

MWENDO Congo

Working together for health,
education and peace in the DRC

Newsletter – May 2016

Message from the Chair, Peder Garnaas Halvorson

Mwendo Congo had its 1st birthday on March 31st and so much has happened in this first year! We have completed two projects: buying land for a future hospital and buying sewing machines to support education. Today we are over halfway on the much more ambitious projects of constructing Safe Housing for Education and buying a boat to increase access to health care.

These accomplishments are due to the generous support of the Mwendo Congo community! In the last year we received contributions ranging from \$10 to \$5,000 from a total of 103 donors. Your average donation has been \$273! Through the work of our Congo partners, these generous dollars are making an impact for health, education, and peace in the DRC!



Conflict Minerals Bill Passes in Minnesota House!

Conflict over vast mineral resources in the eastern Congo is at the heart of so much of the violence tearing apart lives and communities there. A bill has been introduced this session that requires the state to purchase supplies and services from companies compliant with federal reporting laws on conflict minerals. The bill passed unanimously out of Senate and House committees. It has now also passed in the House as an amendment to an appropriations bill! We await a Senate floor vote before the end of session.

Dr. Edwige Mubonzi provided riveting testimony in both committees. "Rape is being used as a weapon of war in Congo... and it is destroying my community.... With humility and hope, I now urge this committee to support this legislation to help transform blood minerals into minerals for development and peace." Thank you to everyone who contacted legislators!

See mwendocongo.org/advocacy to learn more about conflict minerals, read the bill, and see Dr. Mubonzi's complete testimony.

Access to Health Care through Transportation

In consultation with our partner in DRC, Idjwi Initiative, the next top priority is to purchase a speedboat to facilitate access to healthcare. A large speedboat will provide transportation from the island to the nearest hospitals for urgent medical care and to deliver babies in a safe environment. It will also allow for health education in island communities by medical professionals and transportation of female community members to training as midwives and community health workers. Maternal and child health will see immediate improvements, and lives will be saved!

To fund the project we are applying for a Rotary Global Grant. We will raise \$24,000 of funds, and with an amazing \$4.50 to \$1.00 Rotary match will meet the total project budget of \$132,000! We have already raised \$16,100 (67%). Thank you to the over 50 individuals and 7 Rotary clubs that have contributed to this important project. For more information or to contribute, go to mwendocongo.org/health – left column. Also see the story of Dr. Polepole Tshomba, Bukavu Mwangaza Rotary Club President, who says, "No more words. Let's get started!" To learn more about Rotary, see www.rotary.org.

News and Notes

- ❖ Luke Jerviss has joined the board of directors.
- ❖ Haruka Yuminaga, Macalester College student, is our summer Communications Intern.
- ❖ Dr. Denis Mukwege of Panzi Hospital, DRC, was named one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People (time.com/4298232/denis-mukwege-2016-time-100)

USA-DRC Student-to-Student Connections

One of Mwendo Congo's goals is to organize exchanges between the USA and the DRC to raise awareness and build solidarity. This winter, students from the Industrial Technology class of Dave Chatelaine at Owatonna Junior High School exchanged letters and photos with current students at Let Africa Live (LAV) who are engaging in similar studies. Thirty students participated in this first exchange. What a wonderful opportunity for these young people to connect!



Shukuru Buhendwa, LAV student

Contact Amy Chatelaine if you know of a class who would also be interested in participating in a letter exchange with LAV training students (amy.chatelaine@gmail.com).

Ways to get involved – we need you!

- Attend open board meetings – first Sunday of the month, 1pm, Grace Univ. Lutheran Church.
- Host a fundraising house party.
- Share your talents at the fall concert (see item at right) – or attend and invite others.
- Invite Mwendo Congo speakers to give a presentation at your club, church, etc.
- Let us know how YOU want to connect.

Contact us today!

Safe Housing for Education – Progress!

We have raised over \$30,000 towards our goal of \$52,000 for *Project SHE (Safe Housing for Education)* benefiting female students at Let Africa Live (LAV). We are deeply grateful for the generosity shown by so many! Dormitory construction will begin sometime this spring and will take three to four months to complete.

LAV founder Kubisa Muzenende says, “For young women and children who are survivors of the conflict, the new dormitory will provide peace and security during their training at Let Africa Live.”

OPPORTUNITY: Host a house party to raise awareness and funds! We will do the publicity and help with food and logistics. Contact Mark Halvorson at mshalvorson@comcast.net if you are interested.

SAVE THE DATE! – September 23 Mwendo Congo Benefit Concert

The Mwendo Congo community and new friends will gather for a celebration of solidarity. We will move through the night from themes of conflict and pain to pieces inspired by resilience and hope. We invite *you* to share music, poetry, dance or other artistic gifts through this event. Please contact Amy Chatelaine (amy.chatelaine@gmail.com) if you are interested in being part of the program.

Mwendo Congo

www.mwendocongo.org

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Newsletter editor: Elizabeth Andress

How to give – three options

Donors have asked how to maximize their giving. Choose the option best for you. All amounts welcome!

Donation Option	How to Give	Tax Exemption	Amount to Project
Mwendo Congo	Write check to Mwendo Congo	No	100%
Social Good	Write check to Social Good	Yes	93%*
Paypal	mwendocongo.org/donate	Yes	90%*

** Our fiscal sponsor for tax-deductibility charges a fee on each donation, and an additional fee for PayPal. (Mwendo Congo will apply for its own 501c3 status in 2016.)*

- **Designate** Health, Education or General on **all** donations. **THANK YOU!**
- **Mail all checks** to Mwendo Congo, c/o Liz Andress, 1620 Aquila Ave. N., Golden Valley, MN 55427.