

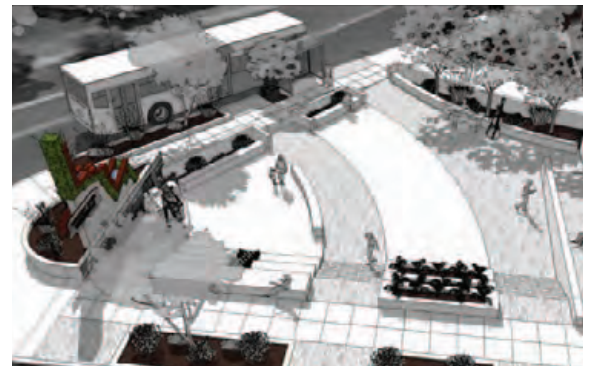
Help at home and abroad

When a devastating tsunami ripped through Southeast Asia on Dec. 26, 2004, Oregon architects responded by forming a local chapter of Architects Without Borders and volunteered to design a school in Sri Lanka. Since then, AWB-Oregon has responded to natural disasters along the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina and in Haiti. When floodwaters swamped Vernonia, they volunteered design services that helped local residents raise the foundations of their homes.

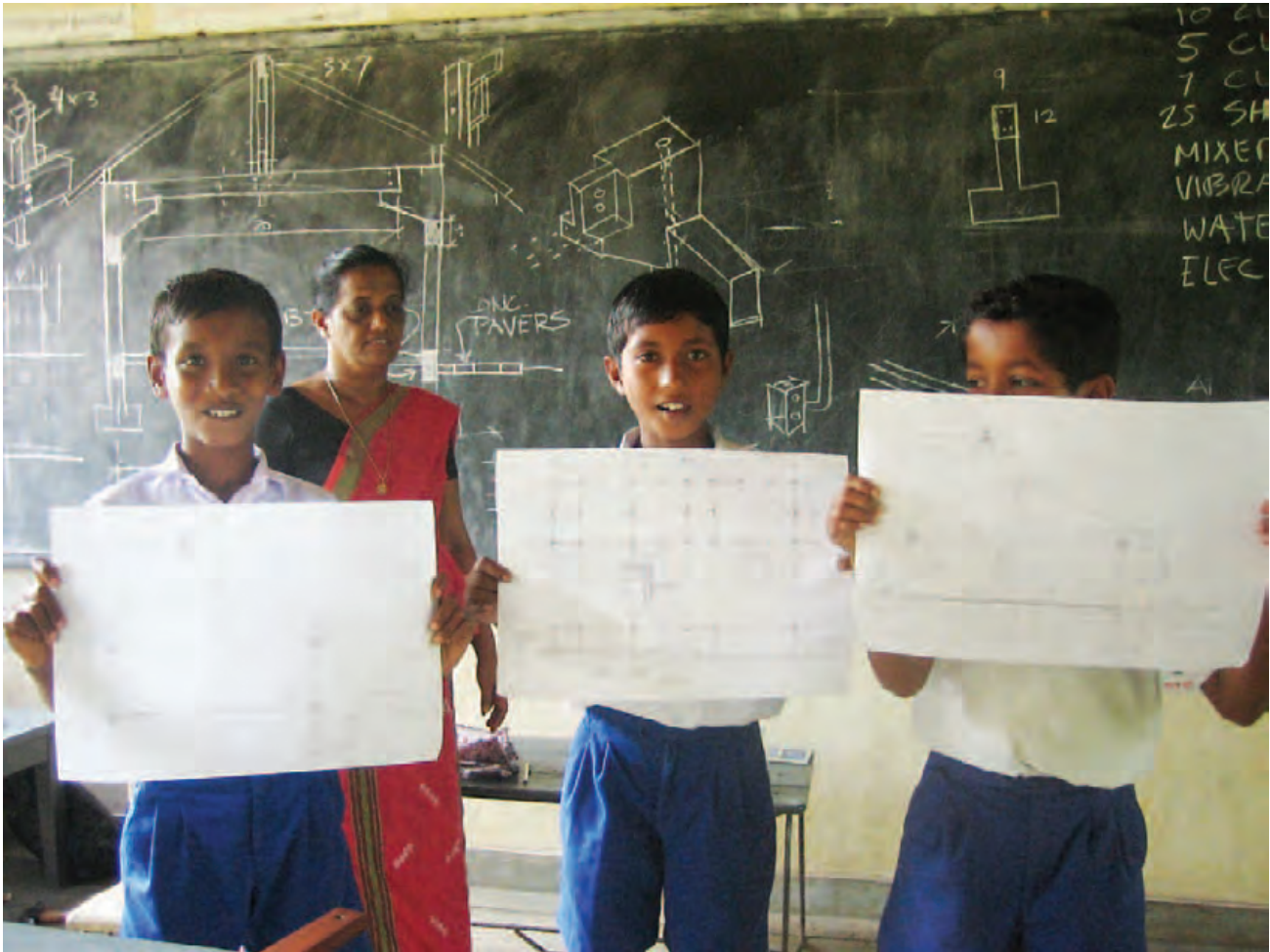
While operating as an all-volunteer organization isn't easy, the chapter has enjoyed steady growth and its email list now includes more than 300 people in the architecture and building industries. Its supporters include AIA Oregon, which provided funding for Hurricane Katrina response. AWB-Oregon makes its home at the Center for Architecture along with AIA Oregon and AIA Portland.

AWB-Oregon has expanded in terms of projects as well. Along with disaster response, it has done international projects such as a multi-building campus for a high school in Ethiopia, a hospital in Africa, and an orphanage and education center in Haiti. Closer to home, the chapter is developing neighborhood parks such as the Sabin Triangle pocket park. A design charrette held for the Sabin Neighborhood Association explored the reuse of an underutilized parcel in Northeast Portland and generated choices for residents. The selected design features arced patterns of permeable paving, bioswale planters and community sculpture. AWB-Oregon's domestic programs also include educational outreach, design studios, community workshops and training programs on cost-effective design solutions and environmentally friendly building elements.

"We have definitely branched out to look at more local projects that address the chronic needs in our community, and we've been reaching out to local non-profits and asking who we can help out," said Abby Dacey, AIA, with Boora Architects. "We have some volunteers who love to work on international projects, but there are others who want to do projects closer to home."



ARCHITECTS WITHOUT BORDERS



John Blumthal, AIA, a principal with Yost Grube Hall Architecture, said one of the biggest rewards is seeing architects and architecture students use their expertise to address urgent needs, such as shelter, health care, education and community institutions. "My enthusiasm for the work of AWB-Oregon is renewed at each meeting and with each project team's work as I see the commitment and dedication of new and returning volunteers who want to put their talents to work for the benefit of others," he said.

Alene Davis, AIA, senior project manager at SERA Architects, joined the group in 2008. Through her work on U.S. embassies and consulates overseas, she has seen economic disparity firsthand and wanted a tangible way to help struggling

communities. Davis said AWB-Oregon has greatly improved its electronic communication capabilities with volunteers, project teams and donors. That makes it easier for teams to work collaboratively, even when many miles may separate them.

AWB-Oregon ultimately hopes to hire a paid staff member to help manage the organization, thus streamlining its efforts and allowing it to take on even more projects. In the meantime, the chapter is using the valuable experience it has gained over the last six years to ensure its volunteers remain engaged in meaningful projects, Blumthal said. "We want to continue to be the vehicle to connect the great talents and generosity of architects and designers with local and worldwide communities in need." ■

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pocket park