

MAYAL TSHIABUILA

For Goodness Sake in Truckee is pleased and privileged to host Mayal Tshiabuila a Christian Scientist from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo on Friday, August 1st from 7:00-9:00 pm.

Mayal is the director of Ecoles du Coeur, (Schools of the Heart), a school for literacy in Kinshasa. He founded the school in 2002 in response to the desperate need for free education for those whose families couldn't afford to send their children to a public school.

"Ecoles du Coeur" is a small, but great idea. There are so many children out of school, and many adults who are illiterate. Even if the contribution Ecoles du Coeur is making is like a drop of water in a desert, it is worth continuing and supporting.

Call for more information and reservations, 530-550-8981
For Goodness Sake – 10157 Donner Pass Road, Truckee, CA



The initial group outside the school (2003).

Early 2002, I "lost" my job with a UN development agency. To make a living, I ventured on a chicken raising business, but a few months later, it collapsed. I had already built, in my compound, a 3.5 by 10 meters room in cement blocks. I kept thinking how to put my room to good use. Then one day, I went out of my compound and saw a good number of school boys and girls, with sad faces, walking back from the nearby school. Asked why they were going back home at that time, they said they had been expelled from school, because their parents had not paid required school fees. I went back in my compound, but the image of those children kept knocking at my mind. I knew we had a transition government facing many problems, but something needed to be done.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, even public schools are not free. Beginning in the late 80s, owing to mismanagement and widespread corruption, the dictatorship then in place, could no longer deliver basic social services. To survive, public schools started charging a fee. Widespread unemployment, very large families, very low wages in the public sector, all those factors combined drove down school enrolment. Available data from UNICEF (2001) tell the story: Rate of enrolment: boys: 55%, girls: 49%. Children who enter first grade and complete fifth grade: 54%. These data tell the magnitude of the problem facing children. Many of those who get a chance to enroll in first grade drop out of school even before reaching fifth grade.

I had a large enough room I could divide in three classrooms, but where would I get the money to furnish them. The following summer, while in the United States for my annual association meeting, I shared the idea with a few friends. One, a Principia College alumnus, offered to send me \$ 100. This I used to buy a few chairs. Then another Principian offered \$ 200. I also wrote a project document which I shared with friends. By December 2002, one room was furnished. The same month, a dear friend from Europe I had informed about the project, promised to introduce me to a friend of hers who could help us. Then, one Monday, that friend of my friend sent \$500 for the school, along with kind words of encouragement.

January 2003, the school opened with a class of 15 children. At the end of that year, we had 26 children of single mothers. In 2004 - 2005, the school population reached 57 students. Among these students, special groups: women aged from 21 to 62, enrolled to learn how to read and write; single mothers aged from 16 to 28, and of course boys and girls aged from 11 to 20.

The school year 2005 – 2006 started in September, and the classes are crowded. We have four groups: young boys and girls : 45; women up to 68 years: 20, single mothers: 10.

Owing to the accommodation problems, we had to turn quite a few away. The many students did not go to the regular school because their parents could not afford the school fees all school charge. Therefore, we cannot ask them to pay a fee.

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