

THE RWANDA SCHOOL PROJECT

Learn. Empower. Lead.

The Rwamagana Lutheran

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Learn. Empower. Lead.

Empower

Synonyms: *Authorize, inspire or give power to*

Dictionary: *to give authority to someone; to make more confident or assertive*

Since its inception, the mission of the Rwanda School Project and the Rwamagana Lutheran School has been “Learn. Empower. Lead.” These 3 simple words speak volumes about what our organization and its staff is all about. They provide direction to the work that is done daily, and they communicate our hopes and dreams for the youth of Rwanda.

This work is challenging, yet rewarding. The results are priceless, yet they come with a price. That price is \$1,440.00 per student per year, which, when we think of the costs associated with education in our country, is truly remarkable. The quality of education our students are receiving exceeds the norm. Our students scored above the Rwandan national average on their national exams last year.

It is vital that we are able to continue this work. To do so we must address

both our environmental and financial sustainability for the long-term future. As we continue to find ways to expand the amount of solar energy we can generate on campus, we are also working to increase the number of donors who are able and willing to sponsor the cost of a student’s annual tuition. \$1,440 per year for a full year of tuition, \$360.00 per quarter or \$120.00 per month is all it takes. Half scholarships are also possible.

To sponsor a student who has the skills to pass our school’s entrance exam but does not have the financial resources to pay for their tuition is a powerful act of empowerment. Your contribution will engage them in a learning process that will develop their ability to think critically, solve complicated problems, and to read, write and communicate effectively in English. They will be introduced to opportunities for higher education that would otherwise be unattainable. Muhire Patrick and Mucyo Pacificque, two students from our school, are examples of just that. These two bright young men were selected from 900 applicants to be among the 100 participants

in this year’s Yale Young African Scholars program. 36 students from Rwanda joined students from 16 African countries. This opportunity is an amazing testament to the education our students receive. It was a life-changing opportunity for these two young men.

You can be a part of this process by sharing a part of God’s abundant blessings via a sponsorship for a student in Rwanda. Costs are rising, but you can sponsor a student now for only \$1,440 per year, which covers a full year of tuition. \$360.00 per quarter or \$120.00 per month is all it takes.

Getting started is easy. Visit the Rwanda School Project website at rwandaschoolproject.org and click the red ‘donate’ button in the upper right hand corner. It will take you to a page at which you can set up your donation on-line. If contributing on-line is not your thing, you can also indicate your interest to support a student by contacting Debbi Holmerud at djholmerud@gmail.com. Debbi will send you a Sponsorship Request form that you can send by mail.

The possibilities are inspiring. We hope you will prayerfully consider this opportunity to do God’s work through the youth of Rwanda and the Rwamagana Lutheran School.

RSP 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

FROM ROBIN:

- Two of our students participated in the Yale Africa Scholars program.
- We rolled out a new Crew Curriculum.
- Girls participated in the International Day of the Girl Child by making posters.
- Our S5 students produced a drama for the school to commemorate Rwanda's national day of peace and reconciliation.
- Senior 6 students did field work in their Geography class with 20 local families to discover their water use habits and water access and they shared the information with the District of Rwamagana.

FROM KARL:

- We celebrated our 10th anniversary.
- We completed the boys' dorm.
- We obtained the funds to build a basketball court.
- We celebrated our first homecoming.
- 100% of our students passed the national examinations.
- Rwamagana girls won their debate in Gisozi, Rwanda.
- Our girls were featured in an article in *The New Times*, Rwanda's leading newspaper.
- In November, we graduated our second class.

▼ ROBIN'S LETTER

Graduation! We're coming up on our second graduating class, and though it is far from routine, it means that we will have about twice as many graduates "out in the world" as we have had before.

So what is our vision of a graduate? And where are we succeeding, and what do we need to do better?

In my mind, our graduates should have strong skills in English and math and a very good grasp of the three subjects in their "combination" (for example, History, Economics and Geography). As required by the Rwandan curriculum, they should also understand the fundamentals of entrepreneurship. In our school, every

student has had multiple opportunities to make presentations in English in front of several audiences, and every student has been exposed to some basics of environmental conservation and systems of sustainability. Many students have become avid readers and others are growing in their ability to reason and think scientifically. All have been part of a Crew, in which we have emphasized their relationship to each other and to the wider community, and our strong message that the development of their character is at least as important as the development of their academic skills. In these areas, I think we have been largely successful.

So what do we need to improve? It's our plan that as we go forward, we can strengthen cross-curricular study and deeper learning and analysis by doing more case studies. Our Entrepreneurship program, while strong in fundamentals, should involve actually running a small business so that students can learn from both success and failure. And to build on students' research skills, we need to strengthen our Senior Project, a year-long research project that helps students to understand how they can be agents of their own learning in the future. Meanwhile, we hope next year to start "Campus Sustainability 101", a mini-



Teachers' Profiles

Teacher Celine

Celine's bright smile and enthusiasm for teaching brings the science lab to life on a daily basis at Rwamagana Lutheran School. She graduated from the Kigali Institute of Science and Technology in 2014 with a BS in Applied Chemistry and then joined the RLS faculty in January 2015. Since then she has been teaching biology and chemistry to O-level classes. Celine loves teaching the students new experiments that are practical and applicable to their studies of both chemistry and biology. She claims, "One of my fun teaching moments was when I demonstrated an experiment on the reaction between sugar and sulfuric acid. I was excited to see a black, voluminous and spongy snakelike substance which comes out of the beaker!" While having fun in the lab, Celine also makes it her goal to teach students important life skills, such as working hard, being open-minded, cooperation, analysis, and honesty. In fact, when reflecting on her past two years as a teacher at RLS, Celine says she has learned that she is able, never gives up, and keeps on trying. Her positive attitude and determination are evident in the classroom as she empowers students to be the best students and citizens they can be.

ROBIN'S LETTER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

course for all students to understand the environmental systems we have --- biogas digester, solar power, water catchment, compost toilets, earthen floors, campus gardens and garbage sorting --- and how they can be important in Rwanda's development. In our science program, we need to build in students better "habits of scientists" so that they are good at making hypotheses, deepening their skills of observation and keeping accurate records of what they learn. Finally, due to circumstance, our students have been weak in computer skills such as basic keyboarding, using Excel, researching online and trying basic coding (some

British schools are now incorporating coding in the Primary 3 curriculum!). Having more electricity will enable us to offer more practice in those skills so that we can close the "technology gap" for not only our students but also our teachers.

To those of you who have cheered us from the beginning, it is quite astonishing to see the changes that have happened. When I first came to Rwanda, there were no ambulances, no street lights, no traffic lights and only 6% of the population had access to electricity. Now there are cranes in Kigali's skyline, the power lines reach down many dirt roads in rural areas and Rwanda has just opened treatment for

kidney dialysis. Our students are graduating into a country their parents never imagined and they must learn in an environment where change is a constant. Rwanda is a reminder to all of us as we look at economic and social threats to global stability and climate change that positive change is achievable and terribly urgent in the world we inhabit. In the story of the five loaves and two fishes, we are reminded that God is able to make much out of little.

Thank you to all of you who have been a part of this unfolding story. When I see how much difference this school has made for so many students, I can really celebrate graduation day!



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HELP US GO GREEN!

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