



The cooking class has drawn a large number of residents looking to improve their everyday meals. — All photos by Si Shushu

ADULT SCHOOL breathes new life into community

Si Shushu and Yang Yang

Adult school offering hobby-related education is gaining momentum in Juyuan Subdistrict in Jiading District, with all its quotas for the 24 classes in the spring semester booked in a wink of an eye, the school's statistics revealed.

Chengxiao (成校), or adult school, used to refer to institutes offering education for adults only. In recent years it has morphed into a community school welcoming all age groups.

Founded in 2008, the adult school in Juyuan Subdistrict has been awarded "Shanghai Model School for Seniors' Education," "2023 Jiading Model Education Institute" and "China Lifelong Education Brand" for its "Citizens 365 Classroom" program and all age group courses.

How did it manage to gain both traction and reputation? A trip into the school gives the answer.

The Juyuan adult school starts to deliver its lessons at 9am each day. It offers courses like music performance, singing, calligraphy, painting and dancing.

Each week before class, Shang Yuzhan, monitor of the seniors' smart phone learning course, will kindly remind her fellow students: "We'll have our class in Room 308. See you later."

Shang, 64, has been taking the smart phone learning course for four years. She wasn't able to use WeChat to create a messaging box in the beginning, but now she can make online purchases, change goods or get a refund, as well as book tickets for tourism sites, flights and hotels.

"The adult school invites me into the digital age," Shang stated.

In 2012, Shang, who had just retired, moved to Shanghai to be with her daughter. She didn't understand the local dialect and had no social events. She



Many women from the Juyuan Subdistrict enjoy dressing up for folk dancing classes.



Above: Xu Mengya (third from right) performs during an evening event for the "Citizens 365 Classroom" program.

Left: Shang Yuzhan (center) shares a happy moment with her classmates.

nearly reached the border of depression.

Worrying about her mother, Shang's daughter inquired about the courses at Juyuan adult school. They finally chose smart phone learning — a life skill course, among computer skills, chorus and other courses.

Having mastered social and

shopping skills on her smart phone, Shang now loves traveling. She gets in touch with her former classmates and together they have toured Qaidam Basin, Kunlun Mountain and the Hohxil lake area.

Recently she has been planning a trip to Yunnan Province.

"I compared myself with photos

of me about a decade ago. I am happier and like a flower blooming at sunset," said Shang.

When night falls, the school turns into an off-work haven for salary people. They play ukulele, dance to rhythmic music, brew coffee and do gym exercises to stave off fatigue.

Xu Mengya, a student of the

piano class, is a new Shanghai resident. Though she has a heavy workload and a family to take care of, she still spares some time for her own.

On the days she has a piano lesson, she hurries to pick up her son from primary school and they come to Juyuan adult school together. Xu goes to the third floor



Many mothers have fulfilled their childhood ambitions with affordable piano lessons at the adult school.

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The parent-kids courses take place in the morning. The teen courses are usually arranged at weekends or during the winter and summer vacation. For salary people, the courses are set at weekends and early at night. The seniors usually have their lessons in the daytime.

Jin Xing

Headmaster of Juyuan adult school in Jiading District

to learn piano and her son reads books in the library on the first floor. She treasures each of her 48 lessons and hasn't missed one.

"It's like I am redoing my childhood. My parents weren't able to finance music lessons back then, and I am treating myself now," Xu said.

"Common art lessons from social institutes are costly. And here the price is affordable thanks to government subsidies," she added.

Xu is even envisioning her retirement years, "I won't have to worry about boredom when I get old. There are plenty of lessons for me to choose."

Juyuan Subdistrict is the "youngest" administration section in Jiading District and its adult school also happens to be the newest.

Being the youngest, it dares to venture out.

"In the first few years, the age of the students and the limited scope of the subjects tended to be an obstacle for the growth of our school," said Jin Xing, headmaster of Juyuan adult school. "Even if we posted recruitment advertisements on each of the residential buildings, few people applied."

The school then held surveys and seminars to learn the needs of

people in different age groups and cultivated its brand "Citizens 365 Classroom" to cater to requirements of all age groups.

Classes are now divided into courses for parents and their kids between 0 to 3 years old; classes for teenage; trendy courses for young and middle-aged people; and the happy retirement courses for middle-aged and senior people.

The schedules are also matched with the daily routines of people in different age groups.

"The parent-kids courses take place in the morning. The teen courses are usually arranged at weekends or during the winter and summer vacations," Jin said. "For salary people, the courses are set at weekends and early at night. The seniors usually have their lessons in the daytime."

The school makes full use of its 1,000-square-meter classrooms. Take Room 310 as an example. The classroom is used for reciting, calligraphy, TCM health, home maintenance and storage lessons, as well as Yueju Opera and children's watercolor painting — all in one week.

In addition, new lessons are constantly designed to cater to residents' ever-evolving requirements along with the

development of the society.

The school turned into a big hit in 2018 with an unprecedented number of people queuing for enrollment. For the convenience of the students, it adopted telephone enrollment, and currently enrollment is offered online.

In 2022 the school embraced its new round of development — the "15-minute community study ring," which refers to one community school, four branch schools, 24 village learning sites and multiple social institutes learning sites.

It has also cooperated with vocational schools to launch baking and video-editing classes, with boxing gyms to set up trial lessons, and with science and technology institutes to cultivate platforms for teenage students.

Scholars, experts, craftsmen, local celebrities and warm-hearted citizens of Juyuan are joining in to be part-time teachers.

This year, the school has invited Mo Hongyuan, a recognized inheritor of intangible cultural heritage in bonsai and gardening from Jiading District, to conduct a balcony gardening class at Chenjianshan Lotus Park. This class is specifically designed for office workers looking to find inner peace through plant care.