

News

GW community can improve lives of children caught in war

By Samba Fall
Special to The Pilot

In 2003, three young filmmakers left Southern California for Africa in search of a story to tell. The original plan was to visit Sudan, but Jason Russell, Bobby Bailey and Laren Poole found their story in Uganda, where rebels were fighting the country's government.

As part of their battle, the rebels abduct and brainwash innocent kids and turn them into heartless killers with little hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Poole, Russell and Bailey experienced and filmed the hardships and suffering that many Ugandan children go through day after day. That film is now a documentary called "Invisible Children."

Campaigns of support for peace in Uganda have been organized at many colleges and universities of America. Now, it is Gardner-Webb University's turn.

Through her Public Relations Techniques class, Professor Lisa Luedeman of the Communications Studies Department is helping some students finalize a campaign for Gardner-Webb and the surrounding communities.

"Actually, a group of students came up with the idea," said Luedeman.

"They came across the Invisible Children organization, got the DVD, and suggested to build a campaign of awareness out of it. The rest of the class agreed with them, and here we are working on implementing the whole project.

"This is a learning process in the field of Public Relations for these students," said Luedeman. "Each student has been assigned a specific duty and is asked to provide weekly reports throughout the whole process. But most of all, you have to value the students' desire to bring awareness about this injustice.

"This campaign is intended to provide participants a sense of awareness and hopefully action in the form of donations, regarding the war in Uganda and its devastating effects on children as young as 4 who are abducted and forced to become soldiers.

"We hope this first campaign will create awareness, and then continue on in upcoming semesters," said Luedeman.

There will be two phases of the upcoming campaign, beginning with a screening of "Invisible Children" at the final Verge worship service of the semester April 29. The Verge will begin at 8 p.m. in

the Dover Campus Center; the screening is expected to start around 8:45 p.m.

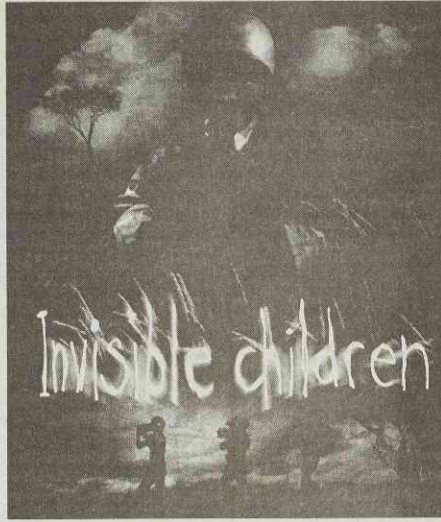
The second phase is a simulated night commute to represent what Ugandan children are subjected to in trying to escape abduction by the rebel forces. At present, Ugandan kids who are afraid of being kidnapped gather each night to sleep at bus stations, hospital yards and abandoned buildings. That phenomenon, called "night commuting", saves many kids from being kidnapped straight out of bed at home (if they have a home or family).

Donations are encouraged, but not required, to attend and participate in the events. A short reception will be held complete with door prizes, donated by community sponsors, for those who donate at least \$1 to the campaign to help these children.

"Of course, we would love to raise a lot of money, but even if we only raise a small amount with this first event, it can go so far in Uganda," said Luedeman.

"It doesn't take a lot to make a big difference, such as building schools and dormitories where these children will have some kind of protection from such atrocities.

"I think that being a Christian institution leads



and motivates our daily actions," said Luedeman.

"But you have to appreciate and applaud these students' understanding and determination of getting involved in such a global humanitarian effort. We are hoping to have a lot of support and feedback from Gardner-Webb and our surrounding communities."

Watching this documentary may change your lives as it did that of the Bailey, Russell and Poole, as well as the students in Luedeman's

Public Relations class. Bring a handkerchief with you, because you will no doubt be moved by the stories of children such as Jacob, Emmy or Innocent—whose innocence was lost because they had the misfortune of being born into a state of war.

For more information about the event, contact Lisa Luedeman at 704-406-2055 or luedeman@gardnerwebb.edu.

Visit the Web site invisiblechildren.com for information about the cause.

Nanney Hall becoming a female dorm next year

By Kory McNair
Pilot staff writer

Nanny Residence Hall is becoming a women's dorm after years of housing men, thanks to an influx of female students expected for the fall 2008 semester.

"We are growing and excited about this growth," said Sherri Ingram, director of residence life at Gardner-Webb University.

Originally, Nanney was a female dorm, but some years ago it was designated a men's dorm to accommodate the number of male students.

"I think the changes are necessary," said Cole Harden, who is currently the Resident Assistant for Nanney's second floor.

"Nanney used to be a girls' dorm, so they're reversing it back to what it originally was."

The H.A.P.Y. Hall wing, which is currently a female dorm, will become a men's dorm next year.

However, the changes though are not leaving current Nanney residents out in the cold.

They received preference over other students when it came to choosing their housing arrangements for next year. They had first choice for the room or apartment that they wanted, if the space was available.

"Gardner-Webb's being pretty fair, for giving Nanney residents first choice to where they want to live," said Harden.

The changes, however, have some Nanney residents divided.

"I don't mind it," said Ben Prewitt, who currently resides on the first floor. "I'm not too angry about it."

Second-floor resident Chase Westbrook isn't as at ease about it.

"I'm not necessarily pleased by it, but I understand it," said Westbrook. "I don't like that we have to leave the community that we have created here."

Another resident had a similar attitude.

"I just don't think it's really fair that we have to move out," said Shane Bryant, who also lives on Nanney's second floor.

U. Kentucky student flees war-torn home, finds second chance in U.S.

By Jill Laster
Kentucky Kernel (U. Kentucky)

(U-WIRE) LEXINGTON, Ky. - Government and rebel forces began fighting in Mabiior Ghack's village in 1987. When he heard shots, 5-year-old Ghack began running.

He couldn't find his parents, and out of fear he did not go back to try to join them.

"When you are in that kind of situation, all you think about is living or dying," he said. "There are no other options. So you have to think of living."

Ghack, who will graduate from the University of Kentucky in May with a civil engineering degree, is one of the "lost boys of Sudan," the name given to more than 27,000 boys displaced or orphaned during the Second Sudanese Civil War between 1983 and 2003.

During the war, government troops systematically attacked Sudanese villages. More than 2 million people were killed during the 20-year war, according to the In-

ternational Rescue Committee. Girls were raped, taken as slaves, killed or adopted by other Sudanese families. Many boys, often orphaned, traveled on foot for weeks to nearby countries as refugees.

Fleeing from his Sudanese village to Ethiopia was a three-week journey. During that time, Ghack and a friend were protected by an older man, and the group managed to avoid the attacks from wild animals and from armed forces while crossing the Sudanese border. Ghack had only the clothes on his back and whatever food he could scavenge when he left Sudan.

It wasn't much better in Ethiopia.

"You can't make it on your own," he said. "Some people tried to go back, and some died because of animals, some died because of hunger, some died because of lack of water."

For three more years Ghack lived in an Ethiopian refugee camp. While there, he didn't think much about whether he would get to see his parents again, if they were even alive -- it was too

unrealistic, he said.

When he was 9, Ethiopian rebels overthrew the government, resulting in chaos for the country. Ghack and others abandoned the camp and began the dangerous trip back to Sudan.

After facing many of the same obstacles he encountered on the way to Ethiopia, Ghack arrived in a small Sudanese town where he lived for about four months before he decided to cross with a group into Kenya, a safer country where he could go to school.

In 1993, six years after fleeing his home village, Ghack figured out how to contact his father. He called from Kenya and told his father he was alive.

In the months that followed, Ghack, 11, saved up money to call about once a month. During middle school he worked as a plumber and tended a small plot of kale, a leafy green vegetable he sold at the market to pay for school supplies.

During their last phone conversation, Ghack told his father he wanted to visit Sudan to see his family. His fa-

ther told him not to because he could be killed in the conflict between rebel and government forces, and to stay in school instead.

A year after they last talked on the phone, Ghack received a letter from his uncle. As he began to open it, his cousin, who knew what it contained, told Ghack to throw it away. He opened it anyway.

His parents had been killed during fighting between the government and rebel forces.

"I was on the bed, and I fell to the floor," Ghack said. "I didn't go to school for two weeks."

Ghack finished high school in Kenya in 2000. A year later, he heard a religious group would be interested in sponsoring him and other refugees going to the United States. The refugees thought it was all talk until they began filling out applications.

After a yearlong process of interviews and paperwork, Ghack was on his way to the United States.

Ghack arrived in Louisville in 2001. He could write

proficiently in English, but he had trouble speaking it. Ghack took classes through the Kentucky Refugee Ministries to learn both American culture and English.

He began working nights at a gas station and taking classes at Jefferson Community College in Louisville during the day. Ghack graduated with an associate degree and applied to the University of Kentucky. The workload was daunting.

"When (my father) told me to go into engineering, I didn't think I would go to college. Even when I was admitted to UK, I didn't think I would graduate," he said.

Ghack, a U.S. citizen since June 2007, has been at UK for four years.

Fellow students sometimes ask Ghack for his story, but he doesn't say much. Someone recently asked him if he was going to visit his parents after graduation. He evaded the question and replied that he would visit family.

"I don't tell a lot of my history because if I tell them, I don't think they would believe it," he said.

Ben Leslie, provost, brings his worldly experience to GWU community

By Lauren Taylor
Pilot staff writer

Quiet strength. Well-chosen and deliberate words — always. No need to speak above a hush; a presence so gently commanding requires no loud or fancy words. He exemplifies gentility and refinement.

Meet Dr. Ben Leslie, Gardner-Webb University's provost.

A provost seeks the good of the students and the faculty, ensuring that every program, curricula and dollar spent shines like a new pair of patent leather shoes.

As President A. Frank Bonner's right-hand man, Leslie is the person to whom all creatures academic report.

Dr. Gayle Price, the new associate provost for schools describes Leslie as "indefinitely patient."

Professor of religion Dr. Kent Blevins calls him "unflappable."

"Ben Leslie has spent his life in the academy and understands and appreciates the importance of academic freedom in the pursuit of truth," Blevins said.

When he's not guiding the university to academic excellence, Leslie and his wife, Kathy, are unpacking their lives, still boxed up from moving into a newly built house, and getting settled in Boil-

ing Springs.

They met at Stamford University when he was 22 years old and majoring in religious studies. He proposed to her under the fireworks on the Fourth of July, and they got married the following June.

The freshly graduated Leslie was gearing up for a career in ministry (for which he's licensed), so shortly after their marriage, the couple went to graduate school at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and when the Leslies moved to Louisville, it was in pursuit of the pulpit.

There was just one thing standing in the way of his career as a Baptist minister: stage fright. Leslie's fear of an audience was crippling, and it didn't mix well with the responsibilities he would assume as a church leader.

But everything changed when he was assigned to give a lecture to his seminary colleagues.

"[It was] only through sheer repetition and help of fellow professors and students that I could not only do it, but enjoy the job of preaching," he says.

He started laying the groundwork to become a professor and decided he should do that groundwork someplace interesting.

He completed a Master of Theology degree at Baptist Theologi-

cal Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and a Doctor of Theology degree at the University of Zurich, Switzerland.

He lived amongst students from Europe, Asia and Africa, mixing with people of many cultures and languages. Into this diverse environment his daughters Mary Katherine and Elizabeth were born.

Through 1983-90, he traveled all over Europe with his family, making friends he still keeps in touch with over the World Wide Web. He remembers most fondly the times in the dining hall at the universities, breaking bread with students he never would have otherwise known.

Upon his return to the United States, he went to work as a professor at North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls, S.D. He taught theology and ethics, and before long became a dean, a transition that proved trying for him.

"Teaching has its challenges, but it's a powerfully affirming vocation," he says.

The gratitude that students show is well worth the effort, according to Leslie. Administration, on the other hand, involves a great deal of problem-solving.

"You have to work harder to the find the joy because it comes at the end of projects," he said. "It's rare



Dr. Ben Leslie

that there is a decision made that everyone is happy with."

Despite the challenges, Leslie is affirmed by his work.

"This is a great place to work," Leslie said. "Gardner-Webb, in my opinion, is truly Christian...in the sense that Christian values and relations do guide the way we conduct ourselves on a day-to-day basis. I know we're not perfect...but I truly see here a caring culture."

As provost, Leslie has assumed a long line of responsibilities: hiring faculty, assessing the academic programs, overseeing the registrar's office, and managing the budget.

The GOAL program, technology services, and the library operations also report to him.

Even with all these powerful responsibilities, he is anything but power-hungry.

"I think the most important thing about him, from a faculty member's perspective, is that he came to Gardner-Webb with an attitude of becoming a leader and not a boss," says Dr. David Yelton, a professor of history.

Leslie is at the center of a "provost trinity" consisting of Price and Dr. James Dire, associate provost of arts and sciences.

"I am amazed at the speed and thoroughness with which he educated himself about all the different areas of Gardner-Webb," said Price, "including pertinent history as well as details of the present and plans for the future."

When he's not occupied with provost duties, Leslie can be found reading a novel, tinkering with computers (one of his favorite hobbies), and dreaming of his next experience abroad—which he hopes will be to Italy or Japan.

Blevins hopes students will take time to get to know Leslie.

"I think they will find, as have I, that Gardner-Webb is blessed to have him as a part of our family," he said.