

BENIN EDUCATION FUND (BEF) Newsletter – Fall 2005

The Benin Education Fund is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization founded in 1998 that provides children in rural West Africa the opportunity to attend school.

2004-2005 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Assisted 141 high school students with small scholarships (for tuition and school supplies, including books),
- Provided housing in Natitingou for 40 rural students moving into the city to attend high school,
- Rented a housing facility in Cotonou for university students from poor families,
- Sponsored two primary schools by recruiting and paying four full-time teachers to supplement the schools' teaching staff,
- Provided education to female students in the program, focusing on AIDS and reproductive health (with the help of a local Peace Corps Volunteer), and
- Offered tutoring for students planning to take the required annual national school exams that all high school seniors must pass in order to graduate.

New this year:

- **English teacher:** BEF organized a summer school program to increase the English language proficiency of BEF students. An independent Canadian volunteer taught English to over 60 students for three weeks in summer 2005.
- **Nursing school:** Our first student in the pilot program successfully completed her last year of nursing school and will be assigned to work in a rural medical clinic. (The student we identified had already completed the first two years of the three-year program, but did not have the funds to continue.)

We plan to recruit a maximum of three students who would like to become nurses and pay for their three-year training program. In return, the graduates from the nursing school would be expected to work for five years in rural clinics where it is often difficult to find medical care. BEF has negotiated with the local government representative ("maire de la commune") who will be responsible for placing the nurses in the various medical clinics based on need. Local jurisdictions will pay salaries for the nurses. The annual tuition for each student will be \$700 (excluding books and supplies).

- **Computer donation:** 40 computers have been donated to BEF and we are now raising money to build a computer center. This donation was coordinated by the World Youth Leadership Network (www.wyln.org).

In total, we raised about \$25,000 to meet the needs of the students. Here are some exciting statistics that demonstrate our progress:

- 92%:** BEF students who succeeded in passing the BAC (high school exam).
- 100%:** BEF-sponsored students who succeeded in passing the CEP (6th-grade exam that allows access to secondary school). This rate is up from 0% just two years ago and from 87% last year!
- 100%:** BEF-sponsored female students participated in the health education program for the first time.

In addition, one of our graduates has completed a two-year college diploma (BTS) and will finish her Master's degree in December.

NEWS: MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER – TRIP TO BENIN

In March, I visited Benin to establish relationships with local and international educational organizations. Here are some highlights:

- Starting in October 2005, IFESH will provide Teacher Training to BEF Teachers. This involves training primary school teachers (free of charge to BEF) with funds provided by USAID.
- We have negotiated with the Peace Corps in Benin for a health volunteer. This person will be assigned to the BEF program to work with the students– especially the female students– on health issues.
- BEF will be registered with the U.S. Embassy in Benin. This status will allow us to benefit from special funding geared toward specific educational projects.
- I also met with various ministers, including the Minister of Education and the Minister of Youth and Sports, regarding tax exempt status for BEF and collaboration on various projects.

YOUTH SUMMIT IN JAPAN

Two BEF students and an adult representative have been invited to participate in an all expenses paid youth education conference being held in Tokyo, Japan, in December 2005. The sponsoring organization is the World Youth Leadership Network.

WISH LIST / FUTURE PLANS

Our projected budget for the 2005-2006 school year is \$40,000. This budget is for our core programs only, so funding for the following programs is also a priority:

Vocational schools: We are already supporting a few students who want to attend vocational schools. However, only a small number of students are selected each year, as the tuition fees are much higher than for the traditional schools. Additional funding will allow us to expand this program.

University studies: We plan to allow individuals to sponsor university students on a case-by-case basis with a minimum of \$500 annually. On average, the cost of tuition and housing is \$1000 per year. Several people may team up to sponsor one student for three years.

Health care: We would like to expand our services to include eye exams, prescriptions, and other health-related costs.

Nursing program: As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, our goal is to select three students to participate in the nursing program.

Computer center: Our 40 computers need a clean, air-conditioned facility so that the students can use this valuable resource.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Network – Share your connections with foundations, donors, or others who can help us to achieve our goals. Forward our information to friends who may be interested in learning more about and contributing to the Benin Education Fund.

Donate – Send a tax-deductible contribution to help us kick off the school year.

Volunteer – Build your resume! Help write newsletters, update the web site, and organize special events.

(Please mail the following form to us along with your gift and comments. Thank you.)

**BENIN EDUCATION FUND (BEF)
Response Form**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone numbers: _____

E-mail address: _____

Enclosed is my gift of: ___ \$35 ___ \$50 ___ \$150 ___ \$500
 ___ \$700 ___ \$1,000 Other \$ _____

___ Please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities and/or special events.

___ I am not making a donation at this time, but please keep me on your mailing list.

Comments: _____

Please make checks payable to “Benin Education Fund.”

Send completed form and your donation to:

Benin Education Fund c/o

Alphonse & Karen Kouagou ♦ 4110 Bennett Drive ♦ Annandale, VA 22003

Benin Education Fund (BEF)

www.benineducationfund.org