

"Education is shaping the future of Rwanda in terms of helping the youth access global education. In this way, the youth of Rwanda has opportunities to reach beyond what Rwanda has already."

# THE RWANDA SCHOOL PROJECT

LEARN.EMPOWER.LEAD.



## Big Dreams, Getting Bigger!

Last December, I shared with you our BIG DREAM vision for the next 15 years:

- Goal #1:** Be the best! and
- Goal #2:** Double in size!

Now, a year later, we have developed and focused this plan.

Our plan is bold, big, and almost seems impossible. When I visited Rwanda in 2005, the thought of starting a school seemed, at the time, impossible to me. I met Robin Strickler, and the impossible became possible. I remember when we broke ground for our first building in 2009. I thought we had achieved our goal! However, I now understand that our goal is much larger

than I could ever have imagined when we began almost 20 years ago.

I'm inviting you to join us in a campus expansion adding a new girls' dorm, a new boys' dorm, a sports' complex, as well as six new classrooms. This will allow us to double in size to achieve our goal of serving the next generation of Rwandan students.

Our mission has not changed: *Educate students to be leaders in Rwandan society.* We have many graduate success stories which we've shared with you in past newsletters, and we'll continue in future issues. We are changing lives.

We are asking you to donate to our capital plan to get us started on this new campus expansion.

Please consider contributing to our vision. As John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, said, "You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay you."

I'm available to talk to you personally, at church, or in groups of any size. Please call or email me for more information. My phone number is (707) 829-0606 and my email address is [karl@rwandaschoolproject.org](mailto:karl@rwandaschoolproject.org). You can see a video about our BIG 15-year

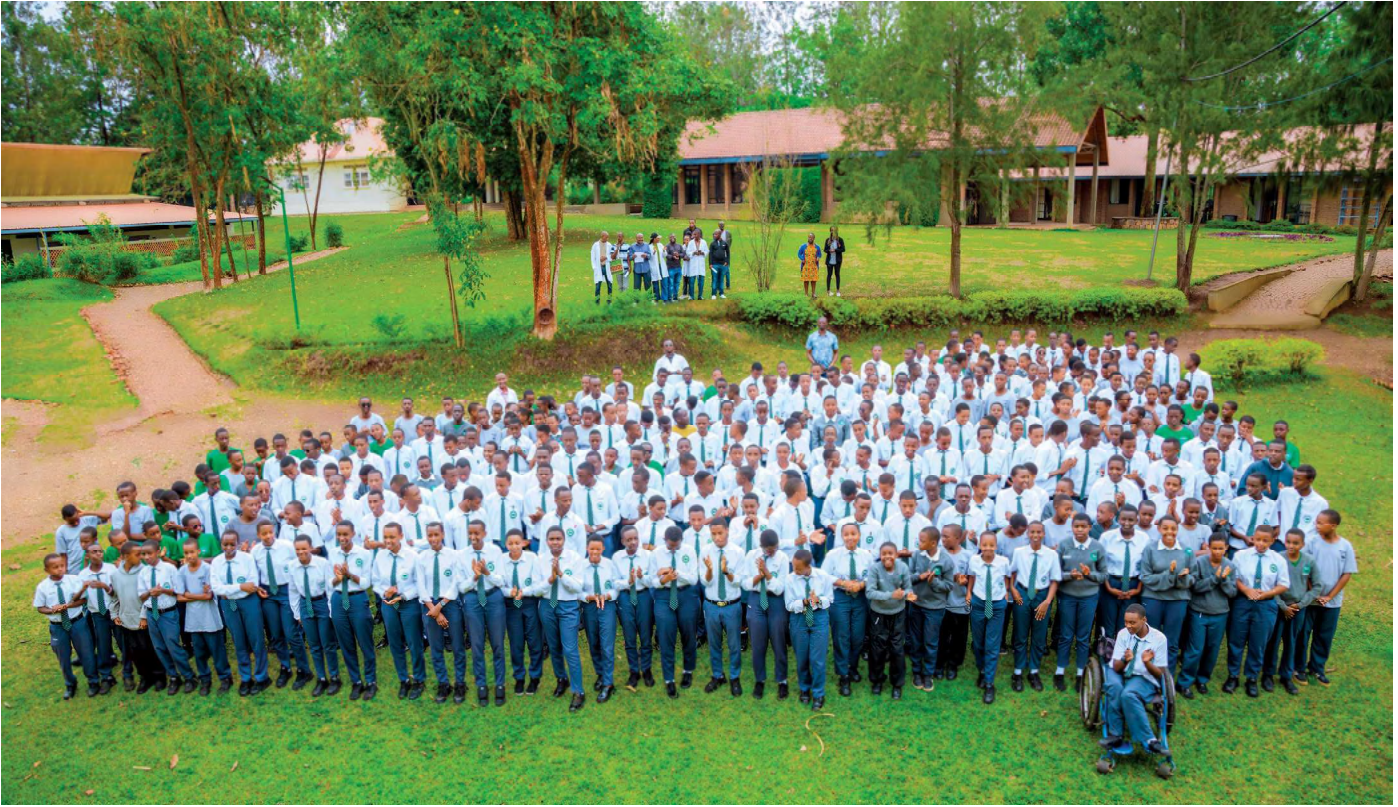


Karl Smith

PRESIDENT

vision for the future by visiting our website [www.rwandaschoolproject.org](http://www.rwandaschoolproject.org).





## Back to School!

On the 9th of September 2024, we joyfully welcomed our students back to campus for the 2024/2025 academic year at Rwamagana Leaders' School. For all Grade 7 students, this marked a thrilling leap into uncharted territories of adventure, hard work, independence, and campus routines, as it was their inaugural experience in a boarding school environment.

We also celebrated the return of many familiar faces among our returning students, contributing to a welcoming community. Our enrollment has expanded from 280 to an impressive



Moses  
Ssenyonjo

PROGRAM  
DIRECTOR

311 students this academic year. This remarkable growth underscores our commitment to fostering an enriching and dynamic educational experience for all of our students.

As an institution that sponsors students to attain quality secondary education, we still have current students in need of sponsorship. Join us in our mission to empower the next generation of Rwandan leaders through education by sponsoring a student. This can be done via <https://rwandaschoolproject.org>

## Tugende '24: Grateful For Your Support

**Our annual fundraiser**, Tugende 24, ended on a high note. Thanks to you, our supporters, we raised over \$11,000 to meet the nutritional needs of the students and staff at the Rwamagana Leaders' School.

Participants in Tugende 24 bought unique t-shirts to wear while moving for Rwanda—walking, running, skating, hiking—and engaging in conversations with people curious about their striking t-shirts and our school. We endeavored to raise friends as well as funds.

“Tugende” means “let’s go” in Kinyarwanda and “go” we did. We are grateful for each one of you who supported our students and staff through buying a t-shirt, making a donation, talking to friends and family about the school, and moving for Rwanda.

It is with deep gratitude that the Board says ‘Murakoze cyane’ to our supporters. Your belief in the Rwanda School Project and your generous support of the Rwamagana Leaders' School gives us the confidence to begin planning for Tugende 25!



## WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

This year, the Rwanda School Project welcomes new members of our two governing boards. Last newsletter, we introduced new RSP board member Annabelle Merkley.

This issue, we welcome RLS Alumnus Amani Alexis Simbayobewe, who joins the LEDO board in Rwanda. Long-time friends of RSP may recognize Amani from our 2015 and 2016 brochures. Amani was separated from his family during the 1994 genocide (2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the genocide) and lived as a street child for five years. At age 18, he started school at RLS. After graduating from RLS in 2015, he attended Kepler College in Kigali on full scholarship and graduated early in 2018. He received a scholarship to study at Southern New Hampshire University and graduated with a degree in business. In 2017, he started his own non-profit, *Sheer Love* Rwanda, to help street kids like himself. Amani is also a 2021 Watson Institute alumnus.

Amani took a moment to share his thoughts on the significance of RLS and education in general.

### What role do you see education playing in the future of Rwanda?

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### Share a moment that you are most proud of.

I am forever excited any time that I visit RLS. I go immediately to the library. It reminds me of the first time I read a book. I look for the same book. Sometimes, I find the book or I look into the beginners' section. It helps me to reflect back on my first days at RLS. I was 19 years old and that was the first time I read an English book.

### What is special about the education offered at RLS?

Rwamagana Leaders' School offers a unique education that gives the students a different perspective in terms of learning experience.



The students learn not only academics, but to improve their critical thinking. I realized that it helped me so much to learn when I was at university. I learned how to speak and alter my thoughts. The school prepares students to be successful even beyond high school life. It is a unique gift that the school offers to all the students.

### What do you see in the future for RLS and our students?

I see RLS continuing to impact young men and women by preparing them for higher education because high school education alone cannot place someone into a job. This will be done by continuing to involve students in extra curricula like crew time, environmental club, entrepreneurship club, debates, and other activities. These are the unique experiences that the students only get at RLS. You can simply spot the difference when you see our graduates and graduates from other schools.

## Announcing The Rwanda School Project Endowment: Your Living Legacy Of Hope

We are pleased to announce the establishment of the Rwanda School Project (RSP) Endowment Fund. The completion of this major step ensures the sustainability of the work we do to support the students and staff of Rwamagana Leaders' School (RLS).

Now, in addition to your regular annual giving, you may support the work of RLS well into the future by leaving a legacy that reflects your values and commitment to the mission of our school and our hope for its future.

There are several ways the RSP Endowment can become a part of your legacy:

- A contribution of outright gifts of cash, qualified charitable donations from your IRAs/401Ks, stocks, or real estate
- A contribution to through your will or as part of your estate planning
- Naming the RSP as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy

As you are planning for the holidays and making resolutions for the new year, please consider designating a gift to the bright future of Rwamagana Leaders' School through a gift to the RSP Endowment Fund.

Additional information on the endowment is forthcoming. Stay tuned to our website and newsletter in the coming year, or contact Josh Kerney at [josh.kerney@elca.org](mailto:josh.kerney@elca.org) for more information..





## MISSION STATEMENT

We provide high-quality secondary education in Rwanda by offering a secure and nurturing school environment that transforms vulnerable youth into future leaders and problem-solvers who champion environmental sustainability and social change.

## VISION STATEMENT

We envision quality secondary education that is universally accessible and equitable, with the aim to equip Rwanda's youth with the necessary skills and tools to develop into the next generation of skilled and compassionate leaders.

## VALUES STATEMENT

We set standards for responsibility and high achievement, and develop an inclusive, supportive, and trusting student body that is able to leverage critical thinking and make a meaningful impact in their communities and beyond. Founded upon the principles of Christianity, we recognize and acknowledge students from all religious backgrounds and beliefs by promoting a school culture of respect, awareness, and tolerance. Core to our philosophy is experiential learning, a pedagogy that empowers students through cross-disciplinary instruction, project-based learning, global awareness and character-building.

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