

# THE RWANDA SCHOOL PROJECT

... WHERE EDUCATION IS FOR LIFE

Volume I, No. 1

The Rwamagana Lutheran School Newsletter

June 2011

## EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the new format for our newsletter. We have been adding generous donors to our mailing list, thanks to our supporters.

The time has come for us to update the information about our school on a regular basis, so we will be sending you a copy of this newsletter four times a year: March, June, September, and December.

I have just returned from a visit to our school for our grand opening.



Over 200 guests celebrated with us for the gala, ribbon-cutting event.



All the students gave their presentations in English. English is necessary for higher education in Rwanda.

The two tents were filled with parents and folks from the Rwamagana community who came to see the students, teachers, classrooms, groomed grounds and to be inspired by the energy of our remarkable students.



Our students provided hilarious entertainment as they presented their skits and a group of dancers stirred our hearts with their rhythmic dance.

The day's festivities ended with the sign of God's promise—a rainbow!



*Environmental sustainability is part of being socially responsible.*



## *What is The Rwanda School Project?*

In 1994, Rwanda was engulfed in a genocide in which 1,000,000 people were killed in 90 days under a Nazi-like regime. The world stood by.

Today, Rwanda's government has expressed a need for secondary education, citing it as one of the top five priorities in the next ten years, but lacking the needed funds. There is a call for leadership by young people with strong critical thinking skills, sound academic and moral training, good science and math ability and a good understanding of teamwork and self-discipline.

The Lutheran Church of Rwanda is working with local congregations to rebuild communities. We are establishing a Junior-Senior High School, which is now open in Rwamagana (eastern Rwanda), for girls and boys, with classes in English.

The school will strive to maintain a diverse population of students and teachers. They will represent Rwanda's population and the international community while accommodating low and high incomes. Some students may continue to a university but those who wish to finish their education with a high school diploma or trade school will also be encouraged to attend.

**DECADES AGO IT WAS DANGEROUS JUST TO EXIST.  
NOW THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE.**

Rwanda School Project \* Tax Id #: 20-3455455 \* 501(c)(3) a nonprofit corp

**FROM RWAMAGANA...**

The students' day begins with "circle," a time for announcements, sharing, playing, and growing together.



Classes in English, math, and music are some of the students' favorites.



Lunch is served daily:



**WATCH OUR VIDEO ONLINE**



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbjgohP-v-4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbjgohP-v-4)



*Sustainability*

Because southeastern Rwanda is not served with water or electricity infrastructure and because erosion and careful water use are significant concerns, it behooves us to develop independent and self-sustaining systems. Our building design includes water catchment systems, solar power, passive lighting, and permaculture gardens, which will serve both as food supplement and agricultural "lab". This leads to our curriculum, which will focus heavily on concepts of sustainability and careers which relate to sustainable development. Graduates will be prepared to lead Rwandan communities in sustainable projects.



*Setting Priorities...*

Girls often miss more school than boys and have a harder time attending because of the duties required of them at home—helping with cooking, child care, fetching water, and cleaning. They are also more hesitant to speak in class. One of The Rwanda School Project's priorities is helping girls get to and remain in school.

**ROBIN'S SCHEDULE**

Robin Strickler, principal, will be visiting the United States. Perhaps she can schedule a visit with your group or congregation. Here are the cities of her itinerary:

- July 19, 2011: Washington, D.C.
- July 21, Chicago, IL
- July 30, All Saints Lutheran, Novato, CA
- July 31, Bethlehem Lutheran, Santa Rosa, CA
- July 31, U.S. Board dinner
- Aug. 3, Rotary in Santa Rosa
- Aug. 5, Party with a Purpose
- Aug. 6, Party with a Purpose
- Aug. 7 (morning), St. John's Lutheran, Sacramento, CA
- Aug. 7 (evening), Resurrection, Granite Bay, CA
- Aug. 11, Elim Lutheran, Petaluma, CA
- Aug. 12, Fabulous Women's Group, Petaluma, CA
- Aug. 14, Community Lutheran, VA
- Aug. 21, Muhlenberg Lutheran Church, Harrisonburg, VA
- Aug. 25, Rwanda

If you would like to schedule a visit, call Joy Petty, 707 544-5933 or Karl Smith, 707 829-0606.

Joy Petty and Karl Smith are also available to visit your group or church to give a presentation, or slide show about The Rwanda School Project.

We offer Full Circle French Roast coffee, from Rwanda. You can purchase this coffee at Holy Cow Coffee:

<http://holycowcoffeecompany.com>



RWANDAN-GROWN COFFEE

**GRANT NEWS**

This year we have received two major grants.



Award: \$24,224  
For latrines,  
and a water  
catchment system

We will give a full report in a future issue of this newsletter.



Award: \$40,000  
Biogas digester  
kitchen equip.  
livestock care

Presentation from Wheat Ridge:



In the June issue of the Wheat Ridge newsletter, we read in an article by Jennifer Halupnik: “Just as he took his first steps as a toddler, Jimmy walked into a world gone seemingly mad. At the age of two, both of Jimmy’s parents were killed in the widespread political genocide that swept across his country of Rwanda in Central Africa, killing more than one million people in 1994. It was a difficult beginning to a difficult life.”

After completing the U.S. equivalent of fifth grade, Jimmy, like so many orphans, went to work hauling large stones used in the construction industry in order to eke out a living. “I had to carry bricks that weighed 50 kg. My life was very hard,” Jimmy remembers.

Now at age 19, life looks very different for Jimmy. He is

attending Rwamagana Lutheran School on scholarship where he is hailed as the local comedian and chicken expert.



He dreams of going to the university to become a computer engineer. He’s curious about life in other countries, asking questions and imagining possibilities. He hopes to write his biography someday to share his life story—a story that is in stark contrast to many less fortunate Rwandan youth.

“Now I can see my future,” he adds, “I’m preparing for my future. I’m hoping in the future I will have have a good job.”



The school plans to build a biogas digester through its partnership with Wheat Ridge. The biogas digester will collect and convert human and bovine sewage waste into energy that will power the school’s kitchen stove and chemistry lab. “We’re interested in trying to be a model for sustainability because world-

wide there is a concern for green technology, but Rwanda, in particular, has a real crisis of energy needs,” says Headmaster Robin Strickler.

Without the participation of Wheat Ridge and our supporters, the Rwamagana Lutheran School would look much different, proclaims Robin. “What we could have done on our own is become a school like every other school,” she explains. “As we aspire to some things that are not ordinary in schools, I hope that more places around us will also have that opportunity and that will become more and more the norm.”

Jimmy couldn't agree more. As he learns practical and leadership skills caring for the school chickens, he begins to envision himself contributing to Rwanda’s progress in the future.

**HELP NEEDED**

We have sought other grants (unsuccessfully) from the Bill Gates Foundation, Oprah Foundation, and Cisco Systems.

If your company has a matching grant program, or if you know of some sources for funding, please contact us so that we can follow up on your suggestion. We are especially looking for a grant for energy/solar power or other types of sustainable energy.

**THRIVENT CHOICE**

If you are a Thrivent member, you can direct your Thrivent Choice Dollars to The Rwanda School Project. The ID number is 515067584.

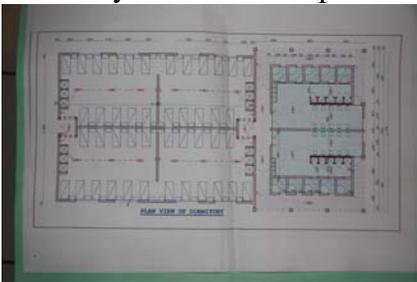
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**URGENT NEEDS**

As we look back over the past five years, we have made remarkable progress. We have formed an organization, received our 501(c)3 status, organized both U.S. and Rwanda school boards, purchased the land, and built a 10-classroom two-story building. We have assembled a team of dedicated teachers who are bringing Expeditionary Learning to Rwanda to transform the future!



Best of all, we are open for business and have 45 students eager to learn! In order to fill our classroom building, our next major need is to build a dormitory. We have the plans:



We are using one classroom to house five boys and remodeled a building to house six girls...



The facilities are not adequate:



Temporary latrines (above), and shower (below):



We have received cost estimates of \$24,000 to build a dorm room for six students and we need a total of 10 dorm rooms to house our students. We have only one solar panel and in order to provide adequate electric power for our building, the estimated cost for solar power is \$40,000. We hope that you will prayerfully consider donating to our school.

**Used Car Donation Tips**



We can accept gifts of cars, boats, or other vehicles. Call 866 244-8464. The name of the organization that will be picking up your car is Auction Donations. After you give them information about your donation, you will be asked about the charity to which you wish to donate. It is **THE RWANDA SCHOOL PROJECT.**

*Contributions*

The Rwanda School Project has 501(C)3 status so all contributions are tax deductible. Contributions can be made by sending a check to:  
The Rwanda School Project  
Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
1300 St. Francis Road  
Santa Rosa, CA 95409

Credit card contributions can be made online at

[www.rwandaschoolproject.org](http://www.rwandaschoolproject.org)

At the left, click on the "You Can Help" link and then go to the secure link

**PLEASE DONATE NOW**

**U. S. SCHOOL BOARD**

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Robin Strickler, Principal  
[robinrutsi@gmail.com](mailto:robinrutsi@gmail.com)  
PO Box 7264  
Kigali, Rwanda  
Tel: +250 0856-9212

Karl Smith, Editor, Treasurer  
[smithkjs@gmail.com](mailto:smithkjs@gmail.com)  
Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
1300 St. Francis Road  
Santa Rosa, CA 95409  
(707) 829-0606