

## SET Partnerships

[www.supportededucationtogo.org](http://www.supportededucationtogo.org)

SET's old address but with a new website designed, written by two talented women: Denise Testa of JD Communication Design and Dawn Lyons of Lines by Lyons. Both donated hours of time, creative energy, and design to produce a compelling account of SET's mission and projects.

Dawn and Denise talk of their introduction to SET which immediately gave them a "passion for the cause." Both women have family histories of volunteering, and as Dawn says, "have the old school beliefs of doing good unto others, feeling good about self-giving." The two have been working together on different projects for three years. In each of their businesses they work with a variety of clients in Canada and the United States. Both have a lot of flexibility as well as determination to get the job done right. When asked what was involved in creating the SET website, Denise laughs and says, "A lot of e-mails," but with the organizational framework completed, she adds, "everything fell into place."

Not that their work on the SET website is complete. Denise points out that the fresher a website the higher the place it occupies in the Google listings. And of course, with an active organization like SET, new schools, new ideas, new developments always initiate changing the website.

## Random Acts of Kindness

An inspiration in SET often comes from the generosity of unknown givers. Many stories can be told about the spontaneous contributions made to SET by people who ask for no more than the opportunity to help.

While a SET Director was visiting the dry cleaner's an unseen woman from the back of the store interrupted his update to the counter clerk about building the most recent school. The director was left speechless as the woman came forward to press a \$20 bill into his hand "to give to the children."



Many people have not even heard of the tiny West African country of Togo yet the Togolese children SET helps stir their hearts to give. Web designer Denise Testa went to a stationary store to pick up some notebooks to send to Togo school children, via the visiting SET directors. When an older lady behind her in line commented on what a great deal the notebooks were, Denise told her she was buying them for children in Togo who couldn't afford to buy their own. And because they couldn't come to school without a 20 cent notebook, they could not attend school at all. Denise also mentioned SET's mission to help children go to school, how 100% of any donation goes to the mission. The woman reached into her own purse and gave Denise \$20 for the "next school."

## Songs in their Hearts

The student choirs of Cawthra Park Secondary School in Mississauga, Ontario will present a benefit concert for SET on April 30, 2016 at 7 pm. The Chamber Choir and Les Belles Classiques Choirs have prepared for more than half a year to make a double gift; the first of their voices, the second of their concert's proceeds to SET. Music helps to change the world. The concert will be held at First United Church in Mississauga.

## Fourth Annual SET Dinner Gala and Auction

The fourth annual SET Dinner Gala and Auction held at the Lambton Golf and Country Club on October 17, 2015 was a sell-out. More than 150 people purchased tickets to browse and bid on silent auction items, to take a chance on winning art or wine, and to be entertained by Jeff West's comedy hypnosis show.

SET Together is published twice a year  
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# SET & TOGETHER

Fall 2015

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## SET's Togo Partner, Laurent Dekalikan

Laurent Dekalikan, also known by his African name, Kouma, has a vision.

*"I want to help shape the lives of children, to see them finish primary school, to write their history with them and to ask them to extend my vision into the future: from one Laurent to a generation of accomplished men and women. They will participate in the building of successful families and a transformed country."*

Competent both as a building contractor and as an accountant, Laurent does not miss deadlines or go over budget on SET schools. In SET's four-year history Laurent has built eight new schools, from the ground up and completed a school renovation addition. Ongoing, he oversees the running of all SET schools, distributes money for supplies and volunteer teachers, reports regularly to SET's directors.

Bob Barclay, SET president, says, *"We simply would not have had anywhere near the success we have without Laurent's amazing help."*

*The following interview with Laurent Dekalikan took place in the fall of 2015.*

### What prompted your interest in helping children? How old were you at that time?

I was a primary school teacher at 29. In my classes I encountered children who arrived at school without a slate, a notebook and similarly not a piece of chalk to use on the blackboard. One case in particular occurred when a child whose older brother had died arrived at school carrying his old notebooks with a few pages left to write. I was very moved. I told my wife, Gladys, about this situation. The next morning she gave me two new notebooks, a slate and a pencil. Two weeks later I took out money from the bank and Gladys did the same and we paid for notebooks for thirteen students.

From this time on a spirit of commonality and compassion was ignited in us. My wife suggested that I should put an association into place with the mission of helping children. We called it Action Enfance et Développement, Togo (AED) known in English as The Association for the Development of Children, Togo.

I still remember arriving at school one day with several files related to organizing this association. These files attracted the attention of the founder of our school who forbade this parallel activity. Threatened with the loss of my job I opted to establish AED and left the school for good. At home my wife consoled me, reassuring me that her income could support us along with our faith in God. We chose to dedicate ourselves to helping children go to school by bringing them basic educational resources and also some small funds for food during recreational periods.

At the beginning of AED my close friends all expressed their solidarity as well as their desire to support us on this worthy mission. Later they had to back away due to the lack of their own funds. My nephews and some cousins who depended on my salary (around \$55 CDN per month) for support became volunteers so that our association grew into what it is today.

### What was your own education?

I was the fourth child born in my family and five children were born after me. The first three children died before I was two. I had an unhappy childhood because for my first ten years I was always sick. However, my primary school record was very good. Being an outstanding student distinguished me during my years of education but because my parents lacked the means to send me to university I decided to turn to teaching. In Togo, someone with a high school equivalent can teach, first as a volunteer teacher, then as a fully-paid teacher. I had to find the income to help my little brothers and my nephews who saw me as support for their future. I was hired by private schools as I followed the path to becoming a professional teacher. I successfully completed the Certificate of Professional Competency.

Laurent Dekalikan

### Join with us at SET

Donate online at [www.supportededucationtogo.org](http://www.supportededucationtogo.org) where you can also see how your donations are making an impact Or Telephone: 1-905-891-5031

Your SET contribution can also be made by mail. Send your cheque to Robert Barclay, 1423 Tecumseh Park Drive, Mississauga, Ont. L5H 3P1. All donations \$20 and over will receive tax receipts.

SET & TO GO  
SUPPORT. EDUCATION. TOGO.

## What other work do you do beside AED and coordinating the building of all the SET schools?

Outside my activities in the service of AED Togo of which I am the president, I am a director of a construction business called GEBAT (Générale du Bâtiment et Travaux publics) General Building and Public Works. In this enterprise we undertake public and private construction projects of schools and individual houses. I am in charge of managing the working teams that complete the jobs.

**Helping children to the best of my capacities continues to be my passion.** I am in the throes of putting an orphanage together to help regroup orphans living in foster homes. In this way I would like to improve these children's lives, who right now have no future as they are entirely without parents or have parents with no means of supporting them. (Editor's note: While visiting Togo in 2014, Laurent took the SET directors to see the land he had purchased for the building of this orphanage project. These children will receive education in a school to be built on the site.)



Laurent and his mother

## Can you describe some of the results you have seen from the work you do with children?

I am proud of the results achieved among the children for whom I have had all responsibility. I educated and continue to believe in my three nephews we nickname the three musketeers (see volume 1, number 2, Fall, 2013 issue, **SET Together**). They always accompany the Canadian teams of Sleeping Children Around the World when they work with AED Togo. I have educated two young women since their early childhood. One has succeeded very well in her studies including finishing university, The other completed the requirements to be a professional secretary. Many other children I support are in primary and secondary school while others have opted for apprenticeships in, for example, plumbing, dress-making, and driving.

I am always ready to try to make a difference. I have found my hope and my strength in my Christian faith and in my desire to serve those who are in need. It reminds me of what one woman said to the children when we were giving out notebooks that had been donated by a Canadian volunteer. "Now that you have a notebook and a slate, you can go to school which frankly I could never have helped you to do."

## What changes have you observed in areas where new, solid schools have been built?

**The school brings a new life for the children in giving them a sure and certain look at their future. A hope is born for their parents. Those who never could go to school for various reasons are becoming some of the students in the new schools. A once-dismal life now shines with potential for them.**

## Do you think you have inspired others to work with the children of Togo?

Many tell me that they would like to do as I do. I answer them that I pray their wishes become a reality if they truly have the heart to help.

# SETting Out for Togo...Again

Yearly, one or more of SET's directors fly fifteen hours to Togo's capital, Lomé. Reviewing the existing schools, along with the plans for future buildings, packs their time there.

Early May, 2015, Anne and Simon Carette, along with two friends, SET donors, Jan Fox-Howlett and Bill Howlett made the trip. In four days they visited schools in Avedze (completed Fall, 2014), Ataregbe (completed Spring, 2014), the site for a potential new school for Atiyi, Démocratie (completed late in May, 2015), Amoussime (completed Spring, 2013), Ametonou Kondji (completed December, 2013).

As a complete newcomer to Togo, Jan gives words to her impressions on the first day: "Setting out from our hotel at rush hour,

Lomé, a city of one million people, was a-buzz with people riding mopeds on their way to work. After driving one hour out of the city on potholed dirt roads we arrived at Ataregbe, our first school, where the contrast was startling. All the villagers turned out on foot to greet us. The SET school, built with brick, and designed to be well-ventilated and lit was a huge contrast to the former thatched palm classrooms that really were no more than rough lean-tos." Of that same trip Bill describes his impression of the village of Ataregbe: "Thatched roof mud-walled houses arranged apparently haphazardly about 10 meters apart. No electricity, running water, or sanitary facilities. Goats tethered or on the loose. We passed through and reached the new school. It was a simple, single-storey concrete block structure housing three classrooms – an imposing contrast to the village itself. It made me think of the cathedrals built in medieval Europe."

From village to village the four visitors were made aware of the communities' same basic needs; the need for a clean water source, close enough for use by the school and access by the community; the need for a canteen to feed the children during their three hour break in the hottest part of the day.

No one, however, spoke as passionately or with as much conviction as Madame Afi Togobo, the head of the Atiyi Parents' Committee. The day the group visited the potential site for the Atiyi school had not gone so well. Roads to the remote location were bad, at times washed out. Fewer children were in school that day, needed as they were at home to help with crop cultivation after torrential rains the day before. The one volunteer teacher at the site talked of receiving inconsistent pay due to the irregular money given by supporting families. When visiting classes Anne saw many broken desks, creating the overall impression, that perhaps, the villagers did not believe in the need for education.



Jan Fox-Howlett and Bill Howlett

Anne and Simon Carette

As the group was leaving Atiyi, Madame Togobo asked if she could speak with them. Her request came unofficially, she said, but on behalf of all the women of Atiyi, who desperately wanted the school for their children. Madame Togobo stated that the women would ensure the payments for the volunteer teacher. They would also collect the school maintenance fee, Stirred by her commitment to education, SET decided to build Atiyi school (completed in October, 2015).



Laurent presenting school materials.

Without knowing how the women would achieve it exactly, but having some idea of the oldest strategy in the world, SET directors take heart in the 100 per cent support the villagers are giving the school.

On each visit discussions with the school principals, teachers, parents' committees focussed on challenges and opportunities. The many challenges might be emphasized by Togo's place on the scale of the World Happiness Report published by the United Nations. This year, of 160 countries, Togo ranked last.

For the most basic need for clean water, SET is working in partnership with Ryan's Well Foundation. No new schools are built without developing a source of clean water. However, some older schools have problems with their water supply, for example, Ataregbe requires a new cistern. Along with clean water, good latrines are established, all making a difference in hygiene and overall health.



Schoolboy with books