'Chinese fever' taking hold in US

2017-07-19

China Daily USA |  
 Updated: 2017-07-19 10:36

NEW YORK - The grandchildren of US President Donald Trump endeared themselves to Chinese-speaking communities in early April when they performed a folk song in Mandarin for President Xi Jinping during the leaders' first meeting in Florida.   
Trump's grandchildren Arabella and Joseph Kushner joined Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg and Malia Obama, former president Barack Obama's daughter, in learning Chinese.   
But the followers of the world's oldest written language are not confined to prominent public figures. Statistics from the United States show Chinese is the third most popular language in the country, behind English and Spanish.   
   
   
Aisling McCaffrey started learning the language when she was in her first year majoring in international business at the Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. After graduation, she went to Renmin University in Beijing for further studies.   
"When I chose Chinese, I just thought I don't know much about China and this will be an opportunity for me to learn something and I'm very glad that I did," she said at the New York-based China Institute, the oldest educational institution devoted solely to Chinese culture in the US.   
"I think everyone believes that China will be the next great superpower ... even if it's not a superpower like America," she said. "And learning Chinese is the best way to make sure that you can be part of that growth."   
McCaffrey has recently relocated to New York City with her boyfriend after working a few years at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, China. She comes to the monthly Mandarin meetup at the China Institute while researching the next step in her career.   
"To be honest, the fact that I didn't know much about China before and then I developed this love for China, I spent most of my adult life living in China, which has really influenced my life. I wouldn't be the person I am today without learning Mandarin," she said.   
Current figures reveal that more than 200,000 students are studying Mandarin in the US, with that number set to increase.   
Chen Jinguo immigrated to the US in the early 1990s has taught Mandarin for nearly 20 years at the China Institute. He said he has noticed an increase in the number of US citizens learning Chinese.   
"There was an English fever in China when I left for the US. Now we are seeing Chinese fever here," he said. "Moreover, many of my students study Chinese for jobs in major Chinese cities... and that is something I have never seen before."   
Xinhua   
   
   
   
(China Daily USA 07/19/2017 page2)

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