

These children invite you ...



*The child is endowed with unknown powers, which can guide us to a radiant future. If what we really want is a new world, then education must take as its aim the development of these hidden possibilities.
~ Maria. Montessori*

to create a Montessori School for them!

**Timeline for the Nhimbe for Progress School,
Magaya Village, Mhondoro, Zimbabwe, Africa, Earth**

1970's

Zimbabwean musician, the irrepressible Dumisani Maraire and other virtuosos from Africa bring Shona music to the west coast of North America. Hundreds of Americans love, dance to, and learn this utterly enthralling weave of melody and rhythm. Keith Barton and a primary guide, Karen Madsen-Barton are among them.

1994

Karen Madsen-Barton meets Ruth Schneider, (associate of Robert Muller) then working to help outcast children in India. Karen **declares** to Ruth that when she starts her own Montessori School, it will support Montessori in a third world country. (Dr. Robert Muller served the UN for 40 years and is known as the Father of Global Education.)

1995

Karen Madsen-Barton and the local community start the primary [Sundborn Children's House](#) in Albany, Oregon. It continues to serve 25 children in a house with garden – the design of which was inspired by Swedish artist Carl Larsson.

1999

Ancient Ways teacher of indigenous music, Jaiyen Beck, begins a cross-cultural partnership with Cosmas Magaya, well-known teacher and performer of the traditional mbira music, the same day Dumi Maraire passes on. As a give-back to Zimbabwean village life that brought the Shona music to North America, Jaiyen

and Cosmas start a grass roots community development and sustainability effort to serve 7 villages in rural Zimbabwe. Karen requests that Jaiaen ask the Zimbabwean people if they would be interested in a school for their 3 to 6 year olds. Jaiaen returns to Oregon with an enthusiastic **YES** from the community.

When talking about sustainability, it is the child who will **ultimately** bring about change. In any conversation about returning to sustainability, a critical component is fostering the potential of young children; they are the ones that will absorb and live the change.

a child's life is the path

~ [Ancient Ways](#)

2001

Parents of the Oregon Sundborn Children's House fund the construction of a school building in Mhondoro. For these villages, it is the first indigenous pre-school and enjoys tremendous widespread community support.

2002 to 2006

We consistently serve 65 children per day – with 70 to 80 registered. School is held five days per week in the morning.

Every year, Sundborn School raises funds and sends educational materials to the school that will fit in Jaiaen's suitcase – the only sure way to transport goods to this rural region. Sundborn also funds the serving of a daily, nutritious snack of corn milk, homemade bread and peanut bread as well as purchasing seeds for a Community Center garden that provides fresh fruits and vegetables.

2006 to present

The Nhimbe School enrollment has grown. The success of the school management along with the support and enthusiasm of donors stimulates an open door policy. Cosmas and Jaiaen decide to welcome neighboring villages into the Nhimbe preschool. There are now 140 children attending, expanding to a morning and afternoon program. Due to the deprivation of family food sources, the diet for the children is varied to include beans, dried fish, rice and porridge. Local cooperatives are started to help support the preschool cooks, providing fresh peanut butter and buns. Fruits and vegetables are purchased to support the orchard and garden produce harvest.

Cosmas Magaya is a village headman of the Magaya village, which is one of the 7 villages in this Mhondoro region. He acts as the Project Director for the entire project which supports many aspects of community development for the 7 villages. Even as political conditions in the country decline, the Nhimbe school community continues to thrive, partly because it is held carefully by the nurturing of the entire project. A nurse, village health worker, and dispensary support any basic health concern that arises, often inspiring the offering of workshops for the families in hygiene and sanitation as they deal with the

common problems of life in rural Africa throughout the year. The Community Center grounds are kept up and the library expanded with the children in mind. The spirit of the people is strong and optimistic. Held up as an example of a model preschool by the government education minister, its graduates excel in the government elementary school. Due to the successes, the model provided by the preschool and the project in general has been utilized to begin another project and preschool in another region of Zimbabwe, directed by Fradreck Mujuru.

A push for improved education is sweeping the continent. The government is expected to establish mandatory minimum salaries for all pre-school teachers in Zimbabwe before 2008, but the economic challenges facing the country take priority. The Shona community continues to strongly support the school and demonstrates this with donations of firewood and in-season produce.

The strategic leaders of the school include:

- ❖ Cosmas Magaya, Project Director in Zimbabwe
- ❖ Jaijen Beck, Executive Director of [Ancient Ways](#) in Scio, Oregon, USA and
- ❖ Karen Madsen-Barton, Director of [Sundborn Children's House](#), Albany, Oregon, USA.

The leaders are ready to invite this stable, established pre-school community to the next step of transitioning to an AMI primary Montessori school.

Vision for the *Nhimbe School, Zimbabwe

This program has the potential to develop quickly into a model school for rural Africa. It is ready for a significant increase in strategic and daily leadership as well as funding for teacher training, teacher salaries, classroom materials and related development.

The Nhimbe school offers an organic, sound foundation, built on the commitment of the local people.

The existing leaders want to document this transition process to make it replicable for the birth and growth of subsequent Montessori environments around the world.

We seek others who would like to participate at any level.

The organization administering the overall project, [Ancient Ways](#), is a 501(c)3 non-profit. [Sundborn Children's House](#), also a 501(c)3, is promoting the continued progress of the preschool into a Montessori environment. Both organizations appreciate the support of the following schools that have joined in this effort:

[Northwest Montessori](#), Seattle, Washington

[Portage Collaborative Montessori School](#) in North Canton, Ohio

[Humberside Montessori School](#), Toronto, Ontario

If we ponder the influence that education can have on the attainment of world peace, it becomes clear that we must make the child and his education our primary concern.

~ Maria. Montessori



Nhimbe School
Magaya Village, Zimbabwe



Children watering the
strawberry garden.

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*Nhimbe is a word from the Shona people of Zimbabwe referring to a community working together to help each other in daily life, for example, during harvest time.