



SUPPORT EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA PROGRAM SERIES 認助中國鄉村教育項目系列

2008 Annual Report

Bringing the Beijing Olympics to Beichuan Communities. In the evening of August 8, 2008, outside newly built prefabricated classroom units in Beichuan County, Sichuan Province, people gathered before large projector screens to watch live broadcasts of the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics. Their faces still carried deep shadows of the recent earthquake that devastated Sichuan, displacing them from their homes and claiming the lives of many loved ones. For weeks they had survived in hot and crowded



tent camps, trying to cope with the basic necessities in life. This evening their minds were temporarily focused on a spectacular event taking place thousands of miles away, in China's capital city.

The TV projector screens were part of multimedia systems donated by ESS in the hope that the Beichuan communities would derive some spiritual comfort by sharing in the global excitement of the Beijing Olympics. In the longer term, the systems would not only help connect the school communities with important national and world events, but also enable them to use multimedia material and technology in the classroom.

Ten school communities in Beichuan County were selected for this special ESS project in early August. Local volunteer groups and ESS representatives worked around the clock to identify an appropriate qualified supplier and negotiate the terms of the contract. The installation team braved through rain and after shocks, traveling over 350 kilometers of treacherous mountain roads to reach all the project sites. Within a few days, the multimedia systems were installed, tested, and turned over to the school communities. By August 7, one day before the Olympic Games were due to begin, all the systems were ready to receive the live broadcasts.

Letters from students and teachers in the Beichuan communities were overflowing with appreciation: *"In China, everyone has been looking forward to the Beijing Olympics. After the earthquake destroyed our homes, watching the Games seemed an impossible dream for us. To have missed the Games would really be our lifelong regret. We are so thankful that ESS has incredibly helped turn our dream into reality! . . . In the midst of a ruthless natural calamity, we are deeply touched by the warmth of humanity, by your care and concern. . . . The Olympic spirit has inspired us, and many events in the Games have reinforced our faith: that no matter what difficulties lie on the road ahead, we will not give up but will work hard to gain strength and be caring for other people."*

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Education and Science Society, Inc. (ESS) is a non-profit, non-political educational organization, registered as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in the State of New York. Its missions are to promote understanding between the peoples of the United States and China, and to promote human and social development in rural China by raising literacy levels and improving the quality of education.



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The ESS Board of Directors holds regular meetings every quarter and the SERC Executive Committee holds regular meetings bimonthly.

Support Education in Rural China (SERC) Program Series

2008 Annual Report

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Looking Ahead from an Unusual Year

Dr. Lungching Chiao, Executive Director of ESS/SERC

2008 was an unusual year in China -- an unprecedented snowstorm in the south central and eastern part of the country in early spring, an 8.0 magnitude earthquake in northeastern Sichuan Province in May, the Beijing Olympic Games in August, Chinese astronauts in spaceship Shenzhou VII in late September . . . The Sichuan earthquake, which claimed tens of thousands of lives and left behind a vast area of devastation, had by far the largest and deepest impact on all of us at ESS. Honed into our memories were the scenes of havoc and human suffering, images of school buildings that crumpled with children underneath, stories of heroic attempts to save lives, and massive efforts to help survivors rebuild their lives.

Two months after the earthquake, ESS volunteers visited some of the worst hit areas in Sichuan. We were most disturbed by the situation in Beichuan County, home of the Qiang ethnic minority. Beichuan Town, the county seat, was completely destroyed, with half of its residents reported dead or missing. Those who were spared were trying to cope with basic necessities in crowded campsites nearby. While huge amounts of government resources and international aid had poured into the region since May, the destruction was so extensive that demands not considered immediately life-threatening could not be met.

What could we do to help support the survivors through this calamity that had robbed them of their homes and their loved ones? The Beijing Olympics was just about to open. Would it help if they could watch the events and share in the excitement? Perhaps we could help make this happen. ESS volunteers quickly came up with a project to provide large screen projection TV/multimedia systems to the Beichuan school communities. The Sichuan team of ESS representatives, aided by the Sichuan Foundation for Poverty Alleviation and the Sichuan Society of Retired Science and Technical Workers, coordinated the project with incredible speed and won the full-hearted support of the supplier, ensuring that the multimedia systems were properly installed on site prior to the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing in early August. Subsequently, ESS sponsors have contributed to the provision of books, musical instruments and sports equipment to a number of schools in the disaster areas. Assistance was also provided to 60 teachers and school principals in Sichuan to attend professional training.

Throughout this year of extraordinary events, ESS has forged ahead on the various activities in the Support Education in Rural China (SERC) program series. Over the past twenty years, the SERC program has helped set up libraries (ARSLs) in 4,966 rural schools in China, and awarded 16,366 scholarships to poor rural students to help them complete their schooling from primary through secondary, and some on to college education. The program has also helped train about 30,000 rural teachers and school principals in the summer basic education conferences/workshops. A new project in the last two years has helped establish Library and Information Centers (RLICs) in 8 county schools that serve communities in remote rural areas.

In addition, musical instruments, sports equipment and other facilities have been provided to many rural schools throughout the years to help improve the quality of teaching and learning in these schools.

In the context of the enormous needs in education in rural China, the assistance provided by the ESS programs seems miniscule. Nonetheless, to bring fundamental change to life in China's rural areas, we must work hard to ensure that all the children, including those in poor and remote rural villages, have access to quality education. We hope that the ESS programs will play a part, however small, towards the achievement of this goal.

Over the years, in the process of our endeavors, we have met many partners who have earned our admiration and respect. They have encouraged us with their tireless dedication to lofty ideals and their profound care for others. Through their examples, we have come to appreciate our duties in life. Together we will continue to move forward in our efforts to help improve education in rural China, and help build a solid foundation for future generations.



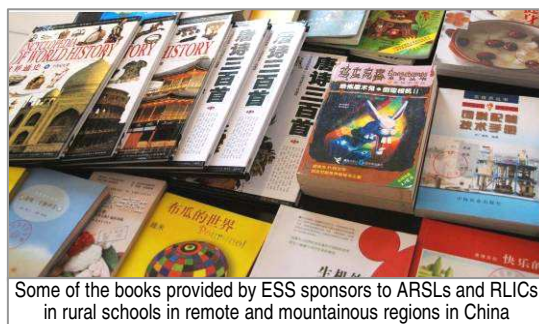
These lovely children in Sanyi Primary School, on the fringe of the deserts in Nei Monggol, eagerly respond to the teacher's questions in a language class. With generous funding from the Raybin Q. Wong Foundation, ESS has been able to help the school improve its learning environment, providing the children with books, musical instruments, and very recently, a library and information center.

SERC Program Series 1988-2008 Major Results and Activities at a Glance

SERC Series I: Providing Reading Material and Information Resources		
Adopt a Rural School Library (ARSL)	(since 1989)	4,966 ARSLs
Adopt a Rural Public Library (ARPL)	(since 1988)	45 ARPLs
Adopt a Rural Library and Information Center (RLIC)	(since 2007)	8 RLICs
SERC Series II: Improving Teaching and Learning		
◆ Basic Education Conferences/workshops for rural teachers - Jointly held with provincial/municipal institutions	(since 1993)	44 conferences
◆ Essay contests and publications		
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Read to Discover</i> *	(since 1996)	13 th year
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Teach to Inspire</i> *	(since 1999)	10 th year
*Award winning essays are posted on the ESS website. From 2009, both essay contests will be combined into one operation under <i>Read to Discover</i> .		
◆ <i>Read Classics</i> projects	(since 2000)	73 schools in 8 provinces
◆ Teaching Equipment and Facilities		
<input type="checkbox"/> Science laboratory equipment	(since 2002)	26 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers training VCDs	(since 2002)	28 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Audiovisual equipment	(since 2002)	12 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom desks, chairs and tables	(since 2002)	59 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Students beds for boarding facility	(since 2002)	1 school
<input type="checkbox"/> Musical instruments in poor counties	(since 2003)	308 schools in 14 provinces
<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/facilities for schools in specially poor counties	(since 2003)	5 counties in 3 provinces
<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/material for rural teachers training centers	(since 2004)	10 counties in 8 provinces
<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/material for physical education	(since 2005)	41 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer equipment	(since 2007)	240 sets (including 8 RLICs)
<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-media classroom equipment (with large screen monitor/TV)	(since 2008)	10 sets (in Sichuan disaster area)
SERC Series III: Financial Aid for Rural Students		
Total number of scholarship awards	(since 1997)	16,366
Of which: Primary students (PS)		2,244
Junior secondary (JSS) and special education students		9,373
Senior secondary students (SSS and vocational school students)		4,542
College students (HE)		207
Special Projects		
◆ Tree planting project in Nei Monggol & Gansu	(since 2003)	>50,000 saplings
◆ Soya bean workshop & pig farm in Fuping County, Hebei	(2003)	1 school
◆ Arts/skills training for girls in specially poor counties, Gansu	(2003)	2 schools
◆ School-wide broadcasting system in Guyuan County, Ningxia	(since 2005)	3 schools
◆ Multi-media classroom/large screen TV project, Sichuan	(2008)	10 schools in earthquake disaster area

Adopt a Rural School Library (ARSL)

In 2008, 269 ARSLs were established in rural schools in 17 provinces and regions in China. Seven of these were sponsored by the State of Maryland as part of its exchange program with Anhui Province. Over the past twenty years, donations from ESS have helped set up altogether 4,966 ARSLs in China (see Chart 1, page B-1; Table 1, page B-2; and Table 5, page B-3). The ARSLs serve students and teachers in the schools as well as the local rural communities. Each ARSL has a collection of children's books and material on education and various general topics relevant to the rural community. Local residents have used the ARSLs to look for information on farming, animal husbandry, managing skills for agro-enterprises, etc.



Essay Contests have been held each year since 1996 to encourage students and teachers to read and make full use of the ARSL books. 2008 marked the 13th *Read to Discover* essay contest for students. A total of 2,857 essay submissions were received, of which 888 came from secondary schools and 1,969 from primary schools. After two rounds of reviews by volunteers in China, 116 essays were forwarded to the ESS committee in the US for final review. At the end, 10 winners were selected for the distinguished award. The winning essays are posted on the ESS website. Starting from 2009, only one essay contest will be held each year, combining the *Teach to Inspire* contest for teachers and the *Read to Discover* contest for students.

Rural Library and Information Centers (RLICs)

In late 2007, ESS launched a new project to help connect disadvantaged rural school communities with the outside world through the use of computers and the Internet. With US\$80,000, consisting of accumulated savings from the ESS administrative budget and some of the funding initially allocated for the ARSL project, four pilot Rural Library and Information Centers (RLICs) were set up in selected junior secondary or primary schools in China's remote north and northwest regions. Each RLIC is equipped with a



Students taking computer technology class in the RLIC at Linxi Experimental Junior Secondary School, near Chifeng City in Nei Monggol. With 3,000 students in the school, they have waited two months for their turn to take the class. No wonder they are so eager and absorbed!

central server, a micro computer station for teachers and librarians, and at least 30 user terminals. It is designed to operate as a mini-LAN connected to the Internet, providing free online access to a broad range of regularly updated national and regional databases. In addition, each RLIC is supplied with a collection of printed and digital books on topics relevant to the local school communities. These RLICs are intended to serve students, teachers, as well as the local public, as classrooms offering computer technology lessons, and as multimedia libraries.

Evaluation of the Pilot RLICs. The four pilot RLICs, in rural Gansu (Zhenyuan County), Nei Monggol (Linxi County), Ningxia (Yuanzhou District) and Sichuan (Yanjiang District), started operation in the spring of 2008. Reports and field visits to these RLICs over the past year indicate that:

- the RLICs have opened up the horizon for students and teachers, helping to increase knowledge and upgrade skills;
- students love to learn how to use the computers, and a visit to the RLIC is their favorite extracurricular activity;
- many teachers who formerly feel cut off in these remote schools are now willing to stay on, seeing that they can keep in touch with the outside world through the Internet; training provided at the RLICs has enabled most of the teachers to use the computers to prepare their lessons and exchange ideas on problems and issues they have come across in the classroom;
- the RLICs need to expand their services after school hours, and school managers need to stop regarding the computer systems as precious fragile commodities that require maximum protection.

New RLICs in 2008. With generous donations from sponsors for this project, ESS was able to set up four additional RLICs in late 2008. These new RLICs are located in rural schools in Jiangsu, Sichuan, Nei Monggol and Jiangxi. All the new RLICs, except the one in Jiangxi, have now started operation.

Details of the names and location of the RLICs established to date are listed in Table 2, page B-2.

Adopt Music Program in Rural Schools

Between 2003 and 2008, ESS has provided musical instruments to 308 rural schools in poor and remote areas in China (*see Table 4, page B-2*). The power of music has enlivened the school environment, bringing laughter and joy to the children and the teachers.

A student in Dongzhuang Primary School (Gansu Province) said, *"Our music lessons used to be dull and dry, sending us to sleep. Now that we have the musical instruments donated by ESS sponsors, we can hear and feel the wonderful world of music, and I begin to hum a few tunes even when I am doing my school work."* Teachers have reported on how the musical instruments have helped students, especially those with disabilities, to acquire skills and relate to others.

It is our hope that the little we contribute in the form of musical instruments will help the children in the disadvantaged rural schools appreciate life and beauty, enhancing their interest to learn and fostering in them a positive attitude in life.



Wow, we have a piano, and what a talented player! Students crowd around in excitement and wonder, in Dongzhuang Primary School in Xincheng Village (Gansu Province), one of the schools that have benefited from the ESS program to provide musical instruments to disadvantaged rural schools.



Chris Robert (front right) and Shannon Crowley (front left), teachers in the Seattle public school system, were two of the presenters at the 2008 ESS Basic Education Conferences/Workshops in Hainan and Wuhan. Sitting with them in the same row were two of 16 American college students who were attending the ACC language and training programs in China. Speaking in Chinese, they gave presentations on their experiences of life in American high schools.

Basic Education Conferences/Workshops

In July 2008, about 1,500 school principals and teachers from rural schools in China participated in ESS basic education conferences/workshops held in Haikou (Hainan Province) and Wuhan (Hubei Province). The cosponsoring institutions for the two four-day conferences/workshops were the Hainan Institute of Research and training, and Hubei University, respectively.

ESS invited professional educators from the US, Taiwan and Hong Kong to give seminars on education concepts and practices, pedagogy and school management. Professor Daisy Lan Hong from Taiwan delivered a series of lectures on the relationship between cognitive neuroscience and education. Presentations on specific issues and demonstrations on various aspects of teaching experiences were given by Professors Rita Smith

and Xuejian Yu from Stonehill College, Professors Honggang Jin and Debao Xu from Hamilton College, Professor Wu-Teh Hsiang from Syracuse University, and several teachers and school principals from Taiwan, Hainan, and Hong Kong. Workshops run by the Jiangsu Handsbrain Education Training Center showed teachers how to adopt the “learning by doing” inquiry-based approach in class.

Karen Harris and Shelley Cowan from the University of Washington, together with Chris Robert and Shannon Crowley, teachers from the Seattle public school system, gave presentations on the US education system from the perspective of the school, the students and the parents. Their short article on the next page summarizes their experience participating in the conference/workshop activities.

Sixteen American college students who were attending the ACC (The Associated College in China) language and training programs gave presentations in Chinese on a range of topics covering various aspects of high school education in the US.

Evaluation reports from the participants indicate that they appreciate the diversity of the seminar topics and the lively formats of presentation. They find the practical demonstration of teaching skills useful, and hope that there would be more discussion on issues pertinent to resource-poor rural schools in China. They suggest that the experience of model teachers and school principals from poor and remote areas in rural China would help them solve problems they face in their schools.

Financial Aid for Rural Students

The ESS provided support to 1,428 students in China’s rural areas in 2008. Of these, 7 were in primary schools, 447 in junior secondary schools and in special education, 888 in senior secondary schools, and 86 in institutions of higher education. Since 1997, the program has awarded a total of 16,366 scholarships to rural students in China (*see Chart 2, page B-1; Table 3, page B-2; and Table 6, page B-4*).

Among those who received ESS assistance in 2008 were 55 students in Nancheng Junior Secondary School in Qingshen County, Sichuan Province. This is a school that focuses on children whose parents have left home to make a living elsewhere. Many of these children live with grandparents who are old or sick. Their parents have low levels of education, poor working skills, and hardly any stable income to pay for their schooling and boarding fees. Their problems were further aggravated by the devastating earthquake in May 2008. When the ESS volunteers visited the school in early August, 2008, they found that many students owed the school about 200-750 yuan per term. It was therefore decided that 600 yuan be provided to each of these students per year to help them complete their schooling.

Many touching stories have emerged in the past year from the students who received FARS assistance. Cai Yan is a student from Wenchuan, the epicenter of the Sichuan earthquake. She described to us her horrifying experience during the earthquake: *“As mountains collapsed and the earth cracked, in the midst of a deadening roar and blinding dusts, we were buried in boundless darkness and couldn’t find a single beam of light. I could not breathe, nor could I open my eyes. All that was left in the world was the taste of earth. I was afraid, and felt utterly helpless. But I did not cry. . . Many things I had never thought about came rushing in my mind at this*

moment of life and death. Many faces flashed past . . . Among them were your faces that I had imagined them to be, smiling, giving me warmth and strength, helping me to be calm and steady. I would really like to tell you, the help you've given me is not just physical, but also spiritual; it's the inspiration of the soul."

Another ESS student, Shen Fuyuan, has graduated with honors this year from Lanzhou University of Science and Technology, and has been awarded a scholarship from the university to begin her graduate studies this fall. Fuyuan came from a poor village where the land was affected by the processes of desertification and salinization. Her parents were peasants, left destitute by years of drought. Fuyuan loved to study and had always performed well in school, but her family could not afford her schooling expenses.

She was grateful to the ESS sponsors who donated the FARS scholarships to support her through secondary and college education: *"You have not only made it possible for me to continue my studies, but have given me spiritual comfort, teaching me how to care for and help other people, and find my values in life."*



Some of the students who have received assistance under the FARS program in Ziyang County (Sichuan Province), waving goodbye to the visiting team of ESS volunteers after a heart-warming meeting in July 2008.

Our Experience Participating in the 2008 ESS Summer Seminar

Karen Harris, Chris Robert, Shirley Cowan, Shannon Crowley

An austere and out of place letter "A" stared at us, alerting us that we had managed to find the arrival hall. Donned with the unmistakable exhaustion of weary travelers, our contingent of four educators, representing the University of Washington and Seattle Public Schools, slogged through the Hong Kong International Airport. Only minutes earlier, the four of us had eagerly peered through the tiny airplane windows, at a world only known to us through the pages of books, or the frames of movies. We were equipped with luggage, tour guides, phrase books, and above all, the coveted contact numbers of our hosts. Little did we know then that these numbers would soon lead to treasured friends, and experiences that would change us as educators.

The first conference at which we were to present was scheduled a few days out. We traveled the Chinese countryside by bus to a city called Haikou on the island of Hainan. Culture shock set in as we whirled past water buffalo grazing along the roadside on a lush green carpet of grass that was newly touched by gentle rain. Closer to our destination, cars zipped in and out of traffic like dragon-flies. Our bus barreled past and finally turned into the circular drive of our hotel. A large red banner announced our visit, and the conference. It was here that we met our brilliant and generous interpreters for the trip. Over meals that felt more like visits with old friends, our hosts oriented us to the wonderful country we were visiting as well as what to expect as we made last minute preparations for our audience of Chinese teachers and principals.

During a three-week period our delegation presented in both Haikou (population 840,000) and Wuhan (population 10 million). The conferences were well attended. The participants were receptive to the talks on innovative teacher education methods used at the University of Washington, and on pedagogy found in a typical American intermediate classroom. Our audiences were engaged and asked numerous questions about American culture, gender issues in the schools, and the dynamics between teachers and students.

We were glad to share our culture and knowledge. However, one of the most poignant experiences for us was not one of giving information, but of receiving it. The day trip to rural areas outside of Haikou was memorable. At the first school we visited, uniform-clad students lined the drive, waving flowers and chanting a welcome to our bus. They presented us with leis, and invited us into their school where we were able to see first-hand a library that ESS donated. A banner in Chinese read, "Books are the ladders to success". We heard from high school students who were ESS scholarship recipients. Sometimes through tears, they or their teachers expressed the gratitude they had for the work that ESS had been doing to enable young rural people to continue their education. The culminating point of our day was a visit to a remote school where an 87-year-old librarian proudly displayed the library recently revamped by ESS.

Perhaps we brought a little to China, but it would be appropriate to say we brought more home to America. Thanks to our gracious hosts, we were allowed to immerse ourselves in Chinese culture; consequently our window of the world was opened wider for a better view. As educators we can't ask for a more valuable gift. Because as educators, it is our nature to pass on what we see to those who populate our schools, in hopes that their views of the world will be wider and more brilliant than our own.

Thoughts on Producing the DVD on ESS *

*Prof. Changfu Chang, Millersville University, Pennsylvania
(translated by volunteer Bella Li)*

To share with you my experience with ESS, let me start with my personal story. I was born in a small fishing village by the Yellow Sea in northern Jiangsu Province. For generations, not one single person in my family ever attended school. Together with a handful of people who have received higher education in my hometown, I have been treated with immense respect by the town folks, considered to be especially brilliant, with a high I.Q. Actually, we knew that we were just fortunate, being at the right place at the right time. In fact, education has changed our fates, making it possible for our horizons to be broadened.

The importance of education was thus ingrained in me. When I was able to send my son to the best pre-school while working in the provincial capital, I felt an unprecedented sense of pride and achievement. At that time, it did not occur to me that thousands of children of rural migrant workers in every city in China could not attend the local schools, or that countless numbers of children in poor rural villages could not afford to go to any school at all, or had to walk several hours before they could sit down in a classroom. I did not give too much thought as to how my "successful life" would relate to these children, until years later I became deeply touched by a few things I came across in the United States. First, as immigrants, we had no problem sending our children to good local schools to receive free public education. Furthermore, when the state legislature of California, faced with diminishing resources, attempted to withhold from the children of illegal immigrants the right to attend public schools, the Federal Supreme Court unequivocally ruled in favor of the children.

These events led me to think about the issue of equal opportunities in education, and the current situation in China. I wanted to produce a film to raise concern about the issues involving the education of children of rural migrant workers. Just at this juncture, a friend who worked in Maryland invited me to attend an ESS meeting. I was very happy to find that I shared the basic concepts underlying the ESS programs. Getting involved in ESS programs would give me the opportunity to contribute towards improving education in China.

In fact, an opportunity was already waiting for me. ESS had been planning to produce a DVD presentation on ESS programs, sponsors and volunteers. Gladly I volunteered for this assignment. I must have been one of the happiest producers in the world, doing what I can do best, for a cause that I love.

Having studied the detailed information provided by ESS, I took my students in the Department of Communication on our spare time to interview and film the ESS sponsors and volunteers. This was an exceptionally meaningful experience for myself and my students. For my students, it was an opportunity to learn about rural China and the status of education there, and to meet many volunteers trying to help improve education in China. My students said they had never seen so many noble people working together for a good cause. This would no doubt have a positive influence on their future. When I attended the ESS summer workshops for principals and teachers in Anhui Province, I saw how the ESS team worked through soaring temperatures, enduring minimum room and board facilities to save on expenses. I heard workers at the hotel commenting that they had never seen any organization as frugal as ESS. When I went to Gansu Province to interview the students who had graduated with assistance from the ESS financial aid program, I heard them speak freely of their experience and ideals. They said they would like to contribute their best to help improve education in their hometowns. In these students I saw that the seeds sown by ESS were beginning to blossom and bear fruit. They will carry on the ESS spirit.

I would like to follow the examples of my fellow ESS volunteers, and do something useful and practical for my country and my people. I will continue to volunteer for ESS, and I will also try to complete the film on the education of the children of rural migrant workers in China.

* The DVD produced by Professor Chang consists of presentations on the ESS program series "Support Education in Rural China", in English and Chinese. It also contains the segment on ESS produced in 2007 by NBC as part its Friday night news series, "Making a Difference". For a copy of the DVD, please write to ESS at the following address: P.O. Box 9525, McLean, Virginia 22102-0525 USA.



Ms. Feng Binbin surrounded by children in the school she was visiting shortly before her death in early 2009.

Tribute to a Beloved ESS Volunteer. In early 2009, we sadly learned that Ms. Feng Binbin had died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 78. Ms. Feng had worked almost all her life on science and poverty reduction programs, and had led the Sichuan team of ESS volunteers for the past 12 years. Deeply concerned about education in the rural areas, she devoted all her energy to help implement the ESS programs, mobilizing and coordinating support to make sure that our limited funds would be used effectively. Her dedication has led to a strong ESS program in Sichuan, comprising 295 ARSLs, musical programs in 41 schools, 2 RLICs, and 958 scholarship awards to rural students. We will always remember her fondly. With donations from ESS volunteers in Washington, an ARSL will be set up in her home town to commemorate her contribution to education in Sichuan.