

Village Libraries

A Prospective from the Kingdom of Swaziland

By Penelope Lulane

The Second Wind Foundation* (Books for the World) in America has an ongoing project of donating containers and books to many countries in the world including my country, The Kingdom of Swaziland. The Rotary Club of Manzini, Swaziland, Rotary District 9400, and Rotary Club of Seabrook, Texas, District 5890, saw the need of training one person in the Swaziland on setting up libraries, who is in return, can train other schools to ensure quality usage of the books donated to the country through the Books for the World Project. The Clear Creek Independent School District, Texas (CCISD) partnered with the Rotary Clubs to provide a vehicle for training-a-trainer for my visit to the USA.

CCISD and the Rotary Club of Seabrook, Texas choose Ed White Elementary school to be the training agent for Penelope Lulane who was chosen by the Rotary Club of Manzini, Swaziland. The principle of Ed White Elementary, Matt Paulson, is a Rotarian in the Rotary Club of Seabrook and Ed White is in CCISD and the Seabrook, Texas service area.

The Manzini Rotary Club Book Distribution Center receives donated books and containers from the Books for the World Project and then donates them to any school in Swaziland. My



school (Khuphuka Primary School) has benefited from this project. We got two containers and books. The picture below shows a picture of one of the two containers with me.



I experienced many things in USA while I was still undergoing my five week training of setting up libraries in 2015. I visited four Rotary Clubs where I gave programs about my country, the projects undertaken by the Rotary Club of Manzini, Swaziland and about the project of building a library in my school (Khuphuka Primary School). We exchanged banners with each club I visited; it was such a wonderful experience. The picture shows me and President Lizzy exchanging banners at the Rotary Club of

Richmond, Texas.

I also got a chance of visiting the Books for the World warehouse, where the books are kept before being sorted and donated to many countries in the world. I learned how to bind and balance books on a pallet; it was such an inspiring experience. I chose some reading tools for my first grade class. The picture shows me on a forklift that is used to wrap and move pallets.

The book pallets are then taken to the Exel Logistics warehouse where they are stored until cleared for shipment, loaded into the containers, and then shipped to other countries. The flatbed truck below was loading pallets to be taken to Exel Logistics warehouse.

I was shocked by the high school volunteers (Interactors) in America, they come in numbers to help with books sorting and palletizing, before the books were shipped to countries in the world. I was so privileged to be among them, we worked together cheerfully. Actually, we were receiving books without knowing how people work hard to get them ready to be shipped.



I felt highly honored to be among the young volunteers and I got a chance to talk to them about how the books have brought change and quality education in Swaziland. I also shared with them how the books have brought change in my school in the teaching and learning process. Since we received the books, the school has had an

improvement, last year in the 7th grade external examinations; we had 3 failures out of 95 learners. English grades have improved in all levels. Pictures were taken during the book sorting.



I also visited the Exel Logistics warehouse where the final loading is done. The following pictures show how they store the pallets before loading them in a container and shipping them.

During my training, I visited a number of libraries in America, from Elementary school to public libraries to observe how they use their libraries. I was impressed by the way the librarians cherished their work. They meet frequently to fix their problems



and plan for the future. I got to learn that library is not only a place for reading but also a place of creation and of trying things out. At Ed White Elementary school they were doing a solar project in the library.

I have a great role to play in my country (Swaziland) to train other schools on setting up primary libraries. Learning in the 21st century has taken on new dimensions with the ever-changing tools, increased digitization of text and heightened demands for critical and creative thinking. To succeed in our rapid-paced,

global society, all learners must be able to access quality information from diverse perspectives.

I believe that primary school libraries are very important because that is where children develop the reading habits of a lifetime. Establishing village libraries in Swaziland will instill the culture of learning to Swazis at a tender age. The sooner children are exposed to library usage the more they will be proficient and excel academically. Learning library and information development is a necessary investment, since without this it's not possible to get full benefit from a vastly greater investment by the government in education and economic development programs of the country. **A successful nation is an educated one.**

Swaziland falls under third World countries so the economic status is low; as a result parents are not able to send their children to national libraries in towns and cities. So establishing libraries in the village will cater to the needs of the underprivileged by giving access to information they need in order to succeed and grow academically.

Furthermore, village libraries can help close the gap between village and town learners. Libraries will give since students equal opportunities and resources.



The photo is of Penny with the District 5890 Interactors at the November 2015 book packing event.

*[The Second Wind Foundation is a Texas based

501c3 corporation which was organized by PDG Charlie and Barbara Clemmons and is managed by a group of Rotarians located in the East Texas Rotary districts. It was formed to manage and fund the Rotary Clubs who wished to be part of the Books for the World Project. It purchases the containers used for book shipment which was prohibited by the Rotary Foundation and donates them to a Rotary Club at the book recipient's site. The

decision to purchase was an economic decision because some Rotary Clubs do not empty a 40 foot container of books for a year and the rent on a container would far exceed the cost of purchase. The containers are converted into libraries, classroom, day care center, clinics, etc. as a community service project of the receiving Rotary Club.]

How can Swaziland benefit from the experience?

- I will share my experience with many schools in Swaziland and also apply it in our school.
- I will work towards helping primary schools in Swaziland to establish libraries with the help of the Books for the World and Second Wind Foundation.
- Will work hand in hand with the book distribution of Manzini Rotary to make sure every village school in Swaziland has got books?
- Enhance education by developing a reading culture.
- Hoping to build schools librarians organization that will develop teamwork among village schools.