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Online Volunteers of the Year 2003**Anne-Catherine Yon (USA) – World Computer Exchange (USA)**

Anne-Catherine established and coordinated the first regional office of World Computer Exchange (WCE) in California. WCE, at the time of her application a newly registered organization in the Boston area, collects donations of used computers and sends them to projects and schools in developing countries. They were looking for a volunteer in the San Francisco area to coordinate these activities.

As the organization was young, and work processes not yet clearly defined, Anne-Catherine found this a challenging assignment, that matched her set of skills at the same time, and she applied. A year later, Anne-Catherine had created, tested and developed a WCE local office model that continues to be replicated by other online volunteers in various US cities, as well as in

Germany and Switzerland.

Anne-Catherine proposed and tested different ways to best operate a regional WCE chapter, and the other chapters now draw from her pioneering initiatives. One of her successful ideas was to organize a computer donation event. Anne-Catherine involved 75 local volunteers to test and pack 400 donated computers, which were then shipped to 93 schools reaching 57,000 students in Bangladesh. She held a second event a few months later, which garnered another set of 400 computers for 30 schools and 13,500 students in the Republic of Georgia.

At first, Anne-Catherine started up the area office in San Francisco by herself, working about 30 hours per week. She soon recruited a network of local volunteers, and created small volunteer teams to whom she delegated key activities. As she knew she was going to move from California, she created a strong, self-sustaining volunteer committee that would be able to continue operations after her departure. This allowed her to reduce her volunteer hours to about 10 per week, which she spent coordinating the teams to solicit computer donations, gather, test and pack the donated computers, and communicate WCE activities in the region.

When Anne-Catherine left for a job to Paris, she carefully selected and guided her successor so that stable leadership for the future could be ensured for the office in California. A third container with 400 computers is now under way from WCE California to schools in Bolivia.

One year of online volunteering with WCE has inspired Anne-Catherine's decision to work for a humanitarian organization.

"This one-year assignment as regional coordinator for World Computer Exchange definitely helped me to better know my interests, and myself, to better define my professional project in this area...I think that it definitely encouraged me to become even more involved when I see the extent of such a network and what can be achieved through such a network."

For more information about World Computer Exchange, please visit their [Group Profile](#).

Deborah D'Amico (Canada) – People with Disabilities Uganda (Uganda)

As an online volunteer providing marketing support for People with Disabilities Uganda (PWDU), Deborah got inspired to realize her own project idea for PWDU: the [Picture Sharing Project](#). While she was promoting the opening of a library for children with disabilities in Kampala, Uganda, Deborah had the idea to connect the children studying in that library with students in her own neighborhood of Toronto, Canada.

Deborah contacted the elementary school near her house with her idea and received a favorable response. Together with David DeBelle of Joyce Public

School, who coordinated this effort with Deborah, third-grade children learned about PWDU's work in Uganda, and discussed what it means for a child to live with a disability. They created pictures for their peers in Uganda to decorate the walls of the new library. The pictures, along with donated art supplies, have been received with great enthusiasm in Uganda, where the students are currently working on their own artwork to send to their new Canadian friends.

Deborah's involvement as an online volunteer is ongoing. Currently, she is working on promotional material for a PWDU benefit album, asking world music artists for their contributions. Thinking up new ideas to help the organization is an exciting part of her work, and she often uses any quiet time she has to brainstorm concepts for future projects. She dedicates 1-5 hours per week to her online volunteer work.

Her online volunteering experiences helped her procure a position with a company that she was very excited about. In her interview she mentioned how she was contributing over the Internet to a development organization, and that she had never met any of the staff members or other volunteers face to face; this caught the interest of her future employer. He considered her online volunteering experience as a rare asset that complemented her professional skills and also, one that set her apart from the other candidates. In the end, Deborah was offered the job.

"[Online volunteering] doesn't take a revolutionary effort on your part. It takes the willingness to share some of your own good fortune and just little time, utilizing the technology of today to facilitate a unique kind of philanthropy that has the potential to do extremely innovative and world-changing things or, at the very least, change the lives of even a few people, which is definitely a good start."

For more information about People with Disabilities Uganda (PWDU), please visit their [Group Profile](#).

Kelly (Xiaodong) Zeng (China/USA) – Business Information Centre Straldja (Bulgaria)



Kelly has been volunteering with the Business Information Centre Straldja, an NGO to support unemployed Bulgarian artisans, just since the beginning of 2003. She is their first online volunteer, and has already achieved full funding for one of their projects and doubled the number of hits to their e-commerce web site—all within several weeks.

After Kelly graduated from business school, she faced a tight job market as an international student in the US. Volunteering online for a project that required marketing skills seemed a good opportunity to gain some practical, hands-on experience in her field of expertise.

The Bulgarian NGO was looking for a promotions aide to market their web site which sells Bulgarian crafts. Utilizing what she had learned about customer segmentation, Kelly designed an email campaign targeting list managers of particular online craft discussion groups to reach thousands of discussion group participants. She sent out 20 emails, and a week later two discussion groups had donated \$7,000—enough to fully fund the women's weaving and sewing cooperative project of the organization. The project will provide income generation opportunities to 64 Bulgarian women.

Enthusiastic about Kelly's success, the Business Information Centre, which had accepted more online volunteer promotion aides in the meantime, entrusted Kelly with the management of their online volunteer group. Not experienced in management, Kelly accepted the challenge, and successfully inspired and motivated the other online volunteers to develop and realize their own promotion ideas. Through the collective creativity and energy of the online volunteer group, the traffic to the Bulgarian crafts e-commerce site has nearly doubled.

Her experience with Online Volunteering has prompted new career ideas. Before, Kelly had never considered non-profit organizations as potential employers. Now she hopes that with online volunteer experience on her resume, she may have opportunities to develop a career in marketing in the non-profit sector.

"I have a few words to those people who consider Online Volunteering: Search your soul and find out why you want to apply for that assignment. Think very hard about how your skill set will contribute to the organization, but equally important, what skills you will be able to develop. If you don't get anything out of it, you won't be able to engage yourself long enough to see results. Last, be flexible and open-minded. The assignments sometimes sound very boring but they are the building pieces of big plans. Once we put everything together, you will see how much we can accomplish as a team."

For more information about Business Information Centre Straldja, please visit their [Group Profile](#).

Lela Rachman Talogo (Canada) – Pearls of Africa (USA)



Lela, together with five other online volunteers, helped develop the web site of the newly founded organization Pearls of Africa (POA), which supports people with disabilities in Africa. After joining the online web development team, Lela immediately took the initiative to coordinate her fellow web developers. She brainstormed site design ideas and skillfully encouraged the other online volunteers to contribute their ideas as well. She managed to translate the ideas of POA's director's into tangible web pages. Thanks to Lela's dedication and structured approach, the web site was completed in less than five weeks.

When deadlines had to be met, Lela contributed long hours late into the night to make it happen. Before she applied for the position, she carefully considered if she would realistically be able to deliver what would be required of her, given that she juggles two children and another job. Despite these time demands, she was able to contribute to the organization and complete her assignments on time.

Because of family duties she has resigned from her volunteer position with Pearls of Africa, but is very eager to embark on a new project, once her schedule permits. Lela has enjoyed working online with people from different cultural backgrounds and levels of experience, and connecting with fellow volunteers from Indonesia, her home country.

"If you are excited to do something you really like, you forget the time you spend working on it, especially if the organization is satisfied with the results of your volunteer work. It is not about the time or effort, but the output from your online volunteering that makes a difference for disabled children and people in poverty."

For more information about Pearls of Africa, please visit their [Group Profile](#).

Mark Wireman (USA) – Lawyers without Borders (USA)



Mark felt compelled to offer nonprofits his services as an IT professional so they would not be left behind in new technological developments that can improve their operations. Believing in human rights and equality for all, the assignment to help improve web site design and listserv messages for Lawyers without Borders (LWOB) exactly matched his interests. LWOB engages lawyers from around the world to create a global network and a clearinghouse for the delivery of quality pro-bono legal services.

As one of the first LWOB online volunteers—a team that is now about 50 people strong—Mark has always taken his assignment very seriously, as he truly believes in the organization's mission and considers himself a part of LWOB.

LWOB has counted on Mark even in crisis situations. For example, one day the volunteer sending out listserv messages of legal vacancy notices to paying subscribers was called up for military service, and did not have an opportunity to contact LWOB. As LWOB had a commitment to their paying subscribers, they called Mark, hoping he would be able to get the notices out on time. Mark spent the next four days reconstructing the listserv and sending out the notices, acting on his sense of commitment to the subscribers.

Christina Storm, director of LWOB, contributed another anecdote: "Sunday morning last, at 7 am I started receiving emails about errors and links not working in a listserv message we sent out the night before. I emailed Mark to apprise him of the problem—not expecting him to be at his computer at 7 am. He immediately emailed me back: 'I just woke up—is it ok if I grab a coffee and then I'll fix the problem?'"

Mark has assumed the role of online volunteer director of IT for LWOB and coordinates other IT online volunteers. He also offers technical advice on IT-related products and services to the organization.

"Online Volunteering – do it. Life is too short and before you know it you will say 'I should have done that.' By then it will be too late. It is fun, you meet great people, and best of all, the rewards are much greater because it is something that you enjoy doing: When one person feels the reward, it is shared among everyone."

For more information about Lawyers without Borders, please visit their [Group Profile](#).

Miodrag Zivkovic (Serbia and Montenegro) – Zartonk-89 (Armenia)

Miodrag has shared his project development skills with Zartonk-89, an NGO that supports poor families, women, orphans and refugees in Armenia. Zartonk-89 needed advice and training on how to formulate a project proposal and professionally develop a project strategy.

Experienced with project development, Miodrag introduced methodologies that have proved useful for him to assist his host organization. His main mission for the assignment was to equip the organization



with the necessary skills so that they can develop future proposals without outside assistance. As the first step, Miodrag developed an English dictionary of terms and expressions in project management in order to avoid misunderstandings, since both he and Zartonk-89 staff members are not native English speakers. Consequently, he adapted training in project development to email communication. To teach each step of the methodology, Miodrag created diagrams, so that the organization could better grasp and memorize the concepts. With the existing language difficulties, he considered using fewer words the better in order for his training to have a sustainable impact on the organization.

Because Miodrag lives in a country with similar problems as the country of his host organization, he brings to his post a level of sensitivity and understanding that is very much an asset for Zartonk-89. Like many people in Serbia, Miodrag currently does not have the means to donate money. He therefore regards volunteering as the best way for people like him to help others who are in a similar or worse situation than he and the people of his country.

"I am living in Serbia, a country that can't provide material aid to countries in need, because we are also receiving aid here. However, I have a few years experience in working with different donors, and if that can help people who are in the same or even worse situation, here I am."

For more information about Zartonk-89, please visit their [Group Profile](#).

Paul Fifen Chimy (Cameroon/France) – Education for Development (Vietnam)



Paul has been spending more and more of his free time volunteering online for an increasing number of different development organizations. He was nominated for the Online Volunteer of the Year Award by Education for Development, a Vietnamese organization helping to give disadvantaged children opportunities to reach their potential. Paul translated articles from English into French which were then published on Education for Development's new trilingual web site. As he proved a very reliable volunteer resource for the organization, they soon offered him a second assignment to edit their entire French web site, that was translated by five online volunteers, and to make its style consistent.

During the past two years, Paul has engaged in various assignments with organizations all over the world. He researched donor contacts and raised book donations for an organization in Nigeria. He compiled lists of relevant upcoming conferences and meetings, as well as media contacts, for an organization in Uganda that is using those lists to plan and promote their activities. Making use of his online volunteer experience, he provided ideas to an organization in Germany for better ways to involve online volunteers.

Paul was brought up in a small Cameroonian town where volunteering was a natural part of life. He spent much of his time volunteering with Christian groups in his local community. With degrees in management sciences and international relations, he was enthusiastic to discover in Online Volunteering a way to apply his language skills and interest in international development.

Paul was so excited about Online Volunteering that he applied for more and more assignments. He has gradually adapted his schedule to accommodate his virtual volunteering and ensure he has time for all his tasks. Occasionally, he stays up at night if an assignment needs to be finished. Paul feels that he receives more in return than what he gives.

"The opportunity to serve and make a difference is something every world citizen and more precisely, developing country national should strive to achieve. The organizations I worked with are very special to me and I want to see them succeed. I give my time to these organizations and feel I am the lucky one who actually benefits most through cross cultural learning, experience, and the satisfaction of success."

For more information about Education for Development, please visit their [Group Profile](#).

Raj Gopal Prasad Kantamneni (USA) – Freedom from Hunger (USA)



Prasad had started to work for Freedom from Hunger, an international NGO supporting the poor in developing countries with micro-credit and health and nutrition education, before he was even accepted as an online volunteer. After applying for their online volunteer posting for a web site developer, Prasad went ahead and created a detailed work plan just as he would have done for a paid job, including: the steps involved to develop the requested web site, an estimation of the time required to accomplish each of the tasks, and his availability. He then sent this to Freedom from Hunger so that they could select or reject him on a well-informed basis. Even if they did not select him, he

figured Freedom from Hunger would at least have an idea about the sort and amount of work that might be involved in this particular project.

Freedom from Hunger did select him, however, and Prasad delivered a high-quality professional web site within the projected time and budget. He not only developed the web site, but also ensured the sustainability of the product within the organization. Prasad realized that Freedom from Hunger was paying large amounts of money to an outside source to maintain the site. Prasad proposed a site-based maintenance tool that would allow the organization to post updates without paying for any external technical expertise. He is currently training staff members to use this new tool.

Prasad ensured that the new site is ranked highly in search engines, and he also optimized it for low bandwidth users. His online volunteering assignment has reinforced his idea and commitment to start up his own non-profit to help underdeveloped communities to bridge the digital divide.

"Working with Freedom from Hunger has given me exposure to people and ideas that are making a difference. This exposure has helped me to connect with some very wonderful people, who are in a position to mentor me on my path [to form my own nonprofit]. If anything, my experience has made me realize that my goals are not as hard, or as far, as they may seem."

For more information about Freedom from Hunger, please visit their [Group Profile](#)

Stanley Tuvako (Kenya) – Kenya AIDS Intervention/Prevention Project Group (Kenya/USA)



In his two years of volunteer engagement for KAIPPG, Stanley has got so deeply involved in diverse activities of the organization, that its international coordinator considers him absolutely crucial to KAIPPG operations.

Having personally experienced the problems faced by many communities in Kenya, Stanley felt he had something to contribute to organizations addressing those difficulties. Also, he wanted to learn more about how to come up with solutions. When looking for an Online Volunteering assignment, he deliberately chose an organization in his country, so that he would have the chance to visit their projects and offices if necessary. KAIPPG aims to prevent the spread of

HIV/AIDS in Kenya, to empower survivors and orphans, and to end stigmatization. They have on-the-ground projects in Kenya, as well as an international branch, made up of online volunteers around the globe. At the time Stanley joined, they were expanding the international branch, looking for online volunteers to network with organizations with a similar focus as well as to help raise funds.

Stanley creatively addressed his tasks in multiple ways. He developed ideas for new projects, prepared the proposals and is working currently to actually realize the projects. His first proposal was called "Youth Awareness Perspective", introducing a youth angle to KAIPPG ongoing activities empowering HIV/AIDS widows in a region of Western Kenya. He then developed the idea for "Gender Awareness, Labour and Subsistence", a project offering tailoring and design training to marginalized women. Stanley's aim is for the women to become self-reliant and responsible, so that they can be self-confident to resist the stigma attributed to their families because of deaths of HIV/AIDS and/or prevent them from contracting the disease through prostitution. He managed to attract partners for the project, and now he has organized a training room, volunteer trainers, as well as customers of the artwork to be produced. The first trainees have just started their course. Stanley's third project "The African Village Tour" attracts volunteers from abroad to support KAIPPG projects in Kenya and tour the country at the same time.

Stanley has written several articles for the KAIPPG web site and has represented the organization at conferences. He has helped to develop, publish and promote a poetry book that will help raise funds for KAIPPG. He is also coordinating groups of international volunteers online. Stanley has networked with other HIV/AIDS organizations and researched donor contacts, both in Kenya and internationally. He is currently co-managing an online group of volunteers who are using art to communicate about HIV/AIDS. He is the principal Kenya liaison of the KAIPPG International coordinator who lives in the US.

Stanley has been volunteering about 75% of the time online, complemented by on-site engagement for KAIPPG in Kenya, mostly in his hometown Nakuru.

"I have learned to be a friend and have felt like those I have worked with have appreciated my friendship. I have made friends with the world, while the world has made friends with me. I have learned to give and be pleased about it."

For more information about KAIPPG, please visit their [Group Profile](#).

Yasemin Gunay (Turkey) – Mgbala Agwa Youth Forum (Nigeria)

As a result of Yasemin's engagement, the library on HIV/AIDS run by the Mgbala Agwa Youth Forum was able to increase their book stock by more than 1,150 publications. The library that was meant to serve a local community is now gaining more regional importance because of its scope and diversity of resources.



Yasemin was inspired to volunteer online by reading the stories of the 2002 Online Volunteers of the Year. The story of Angie Hasbun who had raised book donations for a library in Uganda particularly interested her, and so she was delighted to find another library project in the Online Volunteering database and follow Angie's example.

Yasemin was the first applicant to Mgbala Agwa's assignment, and set the groundwork for an effective online volunteer team. Preparing for more volunteers to join, she established an online group on Yahoo, through which all volunteers would be able to communicate and share files. More online volunteers came on board, and Yasemin has coordinated their outreach activities to organizations and authors. Via a central database every volunteer has an overview of who has already been contacted and who has replied. Yasemin herself has actively approached many contacts for book donations—with great success.

To Mgbala Agwa, Yasemin is an important member of their organization. They have invited Yasemin to join their board of trustees. Every time new publications reach the library they write her in detail to tell her which books have arrived, and how an increasing number of visitors come rushing into the library, and thank her for every single additional resource. During the organization's monthly meetings Yasemin's email messages are printed and read out loud to its members.

As a junior student in university, Yasemin has developed a greater sense of self-esteem because of the impact she has had on Mgbala Agwa and the Nigerian communities they serve.

"Being an online volunteer has made me feel really special because I feel that my efforts were helping many people whom I have never even met. I believe that through the books they read, they will be more cautious and the new generations will have more knowledge about how HIV/AIDS is threatening their lives. I have also learned that one can achieve anything if they truly believe in it."

For more information about Mgbala Agwa Youth Forum, please visit their [Group Profile](#).