

Hoover Happenings

May 2011

Dear covenant churches and other partners in prayer,

April slipped through our fingers without sending out a note by e-mail, but thanks to recovering after a computer crash, we may be better organized than before in terms of our list. Or we may have forgotten some... Nothing like a fresh start!

The academic years careen on toward their ends, respectively in June and July at UMK (Katanga Methodist University in Mulungwishi) and at TESOL and UNILU (University of Lubumbashi). That means more tests and senior papers to correct for the university students, and International Supper programs for Ellen and the TESOL staff for mid-June. We won't go into detail about such normal routines for this time of year.

The building project for The English-speaking School of Lubumbashi moves along steadily but more slowly than we would have hoped. Since last writing to you, we have "final" land documents for the sale (although there remains "final final" lease documents once we have actually developed the land by building on it; the government owns all land but gives you a long-term lease once you develop it). That has taken most of twelve months since TFM finally responded in May 2010 with a favorable attitude to selling us a portion of their Lubumbashi land, no longer being used for a staff housing development as intended when purchased three or four years ago. The school board is pretty much in agreement now on the site plan after studying submissions from two architects. We will soon be ready to sign the contract to do the detailed plans for the first phase of construction. That will also mean putting the local fund-raising drive into high gear, seeking help from companies that could envision not only a charitable contribution but also an investment in being able to attract staff from countries with English-medium educational systems or who would find English-medium schools more attractive than French- (or Greek-) medium schools existing elsewhere in the city. Jeff has been working on developing a brochure to hand out when visiting the *wakubwa* (big shots).

We thought you would be interested in some of the testimonials which have come back to TESOL this spring from some of our early students—i.e., all from the time when we didn't have a high school option of our own and who are now either out of university and working or certainly well along their way. Some are Congolese, some are from other African countries, Asia, or the West. It gives a flavor of what a difference better educational access can mean in a Third-World country like this. Here are the first selections. The first comes from a young man in Zambia who came from a rural area to live with the family of his uncle with the Zambian Consulate-General in Lubumbashi to profit from better schools. When he returned to Zambia, he was not able to afford to continue from high school directly to the University of Zambia (\$5,000 or so a year) but is gaining his diploma now while working and also serving a church in a poor area of Zambia's capital. The second is from the daughter of an Indian merchant in town, perhaps the first university graduate in her family and certainly the first woman to continue with her education. Next two are from an American and a New Zealander/Brit whose parents were here in Lubumbashi with Mission Aviation Fellowship and the Plymouth Brethren. Finally, a Congolese girl wanting to master English for her future and who moved to the U.S. after the death of her mother to live with an aunt and uncle.

I was exposed to an amazingly diverse world view that set me up with a great sense of perspective for life. I was advantaged in high school to have been engaged in smaller classes growing up and to have been encouraged to think for myself from a young age. As an army officer on operations overseas I was often struck by how much of an advantage I have been given in being able to understand cultural differences and to interact easily with people of different backgrounds. Most of all I am grateful for the Christian values I was taught growing up, which have given me a clear moral compass throughout my life and helped me build a faith that has stayed with me to this day.

TESOL has played a significant part in shaping who I am today. The diversity of cultures and languages offered at school helped prepare me for the diversity presented in the world as a whole. I went on to study in different countries after leaving TESOL—primarily Zambia, Egypt and England—and I can in all honesty say that having been a part of TESOL helped me adjust to life in new schools and new cities much more easily. My teachers at TESOL were from different countries and we received a unique experience from all of them - they brought their part of the world into our classrooms and gave us a glimpse of this dynamic world through their own dynamism even before we had the chance to explore it for ourselves. So thank you TESOL for giving us a solid platform from which to launch off for our own life experiences!

Please plan a TESOL reunion of all the old students!! I'm sure everyone would be very interested!!

Nazia Ahmed, Country Director, GroupFive, Lubumbashi

TESOL was a fantastic setting for my siblings and me during our elementary school years. We've never forgotten the caring attention we got from our teachers—and when we moved on to other schools, all three of us remained in top of our classes, thanks to what I'd call our "unfair" advantage. TESOL's small class sizes encouraged a lot of learning, but I'd say a lot of our greatest gains came from our classmates. Our best friends were from every continent and every corner of the world, and many of us still keep in touch today. By learning from each others' cultures, our perspectives on the world became a lot more hopeful and creative than those of our peers back home in the United States. I have never wished I could have spent those five formative years at TESOL anywhere else.

Jen Heller, Sandpoint, Idaho

Today I am investigating Masters opportunities in conflict resolution and international development, something I doubt I would ever have done without the foundation that TESOL provided me.

Gavin, New Zealand

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