

Educating Our Children Carolyn Stoker

Like parents everywhere, missionaries are concerned about their children's education. In fact, the lack of an appropriate educational option for their children is a regularly cited reason for families either postponing or leaving missionary service.

As parents of a newborn, Jeff and I also wondered how answering God's call would impact our child. We were headed to Zaire (now DR Congo). Would being educated in a small rural school with only a few teachers limit his possibilities in the future? How would he adapt to life there and how would he transition back to the United States?

That was twenty-six years ago, and now as the parent of grown children, and as an educator, I have a much better sense of the educational opportunities missionary children have.

Through a variety of circumstances, including political instability, we were forced to leave Congo and relocate to Cameroon where we now serve as teachers and administrators at Rain Forest International School (RFIS) in the capital city, Yaounde. The mission of this school, which serves missionary kids, other expatriates, and local Cameroonian students, is "students prepared for the next stage of life."

As we moved to Cameroon, so did many of the students I had taught while serving in Congo at the Ubangi Academy (UBAC). One of the students I followed for the majority of his life is Jordan. As a self-assured second grader, he ran circles around much older students on the soccer field. Jordan loved soccer, hunting with his father, and being outside. He did not love the classroom.

Years later in Cameroon, I found myself once again as Jordan's teacher. A high-school senior, he still excelled at soccer and other sports. Instead of always wanting to be the star, he had matured into a young man who encouraged his teammates to succeed.

That was twelve years ago. Jordan is still at school, but now as my colleague at RFIS. As the athletic director, he mentors young people, encouraging them not only to excel at sports but to live their lives in a way that will lead others to Christ.



Jordan today (center), as athletic director of RFIS

I have seen God meet the needs of missionary families through schools such as RFIS. Their children have gone on to become doctors, nurses, mechanics, pilots, teachers, pastors, and serve in many other professions. Their futures were not limited by the education they received.

This can only happen, however, as individuals answer God's call to serve as teachers, administrators, and dorm parents. At RFIS, we are always looking for secondary teachers willing to invest their lives in the lives of students. The Covenant mission also helps run a hostel, which allows students whose parents live outside of Yaounde to attend RFIS.

Could you be the answer to the need to provide consistent dorm parents for two or three years? For each of the last five years our hostel has had different dorm parents, resulting in a lack of stability for the students. We are looking for married couples who have an interest in working with teens, in helping them grow in their faith, and in helping them balance schoolwork, sports, and other activities.

Or perhaps you could join the teaching or administrative staff at RFIS. RFIS is looking for Christian teachers who are willing to integrate their faith into their interactions with students both in and out of the classroom. Most of our teachers are credentialed and all full-time teachers must have a bachelor's degree. Currently we would love to have a dedicated middle-school English teacher, an art teacher, and a domestic arts teacher for the coming year. If you are interested in finding out more about these opportunities, contact Lana Heinrich at lane.heinrich@covchurch.org, or call her at (773) 907-3350. ■

Carolyn Stoker is serving in Cameroon.

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Jordan (left) at his graduation from RFIS