

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT
Dr. William Agbor-Baiyee
World Community Service Committee

“Gentle giant” describes this month’s featured Rotarian, Dr. William Agbor-Baiyee. Originating from Cameroon in Africa, William comes from a large family, spread across Cameroon, Nigeria, Europe and the United States. Helping others comes naturally to William, discovering his passion with teaching soon after high school before immigrating to the United States.

Now enjoying his role at IU medical school as Director of the Master of Science in Medical Science Program, William graduated from Ball State University where he studied Cellular and Molecular Biology then shifted his focus to education and management at Indiana University.

He likes to motivate learners to think outside the box, but understands structure is needed to guide creativity. “The balance of openness and structure is challenging for learners,” says Dr. Baiyee. “I enjoy facilitating my students to discover their own individuality.”

Faith is also very important to William and his family. He is married to Michelle, a nurse at St. Vincent’s Hospital. He has 11-year old twin daughters, Shelese and Shelene, attending Fox Hill Elementary School in the Washington Township school system.

A Rotarian since June 2008, and a member of our World Community Service Committee, William was introduced to Rotary by Past President Ralph Taylor nearly two years ago. He soon discovered he has been a “Rotarian” all along. “The idea of ‘Service Above Self’ has always been part of my life,” he says. Especially embracing our Four Way Test, which is a very simple framework to engage the world and test decisions in life.

Dr. Baiyee is currently involved in the development of a private university in Cameroon. The idea of African University came to him as a graduate student at Indiana University in Bloomington. Now, he chairs the Board of Trustees of African University Foundation, an Indianapolis-based 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization with a branch in Cameroon. The foundation’s mission is to facilitate the development of African University in Tali, Cameroon, Africa. “African University in Tali, Cameroon would educate a new generation of African leaders endowed with integrity, creativity and excellence.”

Cameroon, approximately the size of California with a population of about 18 million, has the second largest forest in Africa. The tropical rain forests in and around Tali are a biodiversity hotspot. Tali, located in the southwestern region of Cameroon, is a rural area that will provide a peaceful and pleasant educational environment.

In December 2008, Dr. Baiyee, David Williams Russell, Esq. of Harrison and Moberly and Vice Chairman of African University Foundation and Dr. Baiyee-Mbi Agbor-Baiyee, President of African University Foundation participated in a 3-day symposium entitled “International Symposium on the Role of African Higher Education in Sustainable Community Development: The Case for African University.” The symposium which took place in Tali, Cameroon explored alternatives for creating sustainable educational uses



for 10-square miles of land which has been granted by the Tali Traditional Council for the future campus of African University and to involve the people of Cameroon in creating African University as a self-sustaining, environmentally sound educational institution dedicated to enabling future leaders of Africa to realize their full potential through an integrated experiential education.

As chairman of African University Foundation, William shepherds the ongoing measured and systematic progress from concept toward the implementation of African University in Tali, Cameroon. He explains that his role allows the organic and self-sustaining growth of leadership in Cameroon necessary to move African University forward without him. As a first step towards engaging the Tali community in the process of building African university there, African University Foundation is currently raising funds to establish an Integrated Community Center as a progenitor of African University’s academic programs especially those for the College of Agriculture and Agribusiness. The College of Agriculture and Agribusiness shall be the first and flagship academic unit of African University.

African University Foundation is also exploring potential partnerships with organizations that support and enhance sustainable community development. William thinks that the African University initiative may provide Rotary a unique partnership opportunity in promoting peace and civic leadership development for the people of Cameroon in particular and Africa in general.

Please welcome Dr. William Agbor-Baiyee, and for more information about his African University project, visit www.aufoundation.org and www.africanu.org.

– Greg Albright, Chairperson, Communications Committee