便如此，每当她发现打电话来的人需要更多帮助时，她都会主动让他们加她的微

信语音或视频聊天，并解释说“这样就不会浪费你的电话费了”。

“生命热线”开通以来，她从没收过一分钱。有人冷嘲热讽地说，“只有傻子才不要钱”。在她看来，“正是因为我不收费，才会有那么多的电话。实际上真正需要帮的恰恰就是这些人”。

19年来，咨询者换了一拨儿又一拨儿，在他们身上，曹文英感觉自己见证了社会的变化。他们问的问题越来越多，要求也越来越高。以往曹文英坚持“不给他们做主，只是给一个建议”，但是现在在电话里，急躁的成年人会大声嚷嚷着“你就告诉我，我到底该怎么做”，渴望得到一个现成的答案。

更多的时候她接受的是情感问题咨询。原先曹文英觉得学历高的人很聪明，一点就透，现在发现他们根本不动脑筋，没有一点耐心。她觉得奇怪：“他们太缺乏沟通意识，跟别人说话滔滔不绝的，可是为什么对着最亲近的人没话说？”

有的人解决了问题就销声匿迹，再无音讯。有的人成了她的朋友，时不时来看望她。





新的电话依然源源不断。

曹文英也能够理解这些人的心情，“作为残疾人，社会对我没有那么高的要求，但是他们作为健全人，上有老下有小，要面对的是整个世界”。

“生命热线”出名后，曹文英被人叫作“四川张海迪”，她不愿意。1983年，张海迪的事迹在全中国传播。当时，20岁出头的曹文英留着长发，被人挖苦：“其他不像张海迪，外表倒是挺像。”张海迪给她带来动力，更是巨大的压力。

那时她性格内向、拧巴，不愿说话，心里常常气得不行。“张海迪瘫痪后下身一点知觉都没有，我虽然不能动，但神经都是好的。”用她的话来说，“一根头发丝拂过皮肤”都能感觉到。夏天是最难熬的，蚊子在她腿上猛劲儿吸着血，她只能盯着看，或喊母亲过来帮她赶跑。

如今，曹文英把“生命热线”当成了自己的事业，她更有底气说，“我就是曹文英”，因为“张海迪做到的事我没有做到，我做到的事张海迪也没做，你不能把两件事扯到一起”。



“我是没办法，如果我手脚健全，一定有更多的工作可以做。”

没进校园念书成了她始终耿耿于怀的事。但她觉得“有了这个热线，我们知道了我们的价值所在，知道了我们具备的能力，还知道我们不是废人，不是没有用的人，不是社会的包袱，也不是父母的累赘”。

曹文英还通过电话结识了现在的丈夫姚双全。姚双全童年家庭不幸，出门打工又遭欺负。他在收音机中听说了曹文英的“生命热线”后打电话来咨询。当时曹文英追求者众多，但是她看中姚双全支持她继续自己“生命热线”的事业，于是决定嫁给他。

依靠 60 岁的丈夫抱着背着，曹文英才能挪出那张小床。但这一过程也显得惊心动魄。尽管她的体重现在只有七八十斤重，但丈夫姚双全告诉记者，“不像抱一件 70 斤重的东西”，如果重心控制不得当，曹文英就有可能一下子栽到地上。

丈夫去上班的时间里，她即使接电话讲到嘴角泛起白沫也不肯喝一口水，“怕解手”。现在，她内心的全部担忧是，丈夫今



年就要退休，家中的全部开支只靠老父亲的退休工资难以为继，但若丈夫再找一份全日制工作，她的处境将会更加困难。

她还是无法放弃“生命热线”。她发誓，“只要我的生命存在一天，我的‘生命热线’就会存在一天”。

一位曾经得到过她帮助的中年男子说起“曹老师”满是钦佩。他去看过了曹文英，佩服她比许多健康的人更“看得开”。在曹文英看来，“我帮他们不觉得亏了，我在他们身上学到了许多我在书本上学不到的东西。我失去的东西远远不如我得到的多”。

她承认，19年前，她并没有今天这么豁达。年轻的时候，她不是没想到过死，但是她绝望地发现自己“连自杀的能力都没有”。开通“生命热线”后，这个念头渐渐消失了，她发现自己琢磨更多的是怎么把别人从死亡边缘拉回来。

她说自己还有很多梦想没有实现。她想去观海，想带90岁的父母亲回趟老家。命运却从未给她和家人一天喘息的机会。

她始终记得自己第一次出远门的情形。

那是1991年，河北唐山老家亲戚来信，邀请他们回故乡看看。曹文英和妹妹坐着火车，颠簸了两天两夜，一路往北回到家乡。小侄女推着她们的轮椅在田埂上跑得飞快，采下路边的野花撒在她们身上。她们把花儿带回家，仔仔细细地插在窗台上的花瓶里。

一天黄昏时分，她看到远处地平线上一轮巨大的红日滚滚坠地，夕照泼洒在绿浪一样的田野上，天地寂静，田野广阔，青烟袅袅上升。她第一次感觉到，在自然面前，自己的痛苦不值一提。

那一刻，她和命运和解了。她暗暗地想：“人早晚要死，但是应该顺其自然，不要自己去结束。每个人来到世界上都有自己的价值，如果我们一天天消沉下去，就是白来到世界上一趟。”



## The Life Hotline Worth Living For

Cao Wenying's world is shrinking little by little. She is 56 years old, and still suffers from the after effects of polio, and is confined to her small bed in her home in Chengdu. A lifetime of lying in bed has worsened the functions of her heart and lungs. Chewing and swallowing are difficult. She is paralyzed and relies on her 60-year-old husband to move her around. When he goes to work, she does not dare eat or drink because her 90-year-old parents cannot move her.

She is losing weight. She uses almost all of her remaining strength to talk on the phone.

Her phone service, called "Cao's Life Hotline," was begun in 1999. It provides specialist advice and help for those in trouble. It was started by Cao and her younger sister Cao Wenjun, who was also paralyzed due to polio.

The constant calls constitute an encyclopedia of life issues. From the love troubles of young people to the issues of middle-aged couples like divorce, infidelity and domestic violence, people would call Cao and her sister for advice. Some senior citizens would call to complain that their children weren't taking care of them. A seven-year-old child called them once. She wanted to share some housework with her parents, who are taxi drivers, but accidentally broke a vase while cleaning the house. She asked what she should do.

One night, they received a phone call from a distressed man who confided that he was not able to accept he was gay. Cao Wenying was perplexed. At the turn of the 21st century, the topic of homosexuality was still unspoken in China, and she didn't know how to deal with it. She called university students she knew and asked what they thought of homosexuality. In the end, she concluded that homosexuality was not a disease, but rather biological in nature. When the man called again, she told him. Hearing that, he began to cry on the phone.

In 2005, her younger sister passed away due to lung and heart failure. In the same year, the doctor also told Cao that she would live for only two more years.

For a time, she considered shutting down the "Life Hotline." Whenever there was a phone call, she would think of her younger sister. But she endured her grief in order to comfort others. Her story appeared in the newspaper, and a 16-year-old migrant worker called her and pleaded, "Can you continue to operate the life hotline? I'll give you money." Cao Wenying gave up the idea of quitting, but the former "Cao's Life Hotline" became "Cao Wenying's Life Hotline".

Gradually, her hotline became well-known, and posters for it could be seen on campuses, in newspapers, and on websites. She will not refuse any call. On the other end of the phone line, many people don't know that the voice that gives them hope comes from a paralyzed person.

When four-month-old Cao Wenying suffered from polio, she became paralyzed. For the first 20 years of her life, she tried her best to study and cure her condition. Because of this, she likes the two professions of teacher and doctor most.



At that time, “strong acupoint stimulation therapy” was popular in her city. It involved injecting anesthetics into the main acupoints of the shoulder blade, arm and thigh, cutting them with a knife, and directly stimulating the central nerve. The anesthetic was ineffective, and Cao was in great pain, but she didn’t scream. She thought if she were cured, she could go to school like other children her age. In the end, however, the therapy had little effect.

While she was undergoing medical treatment in several hospitals, the other children who grew up with her in the same courtyard continued going to school. Cao, however, couldn’t even raise her arms, and her younger sister couldn’t move her legs.

But Cao loved literature. Because they couldn’t go to school, the two sisters would look up Chinese characters in the dictionary to be literate. They would also read their elder brother’s textbooks to study on their own, and wrote articles together at home to contribute to newspapers. Later, their articles were published in local newspapers, and many people wrote letters to them. A disabled young man told them his girlfriend’s family would not accept him. At the end of the letter, he wrote, “If I don’t receive your reply within three days, I will leave this world.” When they read the letter, they realized it’d been sent a week ago. Cao and her younger sister quickly replied, but the young man’s family later replied that he had already committed suicide.

This shocked the two sisters. “It’d be better if we had a phone.” After they mentioned the idea, their parents felt it would be fine “as long as they’re happy.” They paid 3,600 yuan and obtained a phone line. Cao then used the phone line for 19 years.

Soon and unexpectedly, people began calling for advice. An old-fashioned white phone was placed next to their pillows. As soon as it rang, her younger sister would immediately answer it. They decided to take phone calls in shifts. "This life hotline is like a window for us to know more about the world and society, and see that there are many unfortunate people in the world, some of whom are more unfortunate than us."

People from different walks of life called them, such as young people working on construction sites and university teachers. Since Cao was not a student of psychology, she was worried that she could not give good advice to others. She bought psychology textbooks to study, but when she answered the phone, she felt that she was competent enough.

In 2002, a man called and said that he wanted to commit suicide the next day. Cao was stunned but immediately calmed down, telling him, "If you really want to die, you should call my younger sister tomorrow." She hoped to delay his suicide this way. The next day, he did not make the call. The two sisters were very anxious. According to some clues disclosed by the man, they called each possible workplace, but the man used a pseudonym, and there was no information about him.

One night, the man called again. He told them that he hadn't thought about committing suicide ever since, and he was sorry that the two sisters had been looking for him.

Cao spent more than 100 yuan on phone bills trying to find him. Some people advised them not to spend the money. She was a little annoyed at first, but she thought that if 100 yuan can save a life, then it was worth it.



She gradually figured out her own methods, and the key was to consider each person with great care. When some called, they would curse and speak incoherently. She would persuade them to calm down and talk in detail. In the end, she would sum up what they said and ask, “Is this what you wanted to express?”

As long as there was a phone call, she would chat for hours. She once set a record of talking for 58 hours. The caller was chattering about his friend’s love tragedy. Cao Wenying sighed with him on the phone line. Only when the caller ate or went to the toilet could she take a break to handle her own things.

After her younger sister died, Cao didn’t have the strength to hold the receiver herself, so she bought a mobile phone. When talking, her family had to help position her body. The mobile phone was stuck in her right hand, and she leaned on two pillows, with her head tilted to the right, and her left hand raised to her forehead and bent outwards. The touchscreen was in her hand between her thumb and index finger, and the screen touch pen was in her mouth. She was able to touch the screen with limited strength. To move the screen pen to another position, she had to mobilize the muscles of her left cheek and pout her lips to move the pen several millimeters.

Whenever she found that callers needed more help, she would add their WeChat. “In this way, you won’t spend too much money on your phone bill.”

Since the “Life Hotline” was put into use, she has never charged a fee. Some people have criticized her saying, “Only fools don’t charge any money,” but she responded, “It is precisely because I don’t charge a fee



that I have so many calls. It is because these people really need my help.”

Over the past 19 years, the questions and problems have been changing. Cao feels that she has been witnessing the changes in society. People ask more questions and have higher expectations of her. She used to insist on “making no decisions for them, but giving suggestions,” but now impatient adults are prone to yell, “Just tell me what I should do!” and eager to get solutions from her.

She provides more consulting on emotional issues. At first, she thought that people who’ve received a higher education must be very clever and will quickly get the hint, but she found that they didn’t use their minds and were impatient. She was puzzled and thought, “They talk to others endlessly. Why don’t they talk to their family?”

Some people disappear after their problems are solved. Others become her friends and come to visit her from time to time. There are still endless new calls.

Cao understands these people. “Since I’m a disabled person, society does not set such high demands on me. But for other people, they have parents and children, and they have to face the world.”

After her “Life Hotline” became well-known, Cao was called “Sichuan’s Zhang Haidi,” but she is unwilling to accept this. In 1983, Zhang Haidi’s story as a paraplegic girl who became a writer spread throughout China. At that time, 20-year-old Cao had long hair and was ridiculed by other people who said, “She only looks like Zhang Haidi, but is nothing like her.” Zhang Haidi brought her both



motivation and pressure.

At that time, Cao was introverted, stubborn, unwilling to speak, and very angry at what they said. “Zhang Haidi is paralyzed from the chest down,” she’d said. “Although I can’t move, my nerves are in good condition.” She said that she could feel “a strand of hair brushing across her skin.” She found it hard to bear the summer season. Mosquitoes sucked blood on her legs. She could only stare at them and call her mother to come help her drive them away.

Now, Cao regards the “Life Hotline” as her career. She said with great confidence, “I am Cao Wenying. I didn’t do what Zhang Haidi did, and Zhang Haidi didn’t do what I have done. You can’t compare the two.”

“I have no alternative. If my hands and feet are in good condition, I must have more work to do.”

She has always felt bad that she was never able to go to school to study. But she feels that “with this hotline, we know our value, the ability we have, and we also know that we are disabled, but not useless, and not a burden to society and our parents.”

Cao met with her husband Yao Shuangquan through the phone. His family was very poor growing up, and he became a migrant worker and was often bullied. He heard about Cao Wenying’s “Life Hotline” on the radio and called for advice. At that time, Cao had many suitors, but she loved Yao Shuangquan because he supported her in continuing her “Life Hotline” career, so she decided to marry him.

Relying on her 60-year-old husband to carry her in his arms or on

his back, Cao could finally move out of her small bed. The process is unnerving. She only weighs 35 or 40kg now. Her husband said that it was unlike carrying a “35kg thing.” If the center of gravity is not appropriately controlled, she could suddenly fall to the ground.

When her husband goes to work, she won't drink a sip of water because she is “afraid of going to the toilet.” Now she is worried that her husband will retire this year, and all her family cannot live on the retirement salary of her elderly father. But if her husband finds another full-time job, her situation will be even more difficult.

She still can't give up the “Life Hotline.” She vowed, “As long as I'm alive, my ‘Life Hotline’ will exist.”

A middle-aged man she once helped talked about “Teacher Cao” with admiration. He had visited her in person, and admired her for being more “open-minded” than many healthy people. In Cao's view, “I feel I lose nothing by helping them. I learn a lot from them that I cannot study in books. My gains are more than my losses.”

She admitted that 19 years ago, she was not as open-minded as she is today. When she was young, she thought about death, but she found that she could not commit suicide. After the “Life Hotline” was put into use, the idea gradually disappeared. She found herself thinking more about how to pull others back from the brink of death.

She says that she still had many unfulfilled dreams. She wants to see the sea, and she wants to take her 90-year-old parents back to her hometown. But fate never gives her and her family a chance to have a brief respite.



She always remembers the first time she went on a journey. In 1991, relatives from her hometown of Tangshan, Hebei Province wrote her a letter and invited Cao and her sister to visit. They took the train, traveling for two days and two nights, all the way north back to their hometown. Their little niece pushed them in their wheelchairs fast through the fields, plucking wildflowers from the roadside and sprinkling them on their bodies. They took the flowers home and carefully put them in vases on the windowsill.

At dusk, she saw the huge red sun on the horizon rolling down to the ground, and the evening glow was splashing on the green fields that ripples. The world was tranquil, the fields were vast, and the smoke curled up. For the first time in her life, she felt that in nature, all her pain had become insignificant.

At that moment, she reconciled with fate. “We will all die sooner or later, but we should let nature take its course instead of ending our lives by ourselves. Everyone has their own value in the world. If we sink down day by day, then we are living in this world for nothing.”

出版策划：王君校 韩 晖  
统筹协调：付 眉 韩 颖 彭 博  
策划编辑：刘小琳  
责任编辑：陆 瑜  
英文编辑：韩芙芸  
封面设计：袁长新  
排 版：北京几何创想艺术设计有限公司  
印刷监制：汪 洋

#### 图书在版编目(CIP)数据

志愿者：让爱传递到每个角落：汉英对照 / “最美中国人”丛书编委会编著. — 北京：华语教学出版社，2022.5  
(最美中国人)  
ISBN 978-7-5138-2278-7

I. ①志… II. ①最… III. ①人物—先进事迹—中国—现代—汉、英 IV. ① K820.7

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2022) 第 044703 号

## 志愿者：让爱传递到每个角落

“最美中国人”丛书编委会 编著

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华语教学出版社有限责任公司出版  
(中国北京百万庄大街 24 号 邮政编码 100037)  
电话：(86)10-68320585, 68997826  
传真：(86)10-68997826, 68326333  
网址：www.sinolingua.com.cn  
电子信箱：hyjx@sinolingua.com.cn  
北京虎彩文化传播有限公司印刷  
2022 年 (16 开) 第 1 版  
2022 年第 1 版第 1 次印刷  
(汉英)  
ISBN 978-7-5138-2278-7  
006900