



We travel to the northern tip of our synod and the other side of the globe for Volume 1, issue 2 of The Lay of the Land. This is the story of two ordinary women with an extraordinary idea.

Dawn-Marie Hanrahan, attended Zion Lutheran Church in Ferndale for the first time with her 6- and 8-year-old children 36 years ago. After Sunday school that first Sunday, her 6-year-old pleaded, “Mommy, Mommy, can we please stay?” They did.

In 2013, Shilla Adyero, a Ugandan woman studying at the Fairhaven School at Western Washington University, arrived at Zion Lutheran Church for Easter morning worship service.

A Custer, Washington, couple who had visited Uganda previously, had heard Shilla speaking about sustainable development opportunities and were so impressed they invited her to continue her studies in the United States, at their expense. She was living with them and attending Fairhaven School. Homesick and missing her village community, Shilla wanted to connect with a Christian congregation.

Shilla and Dawn-Marie met that Easter morning and became instant friends. Zion felt “like home” to Shilla, so she continued to attend services and welcomed the invitation to join our congregation officially. Soon after they were working together to support the Slum Doctor Programme, a non-profit that focuses on health care, public health, food supplies, education, and aid for communities affected by HIV/Aids in Kenya and Uganda.

When Shilla’s term with her host family was complete, she was suddenly in need of new housing. Dawn-Marie was aware of an alternative housing possibility with another Zion family. Robin and Bob Ogmundson had lost their 27-year-old daughter, Amy, to juvenile cancer just a few months earlier. After prayerful consideration, Dawn-Marie approached the Ogmundsons with Shilla’s housing need and they, in turn, generously agreed to host Shilla as their contribution to her philanthropic work and studies. Both the Ogmundsons and Shilla found great solace and healing in giving of themselves and their resources.

One afternoon, while sitting together in Shilla’s new home, Shilla shared with Dawn-Marie that because the Ogmundsons had taken her in as their own daughter, she wanted to do something special for them, in Amy’s honor. Shilla wanted to bring books to her home village in Gulu; she wanted to build the first public library. When Dawn-Marie asked, “So where do we start?”, the seed for Lutino Adunu was planted. Lutino Adunu means “children loved” in Shilla’s native Acholi language and is now a registered Ugandan children’s educational non-profit. It is the only organization in the region that serves the needs of children and has grown to become so much more serving the greater communities.

Dawn-Marie stated that realizing the dream and expansion of Lutino Adunu has been a long and winding journey, full of twists and unexpected challenges. But then, aren’t a lot of the journeys God takes us on that way?

Dawn-Marie recalled story after story of how the Holy Spirit has worked in and through them along this journey.

- A \$20,000 P.E.O. International Scholarship award given to Shilla to continue her graduate studies in sustainable development at the School for International Training, in Brattleboro, VT.
- Ogmundson family connections additionally provided Shilla’s housing while a student at S.I.T.
- Many fundraisers, donations and grants that, much like the Bible story of the 5 loaves and 3 fish, continued to sustain Lutino Adunu.
- The airline agent who so kindly waived the overweight costs of Shilla’s suitcases returning to Gulu, because Shilla had filled her suitcases with the first library books rather than return home with her personal clothing and belongings.
- The generosity of the Catholic dioceses to allow use of an outbuilding as the temporary community library.

- The challenges overcome when the temporary library was immediately closed due to termite infestation causing damage to the structure, furniture, books and administration documents.
- The life-saving assistance Lutino Adunu offered during the Covid-19 shutdown: masks for law enforcement and medical personnel, hospital and clinic supplies, emergency transportation, providing infant formula for orphaned babies, which saved their lives, and so much more.
- The MicroLoan Program established to assist start-up businesses.
- The Atek Pad Project, training sewers in making reuseable feminine hygiene kits. Adequate hygiene supplies for young girls and women significantly reduce school drop-out rates. To date, Lutino Adunu has trained 57 schools and multiple communities throughout the region.
- Development of the Community Demonstration Farm on Lutino Adunu land in partnership with the Pangora Demonstration Farm. Includes hands-on youth-group training for sustainable agriculture, education, and community empowerment; Crop and Seedling Production; and School Feeding and Gardening Projects. More information can be made found at: [Global Opportunity Fund \(GO Fund\)](#).
- Initiated a cooperative relationship with the local prison to begin a prisoner reading program and women's empowerment groups
- October 2023, Dawn-Marie coordinated a local "Fun-raiser" Dinner and Live Auction in Ferndale in support of building the permanent library. The single even raised or \$47,000 and the cost to host the event was generously supplemented by several Lutheran member's Thrivent Action Team Grants.

And the list goes on with too many to include here! Of course, there are countless stories of challenges along the way, too.

- Lack of adequate funding
- Unreliable internet connection for corresponding
- Lack of adequate devices: phone, laptop, computers
- Political unrest within Uganda
- Lack of transportation
- Covid pandemic
- Critical medical and survival needs of the community utilizing Lutino Adunu resources
- Government lockdown
- Supply shortages
- Misunderstandings due to cultural differences
- Funding withdrawals
- Rising costs of building materials
- Inclement weather conditions

With Shilla living in and operating Lutino Adunu in Uganda and Dawn-Marie living in and assisting from the Pacific Northwest, the distance alone has been sometimes overwhelming. But anytime another challenge arises, Dawn-Marie and Shilla turn to prayer for guidance and discernment. Their dream of building a public library in Shilla's home village has expanded into a resource center with Administration Offices, public Conference Room and so many more programs and projects now serving the wider community. These ordinary women with an extraordinary idea have never lost sight of the facility's completion. Grace happens. And God completes good works begun.

The new Lutino Adunu Community Library and Resource Center is nearing completion. Additional funding is still very much needed. If you would like to find out more information about Lutino Adunu, you can Follow them on their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/lutino.org/> They also have a GoFundMe online donation site, if you wish to help them finish the building and fill the library with books. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-build-lutino-adunuresource-center>.

Joyfully,

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