

THE RWANDA SCHOOL PROJECT

Learn. Empower. Lead.

The Rwamagana Lutheran School Newsletter

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Homecoming Day

PHOTO BY BECCA MERRIFIELD

After sending off our first class of graduates from RLS last year, we were glad to reconnect with them during Homecoming Day in August. Nine of our sixteen graduates and several other alums (students who attended RLS but switched schools before graduating from S6) returned to RLS to reunite with one another on their old school campus. They participated in a morning workshop that guided them in how to write a CV/resume and cover

letters, and how to approach job interviews. Sam Ntaganira, a recent '15 graduate, said that he “liked the way homecoming was organized because [we] learned important things which will help us in the future.”

Later in the afternoon alums discussed how they might form an alumni association that would create a support system and professional network for alums in the future. Moreover, they enjoyed catching up with one another, which was evident

in the abundance of chatter, laughter, and hugs throughout the day!

This coming September RLS will host another university recruitment day with colleges from around Rwanda as a way to educate upcoming graduates about the various institutions they may attend. Last year, RLS hosted Akilah Institute, University of Rwanda, and Kepler, where some of our current alums are now studying.



RLS Brothers attend Yale Young African Scholars Program

Brothers Muhire Patrick and Mucyo Pacificiqe, sons of a Lutheran pastor in Rwanda, recently participated in the Yale Young African Scholars Program in Kigali. Although there were 900 applicants, Muhire and Mucyo were among the 100 students representing 16 countries who were finally selected for the weeklong program. The Yale Young African Scholars (YYAS) focuses on teaching African students how to prepare for university, particularly in the U.S., but also allows them to interact with professors and their diverse peers during discussions and activities. Mucyo commented that it was a “cool opportunity to learn from people from different parts of Africa,” and also to learn about “college life” in the U.S., which motivates them to work hard and study for the SAT test. When they returned to school they spoke with enthusiasm about the program and they are excited to share their experience with their peers at RLS: “We want to help others learn new vocabu-



PHOTO BY BECCA MERRIFIELD

laries and develop reading and writing skills so that they can also have a chance when applying to universities. Although we are learning a lot at RLS, we realized that there is more to do and many ways

to improve” said Muhire. We hope that this formative experience will continue to shape the minds and futures of these young men as they continue their studies at RLS and beyond!

▼ ROBIN'S LETTER

When Rwamagana Lutheran School opened seven years ago with 24 very vulnerable students, half of them were former street boys in their late teens. There were people who expected we would have trouble with them stealing or damaging property. On the contrary, they proved to be extremely trustworthy, aware of the opportunity afforded them.

In recent years, partially in a sign of Rwanda's progress and partly as a sign of our school's progress, we have a greater mix now of paying students from comfortable homes and many others from very needy backgrounds. I

hope that we can maintain that balance. Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound and a key inspiration for Expeditionary Learning schools, spoke of this mix of rich and poor in England, where schools rarely mix the two. Hahn wanted “**the poor to help the rich break their ‘ener-vating sense of privilege’ and the rich to help the poor to build a true ‘aristoc-racy of talent’.**” (*Roots: From Outward Bound to Expeditionary Learning*, ed. Emily Cousins, Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 2000)

My friend Peter was an acting CEO for a Rwandan company some years ago and he had a manager from Cote d'Ivo-

ire. Peter asked the manager to empty a bucket of water from a leaky cooler (which he had emptied several times himself) and the manager refused, saying that he had gone to university and no longer could do such work. Although the manager's response was particularly obstinate, it's a major issue in Rwanda (and indeed, globally!) where VIP status comes to those with money. We have some students now who are used to having someone pick up after them or who have never washed their own clothes or carried water. Although their poorer classmates can run circles around them in taking care of themselves, I also



A reflection on RSP school motto: Learn. Empower. Lead.

Learn:

Learning is a process at RLS. Students take a big role in their learning through experiments, fieldwork, observation, essay writing, and so on. In addition, they learn by doing several projects where they find some solution to community challenges.

Empower:

Students learn to take responsibility for themselves and take initiatives to work in the lab, the library, etc. Students are empowered to take part in some decision-making about their future choices, for university and career.

Lead:

Every RLS student is a future leader because they prepare themselves to be a leader in their crews, clubs, classes, and dorms. They make decisions on what should be done regarding students and advocate for the group.

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see some poor students who are cowed by richer classmates or who try to win friendship with them by running errands for them or doing them favors.

Classism is counter to Christian teaching and it's our job in school to help students really understand our six character traits: **respect, initiative, trustworthiness, perseverance, cooperation and responsibility**. Each student belongs to a Crew of 15 or fewer students and they stay with that Crew for three years. Recently, Senior 2 students were discussing how they would feel if someone borrowed a radio that they'd brought to school and then damaged it, and no one

had trouble agreeing that the lender would feel both angry and sad. However, when we turned the tables and asked them what they would do if they'd been the borrower who broke the radio, they had a harder time.

"I might sneak it back and leave it on the bed." "I'd ask him forgiveness." "He has to forgive me." "No, I have to confess to him and say sorry." One boy spoke up quietly, "I have to pay for it." I asked him if he would pay for it even if the lender was angry, and he nodded his head. It's my fervent hope that, as we engage students in these kinds of conversations -- and in sports, drama, conserva-

tion activities and community service with their Crews -- they will move into Rwandan society with an understanding of each person's value and the ethical strength to be good community members and leaders.

Traditional Rwandan proverbs refer to many such ethical norms and we will be most successful if we can produce students who are ethically grounded. If they are academically successful too, so much the better!

Boys Move Into Dormitory



PHOTO BY BECCA MERRIFIELD



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Thanks to all of you who helped us reach our goal to build a boys' dormitory.

The boys are loving their new digs!!! No longer do they need to walk several kilometers to school, they are on campus and the view

from the dorm is spectacular! They do have new responsibilities in keeping things clean, neat, and they must use a water pump to bring water up from the new underground storage tank.

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