

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers stepping up to task

Teams of helpers, some as old as 82, endure heat, stress to help coordinate the Games

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About 110,000 people from all walks of life, at home and abroad, applied to become volunteers for the Youth Olympic Games so far, according to the Games organizing committee.

After near endless rounds of interviews, the committee has chosen about 20,000 volunteers who will be responsible for spectator services, competition organization, reception services, translation assistance, catering and medical care.

More than 90 percent of the volunteers have an education background of a college degree or above, and more than 80 percent are college students.

About 500 are fluent in languages including French, Russian, Arabian and Spanish.

The committee has also conducted several rounds of training for the volunteers, including basic knowledge of sports, etiquette, English, the culture and history of Nanjing, the daily operation of the venues, as well as dealing with emergencies.



Volunteers from different countries and regions will play major roles in the Youth Olympics. PHOTOS BY XINHUA



PROFILE: LIU GUOZHANG

Veteran an indispensable part of volunteer force

Instead of spending time watching TV and playing mahjong with neighbors during the summer, 82-year-old Liu Guozhang chose to spend his time giving directions on the bustling streets in Nanjing.

"I remember most of the routes of the buses around the area," said Liu. "You can almost get addicted to standing here while offering help."

"You dedicate just a few hours each day toward a worthwhile cause and it feels so good to help people solve their problems," he said.

Liu, after serving as a volunteer during the 2013 Nanjing Asian Youth Games, has devoted himself to the Nanjing 2014 Youth Olympic Games this year as the most senior volunteer.

Liu said he never dreamed an event this extravagant would be held in the city he has lived in all of his life. "I was in charge of tickets during the Games in 2013 and had to quit after getting sick, which is one of the major regrets of my life," he said.

"I will make sure I have no regrets at these Games."

Liu said he delayed cataract surgery to volunteer for the 2013 event, bearing in mind the recovery period could have caused him to miss this year's Games.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, you simply don't want to miss it."

Liu has also persuaded his grandson, Zhou Chongyang, a student at the Nanjing University of Science and Technology, to be a volunteer.

"Most of the foreign athletes and visitors are here in Nanjing for the very first time, and they might need my help finding their destinations," said the 20-year-old.

Liu, may be the oldest volunteer, but he has plenty of senior company.

Wang Qinghua, in his 60s, and his wife, Xia Anning, also signed up months ago to become Games' volunteers.

Wang said he majored in English at college and his wife majored in Japanese.

"My daughter, who is currently studying abroad for her PhD, is very supportive of our deeds," said Wang.

"It's much more fun helping those in need than sitting in front of the television watching the Games," he said. "It makes us feel part of it."



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