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BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

BY SAMANTHA SNIVELY

Growing up, Wandile Mthiyane says he had a new idea every day, often to the chagrin of his mother. “I’d say, ‘I want to enter the national science competition.’ She’d ask, ‘How are you going to do that?’ And I’d respond, ‘I don’t know how, but I’m going to do it.’” And he would — with his determination, hard work, and his family’s encouragement; Wandile became a top student in South Africa.

Wandile always knew he wanted to study architecture at an Adventist college. While in primary school, he researched Andrews’ architecture program, which he heard about through his local church.

After finishing grade seven (the last year of primary school), Wandile transferred to Solusi Adventist High School in Zimbabwe, where he continued to excel, but also pondered how to get to Andrews. A door opened, although he didn’t know it at the time, when he was offered a five-year full scholarship to study town and regional planning at Durban University of Technology in Durban, South Africa.

Still determined to study at Andrews, Wandile started studying at Durban while also starting his Andrews application. “I think that’s the reason God wanted me at Durban — to have good access to the Internet and to work on my application,” he says with a laugh.

Wandile also wanted the fresh perspective from studying in another country. “When we all go to the same schools, with the same lecturers teaching us, we are bound to think the same way — which just maintains what’s there but doesn’t create any new development,” he says. “If we go



Wandile Mthiyane receives a science competition award and his graduation certificate from Solusi Adventist High School in October 2011.

to other places, especially first-world countries which have developed infrastructure, we can learn from them, adapt them to our setting, and combine them with local ideas to improve our own infrastructure.”

But money was tight, and Wandile didn’t have the \$2,000 international application deposit until a cousin helped. After he was accepted, Wandile tackled the even bigger problem of how to get funding for the year. *If I could get to Andrews, God would take care of the rest*, he thought. “It was a huge risk, though,” he admits. “I had a full scholarship at Durban, and couldn’t even afford the deposit for Andrews.”

Wandile approached the mayor of Durban’s office with a proposal for the development of Durban’s infrastructure and city planning, hoping

the mayor would be able to provide some funds and see his determination. “It’s almost impossible to get in to see the mayor,” he says, “but I kept going back.” Until two weeks before he was scheduled to fly to the United States, Wandile still hadn’t seen the mayor or funded the school year.

In the meantime, he received an Andrews Partnership Scholarship to partially help with tuition. While arranging for a visa and other necessary documentation, Wandile met

Susan Knowles, an educational advisor at the U.S. Embassy in Durban. She encouraged him to apply for the Education USA Opportunity Program, which provides funds for good students to study in America. "I got the funding, which paid for my visa, flight and a settling-in allowance," Wandile says, which he used to pay his registration fees. He booked his flight, and kept knocking on the mayor's door.

Finally, he got an appointment with the mayor's right-hand man. As Wandile sat in the waiting room, he overheard two men behind him. One man asked who he was and what he wanted, and the other replied, "He's a student at Durban University of Technology who wants to do architecture in America and has a plan to develop Durban. He has a partial scholarship and needs our help." As Wandile told the minister about the Opportunity Program funds and his plans to study at Andrews, the mayor himself walked in.

At the time, the area surrounding Durban was flooding, and the mayoral parlor was full of meetings to deal with the floods. "The mayor asked his right-hand man what was going on with the floods," Wandile says. "Instead of explaining, the minister pointed to me and said, 'Here's another person we need to help.'"

Wandile explained his situation to the mayor and showed him his documentation and flight information. The mayor asked how much he needed; Wandile told him "at least 150,000 Rand."

The mayor laughed.

But then he reconsidered. He told Wandile, "We need good architects in this city," and then he told the minister

to get funds from various mayoral funds and awards, and to give Wandile the full amount.

"I couldn't believe it!" Wandile says. "Usually, the highest amount they give to a student is 10,000 Rand, but they gave me the full amount!"

Now fully funded, Wandile arrived at Andrews in January 2013 to begin his first year of architecture. Still exhibiting the same determination that got him here, he won the Freshman Architecture Award and then was awarded the Dare to Dream Scholarship, which will fund him for the rest of his degree.

After finishing, Wandile plans to keep his promise "to try to bring about change in Durban," although he's got more new ideas. "Having studied in three countries [South Africa, Zimbabwe and the U.S.] now, I have an international perspective, and I'd like to keep it that way, maybe have an architecture firm that operates in countries around the world and finds ways to spread the gospel."

Wandile sees his talents for architecture as his calling to ministry. "If you look at the life of Jesus Christ, He didn't just preach to people, He healed the sick, gave bread to people, and that was an even greater revelation than just preaching," he says. There's also a great need for churches, which can often cost congregations a lot. "Architects can easily provide the design services," Wandile says. "If we give money to the poor, clothes to those who don't have clothes, shelter to the homeless, and preach, then our message will have a greater impact."



Wandile Mthiyane is pictured with his family in Durban, South Africa, in December 2012.



Wandile receives feedback on an assignment from Mark Moreno, associate professor of architecture. (Photo by Darren Heslop)