



Teach & Collaborate in a Chinese Village this Summer

I am only sending this note out to friends at schools I have worked with in starting up Chinese language and culture programs over the past 10 years, because it is not an “official” trip, in the sense of the trips I have run for many students from your schools for the past 10 years. However, the sites we will visit, and the service project we will be embarking on will have some commonalities with what some of your students have done previously.

For years, many of you – teachers, parents, and friends of my *Windows on Asia* Chinese immersion program -- have wanted to come with the group to China. In memory of my dear friend and former collaborator on a number of my trips with students to Yunnan and China projects generally, Ms. Barbara Thompson (former English teacher extraordinaire at St. Andrew’s Episcopal School in Potomac, Maryland, who died two years ago of cancer), I am sending out a rather informal query directed to teachers who might be interested in learning more about China in a very unique way.

My love of China began years ago, when I became a teacher of English in a dusty village on the outskirts of a city in the Yellow River region of the country. Since then, through a variety of experiences and opportunities, I have been lucky enough to introduce more than one hundred American students and about a dozen teachers to more than one face of China. My favorite piece of all the trips we embark on, however, has been to the rural parts of the country – where we meet so many amazing, humble, vibrant people and experience life and culture in a way that is difficult to do anywhere in the world in this day and age. We hike to villages that can be reached only after day-long foot treks, and learn about tradition and time in a way that slows down our western clocks, without us even realizing it.

This summer, I have decided that instead of taking a group of high school students to study, trek, and explore in China, I myself want to go, live, and teach in a remote village for 10-14 days. A British educator and colleague, Ms. Hilary Wheaton, started a non-profit more than 10 years ago, which focuses on helping mostly rural, ethnic minority, young girls be educated. I have taken high school students to these areas, and part of our travel always includes a few days of service in the form of “teaching” English to students there. This year, I want to go as a teacher to work with students for a bit longer, and talk with teachers, and consult about education in America and China – its challenges and opportunities and what we can learn from one another. My plan had been to go on my own. However, I was just inspired into opening up this opportunity to other adventuresome, curious teachers with an in China. The only expenses will be plane fare to Kunming and Lincang (Yunnan), China (\$1,200-\$1,600, I estimate) and \$500-\$800 for two weeks on the ground. If you were interested in seeing a few other places – Beijing, Xian, Shanghai, etc., I would offer recommendations of friends and/or travel assistance to get you to those places as well.

China as I have known it is disappearing very rapidly, especially the countryside.

Be in touch if you are interested in meeting me in Yunnan. The thought is to be there in early July, for approximately two weeks (exact dates to be set in January 2009). I would love some collaborators and some company, and I would love to offer some of these rural schools and communities a few American teachers and window to the western world...even if just for a few days of teaching and collaboration!

Krista Forsgren

kforsgren@gmail.com
www.windowsonasia.org
404.556.9108 (mobile)