



## A Brief Intro To Able & Willing

*To orient our new readers and recap for our old friends, here is a quick historical summary. For more history, newsletters and color pictures, visit <http://AbleAndWilling.org>*

Able & Willing began in 1995 with the construction of a two room school building in Tshamalale, Zaire (now, the Democratic Republic of Congo), a village with no electricity, wells, toilets or schools. Myrt School expanded each year to include all levels through high school as well as a technical school with fully equipped shops, computer labs and library powered by wind, solar and diesel generators.

A second campus, Myrt 2, was started in 2007 in Poleni village a few miles further out, which now has an elementary school and the beginnings of a nursing school and clinic.

Our goals are to make the existing schools self-supporting and self-governing, provide quality education, and help disadvantaged students. Current work focuses on getting school workshops

and computer labs up to speed to train more students and generate income for the schools.



**These Myrt School students now have classrooms, workshops and computers with cheap and stable power. The electricity project completed last November connects the campus and entire village to the hydroelectric grid powered by the Congo River.**

## A Word From The Founder

My Dear Friends,

Well, this was a good year for Able and Willing, Myrt School and, inadvertently, for the village of Tshamalale. What started as a small project to just bring electricity to the school turned into a big electrification project for the entire village.

Much of my time this year in Congo – and money from Able and Willing - was refocused and spent on this project. You might wonder: How does this relate to Able and Willing's educational mission?

The short answer is that a reliable and cheaper source of electricity was needed to replace the school's generators. Not only were they unreli-

able, but rising fuel costs made them way too expensive to operate for more than several hours a week. Without power, the school's shops and other assets like the computer lab were barely useable, vocational education was at a minimum, and production of goods for sale to produce income for the school was stalled.

At the outset of my stay in Congo this year, my work plan and budget for electrification project were limited to completing work begun last year to bring power to Myrt School. Factors way beyond anyone's control or even ability to predict caused the project to expand to the entire village. (See December 2010 Newsletter.) The government unexpectedly changed its regulations. They were not pleased with the sloppy work previously

done by the power company. Everyone saw that I, along with students and others connected to the school, did quality work. And finally, additional money needed for the expansion was raised from new sources – mainly certain political officials and local people contributing money in exchange for a future hookup to the new power source.

It was truly a collaboration effort of many acting for the betterment of themselves AND the broader community. Just what Congo needs more of. For this, I offer heartfelt thanks to all who contributed in one way or the other. Together, we did it, we brought electricity to Myrt School and Tshamalale village this year, and we opened a new world of opportunity for all.

My biggest concerns now – and my plans for future work in Congo – are to ensure that these new opportunities are not wasted. My intention is to alter the focus of work from building physical infrastructure to building human resources.

Electrification, like the construction of the school buildings before, were tools, a means to an end, not the end itself. That end in my opinion has not changed: It is that Myrt School will provide basic education, help less fortunate children, and train young adults to be good and productive citizens with leadership skills that will sooner or later make my presence there unnecessary.

I firmly believe that this job will be harder than all that has been accomplished in the past. Yet it is essential to ensure that the work of the school continue and not depend on the presence of one

individual – me. I am convinced that I must spend more time in the Congo, providing a consistent role model, fighting against old and bad thinking, training and establishing a business ethic character for the school. I am sadly convinced that if I do not, all will die when I do.

The situation is even more critical because changes in the village are causing changes in school enrollment, with more students not able to pay tuition. More than ever, the school needs the shops and income they produce to subsidize education of a growing number of children whose families who cannot afford to pay.

How did this situation arise? Being in Congo a long time allowed me to find out why. In short, more and more middle class people have moved to the outskirts of Lubumbashi, buying up land at high prices from less fortunate villagers, who moved further out. Not only has the gap widened in the village between the have's and the have-nots, but the wealthier newcomers have more options as to their choice of schools. They can afford tuition and transportation to the fancier schools in the city. Over time, Myrt School acquired a reputation as the poor people's school, causing some loss of paying students and leaving more who need financial assistance.

This development adds to the urgency of going back as soon as possible and for an extended stay. I want Myrt School and WaMbuyu Tech to finally and permanently become self-supporting.

*Wa Mbuyu (Puma)*

## The Light At The End Of The Tunnel

In our 15 years working in the Congo, we have not solicited nor accepted help from the government. This year, for the first time, Myrt School decided to receive financial help offered by a few government officials. Why now, you might ask.

Well, as the saying goes, sometimes things have to get bad before they can get better. And this saying is true in today's Congo. In the days of Mobutu, Congo had only one political party, the MPR (Movement Populaire de la Revolution). No others were allowed, and anyone opposing the MPR was nothing but its enemy.

At that time, and even since reform started to take shape, neutrality seemed like the wisest course. It protected our work at the school from political controversy by not being labeled as taking sides. It allowed us to gain a broad level of trust and confidence among all the groups involved in our work.

But with the new government in the Congo, the political situation there is changing, in my opinion for the better. There are now many political parties. They hold offices all over the country, and they can speak out on issues and hold public

meetings without being labeled as an enemy or treated like outlaws. In my visits to other locations in Congo, I saw beneficial changes in the way public funds are used. In Katanga for instance, many roads that used to be barely passable are now paved and useable year round. Some public schools are being rehabilitated, and some new ones are built in villages like Mweto and Kasenga. Hospitals are being built in Manono, Kinshasa, and elsewhere.



**Puma thanks Senator Kisimba who donated 5 km of cable to the project.**

The most significant change I noticed is the attitude of the new government officials. Unlike the Mobutu era when politicians took money for their own use, away from the people and even out of the country altogether, officials in the new regime are putting the money to work in country, building, in addition to schools, roads, and hospitals, such things as hotels, restaurants, apartment buildings, and single homes. The most immediate

benefit of all this building is that it creates jobs for people.

All these changes give me hope that a new, constructive, forward looking attitude is taking over both the people and their leaders. The old way amounted to everyone – politicians and ordinary people - being out for themselves and consuming whatever they had, heedless of other people or their own future. The new way looks to conserving what they have and building for the future.

One big obstacle to development is the lack of practical know-how needed to set up and run small businesses producing goods and services locally. Congo has become too reliant on imported goods, which were easy to obtain in the short term but which have promoted attitudes of “I can’t”, dependency and economic weakness. This can only be changed by retraining so that locally produced goods replace imports.

It is to this end that Able and Willing and Myrt School are devoting our energies. Our mission, in addition to our long term job of providing basic education, must include teaching of vocational skills as well as organizational and leadership skills. The idea that progress here could be accomplished with honest help from government officials is what convinced me to accept their help, for the first time ever.

I hope that you too will continue to help, for it takes a whole world to raise a nation. Again thank you so much for your help.

*Wa Mbuyu (Puma)*

## Achievements Since July, 2010

### Recap of December Newsletter

Progress before December was reported in our last Newsletter. Here is a brief summary.

1. **Electrification Project:** The substation was completed on November 8. Although the final cost far exceeded the original estimate due to unforeseen circumstances, the extra cost was met by raising money within DRC.
2. **Shop Production:** Students produced goods for local markets. Proceeds were used to help finance the electrification project.
3. **Teacher Training:** Waza Alliance provided training seminars for 250 area teachers.
4. **Student Aid:** with the help of funds raised by Myrt School, 51 students received tuition through our three financial aid programs.

**5. School Supplies:** books, microscopes, DVD based learning materials, and sports equipment were shipped. Total value was \$6,600

- Puma went to Kinshasa, the nation's capital, to process government papers so that the school could qualify to be exempted from paying monthly electricity consumption fees. Puma's long time friends, Alan and Trecia Kitombolwe, provided critical help in the form of lodging, and logistic support.
- Construction of a building to house a local office for the power company was halfway completed. (See picture below)
- Regional contests for 160 Boy and Girl Scouts from 17 troops were hosted by Myrt School.
- Women and children from 5 villages were inoculated against rubeola (see picture p. 6).

**Most Recent Progress**

With the substation completed and power to the hydroelectric grid connected on November 8, Puma continued to lead work projects until he left at the end of February. Here is a summary of the accomplishments.

- Seven classrooms, three workshops and the computer lab on Myrt 1 campus were rewired for the new power source.
- Shop production continued to earn income for Myrt Schools. Students helped produce a large Bar-B-Q grill and window frames.



An office building (left) is being built next to the substation (right) on Myrt 1 campus. The office will be the regional headquarters for the power company and will insure that new hookup charges will be properly accredited to investors in the electrification project.



In addition to competing against 16 other troops in the contests hosted at Myrt School Campuses, the Myrt Troop works on merit badges. Here they are moving bricks for a construction project and planting trees.



# Puma's Kitchen

Dinner to Benefit Education in Africa

Sunday, May 22, 2011

4 pm - 7 pm

Way Station, Inc., .230 W. Patrick St., Frederick, MD 21701

*Serving:  
Muhongo (Cassava), Epinards (Spinach), Pepe Soup (Beef Stew),  
Pilipili (Hot Sauce), and other delectibles.*

Suggested donation is \$35.

## 2011 Project Plans

Now that the electrification project is finished, work can continue on the rest of the projects that we had planned for last year. The December Newsletter described the projects and their cost. Here is a summary of the remaining work. Cost estimates have been adjusted due to inflation.

### 1. Shop Production

This project continues to be the key to making Myrt Schools self-sufficient and teaching job skills to students. Puma has consistently demonstrated how to design and manufacture quality goods for the local markets and how to teach the students to develop their imagination and talents. **We need \$3,000** to buy material for starting production when Puma returns in May.

### 2. Preschool

The interior of the preschool built in 2009 in Tshamalale village needs to be finished and furniture made. We need \$3,700 to finish the preschool.

### 3. Medical Complex

In 2009, land was prepared, a well dug, foundation laid, and the first building of a medical complex in Poleni village built. The eventual cost of the medical complex that will include a nursing school and clinic, will be \$100,000. This year, **we need \$10,000** to continue construction of classrooms.

### 4. Classrooms in Poleni

Myrt School 2 in Poleni village needs classrooms for grades five and six. Without the classrooms, graduating 4th graders, must walk 6 km to the nearest school, which is our campus in Tshamalale. **We need \$20,000** to complete and furnish a building with two classrooms.

### 5. Teacher Training

We have been fortunate to be able to host training seminars for hundreds of area teachers for the last three years. The Seminars are taught by Waza Alliance, headquartered in Indianapolis. **We need \$1,600** to help defer their cost for food and lodging.

### 6. Student Aid

Our goal is to provide tuition for 50 students with one of our three student aid programs: Parent Work for Tuition Program Student Work Program; and Orphan Scholarship Program. **We need \$5,000** for these aid programs.

### 7. Scout Contests and HIV/AIDS Education

Every year we support contests for regional Boy and Girl Scout troops (see picture below) and special health education provided by AMO-Congo. **We need \$1,000** to continue these programs.

## U.S. Co-founder of Uganda Mission Visits Myrt Schools

Judy Willson is a woman with a big heart on a mission. Four years ago she co-founded a project with an Anglican priest in Uganda to improve the conditions in a small village. She has returned to the Uganda village five times to work on a water project, an animal husbandry project, educational programs, and plans for a medical clinic.

Last spring she met Puma and marveled at the Congo projects. During the farewell picnic for Puma last June, she determined that she must visit Myrt Schools to see for herself how the work is done there. In December, she kept her word and stayed into the new year before going to her Uganda projects. Her bags were bulging with printer parts and tools for Myrt Schools. "I praise Puma and members of Able and Willing and those there every day doing such wonderful work", she said.



**Judy Willson, from Middletown, Md, visited Myrt Schools before going to her projects in**



These high school students in Myrt School model the clothes they made in sewing class. View in color in the pdf version of this newsletter on our website.



Villagers receive shots, funded by World Bank, for rubeola (measles) on Myrt School Campus to combat recent outbreak. Fatality rates reach 28% in underdeveloped nations.

## *Please Help*

**Next year, with cheap, clean, 24 x 7 hydropowered electricity in place, we will resume our usual development activities.**

The parents in these villages are able and willing to work on building the schools. The students are able and eager to learn. The Myrt School staff is able and working hard. Puma is willing to commit more time to developing human resources in Congo.

**I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution of:**

- \$50.00** Pays for 2 bags of cement
- \$150.00** Pays for a 3'x3' classroom window
- \$1500.00** Buys desks for an entire classroom
- Other** \_\_\_\_\_

**Send to:** AWIEF  
P.O. Box 4303  
Frederick, MD 21705-4303

- Please send newsletters
- Please send year-end summary of my donations.

**My Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please use my email to save postage and printing: \_\_\_\_\_

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