Committee volunteers,

The year of 2017 is an extraordinary one for the committee. This year, the exchanges between Iowa and Hebei have continued in full spectrum and reached a new level, particularly in the agriculture exchange.

An exciting event for the Hebei Committee was the U.S.-China Demonstration Farm with the Iowa Kimberly Farm as its centerpiece, which was initiated in a MOU signing ceremony in Shijiazhuang in November 2016. The project has geared into a high-speed development.

Within the year, the Iowa partners, Luca Berrone and the Kimberly family, Rick, Martha, and Grant, have visited the farm site in the Luanping County of Hebei Province 5-6 times. The partners in Hebei, the RiseSun Real Estate Incorporation and Hezhong Investment Company, visited Iowa respectively in March and April of this spring.

The U.S.-China Demo Farm is the very first farm of its kind in China due to its comprehensiveness. This farm project of 3,130 acres, or 19,000 Mu in the Chinese measurement, includes an Iowa-Kimberly Farm of 300 acres, a typical Iowa town square, a Kimberly farmstead, an ag equipment exhibition center, a museum to showcase the friendship history between the two states, a conference center, and a family-experience site.

In September of this year, the Iowa delegation, which consisted of U.S. Ambassador Branstad, the ISS delegation and its cohorts across China, went to Hebei to attend a groundbreaking ceremony for the demonstration farm.
Another delegation that was able to visit our sister state of Hebei was an Iowa State Fair delegation. This was to enhance the cooperation between the Iowa State Fair and the Langfang Provincial Fair as well as between the demonstration farm and the Iowa State Fair, the Iowa State Fair delegation led by ISF General Manager Gary Slater and Board President John Harms visited Hebei in the past November, and their visit was very well received in Hebei.

In December, a delegation led by the Luangping County Party Secretary Mr. Cai Fushao visited
Iowa. During the visit, they went to Ames to meet its partners in the farm project, visited the Kimberly Farm to learn about its operations, and toured the Iowa State Fairground.

The Hebei Committee is also in partnership with Study-Iowa Tour Consortium to invite counselors of Hebei high schools to visit Iowa college campuses. A small Iowa group visited Hebei colleges and schools in April to pave the way for the Hebei counselors to visit Iowa. The Hebei counselors hope to visit Iowa this April 2018. A group of ten educators from this consortium led by UNI International Recruitment and Admissions Director, Dr. Kristina Marchesani, visited Hebei in late October in an endeavor to recruit prospective Chinese students.
The Hebei-flood donations that volunteers made in October 2016 and was presented to Hebei in a formal ceremony during ISS’s visit to Hebei in November of the year has been directed to Lingshou County of Hebei this year. I will follow up the progress of the donations and report to the committee as soon as I have more information about it.

This year, we have welcomed a few new volunteers to the Hebei committee. On the other hand, we have lost a long-term volunteer, Cyndi Chen, who had also served as ISS President from 2008-2010. Just this morning, I received messages from two Cyndi’s friends in Guangdong Province of China, who just learned about her passing away. They benefited over 10 years ago from the hospitality of Cyndi and her husband Frank. With WeChat, they are reconnected to me and are deeply saddened by the deaths of Cyndi and Frank.

In the year 2018, we will move the demo farm project forward and implement the educational exchange projects. Next year is also the 35th anniversary of the Iowa-Hebei Sister-State relationship, which was signed back in 1983. We will work with Hebei People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries in planning the celebrations.

Happy holidays,

Will Zhang
Hebei Committee Chair