



From the President

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The **RCEF Diaries**, our monthly newsletter, is meant to keep everyone updated on what is going on in RCEF, and highlight activities and events organized by our volunteers. Please let us know what you think!

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The Rural China Education Foundation

(RCEF) is an international non-profit organization. Its mission is to promote education for people in rural China that empowers them to improve their lives and their communities. RCEF is run by full-time workers on the ground in China as well as a team of volunteers around the world.

RCEF is a 501(c)(3) public charity registered in the U.S. Donations can be made online at www.ruralchina.org or checks payable to the Rural China Education Foundation can be mailed to:

Rural China Education Foundation
PO Box 92424
Rochester, NY 14692-0424

Dear all,

RCEF was officially started on April 28, 2005. That means that now **we are 3 years old**. I can't believe how far we have come in just 3 years: we now have 4 long-term programs in China, 4 full-time and 2 part-time staff, 80 active committee volunteers, and about 100 Volunteer Program alumni. We are a highly visible organization and have built strong networks both in and outside China.

We have achieved all of this thanks to the hard work and good ideas of our volunteers, staff members, consultants, and advisors. Of course there is still much to do, but I am confident that we will become more and more successful in our mission: to promote education for people in rural China that helps them to improve their lives and their communities.

If you want to give RCEF a birthday present, please go to the following page and make a \$15 donation (<http://www.globalgiving.com/pr/2100/proj2063a.html>). Our goal is to win the



GlobalGiving competition, which runs until May 13th.

Jikky Lam, a VPO7 volunteer who worked as an intern for RCEF for half a year, visited New York recently, and we took the opportunity to have a dinner meeting. I was glad to see volunteers from VPO5 (**Xuejing Chen**), VPO6 (**Ting Zhou, Andrew Smeall**), VPO7 (**Jikky Lam, David Cohen-Tanugi**), and VPO8 (**Annie Zhou**) together.

Finally, some personal news from me: I will be starting as an assistant professor of Neuroscience at Baylor College of Medicine (in Houston, Texas) in August. Because of this, I will gradually step down from all day-to-day operations in RCEF in the next few months. I will stay on as a member of the Board of Directors and perhaps as president, if we decide to make that a more ceremonial position. I will also no longer write the opening piece for the Diaries / Newsletter. Starting next issue, our co-executive director **Diane Geng** will do that, and we also plan to feature a different volunteer, consultant, or advisor every month. It has been a great pleasure writing for you, and of course I will keep following what is going on in RCEF!

Weiji





Programs

Teaching Fellows Program

The Teaching Fellows Program works at innovative schools in rural areas to document best practices of teaching methods and curriculum that can be disseminated to educators throughout rural China.

@ Guan Ai School, Shanxi Province

New Vegetable Garden...



April was a busy month for visitors and new initiatives at Guan Ai School. During lunch times and afternoon recess, groups of students could be found voluntarily working in a new vegetable garden. The school has rented a nearby piece of land on a three-year contract for 150 RMB. Students in grades three through six have split into groups to farm small plots. Together with their homeroom

teachers, they tilled the land and planted tomatoes, peppers, and other seedlings. Teachers were emphasizing the process so that students could learn about natural science while also exercising team work and cultivating practical skills.

Positive Changes in habits...

Fostering students' ability to make positive changes in their habits and environment is another theme of our experimentation at Guan Ai School. **Jiang Peng** wrote on the RCEF blog about discussions he had with students about problems, such as their use of pocket money and wasting water. Students then brainstormed solutions and put some into practice. For more information, please visit our blog:



<http://blog.ruralchina.org/>

Developing Student-centered English Curriculum

Hu Yonghong, a SVP 07 alumni and rural teacher from Shaanxi Province, moved to Guan Ai School this month to teach English. He is working on developing a student-centered English curriculum suited for rural primary schools with an aim of eventually building capacity of other rural English teachers in this area.

Teachers share about the experimentation they're undertaking in regular teacher reflection sessions. All of the teachers are participating now and submitting written reports about their lessons to RCEF every week.

Inviting Community Members to Teach

Principal Sun Huimiao continues to invite more members of the community into the school to tell stories and share their expertise with students. For example, one student's grandmother teaches paper cutting and a talented local wood worker is planning to help students to make bookshelves for classroom libraries. In this way, we aim to make use of rural resources and cultivate an appreciation and participation in hands-on skills.



Our Visitors

Many visitors have also come to observe and share their resources with Guan Ai School. **"Mark" Wu**, a former teacher at Fuxin Middle School (another RCEF site), visited for a few days and told Guan Ai students stories about going on a bike trek with Fuxin students. Now many Guan Ai students want to go on a bike trip too and the sixth graders hope to interview Mark for the upcoming edition of the school newspaper. **Larry Abramson**, a NPR reporter, also visited to see what kind of education RCEF and Guan Ai School is developing. **Brad Spencer** and **Eric Zhang** of a non-profit organization called **Canada Wood** came to scope out the school in preparation for two buildings they will donate. Canada Wood trains construction workers in Shanghai to build wood houses and will transfer its students' projects to Guan Ai to be used as offices or dormitories. SVP 07 alumni **Yang Chenyun** also visited. In preparation for next year, we've also been busy interviewing Teaching Fellows candidates. Two who advanced to the final interview stage (both students at teacher training colleges) visited Guan Ai this month. They guest lectured, interacted with the students and teachers, and got to know the school and RCEF better.



Programs

@ Guan Ai School, Shanxi Province

(Continued...)

Cheng Tao is RCEF's Director of Public Education. He is a graduate student in the Netherlands and went back to China for a visit this spring. During that time, he traveled to one of RCEF's program sites and shared his experience on the RCEF blog. Below is a brief summary. To read his full posts (in Chinese), see: <http://blog.ruralchina.org/author/taocheng/>.

In March, I visited Guan Ai Elementary School. This is one of RCEF's year-round program sites in Yongji, Shanxi Province. Two of our RCEF volunteers have been working in this school for months. It's a great school with many innovative staff and lovely children. What I witnessed there totally amazed me. I couldn't believe that this little rural school had actually successfully integrated many creative and beautiful teaching methods into its classes. This visit made me think of the possibilities to develop and promote this particular model of rural school, in which the school is

funded and organized by local villagers with some help from outside sources like RCEF, rather than only relying on the government. Since Guan Ai School has made outstanding achievements, why shouldn't RCEF learn from it and therefore focus more on developing this kind of rural school model?

Another important insight from my trip was about the use of volunteer human resources. It is necessary for RCEF to build up a good feedback system in order to evaluate and respond to what volunteers have done. This system could help us become more organized and eliminate unnecessary tasks. Last but not the least, I am concerned that RCEF tends to be too academic, rather than practical and goal-oriented. RCEF's school sites such as Guan Ai and others demand a lot of energy and manpower. On the other hand, we have been so used to conducting long online discussions about administration issues and small details. These sometimes end up without conclusive action and can burden our colleagues. I really see that it is critical for RCEF to now think about what role we want to play in developing rural Chinese education and how we should act on it.

@ Yinjialin School, Shandong Province

Steven Liu recently started a new class for adults in Yinjialin, teaching them basic computing skills. Here is an excerpt from his report:



"Teaching adults in some ways isn't all that dissimilar to teaching kids, but also allows you to touch on topics that you would never be able to do with children, such as discussing agriculture or current affairs. This is a series of posts that cover different aspects of the class. Today's post is about:

finding students and initial teething problems.

The curious thing is that whilst most adults definitely want to learn how to use computers, it's surprisingly hard to persuade them to join a class. Most of them lack confidence in their ability to study, saying that they're too old or that too slow. You have to spend quite some time going house to house, meeting people and explaining that you'll be beginning from teaching them how to turn on a computer and outlining the uses for computers and how it can help them in their daily lives. Even if they understand all that they still might not sign up. But some do, and that's enough to begin with. In my first class I only had four students, but word of mouth spread and numbers increased steadily.

One of the big problems has been that even between the adults there exists a generational gap, and it's divided along the lines of those that were born late enough to have studied Hanyu pinyin, and those who haven't. As the most

common and easy Chinese input methods is pinyin, it's crucial that they know it. So right from the get-go there was a need for two classes, with one a pre-beginners class, spending much of their time learning how to type pinyin.

In addition to the pinyin problem, I also have a student that doesn't recognize Romanic capital letters. This, as you can imagine, is a bit of an inconvenience when you're using a keyboard. I had to print a special chart with both small and capital letters out for him.

For those who've never touched a computer before using a mouse can be quite a challenge. Often they'll not hold it vertically, so dragging up and down makes the cursor move diagonally. In the beginning I let them practise their mouse technique by letting them draw shapes and pictures in MS Paint.

They also tend to use too much pressure on the mouse key at the beginning. I had to constantly remind them that it was a double tap, not a double SMASH!

I'm happy to say that their own fears about being too old and too slow to learn are utter hogwash. In just the first three lessons they have learnt how to operate Windows, create folders, type, create Word files, save their work and browse their first website."





Programs

Scouting potential Teaching Fellow sites *Congjiang County, Guizhou*

Sara Lam and **Li Guangdui** spent ten days scouting potential Teaching Fellow sites in Congjiang County of Guizhou Province. Here is a description of the three most promising sites:

Dadong Primary School

This school runs classes from first to sixth grade and serves students from three villages. Li Guangdui had taught there for one year and the principle is very eager to collaborate with him again. The principle hopes that we can support him in implementing Tao Xingzhi's educational approach in his school. This is an approach that combines teaching, learning and doing, and connect school with society.

Longtu Primary School

Liang Weian, A local Dong ethnic artist would like to start up a primary school in his village. Since the old school was shut down, small children have had to walk a long distance to get the school. He wants to run the school as a Dong cultural school by integrating aspects of ethnic culture into the curriculum as well as having Dong music and dance lessons each day.

Laohuo Primary School

This school is a single-teacher school run by **Shi Chunmei**, a "daike" teacher who has been teaching for eight years. When Chunmei came, she started the school in an abandoned building, which villagers had already taken over

to use as a pigsty in the lower level. Over 70 students came the first year. Probably more than half of them were over-aged. Many parents, including the village head and party secretary, kept their daughters at home to work and wouldn't send them to school. So she went and did their farm work for them in exchange for their



daughters' enrollment. Chunmei is also a very effective teacher. She puts a lot of thought into methods for teaching ethnic minority children and her students have entered the central school with a very solid foundation.

***Li Guangdui** will be working for RCEF on the Teaching Fellows Program as our Professional Development Specialist. He graduated from the Fuyang Normal College in Anhui Province. He taught for over two years at the Anhui Fuxin school, and then started the Western Fuxin school in Congjiang County where he taught for one year. He later worked for Zigen Fund and was in charge of their programs in Southern China. Li Guangdui' has a lot to contribute with his strong teaching experiences and understanding of Chinese educational theory.*

Innovation Grants Program



We have also started to receive reports from Innovation Grants recipients. Here is an excerpt from the **Guizhou Sunshine Volunteers** on their volunteer teaching trip during the winter break. Below is an abstract of their summary. To read the full summary, please visit: <http://blog.ruralchina.org/>

"There were so many unforgettable stories in this teaching trip. During one of the activities, called "Life Trip," a student cried because he misunderstood the rules. However, with the help of our volunteers, he learned a lot and ended up getting the highest score in the whole group! That evening, he came to us with his friends and gave each of the volunteers an orange lamp. He told us that the most important thing he learned that day was the importance of communication.

When our team was short of money, every volunteer donated the money they were planning to use for Chinese New Year. Due to heavy snowstorms, there wasn't even electricity and we could not contact the outside. The return trip from the village took us over six hours; we really felt frozen. But we were together and had successfully completed the project! "



Programs

Online Library Program

A Call from the coordinator of Online Library

Dear RCEF Community members,

Greetings from Zixuan Liu, coordinator of the RCEF Online Library. Here I'm bringing you the latest updates of the library:

Although the library is still under construction, it has been open to the public. It is made up of several subcategories with introduction both in English and Chinese. If you are interested in it, please check out our library website at:

<http://library.ruralchina.org>

We believe that the quality improvement of rural China education relies on the education reform and peoples' consciousness. An online library is a great way to link different thoughts together. It will be an information center for all the people who share concern about rural China education. Now it's the time to expand the library. In order to achieve this goal, we need your help! If you have any article(s) or paper(s) that you think may fit into the library, please send to zliu5@stevens.edu

Thanks,
Zixuan Liu

Library and Reading Program

Beatrix Wang has been collecting updates from our libraries, and here are two

Peasants' Children Cultural Development Center, Miyun County of Beijing

Dayang School, Luohe City, Henan Province

The library program has been going well in Dayang School. Because the school library has been updated with new books, students have become more interested in reading. The school has also set up fixed reading time. All students in the school have two reading classes every week, in which they read books recommended by Chinese teachers. In addition, "book corners" have been established in some classes, where students bring their own books and share with others. They are encouraged to read during the noon break and join speech contests to share their opinions about the books. Students in higher grade can borrow one book to take home after placing a cash deposit of 20 RMB. Teachers also like those new books and borrow them to take home.

4000 RMB has been invested for books in the library here. The books are divided into two parts: one for the teachers of schools for rural migrant children; and the other for children. Following are some feedbacks from the **project manager Lin Lusheng**:

"Firstly, we believe book selection is very important for developing children's interest in reading. We are quite satisfied with the current selection. Secondly, we realize that only round 20 children are now using the books. Since those children joined the "children's nature education in Miyun County of Beijing", they have already been familiar with us. And they normally use books very carefully. However, they could only come to borrow books once a week. We don't set up any upper limit for borrowing books,

sometimes they just borrow one to two books; other time they borrow three to four books. Besides, parents also feel very happy that their children like reading. Currently, we are organizing an activity, in which children are asked to write a piece about the book on the paper pasted on its back cover, so that they can recommend books."

Fundraising

RCEF has joined a competition to raise the most money in the GES-Global Giving Challenge! We have until **May 13** to reach raise more money than other projects in the competition, in order to win a \$3500 prize and a permanent place on the Global Giving website. Please visit <http://www.globalgiving.com/pr/2100/proj2063a.html> to do your part and spread the word!

A few months ago, Global Fund for Children invited RCEF to submit a grant proposal to them. We passed the first round of screening and submitted a formal proposal to them this month. Results should be known in May. Meanwhile, fundraising committee members led by **Annie Zhou** and **Grace Chang** have been busy researching other foundations and grants RCEF can apply for. Fundraising director **Jean Tsao** and **Annie Zhou** attended the All-Day University in Fundraising and Grantmaking class on fundraising strategy at New York University. **Jean Tsao** met with Eva Brune, Vice President for Institutional Advancement of the Eldridge Street Project to discuss RCEF's long-term fundraising strategies. Our team welcomes **Jared Chung**, a New York native who works in McKinsey & Company's Hong Kong office as a business analyst. Echoing Green put us in touch with **Michael Tai** and **Jackson Tse**, members of its Social Investment Council. They work at General Atlantic and have volunteered to lend their advice and expertise to RCEF's fundraising committee.



Networking

Beijing Meetings

RCEF staff gathered in Beijing from March 30-April 2 at the invitation of **RCEF Advisor Leslie Schilling**. They attended a lunch to learn about rural microfinance from experts like **Professor Du Xiaoshan** of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. It turns out that Professor Du runs a microfinance program in the same county as one of RCEF's sites—Hebei Yixian! The trip was also a valuable chance to meet and discuss RCEF issues with Beijing-based volunteers like **Hua Zhenyu, Marco Flagg, Zhang Jing, Huang Zhenzhong, Wu Aiying, Zhang Qian, Grace Chang, Stephanie Hakes, and Vivian Chow**. To get ideas for the Libraries and Reading Program, **Jiang Peng** and **Diane Geng** attending a seminar at Hong Niba, a children's book society, about how to get kids interested in the Chinese classics. Diane also met with Beijing Normal University professor **Zheng Guomin**, who is a specialist on Chinese textbooks. **Steven Liu** and **Sara Lam** traveled to Thoughtworks, a web development company, to talk about a website that RCEF is designing for rural teachers.

Guizhou conference

Sara Lam gave a presentation about the RCEF Teaching Fellows Program at a conference for nonprofit organizations in the education sector organized by **New Education** (www.eduol.cn). It was a great opportunity to network with scholars, discuss potential collaboration with other NGOs and recruit for the Teaching Fellows Program.

Communications Division

Translation

The translation team has organized a revision for our VPO7 Report in English. We would like to appreciate **Marco Flagg, Zhi Li, Chun Xia** and other three temporary volunteers recruited via Proz.com for their efforts in revision. The final version is expected to be released by the middle of May. Due to the increased workload, the translation team is looking for volunteers for Chinese-to-English translations.



Open Positions

Public Education Writers

Committee: Public Education

Time Commitment / Week: 2 hours

Duration: minimum 1 semester

Tasks: Raise public awareness and knowledge about rural China and rural education! Collect and compile useful and interesting questions related to rural China for the RCEF web quiz! Another project is writing information sheets about selected rural issues. Current topics include general introduction to rural China, migrant workers, and health condition in rural China etc.

Start Date: immediately

Programmers / Web Developer Technicians

Committee: IT

Time Commitment / Week: 4 hours (read tasks for more details)

Duration: minimum 1 semester

Tasks: There are some outstanding tasks in the IT committee that require personnel with skills in CSS, javascript and php to solve. Jobs will not be regular, but rather will be assigned as problems occur, so take the time commitment of 4 hours per week just as a guideline for how long it will likely take to complete a task. You will be under no obligation to take on a task, but should you do so you will be expected to complete it within a defined timeframe.

Start Date: immediately (applicants will be required to undergo a few basic tests to confirm ability)

Monitoring and Evaluation Researcher

Committee: Research and Evaluation Committee

Time Commitment / Week: 4 hours minimum but varies depending on project demand

Duration: minimum 1 semester

Responsibilities/Qualifications:

- familiarity with educational program evaluation methods;
- demonstrated ability to conduct educational research and evaluation;
- expertise and/or experience with qualitative and/or quantitative methods;
- broad theoretical background in rural China education;
- commitment to assigned tasks;
- capability to work independently and within teams as well as communicate efficiently in virtual environment

Start Date: immediately



Open Positions

Materials Design

Committee: Public Relations

Time Commitment / Week: 2 hours

Duration: minimum 1 semester

Tasks: Help design promotional materials for RCEF that that we can publish and distribute.

Start Date: immediately

Academic relations coordinator

Committee: Research and Evaluation Committee

Time Commitment / Week: 4 hours minimum

Duration: minimum 1 year

Responsibilities/Qualifications:

- establish and maintain long-term relationships with academic community (in education particularly) to seek inputs,
- organize dialogues, circulate information within committee;
- Broad theoretical background in rural China education;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Capability to work independently and within teams as well as communicate efficiently in virtual environment

Start Date: immediately

Volunteer Management Assistant

Committee: Human Resource

Time Commitment / Week: 2-3 hours/week

Duration: minimum 1 semester

Tasks: Help with update of new volunteer information internally.

Start Date: immediately

The positions are unpaid and no formal contract is signed. Applicants should send their application and CV/resume to recruiting@ruralchina.org. All positions are available immediately and open until filled. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis.