



### Note from the Field

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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)** promotes 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.A. Donations can be made online at [www.ruralchina.org](http://www.ruralchina.org) or checks payable to the "Rural China Education Foundation" can be mailed to:

Rural China Education Foundation  
 PO Box 92424

#### The RCEF Blog

*Reflections from Guan Ai School*

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

Dear friends,

Did you know that RCEF may be in the business of raising cranes? I write this facetiously of course, in a reference to the old Chinese proverb about a crane standing among chickens. It is a metaphor for the "odd person out" in a situation—someone who should blend in, but who is awkwardly different.

When rural teachers move from more traditional teaching to more progressive, student-centered teaching, they may stand out in their old environment like "cranes", in ways that can be awkward and unexpected.



Recently, I read a paper by **Huhua Ouyang** called "**One-Way Ticket: A Story of an Innovative Teacher in Mainland China**" (*Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, Dec. 2000). It chronicles the journey of "Cheng," a highly decorated English teacher from a rural area. She received free training at an urban university aimed at raising her English skills and ability to teach. The training was very tough. She had to re-learn how to learn, because the university emphasized a communicative student-centered pedagogy and required her to be an independent thinker. After two years, Cheng returned to her hometown, a convert to the new methods. Re-instated to her former position as a middle school teacher, she tried to put her experience into practice. The results? Painful.

Her colleagues, superiors, and even students opposed her new methods. Unable to gain recognition or support for the value of her new abilities, she left the rural school and went to teach in a large city, where her skills and teaching philosophy were more appreciated and financially rewarded.

The bottom line is that even after an individual teacher's thinking has changed *internally*, many environmental factors may need to change in order for that teacher to enact change *externally* in the disadvantaged rural schools where they are most needed. Thus, RCEF must constantly take into account the complex social and political environment surrounding education in rural China.

RCEF is one of the only organizations in China focusing on the holistic process of rural educational change. We invite you to join us as we figure out what the environmental factors are that are needed to make teacher training most effective. Your donations help to allow this important work continue. Thank you!

—Diane Geng, Co-Executive Director



## Grant from the Chen Yet-Sen Family Foundation

The **Chen Yet-Sen Family Foundation** has approved a US \$68,180 grant for RCEF's Integrative Rural Education Program! Last year, the Foundation also sponsored the creation of "Innovations Central," RCEF's database for sharing best practices among rural teachers. We are extremely grateful to the Foundation for its support of pioneering programs that improve the quality of education in rural China.

The Chen Yet-Sen Family Foundation was founded by Dr. Robert Yet-Sen Chen in 2003. Its mission is to ENGAGE with promising non-profit organizations to ENABLE them to implement programs to EMPOWER their target clients to strive for ENLIGHTENMENT through achievement. The Foundation supports high need areas within Mainland China, Hong Kong and Africa. <http://www.chenyetsenfoundation.org>.



## Guan Ai's New Educational Philosophy

### **Teaching Philosophy**

*Emphasize the cultivation of abilities; raise overall quality; teach students how to become caring, dutiful, scientifically innovative, cooperative and socially responsible people.*

- Lesson plans should be written accurately and simply. Each teacher should submit one good lesson plan per week (lesson details + reflections).
- Teachers should actively invite others to audit their classes twice a week.
- Every teacher should also audit others' classes twice a week, and afterwards post feedback up on the office wall.
- Teaching diary: teachers should all write one entry per week and display it on the office wall.
- Teachers should submit one 'teaching essay' per semester.

### **Dedicated and Loving**

- No corporal punishment
- No exclusion of any student in group activities
- Special attention to students with difficulties
- Teachers must schedule time to meet with parents and write letters home
- Each teacher must hold 5-10 teacher-parent meeting each semester

### **Scientific Innovation**

- Each unit of every subject should consist of either exploratory or practical activities, and be as closely related to the community as possible.
- Every lesson should include group exercises.
- In each period, the teacher should not speak for more than ten minutes.
- The teacher should design the lesson plans around the students and their teaching objectives, not simply by following the textbook.
- The teacher should take advantage of the subject's inherent concepts to examine its value to the students' education.

### **Realistic Cooperation**

- Homeroom teachers should take turns to carry out hygiene inspections.
- The teachers should give the students the opportunity to elect representatives to take part in the management and improvement of the school.
- In order to improve the students' study abilities, these objectives must be followed in both developing and assessing the students.
- The tutor for each year group should arrange for the students to carry out a community service project (preferably one that is long-term).

### **Characteristics of Our School**

*A combination of the rural areas' unique natural and societal environment to create a cooperative learning institution, focus on learning through independent, hands-on experiments.*



### New Construction at Guan Ai

Last year, construction at Guan Ai Primary School began with the building of two new wood buildings donated by **Canada Wood**, a non-profit organization. The two buildings are being used as offices for the teachers and RCEF staff members so they have space to design lesson plans, attend training, and reflect on their teaching. This year will be one of further construction and renovation as we work to make Guan Ai the safe, comfortable and welcoming environment the students and teachers appreciate.



*One of the Guan Ai cooks standing in front of the new kitchen building*

This year's construction plans are off to a great start. Last week, a local building crew completed the construction of a new kitchen. This is an incredibly important building for our school as the students have three quality meals which are prepared on campus every day of the week.

In addition to being better looking and sturdier than the previous one, the new kitchen is twice the size of the old kitchen. This makes life easier for our cooking staff who prepare food for over two hundred people at every meal. The new kitchen also has running water inside and five separate water taps outside. The outside taps make it easier for students to wash their own dishes after each meal. Finally, the new kitchen has a covered cellar for fresh vegetables.

As soon as the building crew completed the new kitchen, they moved onto the cafeteria. The old cafeteria was only large enough for the first, second and third grade students to use during meal times, leaving the older students to eat outside or in their classrooms. In addition to being too small for our student body, it was also dilapidated with crumbling walls and a leaking ceiling. Along with the old kitchen, the cafeteria has been torn down. Presently, the building crew is removing the debris and digging the foundation for a new building. The new building that will stand in its place will be the principals' office and living quarters, a new library and a storage area. We hope to build a new cafeteria in a different location on campus later this year.



*Student washes his own dishes after the meal.*

### First-Ever RCEF Calendar



**Yue He** and **Nicolle Cai**, volunteers in the Materials Design Committee, have designed a 2009 RCEF Calendar! It contains photos from RCEF's summer camps and other programs. Yue's unique design and Nicolle's careful selection of pictures create a product that captures the message of RCEF in an eye-catching way.

100% of proceeds from sales of the finished calendar will go directly to benefit RCEF's programs. They will be displayed and sold at NLGX, a popular cafe near the Bell and Drum Tower in Beijing. **Ed Hung**, the owner, supports several non-profits working in China and is happy to give RCEF the space to display our materials. If you are in Beijing please check it out, or visit their site at [www.nlgx.com](http://www.nlgx.com). Calendars can also be ordered by sending an email to: [donations@ruralchina.org](mailto:donations@ruralchina.org).





## RCEF at the JUCCE Energy Forum

**Marco Flagg** and **Diane Geng** attended the Joint US-China Clean Energy's "2008 JUCCE China Energy Forum", a showcase of leading experts and projects dedicated to making China's energy usage more sustainable. RCEF was one of the few organizations there working in rural China.



*Diane Geng was invited to introduce RCEF at the 2008 JUCCE Energy forum.*

Diane and Marco had the opportunity to talk to several of the other guests to exchange ideas and look at ways to collaborate, including:

**Sheri Liao** of Global Village Beijing who has headed efforts to rebuild an eco-village in Sichuan;

**David Turnbull**, an architect who has worked on unique building projects in both rural and urban communities throughout the world;

**Julian Wong**, the author of [greenleapforward.com](http://greenleapforward.com), a blog that deals with China's renewable energy sector; as well as several other leaders of non-profits, businesses and governments.

All in all, the collection of guests and topics were eye-opening. Though it would have been good to hear a bit more about some of the issues that would be facing rural China in the coming decades, the presentations all gave a clear forecast about China's future and some of the things that are being done to address the challenges that it is sure to face.

## 2008 Echoing Green Fellowship Conference



**Sara Lam** and **Diane Geng**, RCEF's Co-Executive Directors, attended the 2008 Echoing Green Current Fellows Conference in Philadelphia

from November 19-23. In 2007, they were selected for the Echoing Green Fellowship, a prestigious competition that awards seed funding to social entrepreneurs. At the conference, Sara and Diane attended workshops on non-profit strategy and management.

While in Philadelphia, **Sara Lam** and **Diane Geng** caught up with RCEF Advisor **Emily Hannum**, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and an expert on education inequalities in China. She brought along **Shang Lifu**, the founder of Western Sunshine Action, a non-profit organization in Beijing that focuses on rural education.

Sara and Diane also visited several schools and organizations, conducting innovative education programs, to learn about their approaches. Diane went to the *Walter D. Palmer Leadership Learning Partners Charter School*, which serves mostly students from low-income families. The hallways were lined with paintings of leaders from around the world who have fought for social justice. The school day includes a curriculum on leadership qualities. Sara visited the following organizations:

- *Need in Deed*, an organization which connects the classroom with the community through service learning projects.
- *Philly Student Union*, where high school students fight for improvements in their schools and the school district through organization.
- *Micro Society*, which has a unique curriculum, where students emulate the larger society by starting new businesses, setting up legal systems and more.
- The *FACT School*, a charter school in Chinatown which integrates community life and culture into the curriculum.
- The *WB Saul School of Agriculture*, a public high school where rigorous vocational education in the agricultural sciences is an important part of the curriculum.



## Open Positions

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

### Materials Design

**Committee:** Materials Design

**Time Commitment / Week:** 2 hours

**Duration:** minimum 1 semester

**Start Date:** immediately

**Tasks:** Help design promotional materials for RCEF that we can publish and distribute, such as brochures, posters, T-shirts, and bookmarks. You will get to contribute your thoughts on RCEF's present design, and what it should look like in the future.

### Fundraising Events Coordinator

**Committee:** Fundraising Committee

**Time Commitment / Week:** 3-4 hours/week

**Duration:** minimum 1 semester

**Tasks:**

- Initiate and help to coordinate fundraising events around the world to raise money and support for RCEF.
- Provide advice on event planning, promotional materials, and other support to event organizers.
- Experience in fundraising and event planning preferred.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Capability to work independently and within teams as well as communicate efficiently in virtual environment

### Individual Donor Cultivation

**Committee:** Fundraising Committee

**Time Commitment / Week:** 3-4 hours/week

**Duration:** minimum 1 semester

**Responsibilities/Qualifications:**

- Establish and maintain a system for RCEF to attract and retain individual donors.
- Experience in fundraising preferred.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Capability to work independently and within teams as well as communicate efficiently in virtual environment

### Academic Relations coordinator

**Committee:** Research and Evaluation Committee

**Time Commitment / Week:** 4 hours minimum

**Duration:** minimum 1 year

**Responsibilities/Qualifications:**

- Seek input from and establish long-term relationships with academic community (in education particularly)
- 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

### 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
- Efficient ability to work with teams virtually

### Assistant IT Administrator

**Committee:** Information Technology

**Time Commitment / Week:** 6+ hours

**Duration:** Minimum one year, with possibility of promotion to paid, permanent role after one year.

RCEF is looking for an experienced web administrator to take on web administration responsibilities. The role can be fulfilled remotely, though there is an exciting opportunity to work 'on the ground' at one of our rural partner schools in Yongji, Shanxi Province.

Examples of duties entailed include the following:

- Keeping web application software up to date.
- Making CSS and PHP edits to alter the look and functionality of website, blog and gallery.
- Updating and maintenance of mailing list address books.
- Solving general technical problems RCEF staff and volunteers may be having with website and other applications.

**Skills:**

- Unix, and more specifically executing administration tasks via a Unix shell interface
- SQL
- HTML and CSS
- a high level programming language, including at least one of the following: Java, C++, Ruby
- Some knowledge of PHP would be an asset. If applicant is not familiar, he/she will be required to learn it.
- Excellent English reading ability and proficient spoken English a must.
- Ability to read and speak Mandarin Chinese at an intermediate level
- Teaching experience would be a plus so that you better understand the context RCEF works in.