

Local group helps supply Nigeria with drinking water

While meeting urgent need, NuWay plans site to host missionaries

BY LUCY MAY

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After just a year of work in the village of Awa in southern Nigeria, the NuWay Foundation is making a difference.

The foundation has funded four water stations in the village to help supply residents with clean, safe drinking water, said NuWay founder Evans Nwankwo, CEO of Megen Construction Co. The organization also has provided school supplies to the village and is funding five additional teachers there.

NuWay decided to focus on water first since it is a basic need that has an immediate impact on the lives of the people of Awa, where Nwankwo lived until he was 19.

"It's not the end-all, and additional aid is needed," Nwankwo said. "But for now, instead of walking three miles to fetch water that isn't all that great, you can go two blocks to fetch water that is good."

When he launched NuWay in 2006, Nwankwo wanted to build a facility in Awa that would host visiting missionaries and others from the United States and serve as a base of operations for the foundation.

That's still in the works, he said. Land has been secured and is being surveyed. But the foundation's board decided to focus on projects that would have a more immediate impact while that project was under way.

"When you get on the ground, you find out not only what's important but what's

urgent," said Chuck Proudfit, a NuWay board member and CEO of Self-Sustaining Enterprises Inc., a Mason-based nonprofit that does work in northern Nigeria. "It's important for us to build a facility in Awa. But it's important and urgent to get fresh water for the people in that village right now."

Proudfit said NuWay's collaboration with Self-Sustaining Enterprises has helped the organization make an impact more quickly, and he expects that to continue.

"As each year passes, we're going to get faster and faster at accelerating our progress," Proudfit said.

Nwankwo estimates the foundation has invested between \$60,000 and \$85,000 in Awa and stressed there is much more to be done. NuWay will hold its second annual fundraiser, the NuWay Bianu, from 6:30 to 10 p.m. Nov. 30. Last year's event raised about \$150,000, and Nwankwo hopes to top that.

The event will honor Robert "Chip" Harrod, executive director of Bridges for a Just Community, as recipient of the 2007 "International Bridge Award."

Proudfit looks for the Bianu to also raise awareness about NuWay and the impact strategically focused nonprofits can have.

"When you're invited to a fund-raiser for Nigeria, the first thought is why would I send money to this corrupt country where it will be wasted?" Proudfit said. "We have to create credibility. And we need to make people aware of a way to take money, resources and strategies and funnel them directly to the people who need it."



Nwankwo