



Celebrating 22 Years of Work in Africa !

1994 saw the start of construction on a two room school in Zaire (now, the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC) in a village with no electricity, wells, toilets or literacy. Myrt School now includes preschool through high school and is rated the best on all levels in the Katanga Province based on national exams. WaMbuyu Tech is rated tops by by the Belgian Technical Corporation. The newest project is a special needs school in Kenya. Read about the projects below and on our website, <http://AbleAndWilling.org>.

Able & Willing is searching for volunteers to teach at any level or train teachers at Myrt schools in Congo. Food and lodging is furnished. **Call Able & Willing 301-685-3282**

A Word From The Founder

Myrt School continues to make history for education in DRC. Besides our leading examples in curricula, community development, and new student aid programs reported in previous issues of this newsletter, we are the first school to introduce sports like tennis and basketball into the school en-

vironment. Last August I brought a supply of tennis balls and rackets and a net from the U.S. The tennis court was constructed at minimal cost using the high quality clay from the huge termite mounds mixed with powder from ground burnt clay bricks.

Tennis in Congo from colonial time to today was only played by the elite people with money, not by ordinary people. Many people have never even seen a tennis ball or racquet and have never known of such a game. The Minister of Education in Katanga praised Myrt School for introducing tennis in a school environment. At this time, only two schools in all of DRC have tennis programs: Myrt School and George Malaika School sponsored by Noella Coursaris Musunka, the New York fashion model born in Zaire. The minister now wants to create a league of tennis and encourage more schools to support all sports, not just soccer.

Previously, the minister has complimented the way Myrt Schools are evolving compared to other schools, like



Myrt students get lessons on new tennis court

creating a good environment with workshops and spacious grounds with trees. Other schools are built like houses with small yards and are overcrowded. They don't look like what a school should look like. We continue to improve by building new and larger classrooms that are furnished with nice desks.

All schools are experiencing hard times in a continuing downturn in the economy. Children are deprived of education because parents can't pay. 50% drop out. Mining companies are laying off workers. Market prices are rising. Food is scarce.

Thanks for all of your help and helping us continue

the struggle to provide good examples of quality education in Congo. Education is the key to freedom. You are key to our success.

(For more about Myrt School and the economy, see *Myrt School Update* article in this issue.)

*Mbuyu
Wambuyu*

(Puma)



Karen Anderson's Library Project

Have you heard of the imminent extinction of the Pacific Northwest tree octopus? What about the tale of the thrilling capture of the Africa Amazon Anaconda, which was responsible for the deaths of 257 people? These stories have captured the interest of many Internet users over the years. Just last month, one of my Facebook friends posted the anaconda story on her timeline. I sent her a personal message with a link to the www.snopes.com page debunking the story, so she could realize her gaffe in private and quietly remove the post. This sort of education is one of the jobs of librarians around the world. We live in an age of people needing digital and information literacy as well as literacy.

While I was in Congo (DRC), where the overall adult literacy rate according to UNICEF is 61.2%, I frequently saw people walking around with more than one cell phone in their hand. Cell phones are ubiquitous here, and people are accessing the Internet daily. Therefore, digital literacy is already needed in this part of the world, where electricity and indoor plumbing are still scarce. While the Internet can be an amazing tool for improving literacy and general knowledge, it can also be used for more nefarious purposes.

Organizations like Boka Haram use the Internet to recruit young people to their cause. Just like discerning the validity of tree octopi and giant anacondas, all of us need to be able to sort fact from fiction on the Internet. Librarians and other educators help us all learn how to do just that. And there is a serious lack of libraries and free schools in Congo.

In fact, there are no public libraries in this part of the DRC. Books are relatively scarce, just like electricity and indoor plumbing. And I think that books, physical books, are only a small part of a modern library system. My plan is to bring digital, mobile libraries manned with people trained in digital literacy and information literacy to Congo. Digital literacy involves using software and applications successfully. Information literacy means analyzing information to determine its validity and effectiveness.



Karen and new friends at Myrt School

If this sounds like a sales pitch, that's because it is. Many Americans feel that libraries are useless in today's global, Internet-rich society. And I think librarians and other digital educators are even more important for that very reason. We are surrounded by information 24/7. Some of that information is valid and useful and safe, but much of it is misleading or

even dangerous. Cell phones have been embraced by people of DRC. If terrorists and criminals use them for bad purposes, then good people need to learn how to use them for good. Fighting ignorance and fear with knowledge and confidence is the job of librarians.

Myrt School Update

Times are tough in the Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) which is highly dependent on the price of copper. World copper prices have been falling for the last five years, now less than half the price of the peak in 2011. According to a Reuters February 10, 2016 article, Congo's copper production fell for the first time in six years, and this is being keenly felt in the Lubumbashi area. Many people are losing their jobs. When money is tight, many parents feel that sending their children to school is a luxury that must be cut. So far, approximately 50 paying students at Myrt School have dropped out of school, because their families can no longer afford to pay the tuition. Current enrollment is 170 primary and 225 secondary students.

At the school, work is almost completed on the three classrooms that were needed to satisfy the require-

ments of the Congolese equivalent of the Department of Education. Furniture is being built, and Puma reports that everything will be ready in time for the inspection.

Work is also continuing on the security wall that will eventually surround the entire campus. 40,000 bricks are being laid by masons, but that may not be enough to finish the wall. So far, 285 meters of the 2.5 meter high wall has been built with 225 meters to go.

Myrt School at Poleni campus hosted the regional Scout Challenges and three leader training sessions. In addition to the usual camping and physical contests, Puma insists that academic games are included. The Scout District Chief of Katanga praised the environment at Poleni as an ideal site for hosting the Scout Challenges.



The final stage of construction is captured for the three large new classrooms. Puma (at right) is installing glass in the windows. The classrooms form part of the 500+ meter wall around the campus.

Maggie Lusweti's Project: Special Needs School in Kenya

Happy New Year! Thanks to all your generous contributions, we now have a piece of land (2 acres) in Kenya to build a school for kids with special needs.

I'm happy to let you know I made the trip to Kenya in December right before Christmas and came back before the end of the year during one of the best Winter seasons ever. My trip to Kenya went well, though it was quite brief.

Because I got to Bungoma right before Christmas, all schools had closed for the Christmas holiday. I had scheduled the trip with the intention of visiting the schools before the holidays and interacting with the teachers and parents at school, but that did not materialize as my timing was off due to problems in booking my flight.

With my eighty-four year old mother's assistance, I was able to get a couple of things accomplished. I got together with the leaders of the Quaker Church in Butunde and they organized a few get together meetings where I met a few parents and their special needs children. They were all very lovely children and special, each in their own unique ways, whether it was with their clear eyes, simple smile, running up and down, sign language or a whisper, a strong desire to whisper a word acknowledging a desire to go to school and be given an opportunity much like their neurotypical sibling or peer. They all reminded me of their hunger to have an educational opportunity in spite of the obstacles they face.

With my mother's assistance, I was able to get all the original documents pertaining to the purchase of the land. They include the major one which is the Title Deed, the transaction receipt, letter of consent, the land sale agreement, the costs of the transfer and the legal transaction breakdown.

As you can see from these pictures, it's a very beautiful green piece of land with access to the main road and electricity within reach. Tapped water is not yet accessible in this area.

My most recent trip to Kenya achieved one of the major goals which was to obtain the title deed and the rest of the documentation. Although the boundaries had been established by the Registrar of Lands and

Settlement, there was potential for people to trespass on the land and tamper with the established boundaries. I was able to purchase barbed wire and some nails which were used to firmly secure the land and



Our new site for a future special education elementary school, Butunde, Bungoma County in Western Kenya. This is a 2 acre piece of land that is accessible to the main road, electricity and water.

draw visual boundaries.

I also met with professionals in the construction business who were ready to get started if only we had the resources. A team of special education specialists were unavailable since all schools were on Christmas holiday. In my conversations with the teachers and retired teachers in the area, there is a strong possibility that there are very few special education teachers. No one that I spoke to had ever seen a speech therapist/pathologist, physical therapist or occupational therapist, including the parents of children with special needs. Our challenge is that we have little to no expertise to draw experience from. Our advantage is that we can chart our own course and be the pioneers of real special education.

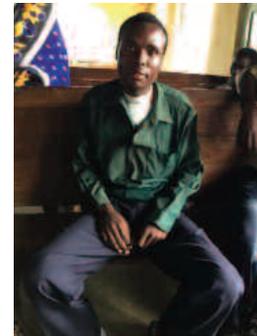
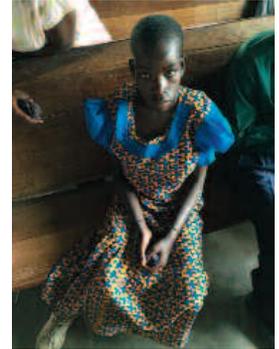
In discussing with neighbors, parents, teachers and community leaders of the importance of special educa-

tion to children with developmental needs, it was clear that in Kenya, the definition of special education remains ambiguous and continues to be more physical than developmental. Most people continue to overlook the need for offering opportunities to children with developmental disabilities because they have never really seen someone who is developmentally disabled holding a job or doing something that contributes to the development of their community. On the other hand, if a disability is not physical, it's difficult for people to visualize.

Often, people think the term disability only refers to people using a wheelchair or a walker or visually impaired people. Cognitive dysfunctions such as learning differences and mental health disorders as well as hearing impairments are not always obvious to the on-looker but they do limit an individual's daily activities, ranging from mild challenges to severe limitations and vary from individual to individual.

Our initial estimate of constructing two classrooms, two bathrooms and an administrative office was at sixty five thousand US dollars. Upon visiting the land and talking to most people involved in construction, this would cost eighty thousand if we include the permit to the Ministry of Lands and Public Works and another permit to the Ministry of Education and the

legal fees as well as logistics costs. We are confident that with your help, we will make this a reality. Thanks for your past help and we're looking forward to your future assistance.



These three young people were among those interviewed by Maggie. They are all hearing impaired.

Recycle Electronics & Shred Documents

Saturday, August 20, 2016 9 a.m. - Noon



Jefferson Ruritan Community Center
4603 B Lander Road, Jefferson, MD 21755

(Just off of U.S. 340 exit, next to Jefferson Volunteer Fire Company)



Cooperative fundraising event with Jefferson Ruritan Club

Voluntary tax deductible donations support your choice of

- Education Projects in Congo of Able & Willing
- Scholarship Fund of Jefferson Ruritan Club

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

A TASTE OF AFRICA*Buffet of favorite African dishes***Sunday, May 15 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.****Way Station
230 W. Patrick St., Frederick, MD 21701**

Suggested donation \$25 for dinner to support our projects

***Please Help***

The parents in these villages are able and willing to work on building the schools. The students are able and eager to learn.

Able & Willing is committed to helping the parents and students and their community improve their educational opportunities.

Please continue your partnership with Able & Willing and invest in a better future in Africa.

I would like to make a tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____

My Address:

Send to:

AWIEF

P.O. Box 4303

Frederick, MD 21705-4303

or donate securely online

Please use my email to
save postage and printing: _____

Able & Willing International Education Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-religious, all-volunteer run organization. All contributions are tax-deductible. For a copy of our current financial statement, please write, phone or email us.

AskUs@AbleAndWilling.org

301-685-3282

<http://AbleAndWilling.org>

2016-04