



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 photo gallery with recent photos, 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. A second campus, Myrt 2, was started in 2007 in Poleni village a few miles

further out.

Our goals are to make the existing schools self-supporting and self-governing, provide quality education, help disadvantaged students, build more elementary school classrooms, and finish construction on the clinic and nursing school.

An urgent goal is to replace the computers stolen in a recent theft. (See page 5.)



Above: Students in weekend exercise class.

A Word From The Founder

Friends,

Since I began my work in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) in 1995, I have believed that the best way for others to help a struggling nation is to share knowledge and tools and allow them to be adapted to local systems and cultures. Too often, foreigners bring their assumptions, their ways and goals, but their "experts" don't stay long, don't become part of the local economy, don't use local labor or sell to local markets, and when they leave, nothing has changed.

Sustainable development and self-sufficiency in Congo will only come when our culture is taken into account, and that is exactly what Able and Willing is all about. Because of you, change has

come to the lives of so many children, parents, and families. The now have clean drinking water, latrines and other sanitation, electricity, scouting, and schools. With love, patience, and understanding, we put our hands to work together and show the world that we can make it a better place for all.

Perhaps our most inspirational accomplishment is the Myrt School in Tshamalale village, with its excellent infrastructure and excellent staff. Thanks to your patience and support, Myrt School can at last stand on its own, generating enough income to pay personnel and all business expenses.

What the school still needs is outside support for programs that do not generate income, especially

for orphans and other students needing tuition and other assistance. The numbers of such students has grown as more people have moved in to the area, especially refugees from the more politically unstable parts of the DRC. I make a special plea for your help to support our three student aid programs. These programs pay the way for 36 children to attend school. For \$25 per month, each child can receive free tuition, uniforms, shoes, and school supplies. I want others

to have the same opportunity to learn to become good citizens as I have had. The future depends on it.

*Wa Mbuyu
(Puma)*



Maggie's Work in Kenya

Maggie Nato Lusweti, Able & Willing board member, traveled to Kenya, country of her birth, where she visited three schools that she and her parents have been helping. Parents Jeremiah and Rachel Lusweti both have long careers in education in Kenya. Maggie discussed needs and programs with the staff to help her develop future projects.

Maggie brought laptops, books and eye glasses for the schools. Maggie brought her two sons, Brent, age 7 and Gerald, 10, to see their grandparents and relatives. The kids were delighted to see them, especially their grandfather who is battling cancer. You can see photos with captions in the Photo Gallery on our website.

New Construction on Myrt 1 Campus

The interior of the preschool classroom, started last year, was finished and classes have started. Two additions were added: a science lab adjacent to the preschool classroom and a second story multipurpose room above them.

A small building at the entrance to main gate was made. A security guard is stationed there to check visitors during work hours. A second guard patrols the grounds at night.

The interior of two rooms in the office building

constructed last year was finished. One room contains the battery charging business and the other contains the take-out food restaurant.

See the Photo Gallery on our website for more pictures. <http://AbleAndWilling.org>



Above: The science lab has several rooms with sinks (shown), aquarium, sterilizing oven, dissecting table, microscopes and lots of technical posters on the walls.



Above: work on new building for preschool, science lab and multipurpose room (rear view). The preschool classroom is the one story structure on the right, the multipurpose room is in the second story with the science lab below. The arched structure at left is a recreation area with ping pong table.



Right: Puma in the kitchen of the take-out food restaurant.

Adventures In Business Training

Workshop Production

Puma and the new shop teacher, with the help of Myrt students, can make almost anything imaginable in the school workshops. Shortly after arriving in July, the school set up a road-side display of items made in the school workshops. Items on display included two-wheeled dollies, bar-b-q grills, gates and iron fencing, and frames for beds, doors, and windows made to order for local people. Displaying the items before delivery serves to advertise the quality of the products.

Raising Chickens

As a learning project with income potential, Myrt School bought 100 peeps and managed to raise



Above: project to raise chickens was profitable.

73 for sale. Chickens typically fetch \$12 – 18 each on the local market. After expenses, Myrt's profit was \$300, about \$4 each. With the experience gained, the staff expects to improve the profit margin and have ordered another 100 peeps, imported all the way from Zambia.

Contract With Swiss Clock Maker

Puma negotiated a special contract with a Swiss clock company that has an order from the government for dozens of **large clocks to be placed in town centers throughout DRC**. The contract includes instruction for students by a technician from the Swiss company and a monthly income for production. Work is delayed until after the the government and the economy

resume normal operation following the election conflicts.



Above: Myrt has subcontract to make public clocks measuring about 20 feet in diameter.

Take-out Food

With increasing development surrounding our first campus and more working parents, Myrt School is experimenting with a food take-out business. Main items include fried chicken and French fries. So far business is slow as the idea may take time to catch on. A friend of Puma's installed an ice cream maker and sales are picking up. Popcorn sales are booming.

Healthier food and snack choices are sold from an existing coop building. Able & Willing board members want to promote these healthier choices and urge MYRT to proactively educate about nutrition and become a model of healthful snacks and eating.

Battery Recharging Service

Last year's push to bring electricity to the village has not realized its full promise yet. Few houses surrounding our school have been hooked up to the electrical substation that Puma built last year because few can afford the hookup out of pocket, and funding promised by their senator, who was not re-elected, was not forthcoming.

In the meantime, village households operate their few electrical appliances with current from car batteries. The school now operates a service to recharge car and cell phone batteries, saving families a 5 kilometer round trip to the nearest recharging station while earning a tidy income for the school.

Push For Quality Education

Highlights

Puma has lead efforts with teachers and parents that are improving administration practices, teacher development and student learning. Highlights include:

- Contract with a specialist from Catholic University in Lubumbashi to advise school administrators and train teachers.
- Hired new elementary and high school directors with more experience.

- Implemented one-year teacher contracts that are more flexibility for both parties.
- Hands-on learning for students in science.
- Use of video media to encourage debate and questions.
- More homework for students.
- Better monitoring of student performance.
- Supplementing text books with printed material from the Internet.
- More involvement of parents.

Waza Teacher Training

Waza Alliance has completed its third year of teacher training seminars at Myrt School with 135 teachers receiving advanced training. This year Faustin N'Tala, president of Waza, was joined by Dr. Martin Hartog, professor of Mathematics at Southern Connecticut State University with 10 years of teaching in the Congo. They had help

from two local luminaries in education.

Waza raised the money to pay seminar expenses, which includes a living stipend for each teacher enrolled. The Waza team went on to train 75 teachers in Kolwezi, about 150 straight-line miles northwest of Myrt School. Waza is committed to improving the effectiveness of education in D.R. Congo through teacher training.

Governor Praises Myrt School

Mr. Katumbi Chapwe, the popular governor of the Katanga province, spoke at a ceremony to mark the completion of a project that extended a paved road and water system to within 2 kilometers of Myrt School 1.

Addressing a large crowd, the governor recalled that Puma was considered crazy to start a school in 1995 in such a small backward village. **“But now,” he said, “Myrt School and WaMbuyu Tech are models of community development.”**



Puma's Kitchen

Dinner to Benefit Education in Africa

Sunday, April 15, 2012

5:00 - 6:30 pm

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

Serving: Muhongo (Cassava), Epinards (Spinach), Pepe Soup (Beef Stew), and more.

Suggested donation is \$35.

Major Theft Presents Challenge...

Dear Friends,

Life has taught me that every stage of life, every trip I have made to Congo, has its own story and memories, some good, some bad, but all unique. I'm always ready for progress taking three steps forward, two steps back, knowing that those steps back are just bumps in the road forward.

The most recent setback was unique. Shortly after I arrived home from Congo, Myrt School was the victim of a terrible theft. By breaking one of the windows of the main building on the campus, thieves stole all of our laptop computers, 4 desk top computers, printers, 2 PA systems, and all spare electric tools for the shops. Not satisfied with that, they then went on to the cooperative store and stole all goods that were ready for sale.

My heart is breaking, remembering all the sacrifices made to achieve this – not just my own, but

those of everyone whose support makes this work possible. I despair that so much disappeared in an instant into bad hands. I have given my heart, soul, and more to this work but promise to rally my energy and to overcome despair. Now is not the time to give up. I promise to return to Congo as soon as possible to see what can be done to prevent this from happening again and to resume our progress. I have come a long way, and I am asking to all of you to keep me and the project in your prayers as I continue the hard work of making progress happen.

Once again and from my heart, thank you for all your help.

Sincerely yours,

Wa Mbuyu (Puma)

... How To Overcome The Challenge

Having worked for ten years on developing the Myrt School computer labs, the news last week of the theft was devastating to me.

The problem of restoring the computer capabilities at the school presents major logistic obstacles. No solution leaps immediately to mind. We ask you to think about this and share your ideas with us. Here's our thinking so far.

It seems infeasible to re-invent what we did the first time, which was to ship several large loads and hand carry many smaller loads of second-hand, refurbished American products. The combination of timing, expense, and luck the first time was special and probably not reproducible.

Alternatively, we could rebuild using exclusively locally available computer products. This good idea in theory bumps into reality of local market limitations and quality concerns.

Another good idea in theory is to ship parts from

the US and assemble them there in cases made in the school workshops. This idea has potential for training students, producing income for the school and helping other schools get quality computers at low cost. Transportation is a huge problem. Air vs. sea determines trade-offs in weight, size, cost, speed, and Customs issues.

Another idea is to appeal to other NGO's that provide IT services in developing countries. Able & Willing has helped provide hundreds of computers to schools and aid workers in Congo, Cameroon, Liberia, Nicaragua and Kenya.

If you have any insights into solving this challenge, please let Puma or Jim Carpenter know.

Jim Carpenter

Cell: 301-514-1356

Challenge@AbleAndWilling.org

Project Plans

1. Replace stolen items.

(see P.5, "How to Overcome the Challenge")

2. Student Aid

Our goal is to provide tuition, books, shoes and uniforms for 36 students costing \$25/month for 10 months. **We need \$9,000 for this program.**

The student aid programs include 16 orphans, 12 students in Parent Work For Education Program and 8 students in the Scouting for Education Program.

3. Classrooms on Myrt 2 Campus

Myrt School 2 in Poleni village needs classrooms for grades five and six. Students now must walk 6 km to the Myrt 1. **We need \$20,000 to complete and furnish a building with two classrooms.**

4. Medical Complex

In 2009, work was started on a medical complex in Poleni village. The medical complex will include a nursing school and clinic. **We need \$100,000 to complete construction.**



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. 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
- \$250.00** Pays for tuition, books, shoes and uniform for one student for a year.
- \$1500.00** Pays for material to make desks for an entire classroom
- Other** _____

Send to:

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P.O. Box 4303
Frederick, MD 21705-4303

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