

# OnDemandJournal.com

Marketing Knowledge for Digital Printing Executives

---



**ALEM** threaded his dilapidated cab through traffic toward the hotel at the far end of Poydras. He was from Ethiopia and spoke a patois of accented English. He was working towards becoming a citizen, learning things most of us have long forgotten, and was very interested in history and how the U.S. has come to be the way it is today. He asked questions. “I learn something new from everyone,” he told me. In his five years here, he’s had some hard times, but he knows what he wants and keeps his focus on becoming a citizen, getting more education and having a happy life.

“It is hard coming here,” he said. “But there is opportunity, there is hope, and I can find a way to fit in. I will never give up.” We shook hands when we parted, his grip firm, his gaze steady. Alem looked straight into my eyes and smiled, thanking me for talking with him.

**Tales from the  
Open Road**

words & pictures  
by Noel Ward,  
Executive Editor

Opportunity and hope. That was the beginning of three interesting days in New Orleans at the Konica Minolta dealers’ convention, days where I saw this ‘never give up’ attitude demonstrated in multiple ways. The most inspiring was a dozen blocks down Bourbon Street in a red brick building called McDonogh 15.

*continued on next page*

### The Little Red School House

McDonogh 15, also called The Little Red School House, is a charter school. As such, it doesn't have to march to quite the same drummer as other public schools, which is a good thing because it has a focus on the arts and music in addition to providing a solid academic foundation. The building contains kids in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade and is the most exciting school I have ever seen.



The school is the focus of this Tale because of what Konica Minolta is doing to support it, what it means to the kids and teachers now, and what it can mean moving forward. Konica Minolta has formed a fund that will provide initial support to help rebuild the infrastructure at McDonogh 15, then go on to support a variety of other needs, including scholarships and other financial support for students.

“We selected New Orleans for our dealer and partner event knowing we also wanted to contribute to the city in other ways,” explains Jun Haraguchi, President and CEO of Konica Minolta Business Solutions, USA. “The New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau identified the opportunity for us to work with The Little Red School House. When we visited the school, we were immediately inspired by every teacher and student we met. The school’s rich history in the creative arts not only embodies the spirit of New Orleans, but also aligns with what we stand for as a company—promoting the essentials of imaging and building global initiatives around disaster relief, supporting local culture and next-generation education.”

### The McDonogh Makeover

The kids at McDonogh, primarily African-American and Hispanic, have lacked the socio-economic opportunities that most kids—like yours and mine, probably—take for granted. Then came Katrina. They were scattered, many displaced to cities in Texas. Being resourceful, they called their teachers’ cell phones. “When can we come back to school?” they asked. “We want to come back to school.”

But their school was all but destroyed. The city of New Orleans offered up McDonogh 15, which while in disrepair, was at least a standing building. “It was in rough shape,” relates School Leader and New Orleans native Gary Robichaux. “So we had to fix it up if we were going to use it.”

And fix it they did. The entire staff and parents came in and painted walls, cleaned, washed, and made the place ready, some working a hundred hours a week, to get the building ready, because the kids were coming back. Teachers went to Houston and Dallas to find them and bring them home. The school opened last summer, less than a year after Katrina, and today the doors open at 7:30 in the morning and school lets out at 5:30 in the afternoon. Then there are two Saturdays a month.

The long hours are there to help the kids get caught up, because some are over two years behind in reading, writing and math. But they are gaining ground every day, and the focus is for every kid to go to college. This in a student body where few of the parents have education beyond high school and many have less than that. It is inspiring. It is hard. It has to be frustrating. But the teachers and staff are some of the most positive people I’ve ever met. Like Alem, these teachers and these kids are not going to give up.

I want you to try something. If you have kids in grades 1 through 8, ask them what year they will be going to college. Don’t give them time to calculate. I bet you a cup of coffee they won’t know. But any kid at McDonogh 15 knows, and they will tell you. Proudly. In fact, each student identifies their grade level by the year they will enter college and classrooms are known not by number, but by the teacher’s alma mater—LSU, Harvard, Cornell, and many more—emphasizing the focus on the importance of going to college.



Headed to college in 2013.

## Critical Support

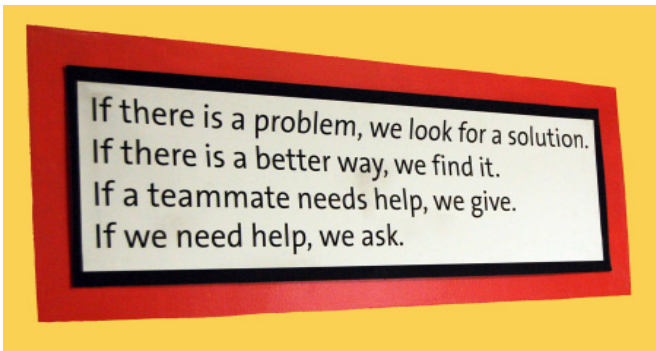
The initial support from Konica Minolta will fund repair of exterior cracks, damaged windows and deteriorating bathrooms, as well as upgrading and adding playground equipment to a local park. Konica Minolta's starting goal is to raise up to \$200,000 through donations from its holding company and employees, as well as its network of dealers and business partners.

"We work hard to make this school a warm and happy place for the kids. Our teachers and parent volunteers have done a lot of cleaning and painting, but there is so much more we can do," says Robichaux. "This donation from Konica Minolta will allow us to complete large scale renovations that will make this building a place that honors the hard work of our students and teachers."



Konica Minolta began making the donations while I was there. Not only was the first check delivered to the school, but at the dealer convention they held an auction of an enviable array of sports memorabilia ranging from autographed photos of famous players, signed balls, jerseys, helmets, and more. With all funds going directly to McDonogh 15, the proceeds totaled some \$20,000. And that's just for starters.

Haraguchi told me his two passions in life are music and education. So it is fitting that he lead Konica Minolta's efforts in supporting a school with a focus on creative arts and music. He said the company will continue to make bi-annual donations of necessary school supplies and will donate an additional \$20,000 worth of products for the students' everyday use, including graphic application software, wide-format color printers and high-speed scanners. Through these donations, McDonogh kids, who are passionate about the arts, will be able to improve the quality of their work and take even more pride in their creative projects.



Signage throughout the school encourages focus, collaboration and problem solving.



Bill Brewster, VP of Marketing, Konica Minolta Business Solutions USA (L), and Gary Robichaux, School Leader, McDonogh15

Konica Minolta has also committed to an annual \$45,000 investment to provide financial support to students who could not otherwise afford the costs of private education. Each year, three \$15,000 scholarships will be awarded to best-in-class students—one based on academic performance, one for achievement in the visual arts, and a third for proficiency in the musical arts. These scholarships will offer opportunities for graduating eighth grade students to attend top New Orleans high schools that will provide them with the foundation to pursue higher education.

"While we were thrilled to be able to fund the critical renovations to McDonogh 15, our goal was for this to be more than just a one-time contribution," says Bill Brewster, vice president of marketing at Konica Minolta. "By instituting programs for both the near and long term and involving our entire organization and our business partner network, we are able to contribute in ways that spans students, teachers and parents—both today and tomorrow."

## Knowledge is Power



Let the KNOWLEDGE Roll!

McDonogh 15 is part of KIPP, the Knowledge is Power Program, a national network of 52 open-enrollment public schools in 16 states and the District of Columbia. Focused putting underserved children on the path to college, KIPP's innovative programs and approaches help give kids the academic skills and character traits they need to succeed in competitive high schools, colleges—and in life. According

to Robichaux, 80 percent of graduates of other KIPP network schools have enrolled in college, compared with only 25 percent of public high school students in New Orleans.

*continued on next page*

