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Greetings!

As the upcoming 2009/10 school year fast approaches, it is time to ask for your tax-deductible donation to the Indian Church and San Carlos Villages High School Scholarship Program in Belize.

*Let's journey to Indian Church and San Carlos villages to check up on the high school scholarship students there. We fly into Belize City and catch a local bus, of the old school-bus variety designed for those short in stature, and head north to the town of Orange Walk. With luck we will arrive there in two hours. From Orange Walk, if it happens to be a Monday or a Friday, we can catch a little-bit-more-decrepit bus to Indian Church Village—a grueling, minimum two-hour ride, filled with pot holes and mud pits. After passing the village of San Filipe, the electric lines cease and it's just fields and jungle and a little dirt road for another half hour before we arrive at the isolated rural village of Indian Church where about 250 people reside. Down the road another ten minutes is the smaller village of San Carlos. Most of the families living here are subsistence farmers, who immigrated here from war-torn Guatemala nearly twenty years ago. Most of the adults have had very little, if any, formal education; many are illiterate, and most speak only Spanish in a country where the official language is English. Villagers occasionally get low-paying day labor jobs with Mennonite farmers, with researchers coming to the Lamanai Maya site and nature reserve, or at a local tourist lodge. Paying jobs are scarce.*

*Can you imagine being a kid living here? It's great with the New River Lagoon to swim in and the Maya temples to climb, and the dark nights without any glaring electric lights to obscure the stars; but what if you are a kid hoping to continue your education beyond primary school? Knowing that the nearest high school is several hours away and the bus only comes to your village twice a week? And knowing that school costs money to attend?—there's tuition and school fees and books and uniforms. On top of that, there's room and board! But mom and dad don't earn very much money. Seems hopeless, doesn't it?*

Thanks to many generous people, the pursuit of education is not a hopeless cause for these children. The scholarship program, which began in 2003, has had ten Indian Church Village scholarship students graduate from high school in the past two years. They have all continued on to 6<sup>th</sup> Form (junior college) and for several of them this is thanks to a student loan program that is an outgrowth of the scholarship program. In the upcoming 2009/10 school year there will be 17 students from these two villages attending high school and junior college. Family participation is vital to the success of the scholarship program, but most parents can only contribute a portion of the funds needed to send their kids to school. That's why we need your help.

**We need to raise \$10,000USD for the 2009/10 school year.** Additional funds will be used to help support the village library, which the students often rely on for reference materials to complete their school assignments on weekends. **The good news is that this year your donation can be tax deductible!** Please help these kids continue their education by sending your donation now. If you happen to be a Canadian resident, funds can be donated to S.H.A.R.E.—contact me for specifics.

**Make your check out to:** The Foundation for Academic Innovation (It is a 501c3, Number 20-3517525.

**Mail your check to me:** Karen Pierce, PO Box 3241, Evergreen, CO 80437-3241 USA

(I will forward your checks in order to avoid any confusion as to where the funds are to be allocated)

Thanks for helping these children get an education! See my website for new photos and more information.

Sincerely,

*Karen Pierce*

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