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received funding in August for the new school year.**

EGRC's administration cost is 4% of the fund raised in 2009 – 2010

The BC Society for Educating Girls of Rural China (EGRC) has just concluded another successful year.

Since 2005 we have sponsored the university education of 250 young women. 76 of these women graduated in 2009 and 2010. Among the graduates, 10 are pursuing a post-graduate education in Law, English, Mining, Agriculture, Philosophy, Physical Geography, Physical Chemistry and Medicine; 8 of them are studying under full scholarships.

Finding work for undergraduate students in China has been more difficult. As of August 2010, 2 out of the 26 graduates in 2009 are still looking for work including Zhang Fang Fang, a voice student who visited Vancouver last year. 34 (about 80%) of the 2010 graduates found employment.

Among all the graduates who have found work in 2009 and 2010 - 50% of them are working in the engineering field in various cities in China; 20% work as school teachers in or near their home towns; 15% are employed by the local Gansu government; the rest are working in a variety of professions such as finance, the pharmaceutical industry, tourism, real estate and journalism.

On this trip, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that two grad girls were married earlier this year. I met both of their husbands, and wish them well in the future.

The latest trip in August was my 9th trip to Gansu. On this trip I met with nearly 200 students, including some graduates. 174 students including 39 new students received funding for this school year. In Gansu I traveled to the home towns of the sponsored girls in Lanzhou, Longxi, Anding and Yuzhong to meet with them. The meetings were comprised of group discussions, individual interviews, transcript review and contract signing. This 12 day trip was filled with joy, excitement, sometimes tears, and mostly inspiration. My daughter Kate accompanied me on this mission for the second time and we had an incredible time together.



Visiting New Students' Homes

Visiting new sponsored students' homes is important. It is not just to check out the families' financial situation, it is also to let the new families and students know - first hand, about EGRC.

The EGRC senior girls have taken on the responsibility of home visiting from last year. Usually it will take one week for two students to visit 12 to 15 families. They use whatever transportation that is available, but most times they walk. Sometimes it takes a whole day to reach one family.

I visited two families on this trip. Both girls from these two families are the first female to go on to university from their villages.

Ma Wenjing was accepted by Southwest Minzu University (mainly for ethnic students). Her family has lived in this Muslim village in Yuzhong County for generations. Her grandmother was in tears when she got to know that we came from Canada and many Canadians would help her granddaughter's education. She told us that her husband died young and she had raised all her children on her own. None of her children had ever gone to school. Ma Wenjing is the first one in the family to go to a university.

Niu Huiying's father has been ill and not able to earn any income. Her mother works in the field to provide basic food to her family. The cost of university is beyond the family's ability. Our sponsorship not only makes the students' study possible, it also takes tremendous pressure off the family.



Stories...

On the morning of August 12, 2010, in Longxi county I was meeting a group of students who have completed three years of study and will graduate in the summer of 2011. The girls and myself all became very emotional during our group discussion because next year some of them will be working and won't be able to come back to their home town to see me and see each other. They all expressed gratitude towards EGRC for making their university study possible. I would like to share some of the words from the girls with you.

Wang Xue Yan played Guzheng - a Chinese instrument - for us. Her major is Music Education in Lanzhou City University. She has been using her own money and time to study this instrument. She practices 6 hours a day on top of her school work. In 1 ½ years she learned to play at a level equivalent to 4 or 5 years of study. She also talked about her journey of growing up in a small village; always feeling that her life was being compromised because she is a girl.



After graduation in 2011, her dream is to open a music studio in her home town of Longxi. She said that rural children never have a chance to learn to play musical instruments simply because they cannot afford to buy one; and there is no teaching facility. Her future studio will offer music lessons and instrument rentals. She will also offer free instructions to children who love to play, but do not have the financial means to pay. Her plan has already got support from her teachers.

Mo Yan is studying Medical Biology at Lanzhou University. She has been accepted into a Masters program with full scholarship by two of the most prominent universities, Fudan University in Shanghai and Qinghua University in Beijing. Her dream is to come to Canada to complete her PHD. She talked about being an EGRC sponsorship recipient for her four years of study, and how the sponsorship made all her achievements possible. In the future she wants to be one of the donors herself to help more students in need.



Huang Lili is an engineering student studying at Changan University. She says:



"I have never lived life as a normal university student. I have held at least two or three different jobs every term over the past three years. I worked every weekend plus holidays.

I can never forget the terrible accident that happened three years ago; it changed my life and my family forever. My father is now paralyzed from his neck down; and he has to have a few different operations each year to keep him alive. My mother also had injuries in the same accident; and she lost all her hair due to the tremendous stress. She is only 42. I also have a younger brother and sister at home.

Without the money I received from EGRC and the encouragement from Madam Tien, I would never dream that I could complete my university study. I am not #1 in my class, but I belong in the top few; I could go on to a grad program, but I have to find work to make money. Once I start earning money I will take my father to the best doctors; and I will support my brother and sisters' education.

EGRC brought light to me in the darkest period of my life. My parents and I are very grateful for all the help we have received."

"Paying Back"

In the last couple of years, some of the EGRC girls have often expressed the desire to "pay back" by donating money to EGRC once they start working. I always know that many of them have loans and their families also are in debt. In addition, most of them have younger siblings to help. I really appreciate the idea, but I do not encourage them to donate money right after graduation.

In our email correspondence, I told them that there are different ways to "pay back." Helping anyone in need in their communities will be the start. It does not have to be in the form of donating money. The girls got the idea and responded with enthusiasm. Helping me by visiting new students' homes and the summer teaching camp are two great examples.

In July, four of our sponsored girls organized a two-week summer teaching camp for the children in one of the girl's villages. The result was amazing! 63 boys and girls between ages of 8 and 13 participated. This two-week program included reading, story telling, singing songs, playing games and helping with their school work. The most meaningful message from our girls that are teaching the children was: "Learning can be fun, and going to school is great!"

This idea came up after Wang Ting - a second year student at Northwest Normal University posted a story on the EGRC student blog earlier this year:

A reporter went to visit a village. On the way there he encountered a young boy tending sheep on a hill. The reporter asked the boy:

"Why you are tending the sheep instead of going to school?"

The boy replied: "To earn money."

"What do you earn money for?"

"To marry a wife"

"Why marry a wife?"

"To have babies"

"Why do you want babies"?

"They can tend the sheep"

This is the reality in many remote villages. Wang Ting said *"We must help to break this cycle and let more children know the importance of education."* This is how the first "teaching camp" was born, and more will come next summer.





During my time in Beijing on this trip I had the opportunity to meet our Ambassador David Mulrone and the Counselor, Head of the Development - Francois Lafreniere. They took great interest in the work we do in China.

Recently I was invited to give a presentation to CCPA – Chinese Canadian Professional Association. The presentation was about one of their mentorship program events. I met a group of bright young Chinese Canadian professionals and some of them showed great enthusiasm to help.

It is important to let you know that EGRC's administrative cost in the year of 2009 - 2010 is 4% of the total fund we raised. We will continue making the effort to keep the cost to a minimum.

In the past six years that I have worked on this project, I have been moved, inspired and amazed by all of our sponsored girls. Their determination to overcome obstacles, their courage and ability to endure hardship, and above all - how much they have achieved.

I would like to conclude my report with a sincere Thank You on behalf of all the sponsored girls and the organization. I appreciate your trust, generosity and the vision we share.

Please feel free to contact me and give your feedback.

I hope I can count on your support again.

Sincerely,

Tien Ching
Founder EGRC