

Charity helps build schools abroad



Good read: Besa Kosova stands in My One School bookstore in Longwood, a charity she started to raise funds to promote literacy overseas by building schools.

By Jenna Rew | July 23, 2009

In these economic times, few people are able to quit their jobs and follow their dreams, especially when those dreams mean giving money more than making it.

But in May, Besa Kosova, 32, decided to do just that.

The single mother of two was discouraged after repeatedly trying to get her own novel published with no success and had decided to give up on writing, and give up on her dreams.

"My dream always was to use my writing, my books, to inspire others," Kosova said. "I thought that I had a story."

Kosova said she still thinks she has a story to tell but said she had a revelation after writing a letter to God announcing her decision to give up.

The next morning, Kosova said she awoke with a brand new idea and a whole new dream.

In June, she made that dream come true after quitting her full-time job as an apartment leasing agent and using her savings to open a charitable bookstore called My One School in Longwood with the aim of using proceeds to build schools in impoverished countries to help promote literacy in children.

"My mission was one book to one child to one school at a time," she said.

In partnership with Child Literacy Inc., a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization, Kosova took on her first project and used her online bookstore to help fund the building of a school for 300 children in rural Uttar Pradesh, India.

The land had already been purchased and the agreement was that Kosova would fund half the cost of building the actual school, around \$3,500.

That project has already been funded and construction on the school is scheduled to begin sometime in the third quarter of this year.

Anupam Satyasheel, one of the founders of Child Literacy, said he first met Besa online and noticed that she had an interest in the projects the organization was working on.

He spoke with her over the phone, and from then on they developed a partnership between the two organizations.

My One School Inc. would operate under the nonprofit status of Child Literacy while Kosova applied for one of her own.

"It seemed like a match made in Heaven," Satyasheel said.

Satyasheel was at the My One School bookstore's grand opening and said he was really excited about the work Kosova is doing.

"These people really stand out," he said. "Very, very impressive team."

Currently the Longwood store on South Ronald Reagan Boulevard near State Road 434 is staffed entirely by volunteers, including Kosova and friend Terri Avellone, who helped Kosova get the store going and up on its feet. No one receives a salary.

"It was a pit," Avellone said about the store space when they first signed the lease. "It was not pretty in here."

Kosova spent about \$20,000 of her own money to renovate the store space, which features a dining table for meetings, a children's room, free wireless Internet, complimentary tea and coffee and a place for community gatherings such as Kosova's book club that meets once a month.

The inventory is made up entirely of donated books.

"I just cannot imagine us stopping at this point," Avellone said.

My One School is already onto its next project, raising \$10,000 to help fund a school, shelter and library for 500 orphan girls in another part of India.

The land for the project is already secure and once again Kosova will be working with Child Literacy Inc.

This project will cost a grand total of about \$20,000 according to Satyasheel, who said he also expects My One School to have a long standing relationship with Child Literacy.

Closer to home, Kosova is collecting backpacks and school supplies for local low-income families.

"I am living my dream every moment," Kosova said. "I don't regret one second, one dollar, one penny."

"I just want to grow this."

To find out more or to make a donation, visit the store at 180 South Ronald Reagan Boulevard in Longwood or call 321-872-6047. You can also visit the Web site, www.myoneschool.org.

<http://media.causes.com/ribbon/511780>