



The arts bring the Girdner family together

Playing Every Night

Artistically inclined dad **Randy Girdner** tells us about his spelling bee star and the family's penchant for performing

→ **Your family is a match truly made in Shanghai. Tell us a bit about how you and Tracey met.** We met on our first day in Shanghai (at the Long Bar, of all places) in 1997. We were at a teacher mixer; we turned around, and that was it. The Oklahoma boy had to go halfway around the world to meet a Canadian girl. **Both you and Tracey are quite arts-oriented. Can you tell us a bit about your involvement in the school and community arts scenes?** I am one of the chairpersons for the Shanghai Student Film Festival, which brings together students from all over the city and highlights extraordinary films from a variety of talented kids. Tracey is involved in several music activities, including the International Festival Chorus. In October, she sang the "Yellow River Cantata" in a stadium with 20,000 people, which was broadcast live for China's 60th anniversary. **Do your kids get involved in the activities that you and Tracey participate in?** As a family, we made a film together for a variety show at Shanghai Com-

munity International School, which was a lot of fun. Because we're so busy with arts-related activities, our girls come to a lot of the events with us, ranging from rehearsals to actual performances. When we did *Bugsy Malone* with our high school, the girls watched dress rehearsals and performances of the show, and whenever we thought we could get the songs out of our head, the girls would march through the room, putting on their own performances. **We hear your eldest daughter won the citywide Mandarin Chinese contest hosted by the Community Center Shanghai a while back.** Harper did very well in her level 1 Chinese character test, but we had very little to do with her success. After her two years here, she knows more Chinese than we do after

Meet the Family
Nationality: Canadian and American
Dad: Randy Girdner
Mom: Tracey Ramsey
Daughters: Abbey Girdner, 5
 Harper Girdner, 7

five years. Thankfully, we have a great Mandarin program at our school, which has made both of our girls love learning the language. The school's ability to bring out that enthusiasm in our kids has contributed to something that we think will be very important in their future. **Do you and Tracey fall into the category of overzealous parents, or were you able to contain your enthusiasm?** Not at all. In fact, we're probably not as driving as we should be. We encourage our girls to use their imaginations and play as much as possible. We hate homework! **If your family's life was turned into a film (or a musical given Tracey's musical inclinations), what would it be called?** The film would be called, "Tracey, Randy, Harper, & Abbey: So Tired They're in Bed by 8 o'clock Every Night." ◊