

News from the project in Tenaquip, Madagascar

Kathy Lucking

We had a wonderful week of Waldorf training for our pre-school teachers in February, given by Anne Beauché and her sister Emmanuelle from France. We had our 40 teachers attend and were joined by 20 teachers from other schools in our area.

Our teachers were very interested in learning about the development of the child and what that means to their role as teachers. They participated whole heartedly in the singing, activities and art, all the while recognizing how entertaining and challenging learning can be and how heart-warming it is to work with others towards the same task.



The teachers loved the artistic activities that they were led into by Anne for the preschool and Emmanuelle for the grades teachers. They were astonished by what they could manage to do with the materials given, and by the joy of being 'in the flow' as they worked on a scene with crayon or wrote a poem. These are things that they have never had the opportunity to do. Most households don't even have a pencil, and creative writing appears no where in the Malagasy curriculum. After the artistic sessions the teachers would hang around for an hour marvelling at every piece of work from among the 60 participants.





We had a big gardening project underway at the same time as the teacher training. Having asked the children to stay home from school for an entire week so that we could run the teacher training, we asked the parents (one from each family) to come for two days to work in the garden as we transformed our land into permaculture gardens. We had over 120 parents/day moving soil and sharing a lunch with us each day.

For this gardening project, we had the direction and help from a Swiss man who was himself the product of a Waldorf education. His father teaches at a Waldorf school and so he also brought with him two young people who had just graduated from a Waldorf high school. Together with another engineering grade student from Germany and four Malagasy men that they had recruited, who were interested in learning permaculture methods, they came, all 8 of them, to lead this mammoth gardening project.

As word of the project got out, the Anglican church in Madagascar sent interested people, including the Bishop's wife, to work along side us and learn. Also a Swiss NGO called 'Aqua Alimentä' came and worked with us, and ended up installing two foot-pedal pumps to help us get water from the stream, up to the gardens.





It was, for me, the experience of a lifetime, to stand on the hill side and watch all these parents working to make our gardens on one side, and on the other side, all our teachers gathered in a circle singing, listening and learning. It felt as though God had to be among us, as this gathering would never have been able to be orchestrated by people alone.

It was a true testament to Waldorf education for our teachers to see how the education of these young people led them to journey so far from home, to work extremely hard in the hot sun, to realize this goal of feeding all our 700 students with our own food production. For the Malagasy people, who are used to having very few choices in life, to see these Malagasy men who were volunteering and moving around the country, also to learn, was eye-opening for them, and gave them a sense of pride in their fellow countrymen, and the knowledge that despite severe poverty, there are still choices.

The message was, **Anything and everything is possible when you invoke your will.**

