



A Word from Puma

Life is a challenge and every day that I wake up, breathe fresh air, see the sun rise, I know that I will face many issues, both easy and hard. My hope is to live through the day, to be blessed with the wisdom to make good decisions, and to sleep well and peacefully that night with the hope of seeing another day.

Friends, lately I have been dealing with difficult times on several fronts – new forces and often disruptive forces at work in the Congo in general and at the Myrt schools in particular, as well as new challenges in my personal life, including job uncertainty and financial and other fallout from that. In many respects I cannot avoid these difficulties nor control their outcome, but I can and will commit to giving my best to finding the best solutions.

As to the situation in the Congo, the war in the northeast is still going on and the suffering of the people continues. More and more people are migrating from the areas of conflict to seek peace and work in other regions of the Congo. Lubumbashi in particular is flooded with refugees from war torn areas. I know many in the U.S. may be jaded by what they hear and see from an impersonal distance on radio or television. But for me, that is home and those are my people of my own blood. Sometimes it is difficult to sleep as I stay up thinking about what can be done to end the calamity, about what I can do to ease it just a little. While so many are migrating into my home region in the Congo, the jobs they are seeking are disappearing as the local mines close. The source of so much hope as a basis for development in southeastern Congo, these mines are closing due to the global economic crisis.

This crisis has hit home hard at the Myrt schools, creating some of the most difficult challenges we have ever faced. In a word, school revenues are way down because fewer and fewer parents can afford even Myrt's



**Mbuyu "Puma" Wa Mbuyu,
President & Co-founder**

Continued on next page...

....Continued from Page 1

small tuition fees. Enrollment is therefore also down. For the past three months, the schools have struggled to pay staff their full salaries. Some have taken advances against their future salaries as they struggle to keep the schools up and running.

But, as Baden Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts said in his book about the road to success, “les difficultes sont les selles de la vie” (loosely translated as, difficulties are the spice of life) and “together we can change our world.” In this vein, Able and Willing will implement a furniture building and leasing project this year through WaMbuyu Tech, which we hope will both educate students in practical skills, and also generate another source of income for the school, relieving it of its total dependency on income from the students’ monthly fee.

Again, let me thank you from my heart for your continuing support and generosity.

Wa Mbuyu (Puma)

Poleni Village School Expansion We Need \$70,000 for This 2 Year Project

In 2008 AWIEF funded and organized the construction of a building with two classrooms in the village of Poleni, about 6 kilometers from our original Myrt School campus. The building accommodates up to 60 students in the first and second grades. There are now 40 students enrolled from five neighboring villages that were previously without schools. The Poleni School is already self supporting.

By 2010 we plan to more than double the capacity to provide education through the sixth grade. The villagers will begin making the sun-baked adobe bricks in early June. They should be ready to start construction when Mbuyu arrives in July to oversee construction.

Boy Scouts & Girl Scouts Help and Learn

As usual, the Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops from Myrt School will be working in exchange for their tuition for the next school year along with the parents of other students in the Work For Tuition Program.



Laying bricks for school in Poleni village.

...Poleni Continued....

The Scouts will be camping on the Poleni School grounds in the tents that we shipped last year and cook their bukari over open campfires. These conditions are not all that different from the home life of most of the students. A typical family lives in a two room, grass thatched house, sleeps on bedding that is rolled up during the day-time and cooks outside over small charcoal fires.

In addition to helping to build the school, making door and window frames and school furniture, the Scouts will participate in extra curricular science and literary projects. Last year, they reconstructed and labeled the bones of a goat and a rooster, performed their own one act plays, practiced their English, and wrote articles for the school newsletter. By the time they graduate, these Scouts will have the knowledge, technical skills, civic values and personal integrity to effect positive changes in their communities.



Girl Scouts at Myrt School.

Nursing School and Clinic at Poleni

We Need \$40,000 for This 2 Year Project

Lack of even the most basic health facilities are a big problem in the DRC, particularly for the outlying villages around Lubumbashi. Last year there was an outbreak of cholera in Lubumbashi caused by contaminated drinking water. Malaria, HIV/AIDS and other diseases continue to be a problem. These diseases can easily be treated or even prevented with proper care.

Last year, Mbuyu began discussions with the medical department at the University of Lubumbashi to set up a nursing program at Myrt School. This year we are planning to set up some teaching and health care facilities on the Myrt Campus at Poleni village. The facilities would serve four neighboring villages that do not have health care facilities.



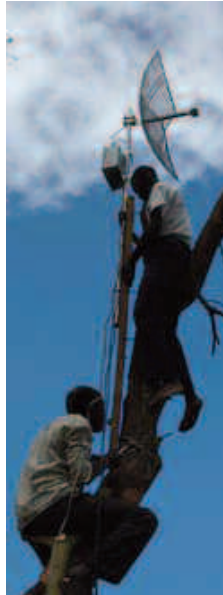
Mbuyu already has preliminary building plans for the clinic and classrooms and priced out all of the materials. We are fortunate to have Priya Rednam volunteer to review the plans the facilities and training program. She is a medical training officer at Fort Detrick with experience in setting up small community clinics in Iraq. The medical department at the University of Lubumbashi will provide the teaching staff and curriculum.

Communications Technology Infrastructure We Need \$2,000 for This Project

We are VERY proud of the computer lab at MYRT. It has grown, and with over 40 work stations it has become an integral part of the school education.

The Next Step.

In order to realize its full potential, the lab needs to be connected to the internet. This would allow access to all sorts of educational material, provide better communication with Able & Willing volunteers in the U.S., and could facilitate an exchange program between Myrt School and a sister school in the U.S. After school hours it could serve



as a cyber café for the growing community and earn extra income for the school. The demand around Lubumbashi for Internet access is huge. Cyber cafes are full all day long.

Decreasing Cost.

The technology to connect to the Internet has improved since the first laptops were installed in 2002 and the cost has dramatically decreased, from \$10,000 in 2005 to about \$1,000 today. Monthly fees would about equal what we now pay for telephone calls between the U.S. and DRC. The time is right to be connected.

Continuing Education for Katanga's Teachers We Need \$500 for This Project

In our last newsletter, we reported how our friend Faustin N'Tala launched his dream last year of improving teaching skills in the DRC. Alas, good teachers are hard to find in DRC. Faustin and Sylvia Hyde, a teacher from Indiana, conducted a training seminar for 70 teachers from Myrt and other schools in the region.

This year Faustin and Sylvia plan to return to evaluate their work and conduct a seminar for another 70 teachers. For each teacher that learns better teaching methods, 30 – 100 students benefit each year. The benefits are compounded every year. By providing this training, they have a huge impact on the quality of education in the Katanga region.

We are fortunate that Waza Alliance, an organization founded by Faustin, is funding most of the cost of this program. Able & Willing will provide \$500 to host the seminar at Myrt School.

TUSEME - Girls Empowerment Program

We Need \$13,000 for This Ongoing Program

In most of Africa, females are traditionally discouraged from speaking out about the conditions and pressures that affect their lives. For those girls fortunate enough to attend school, early pregnancy, dropping out, and sexual harassment or abuse are commonplace due in large measure to this age-old tradition of remaining silent.

“Let’s Speak Out”

TUSEME (pronounced too-sem-ee) is a Swahili expression whose English equivalent is “Let’s Speak Out”. It is also the name of a theater-based girl’s outreach and empowerment program developed at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1996. TUSEME was created to redress the poor academic performance of girls in secondary schools after research had



These girls at Myrt School would benefit from TUSEME training.

shown the link between low-achievement of girls and their inability to express themselves when faced with societal pressures, such as the pressure to engage in sexual activity at a young age or to drop out of school rather than graduate. The TUSEME project trains girls to express their views publicly in matters that affect their academic and social development, and to take an active role in finding solutions.

Training for empowerment

Our goal is to bring two TUSEME trainers with the Forum for African Women Educationalists from Tanzania to the Myrt School for a week-long training. They will not only train the girls enrolled at Myrt and their teachers to carry on the activities, but also girls in the wider community so that the language and habits of empowered expression can really catch on.

The cost of this program is inclusive of all fees, materials, transportation, and lodging. Able and Willing believes that adding this quality program for girls not only improves the chances for their achievement in school, but also improves the chances that the girls of future generations will finally be able to speak out - to have a say in the matter of their own lives.

School Supplies Enterprise Project

We Need \$10,000 More for This Ongoing Project

This year we plan to implement an enterprise run by Myrt School in Congo that will benefit other schools in the Lubumbashi area, generate income for WaMbuyu Tech, and teach skills to students. The idea is to have students produce student desks in the workshops at WaMbuyu Tech for use in other schools for a small monthly rental fee.

The Problem.

All schools in DRC, both private and public, are essentially small businesses whose revenue comes from student tuition. Like other businesses in developing countries, schools lack the capital to invest in their infrastructure, lack access to credit, a reliable bank, or other means to accumulate enough cash to purchase desks, or other basic school equipment. Worse yet, what is available on the market is expensive and does not last long. Discussions with directors of large schools in Lubumbashi, none of which have student desks, have confirmed the situation. Some directors indicated that they could absorb the costs of some school improvements if there were a way of spreading out the cost through a payment plan.

Our Solution.

Last year we collected, through purchases and donations, over \$22,000 worth of equipment for our school workshops. The equipment was shipped and installed in



our workshops. Our next phase puts that new equipment to use.

First, our technical students will acquire the necessary skills and build the desks in our school workshops. Second, our school will extend credit to other schools so they can rent or buy them on an affordable monthly payment and maintenance plan. We believe that our school can

Myrt students will soon be using power tools and machines shipped last year to make furniture for Congolese schools.

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make quality desks and other basic school equipment and offer them on affordable terms to many other schools in the region.

At the end of 3 years, initial funding plus profits from this project could buy material to make desks for over 3,000 students while investing an amount of equal value in other projects. This will maximize last year's investment in our workshop equipment.

Evaluation.

The evaluation will be done as part of the project management process, not as a formal academic exercise which would be less cost effective.

Our criteria:

- A reasonable rate of return on our investments.
- Our students will learn skills that help them get jobs or start businesses.
- The percent of students who get jobs or start their own business.
- Percentage of prompt payments vs. the percentage of defaulted contracts.
- Visible improvement in the classrooms of schools.



Desks made by Myrt students for the school in Poleni.

Special Thanks!

The cost of the new shop machinery and the shipping expenses was mostly funded by a generous grant from **the Five Together Foundation**. Many other people donated electrical and hand tools, tents, sewing machines, bicycles, computers and other equipment. **Mbuyu** donated a new 40KW diesel generator. A special thanks is due to **the Washington International School** for the donation of 60 Dell desktop computers.

Most of the funds to buy startup material for making desks came from **the St. Andrew's Benevolent Committee**, a program of a Lutheran congregation in Minnesota. They became aware of our work in Congo through a former Peace Corps volunteer in their congregation and invited us to apply for a grant.

Able and Willing Elects Vice President

Rebecca Rowles has been working in the field of international development since 1988, when she served as a volunteer for the Peace Corps in Mali, West Africa. Her passion for promoting education in the developing world came about while working for the U.S. Agency for International Development in Mali, where she first became aware of the high illiteracy rates of most African countries—with statistics soaring near 80% of the adult population.

Having worked at both international and national level agencies in her field, Rebecca finds great satisfaction in her volunteer work for Able and Willing. In her words, “my work with Able and Willing allows me to do exactly what I’ve been preparing for all these years: to work with the people I want to serve to find immediate and sustainable solutions for getting kids in school. International development that begins from the ground up.” Her goal is to continue to help develop Able and Willing’s capacity to grow into a dynamic and thriving organization and reach more kids.



Rebecca Rowles is now Vice President of AWIEF

Rebecca currently works in Washington, DC, for the Department of Labor in international trade and labor affairs. She holds a BA in English from Barnard College and an Ed.M. from Harvard. She resides with her husband and daughter in Takoma Park.

Volunteers for Able and Willing

Special Thanks

It would be difficult to thank everyone who makes our work possible but several people deserve special mention for their help this year.

Thanks to **Richard Griffin** (from Frederick, MD) for guiding our board through a planning and improvement process. Richard has plenty of experience as the Director of Economic Development for the City of Frederick.

Thanks to **Sam Cincotta** (from Brunswick, MD) for his lessons and help in media relations. Sam has years of experience in media relations at the Pentagon and is now starting his own consulting firm.

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“Why I choose Able & Willing . . .”

Sometimes life chooses extraordinary people to bear an extraordinary burden. And sometimes, out of that experience comes an understanding of the bigger picture that clarifies and quiets the noise of our daily shuffle. For one donor, the commitment to Able & Willing permits a connectedness to a world and web of relationships that transcend her own life.

Robie lives by a personal philosophy that we are not alone. We are all part of the web of life, weaving our own threads among the many, shaping this web, creating connections with others that may be life affirming or not, intentional or not, causing ripples that extend beyond awareness or even one's own mortality. And so, even when we feel weak and the work is hard and thankless, we must remember our obligation to ourselves and to posterity to act in the knowledge that we are part of an eternal whole.

Robie Sangster met Jim Carpenter and Puma while working at the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the 1990s. She has remained a faithful supporter ever since. As she faces the late stages of ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), Robie has found peace in the words she first crafted a decade ago. The lives that Robie has helped us to touch ensure that her own threads will remain among the living forever.



Robie Sangster

....Special Thanks Continued....

Thanks to **James England** (from Boonsboro, MD) for translating our Fall 2008 Newsletter into French. It is now on our new web site.

Erica Chapman (student at Hood College) and the Hood Gospel Choir for their performance at our fall benefit dinner.

Volunteers Needed

Several talented people have recently volunteered for a variety of tasks, ranging from web site design to designing small clinics. Our critical need is for legal advice and accounting. Please visit our redesigned web site for more information on how you can help: <http://AbleAndWilling.org>

Puma's Kitchen



Dinner to Benefit Education in Africa

We Are Proudly Serving:

Pepe Soup (Beef Stew), Pilipili (Hot Sauce) Muhongo (Cassava), Epinards (Spinach), other African meat, seafood & veggie dishes.

Featuring

- **Mbuyu "Puma" Wa Mbuyu, Founder, AWIEF**
- **PowerPoint Presentation of AWIEF Projects**

Sunday, May 17, 2009

4 pm - 7 pm

@

Way Station, Inc.

230 W. Patrick St.

Frederick, MD 21701

Saturday, May 23, 2009

Event starts at 4pm

Fellowship Hall

Hope Presbyterian Church

617 Hope Chapel Road

Lakewood, N.J. 08701

We would love to meet you and share ideas.

If you can't attend, please send donations to

AWIEF, PO Box 4303, Frederick, MD 21705-4303

Phone: 301-685-3282

<http://www.AbleAndWilling.org>

Please Help!

We need to keep construction going on new schools.

The parents in these villages are able and willing to work on building the schools. Won't you help by investing in some of the the start up costs?

With your help, our long standing aim - to build self-supporting, quality schools that can produce human and financial resources to build more schools – is coming to fruition, despite these hard times. This is the way to break the demoralizing and self perpetuating chain of dependency on foreign aid.

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

- \$50.00** Buys 2 bags of cement
- \$150.00** Pays for a 3'x3' classroom window
- \$500.00** Pays for a double classroom door
- \$1500.00** Buys desks for an entire classroom
- Other** _____

My
Address: _____

- Please use my email to save postage and printing: _____

Send to: AWIEF
P.O. B0x 4303
Frederick, MD 21705-4303

Phone: 301-685-3282

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

AskUs@AbleAndWilling.org

<http://AbleAndWilling.org>



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A new school...

... for an old village

2009-10 Projects

- Poleni School Expansion
- Nursing School and Clinic
- Internet for MYRT School
- Continuing Teacher Education
- TUSEME-Girl's Empowerment
- School Supplies Enterprise

Highlights

