

Settlement Story Yu Eun-suk, Employee of Namyang Nexmo

Standing 16 Years With Unchanged Attitude

After completing Hanawon, Yu Eun-suk was at the time in her mid 30's. Around that time she also got a chance to study by the support from the national special scholarship. However, she was hesitant due to having to raise her two children.

Eun-suk had only worked as a farmer in North Korea. Yet in less than a month after completing Hanawon, she got a job at NamyangNexmo, a company which produces major parts for Korean automobiles, as a manufacturer of auto parts. Although she lacked any experience in this field, she overcame her difficulties by strong will and determination.

Overcome The Hardest Hump

Yu Eun-suk would like to tell North Korean defectors that it is important to overcome what she describes as "the hardest hump." When she first began working at NamyangNexmo, she always told herself to endure and endure. The most difficult time was during the first year of working. From the first day, she couldn't understand the names of diverse machine parts, equipment, and raw materials because they were new foreign words for her. Eun-suk had to deal with the machines that she had not seen in North Korea, so it was hard to memorize the names and learn how to handle them. Sometimes she felt it was too tough to work, and bursted into tears when she thought about her families in the North. However, she believed that no matter how difficult it is, she could adapt someday and create her own place.

The Price Of Labor Does Not Deceive

Eun-suk could never forget the joy of receiving her first salary. Despite the rigorous work, she remembered that it was difficult to even afford three meals a day in North Korea. Now, her salary cannot be compared to back then.

Eun-suk's work starts at 8am, but she leaves home around 5am in order to avoid traffic jam during the rush hour. It has been 16 years since she got this routine to start work after perfect preparation. She became an exemplary employee among others in the company. She has received eight prizes including the perfect attendance and the award certificate. After receiving frequent awards, the chairman also became familiar with her for her diligence and hard work. Knowing that she is a North Korean defector, the chairman always looks for her whenever he visits, and asks her about her hometown in the North and her current life, and encourages her. All the while, Eun-suk brings home-made North Korean food to the company and shares it with her colleagues during the break time. So they became used to the taste of North Korean foods such as tofu rice, artificial meat and North Korean vegetable rice cake.

Can't Just Stay In One Place

She has worked for 16 years straight after completing Hanawon, and now she is embarked on a new challenge. Her children are off to college and Eun-suk is as well regardless of her age. Eun-suk is now a student at the Social Welfare Department of Seoul Cyber University and is about to graduate next year. She still works at NamyangNexmo but takes lectures on the Internet after work or on the weekends. We could see that she has the will to serve those in need as a social worker after her retirement.

Every morning, Yu Eun-suk drives to work with assertive and vigorous attitude. I felt pleased of imagining Eun-suk driving to her hometown in the North and proudly telling about her rewarding life in the South when the unification happens, hopefully in the near future.

written by Kim Hyeong-su

How to Donate

You can help North Korean refugees achieve self-sufficiency and successful resettlement in our society by giving a helping hand. The Donation will be used for the resettlement of North Korean refugees.

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KHF Story Joint Conference of KHF-KANKS

Finding a New Imagination on the Korean Peninsula

On October 11, a joint autumn conference of Korea Hana Foundation-The Korean Association of North Korean Studies(KANKS) was held at the University of North Korean Studies in Jongno-gu, Seoul. KANKS holds quarterly conference every year, and this time, it was held under the theme of "Finding a New Imagination of the Korean Peninsula."

At the beginning of the conference, Professor Yang Mun-su, chairman of KANKS, said, "Finding new scholars is an important mission of the our association, and I expect that this society will be developed by mainly new scholars." He also thanked the Korea Hana Foundation for organizing the conference.

Following this, president of Korea Hana Foundation Ko Gyung-bin gave a congratulatory address and said "We are delighted to hold this autumn conference. Through this conference, it is expected that the Korea Hana Foundation will raise interests of researches and scholars on the settlement support for North Korean refugees and present desirable unification researches. In addition, the results of researches by young scholars will be valuable resources for transforming our society into a unification-friendly society through supporting the North Korean refugees. The Foundation will continue to support young scholars in their research activities."

The autumn conference consisted of 10 panels of various themes, each of which consisted of one moderator, three thesis presenters, two panelists, and a Q&A session with the audiences. The event continued until the afternoon and attracted the largest number of audiences among regular academic conferences on North Korean Studies, including students and professors studying North Korean Studies, journalists, and people from all walks of life interested in North Korean affairs.

The papers presented at this conference deal with various topics such as settlement of North Korean refugees, politics, military, economy, society, and culture of South and North Korea. In particular, the paper on the military integration plan between



South and North Korea attracted attention of the audiences, and the questions were followed about how to achieve "human integration" when the unified Korean military is launched.

Furthermore, a paper on the settlement of North Korean refugees in South Korean society also attracted much attention. The paper deals with the trauma experienced by North Korean refugee women who escaped the North Korea by passing through a third state. The individual's effort and national institutions or policies being implemented to overcome the trauma were specifically analyzed.

After the young scholars' papers were presented, elderly scholars gave feedback. The participants of the meeting session pointed out what was good and what needs to be supplemented to make better research progress for the young scholars.

The conference was processed with a serious and heated atmosphere. It was not just a mere paper presentation but an opportunity to look more specifically on practical relevance with policy making for the North Korean refugees and the measurements for settlement of them using the studies.

Written by Park Seon-hee & Photo by Han Dae-eui

Settlement Story Kim Yu-kyung, CEO of Yukyung Restaurant

Stand Up Based On The Failure



North Korean refugee Kim Yu-kyung (false name) is a young restaurant owner in her mid-30s living in Gyeonggi-do. She fled from North Korea to South Korea in 2005. Yu-Kyung fled not due to force by hardship to find freedom, but by a mere accidental persuasion of a friend. She was simply visiting her friend who was dispatched to China. The friend informed Yu-Kyung about the financial and residential settlement support by the South Korean government if a defector were to arrive from the North. At the time, Yu-Kyung was in her early 20's and out of curiosity, she decided to find out if it was true and took off to the South just like that.

After the arrival and her time at the Hanawon, she started working at a law firm. All the while, she also attended college for evening classes too but could not give up working due to her cost of living. After four years of hard work, she graduated from college. In 2014, she opened a small Gimbap restaurant with the money that she had earned from the law firm.

Yu-kyung decided to run a Gimbap restaurant because she felt that working at a company was boring and couldn't expect a new change of life. Before starting her own business however, Yu-Kyung still went to her office job while working part-time at a local Gimbap restaurant on the weekends, to learn how the business works.

After careful preparation, she finally opened a small restaurant of about 7m² in area size. The main menus were gimbap* and tteokbokki*. Yu-kyung went to work at 6am everyday and prepared ingredients for gimbap before her employees came. It was too crowded in the restaurant with three employees

*gimbap and tteokbokki : korean fast food



when customers would rush in at busy times. After awhile, the employees suggested Yu-kyung about enlarging the restaurant since the business was going well. Yet Yu-kyung thought otherwise. When starting the business, she set a strict rule: "Start every business small without overdoing."

Then in 2016, Yu-kyung finally jumped into a new business of running a grill house. The wide range of pork menus drew customers in very quickly. Then, as the restaurant was going well, she witnessed herself becoming greedy. She thought that it would be a good idea to open up at other locations like a franchise. The second one led to the third, then fourth and on. Eventually, she had to get a loan to make this happen. At first, the businesses seemed to be going well, but the number of customers and sales gradually decreased. Fearing that she would sit in a pile of debt, Yu-kyung took the loss and shut down the restaurants.

Yu-kyung learned a valuable lesson from this experience. Unreasonable greed will never lead to success. Based on this failure, Yu-kyung prepared a safe business that would never fail. Carefully considering the size and menu of the restaurant, she opened the 'Yukyung Restaurant' last September, serving meat and Pyongyang cold noodles(Naengmyeon) as the main menus in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do. Luckily, since the summit of South and North Korea, Pyongyang cold noodles became very popular and it helped profit of her restaurant.

Yu-kyung would like to say something to the North Korean defectors who are dreaming of doing business in South Korea. "Start small, acquire abundant experiences, and don't hesitate to fail, then you will surely get good results." We hope every North Korean refugees who dream to start a business would not be frustrated but get back up again like Yu-kyung from her failure.

written by Park Seon-hee & Photo by Han Dae-eui

Settlement Story Lee Ok-hwa, CEO of CK Precision

“Get Up and Run At The End Of Despair”

The beginning was hard, but the desperate effort did not evaporate. Ok-hwa took over a nearly bankrupt company and made it flourish. It has incredibly grown since, with having 30 employees and 120 million won of monthly sales today. Ok-hwa received more attention due to her being in her 30's and being a North Korean refugee. Lee Ok-hwa is the CEO of CK Precision.

In 2009, Ok-hwa had lived for three years in South Korea. Ok-hwa was working at a small manufacturer in Gimpo, Gyeonggi-do. One day, the company's management and creditors suggested her to run the business together out of the blue. The company she worked for produced radiators which would prevent heat from devices such as hot and cold water machines or air-conditioner. However, the company was in the risk of going bankrupt. At the time, Ok-hwa was a bookkeeper so she was surprised to hear the word "management." Her task was primarily concerned with organizing accounts and answering calls, and she was still learning one by one even after work in order to become a useful employee. Still, thankfully, she was hired even without an interview because her computer school recommended her. As such, she was recognized by others everywhere she went with her persistency and passion. Ok-hwa didn't want her first company to go bankrupt so after hearing the suggestion and careful consideration, she decided to take the offer.

Risking life for success of the company

Ok-hwa set out to save the company with 38 million won(approx. \$30,000 USD) which she had saved for the past three years, plus collateral loans, and some help from acquaintances. She also renamed the company as CK Precision, Co., Ltd. She was only the nominal CEO at first. She did everything by herself from cleaning, assembly, forklift driving, and sales. She slept only three hours a day and worked rigorously. Due of her hard work, the company began to establish a groundwork for revitalization little by little. Her elder sister Mi-gyeong and little sister Su-jin actively participated in the management until the company went back to its stable stage. The sisters shared tears and laughter along their difficult times, encouraging each other. Although it was a small factory of about 660m² in land mass, it was the largest and the best company in the world for Ok-hwa. Furthermore, the 10 employees, who had trusted and waited her although they couldn't get salary at proper time, were her precious family.



Thanks to the sisters, the company survived and even gained public attention when it earned 120 million won of monthly sales. The media showed a lot of interests, the government officials visited, and the Small Business Administration and the locals hailed Ok-hwa as a successful female CEO with North Korean background. Various patents and proofs of inventions hanging in her office show her ardent efforts and passion. Ok-hwa was nowhere near feeling exhausted or defeated, seeing the number of partners having been increased to 38 and the number of employees to about 30.

Wept and stood up by the riverbank

However, three years ago, Ok-hwa faced another crisis, certainly not out of lack of her effort. One of her business partners went bankrupt for 240 million won, and shortly later, another filed for bankruptcy. The collateral bankruptcy of her business partners destroyed Ok-hwa. She wept for a long time by the local riverside where no one would find her. She even passed out and was taken to a hospital several times, but could never relax wholeheartedly because of her worry for the company. She tried every means to save the company.

After her hard efforts, the company's situation began to improve. She got hope again. Today, she leaves home at 4am, visits partner companies, and comes back home at around 11pm. She is on her feet all day, often not having enough time to eat. Like 10 years ago, she is a nominal CEO again and multi-tasks in all parts. She is sure that she will rise again like 10 years ago.

written by Jeong Jin-hwa & Photo by Huh Young-chul