

Buy a Brick; Build a Home

Grad student project makes a difference in South Africa

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With just \$10 to [#BuyingABrickToBuildAHome](#) we can make this rendering a reality. Donate at the link in the article to help us make the Mtshali's dream a reality.

By: Rebecca Coleman

Seek Knowledge, Affirm Faith, Change the World. Andrews students can quote the University's tagline-turned-mission-statement in their sleep. However, one group in particular isn't waiting to change the world until they graduate; they are doing it right now.

Ubuntu Design Group (UDG), a small nonprofit organization founded by Wandile Mthyiane, a recent graduate of the Andrews University School of Architecture & Interior Design, is all about using architecture to improve communities around the world. They are currently working in South Africa.

"Managing urban areas has become one of the most important development challenges of the 21st century," says John Wilmoth, director of UN DESA's Population Division. "Our success or failure in building sustainable cities and communities will be a major factor in the success of the post-2015 UN development agenda."

According to UN HABITAT over a quarter of the world's population will be living in slums by 2030.

“That’s less than 15 years away,” says Mthyiane, now studying as an architecture graduate student. “Ubuntu seeks to address that problem. We want to have a sustainable impact on the world.”

The word Ubuntu is a Zulu word that encapsulate the essence of humanity. Many people translate it to mean “I am because you are.” UDG takes this premise and uses it as the foundation for the way it operates. Communities build communities. Engaging people to help others is a cycle in which paying it forward benefits others as much as it benefits you.

In 2015, Mthyiane started UDG as a specialized organization that partners with local municipalities in South Africa and around the world to help meet the needs of the underprivileged in the community. Through partnerships with local organizations and others, like Andrews, UDG works much like an architecture firm and takes on clients.

Ubuntu’s first project is working with the Mtshali family from Umbumbulu, South Africa. The Mtshalis are a resilient family. Nkosinathi, the father, survived a tragic road accident which left him handicapped and unable to properly provide for his wife and young son. After the family lost their home to a storm, the Mtshalis made the decision to send their son away to live with relatives.

“I feed Nkosinathi every meal that he eats and I bathe him,” says Mrs. Mtshali. “Everything is difficult and the space where we are staying is very cramped. We did not want to submit our child to that.”

The Mtshalis simply desire a safe and happy home in which to live and contribute to the economy. The Andrews University graduate architecture class and UDG are already working on turning the Mtshali family’s dream into a reality. Andrews students designed the complete handicap-accessible structure for the Mtshali house. These designs will also serve as a template for all future houses built by UDG and can be scaled and altered for use on a global level. This is where community and giving to receive—the spirit of Ubuntu—comes into play; not only are the architecture students actively changing the world, they are receiving a one-of-a-kind experiences that will help shape their future careers through a partnership with UDG.

One student put it best when they said, “This experience allowed me to have a different perspective on what I would like to do with architecture. I see designing for the less fortunate as a grand opportunity to not only design for those in greatest need, but to truly listen to them and involve them in the process and allow them to express themselves in ways they may not be used to.”

We invite you to join the community that is helping improve the lives of the Mtshali family. Construction of the house will begin in just a few short days on March 15, 2017. UDG is moving ahead in faith with only half of the funds needed for the completion of the house. If you feel that you would like to be a part of Ubuntu, there is a way you can help.

A few weeks ago, UDG launched the "Buy a Brick, Build a Home" campaign. A brick costs only \$10, and all the money raised will go straight into the building of the Mtshali home. Of course, larger donations are welcome.

To find out more about the project and to donate, visit [the project's website](#).

To read more about Ubuntu Design Group, Andrews University students and the people that they are serving, please visit ubuntudesigngroup.com and like our Facebook page at [Ubuntu Design Group](#).

"Don't forget to do good and share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God." Hebrews 13:16

Related Website(s): <https://www.crowdrise.com/buy-a-brick-build-a-home-the-mtshalis-family/fundraiser/wandilemthiyane>

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