

Babe of the week: Bubbly Ampaire is thirsty for success

Sizzling Entertainment

Thursday, 07 June 2012 20:53  
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Small, bordering on skinny, and wearing a wide smile, Christine Ampaire is no simple campus student.

Together with four other students, Ampaire successfully developed Mafuta Go – an application that helps users find the nearest petrol station with the cheapest prices and other services.

She explains her success in developing mobile application as one purely born out of teamwork, ambition and passion. The third-year student of Software Engineering at Makerere University recalls the road to success:

“During my recess term last year, my dad brought me papers requiring one to apply for the Googlestudents’ ambassadorship and I was extremely interested.”

Her father is Edward Kataama, the head electrician at Makerere’s Estates department. Ampaire wrote essays about how they would use Google products to change Africa.

The effort paid off. Google-Uganda organized a software orientation at Protea hotel, where Ampaire interacted and shared ideas with Google users from different countries.

After her orientation, she attended a pitching event organized by Richard Zulu, head of Google Technology User Groups (GTUG) and Garage 48 (an organization specializing in coding events based in Estonia) in Kampala. On this occasion, Ampaire was exposed to over 20 ideas that could be developed into mobile applications.

“I looked through all the ideas that were pinned up but the mobile fuel locator application caught my eye and I offered to become its project manager,” Ampaire says.

Together with her team of Samuel Paul Remo, Gerald Odur, Jingo Kisakye and James Muranga, she presented the ideas they had pitched for the application before a panel of six judges. Her teammates are all fourth-year students.

They did not win but her faith did not waver. Armed with resolve, Ampaire and her group stormed several petrol stations hoping to share their idea.

The feedback was promising.

Eventually fortune smiled on the group when Mafuta Go was nominated among the top 20 applications at the prestigious mobile events of the year - the Premier Awards in Barcelona, Spain. Organised by AppCircus (a platform that showcases the most innovative applications during mobile or web international events), the awards are a prelude to the opening of the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona.

In February at the award giving ceremony, Ampaire was humbled by the announcement. Mafuta Go won second place after Bear Care (a mobile game application). It won the Ring Master award.

“It was a very humbling experience when we were announced as first runner-up; it reassured us that it was worth our effort,” Ampaire says.

The application was officially launched last Friday and it can now be accessed through phones with mobile internet browsers on [www.mafutago.com](http://www.mafutago.com) and also on the Android market (Google’s system that allows for an organized listing and easy downloading of applications for specific phones).

Even with this success, Ampaire is looking to greater heights. Her team merged with three more developers to form CodeSync, an organisation that develops mobile applications. They are developing applications that will be relevant to society andmake internet use popular, under the slogan, “Sync Differently.”

The second of five children, Ampaire attended Nakasero primary school between 1997 and 2003, where she was class prefect and a good debater. She carried on debating at Maryhill High School, where she completed her O-level.

“During my O-level, I spent most of my time in the library because I loved to read all sorts of literature. In my childhood, I had envisioned being a writer,” she says.

But the writer’s dream faded after excelling in computer studies at Maryhill. She later joined Ndejje High School in 2008 for A-level and served as vice president of the computer club and chief editor of the writers club, among other posts. She then joined Makerere in 2010.

She pays tribute to her mother Francesca Birungi for her strong Christian faith that keeps her hope alive and her father’s pursuance and sacrifice

to see her succeed. Ampaire is currently one of the Google student ambassadors for Makerere University. She is also a proud member of WITU (Women in Technology Uganda).

Away from her studies, Ampaire likes hosting friends at home, reading novels and poetry.

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