



Evergreen Education Foundation Newsletter

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

We have a great deal to report this year. So much has occurred and so much has been accomplished that it is hard to know where to start or how much to include. Two major events must be mentioned. The first is that Evergreen hosted an international educational conference in Beijing this summer and the second is our winning the Access to Learning Award given by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Before reporting on these major events, we should mention that we have a new administrative team, headed by John Lee as the chair of our board of directors. We have been promised a free office by Patten University and expect to move to that location in Oakland in January of 2005. Slowly, but surely we are growing and establishing our presence.



Students in Tongwei No. 1 High School

TIE2004 Conference

Our July conference in Beijing is called: *Information Technology in Education, Learning from Different Cultures*. Over 200 educators/scholars attended from all over the United States, Japan, Hong Kong and China. Both Soar Education Foundation and Shin Shin Foundation sponsored teachers to participate along side with Evergreen teachers from rural China. For most of these teachers, it was the very first time that they have attended an international conference. Actually, most have never been outside of their provinces or traveled on a train. Quite a few mentioned that the conference was a life altering experience for them. The interaction between the Chinese teachers and western educators was phenomenal, each learning from the other. Please read the reflections of a number of participants below.

A survey was conducted at the end of the conference and the response was overwhelmingly positive, giving us courage to think of holding future conferences. Without doubt, the success of this conference was the result of the hard work and efforts on the part of many Evergreen volunteers. On the U.S. side, Geoffrey Liu did an excellent job reviewing and translating all the papers and abstracts, Jingyi Yu was responsible for all the bookkeeping and communications, Jerry Xu designed and executed the fantastic conference web site and Danping Peng arranged the payment plan for overseas participants. Eileen Lichin Tang, not only presented at two sessions with only a few days notice, she also brought her niece to demonstrate teaching English as a second language, which was extremely well received.

Our conference was unique in that we had a whole morning session devoted to ethics. All participants were put into small groups and discussed a number of ethical issues dealing with the use of information technology and each group made thought provoking comments and analysis.

In Beijing, at the conference site, Bai Fan was phenomenal. Through her efforts we were able to hold the conference in an excellent location with an auditorium and presentation rooms. She also arranged for the terrific food service and the tours for the participants. On the last night of the conference, she stayed up all night with her sister, Bai Hua, to ensure that all the participant's accounts were completed before they left.



Liu Dunzhi was also indispensable registering and taking care of, with the help of our former Evergreen student, Zhang Min, all the rural teachers and librarians. Xiao Yu (Yu Gang Lei), whose article is below, was everywhere. He not only served as one of our translators along with another student volunteer, Xu Yue Hua and our own Susan Wong, he was also our chief trouble shooter. This group of young volunteers was round out by our film maker from New York, David Hou.

Zhang Zan Jie and Ma Po Hung, a husband and wife team of professors, sponsored by Chang Yen Shen, came from Louyang to help out at the conference. We hope that we will be working with them again in the future.

Geoffrey must be mentioned once more. At all of the plenary sessions, Geoffrey was our chief translator, working with both Chinese and American presenters. One of the many talents Geoffrey possessed is his ability as a translator. It is safe to say that few can be his equal in this area.

Lastly, we thank a number of our supporters who donated generously to make this conference possible. The Joseph Tse foundation provided the \$10,000 initial funding that allowed us to begin our planning for the conference.

The Access to Learning Award

The other major event for Evergreen in 2004 is that China Evergreen won the *Access to Learning Award* given by the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**. This year's award of one million dollars was split between a very large library in Denmark and China Evergreen. Although the funds can be used only for such items as technology and technology training, the very fact that China Evergreen won this prestigious award has energized and encouraged all of our workers and volunteers.

The panel of evaluators included professors from major universities and head librarians from major libraries throughout the world. One of the criteria for the award is that the libraries must provide free public access. The other major criteria is that our programs must be innovative. Evergreen libraries are very unique in that we are school libraries that also serve the communities in which they reside.

At Tongwei No. 1 High School, Principal Niu Tuo Wen has established a number of satellite sites where the books from his school library can circulate. This method has already resulted in significant benefits to the local economy, such as providing information growing mushrooms as shown in the picture below.



Of course, Evergreen's main purpose for establishing the libraries is to serve the students. Below shows the librarian at Danfeng high school helping students selecting books from the library.



The Access to Learning Award was presented at the annual IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) conference. This year's conference was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



The Award given at the IFLA Conference in Argentina



Geoffrey and Blanche at the Presentation Ceremony

All the workers from both the US Evergreen and the China Evergreen sites are determined to work harder to ensure that we will be able to help more students and serve the local communities obtain access to information technology.

Future Projects

A number of projects are planned for 2005. We will continue to support each of the schools at which we have established a library. We will continue to award scholarships to students at

these schools whose families have financial difficulties and provide training workshops for the teachers and librarians.



Students at Hui Ning High School

We are also planning to establish new school libraries in Beijing at the schools for the children of migrant workers and perhaps in Yunnan. A trip to Beijing and Yunnan is planned for the winter break by Faith and Geoffrey to explore these possibilities.

A Winter Conference of the Western province Principals and librarians will take place in Tongwei on January 3rd, 2005. We will share experiences and opinions concerning future projects and how we might expand public access and provide better service to our students and teachers.

Plans are being established for cooperation with San Jose State University and Wuhan University to train our school librarians.

All these achievements are only possible with your support and hard work of our volunteers. Together, we are sure to accomplish ever more the coming year.

Faith Chao, President

Reflections on ITIE Conference

by Les Gottesman

Director of General Education, Golden Gate University

I have been thinking about the ITIE Conference and wanted to share my reflections with you. First of all, the conference was truly impressive, in terms of organization, enthusiasm of the participants, and opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue. I was impressed by the contributions and participation of Chinese attendees at the ITIE Conference.

I attended a number of sessions, and found that the presentations by Chinese teachers demonstrated a thoughtful perspective on their experience and situation. While they expressed and demonstrated an awareness of and ability to apply up-to-date pedagogy, they were also aware of limitations inherent in their

situation: lack of resources, large classes, limited access to technology (or none at all), etc. Some presenters used technology in their presentations that they cannot reasonably be expected to use with their students, which strongly suggests that they are acutely aware of their current limitations and actively planning for a technologically richer future.

That future is inevitable, and I believe that these teachers and principals are preparing themselves to be leaders in it. I noticed similar tendencies in some of the questions and answers in some of the sessions. While it is true that some people tuned out when the discussion focused on technologies that they have had no hands-on experience with, others showed a keen interest and abstract, if not actual, familiarity with web resources and technology, and the social, pedagogical, and even political issues it raises. For all these participants, I do believe that the Conference was just one event (an important one) in a process of the transformation of education; as such, the conference reinforced their interest, humanized, personalized, and contextualized not just the use of technology in education but also the issues that use raises, both within and across cultures. In sum, I think everyone at the Conference learned a lot!

Fun of Interpreting for the ITIE2004 Conference

By Geoffrey Z. Liu

This summer the Evergreen Education Foundation organized its first International Conference on Information Technologies in Education (ITIE2004) in Beijing, P.R. China, and I had the honor of being a designated interpreter for most of the speakers. It was hard work, but also full of fun.

Fortunately the interpretation was not simultaneous, but sequential, which is less demanding. Being a native speaker of Chinese and having stayed in the States for more than ten years, I had relatively easier time to translate from English to Chinese. Nevertheless, once in a while I would still come short of appropriate wording, especially when the speaker started saying things unique to the American culture, and there is no Chinese equivalents to relate to. This is when interpretation really became explanation.

The funniest part is when I interpreted for informal discussion during recesses. In the heat of exchanges, I got things mixed up and started speaking English to the Chinese party and Chinese to the American party, totally unaware of what I was doing wrong, until everyone started laughing.

The other observation is that reaching a secret agreement with the speaker on how long a breath is going to be just right for you to interpret really helps. Needless to say that I learned my lesson in a hard way. One morning at the conference, the speaker started talking about some exciting things and her train of thought got out of control and she kept going and going, not leaving me any chance to cut in and translate. And she kept going until – well – until she ran out breath herself. As you can

imagine, my buffering memory went overflowed, and by time she was done, I had completely lost track of what she said earlier. The audience certainly saw what happened and burst into a big laughter while I sat there stunned, speechless.

But I enjoyed the experience a great deal in spite of such incidents, especially the feeling of how it's like to live on the edge by seconds. And I assure you that I will do it again should such opportunities arise in the future.

We Are Really Making a Difference

By Susan S. Wong

This summer, I had the opportunity to attend the Information Technology in Education Conference in Beijing. My job at the conference was to be a translator and also to help out with the administrative work at the registration area. This trip afforded me the opportunity not only to be a translator, but also to see first-hand how the money we have spent on the programs was being put to work.

During our visit to Qinghai in 2002, it was inspiring to see how our contributions impacted the lives of children for the better. If 2002 was a year of planting seeds, this year was the year of the harvest. When I met one of the many local Chinese beneficiaries, Zhang Min, I knew we had picked the right student to sponsor.

In 2002, Zhang Min was a high-school student at Li Jia Shan in Qing Hai province. With the help of an Evergreen scholarship, she has finished high school and is now studying at a well-known university in Beijing. Zhang Min happily volunteered to assist us at the conference, and it was a true pleasure to get to know her.

Another volunteer I met at the conference was Yu Gang Lei (Xiao Yu). He is currently a student at Beijing University. He volunteered his services as an interpreter at the conference. I was very impressed that this young man, who has never been outside of China, spoke excellent English and did a great job for us.

Working with Zhang Min and XiaoYu for three days at the conference reinforced my belief that the funding provided by Evergreen is producing real results for real students in rural China. It is truly amazing when you consider that these are young people who otherwise may not have even graduated from high school.

For me, one of the most valuable aspects of being a member of Evergreen is the friendships that I have acquired along the way. It is a profound experience to watch these kids as they mature and reach out for a future that would likely have been unattainable for them. Having the chance to meet and work with Zhang Min and Xiao Yu was yet another reminder of the groundbreaking work that Evergreen is accomplishing.

In the modern world, education can be as important to a successful life as food and air. I believe that every child should have the opportunity to go to school and learn the basic skills that are so essential for a productive and fulfilling life. Your care and generosity will help to pull these children out of very difficult situations and help to provide opportunities that would be otherwise unimaginable.

A Volunteer's Experience

By Gang Lei Yu

Evergreen held a conference in Beijing this summer to let teachers and librarians from both China and out of China to study from each other. It was a very successful conference. I think everyone learned a lot. Besides, during the conference, the rural schools where we donated books and computers to showed lots of posters that indicated the achievements we have made these years. I was quite amazed, and admire Evergreen very much.

All of the volunteers worked very hard. Zhang Min, for example, did a lot of work, but I did not know she was just 17 years old (not an adult yet by Chinese law) until the end of the conference. She really did a good job. Bai Fan, thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend this conference. And Susan, thank you for helping me doing translation services. Still, David, Xu Yue Hua, and some board members and executers of Evergreen really helped me a lot.

However there were still some difficulties, for instances we lacked volunteers and translators. But at last, we overcame them. I think we will surely have a more successful conference next time.

Evergreen's work is of great value. With our help, more and more kids in rural China will get better and better basic education facilities, and as a result, more and more knowledge from both books in library and web pages from the Internet. This summer was really impressive.

Your Views and Suggestions are Important to Us.

Please let us know your opinions and any suggestions for improvements. To find out more, please visit us at our web site:

<http://www.evergreeneducation.org>

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