

Microcredit thrives with Y

By Sara Giles *Monday Editor* - 9 Apr 2001

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In a modest room with sparse furnishings in the Wilkinson center, a group of people united Friday and Saturday in an effort to change the world, one bank at a time at the 4th Annual Microenterprise Conference.

Gan You-ping, Vice Chairman of Standing People's Congress, Guangxi, China, ate lunch in a room where down the hall, Robert Gay, managing director of Bain Capital, Inc., expounded on the program and the need for student support.

"This is one thing students can get involved with. If they want to have a big impact, this is one place. You don't have to be the million dollar donor to help." Gay said.

Microcredit is a program that extends loans to entrepreneurs too poor to qualify for traditional banks loan coupled with business lessons given by NGO organizations.

Microcredit began in the early 1980s with the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, and has now spread to millions of micro-entrepreneurs throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America, and economically at-risk areas of the developed world, according a pamphlet by the BYU Marriott School China Microenterprise program.

Lee Johnson of the New England Patriots, echoed Gay's sentiments.

"It's a worthy because there is a whole world of people out there needing us. So many people are lining up for help, wanting it and we need to give it to them."

Chieko N. Okazaki, a counselor in the Relief Society General Presidency, was a presenter and expressed her motivation for speaking at the conference.

"I have worked with children in needy situations and I know what it is like to go in their homes and see the very real need there."

The Microenterprise Conference drew people from across the globe. One of the most notable was the Chinese delegation from the province of Guangxi headed by Gan You-ping. He is the highest ranking official to ever visit Utah, according to Warner Woodworth, of the Organizational Leadership and Strategy Department at BYU.

BYU is sending 15 students this spring to the Mianning County to work in micro-entrepreneurship. They have been invited to participate by the Chinese National government and the Provincial Woman's Federation of the Sichuan Province.

"We are excited about the increased cooperation between BYU and our program. We hope for the

investment of the BYU students' talents, time and money to expanding the programs to areas that they haven't been before. We have so much to do and we need help meeting those people's needs," said Jiang Pei-Lan, chairwoman of the Guangxi Woman's Federation, which is responsible for over 47 million inhabitants.

"They really have very rough conditions. They don't even have cars to take them to the most remote conditions," said Marcie Holloman, a senior majoring in global trade and international development, from Springfield, Virginia who grew up in China.

Lee Johnson of the New England Patriots, was also a speaker at the conference and stressed the importance of the average person helping each other through micro-credit.

"We have a responsibility being from this great nation. To see people doing stuff like going to Africa and helping each other - it just makes you feel good."