Enfield students spotlight the genocide in Darfur

By Christine McCluskey
Journal Inquirer

ENFIELD — There's a group of students at Enfield High School who want you to know about what's happening in the Darfur region of Sudan.

"So many people have been affected by the genocide that's going on there," EHS senior Antonia Jackson says.

On Wednesday, May 27, Jackson and the other students of the EHS Darfur Awareness Committee will present a documentary film about the crisis in Darfur, "The Devil Came on Horseback."

The event begins at 7 p.m. in the auditorium at the high school, 1264 Enfield St. It's free and open to the public. Refreshments will be offered.

The students hope to raise some funds for the people of Darfur while they raise awareness of the genocide there. Donations will be accepted at the event, and the students are selling T-shirts for $10 each.

The front of each T-shirt features a sketch of Sudan with a skull over Darfur, and the phrase "Never again?" On the back, it says, "Stand up for them and stand out with us," the EHS Darfur Awareness Committee.

"The Devil Came on Horseback" follows Brian Steidle, a retired U.S. Marine captain and international observer in Darfur, as he documents the genocide in which 400,000 to 500,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million displaced since 2003, EHS social studies and history teacher Sean Patrick Crane says.

The title of the movie refers to the name for the militia groups that collaborate with the Sudanese government's military forces in the Darfur region. The militia are called "janjaweed," which means "devils on horseback."

Scott Hartblay, a professor of social work at Elms College in Chicopee, Mass., will introduce the film Wednesday.

Last year, the International Criminal Court at The Hague in the Netherlands charged Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, with backing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

After he was charged, Bashir effectively removed international aid groups from Darfur, Crane says.

"Those people are pretty much left defenseless right now," he says. "… Their plight has been pretty wretched for the past several years."

He covers the Darfur conflict in his genocide course for seniors at the high school, as does fellow teacher Lisa Darin in her Modern World History course for sophomores.

Crane says he strives to help his students understand how a genocide develops and what causes an average person to turn into someone who commits genocide.

Crane, Darin, and their students formed the EHS Darfur Awareness Committee in 2007. It is a chapter of Students Take Action Now in Darfur or STAND, which has chapters at high schools, colleges, and universities throughout the U.S. and in some other countries.

STAND raises money for the people of Darfur and assists them through projects such as providing women there with portable cookers so they don't have to risk getting raped by going out to seek firewood, Crane says.

The high school group currently includes about 10 "core" students and several others who are involved once in a while, Crane says.

"A lot of our students have really been very active in this committee, and they're pretty gung-ho about it," he says.

Jackson says the students are already planning some events for the next school year, such as a marathon and a penny jar fundraiser.

"I just hope that people will learn more about it and become more aware," Jackson says of the Darfur genocide.

She compares the news coverage of Darfur to that of the swine flu, which has killed far fewer people.

"You hardly hear anything about it," she says of Darfur.

Another member of the EHS Darfur Awareness Committee, sophomore Mary Hastings, agrees that too few know about what's happening in Darfur.

There are refugees from Darfur who have made it to the U.S., she says, and people still there who keep this country in their thoughts.

"They think of what's happening to us," she says.

She hopes her group will make more Americans think about what happens to the people of Darfur.

MARC Cabaret Night set for May 29

By Journal Inquirer Staff

MANCHESTER — MARC Inc. of Manchester will be hosting its annual Cabaret Night on Friday, May 29, at 7 p.m. at Cheney Hall, 177 Hartford Road.

Billed as an elegant evening of fine music, wine, and cheese, the benefit is a fundraiser for the nonprofit's building fund.

MARC assists people with disabilities in finding work and other support. It is trying to raise $5 million in a capital campaign in order to build a new home on a 5-acre site on Sheldon Road.

Summit Studios will provide the entertainment, which starts at 8 p.m.

Tickets are $20 per person and tables accommodate four. A cash bar will be provided.

Tickets are available by calling the MARC offices, 352 West Middle Turnpike, at 860-646-5718, or by visiting the Web site www.marcct.org

Tickets can also be obtained by calling Summit Studios, 421 Main St., at 860-645-1502.

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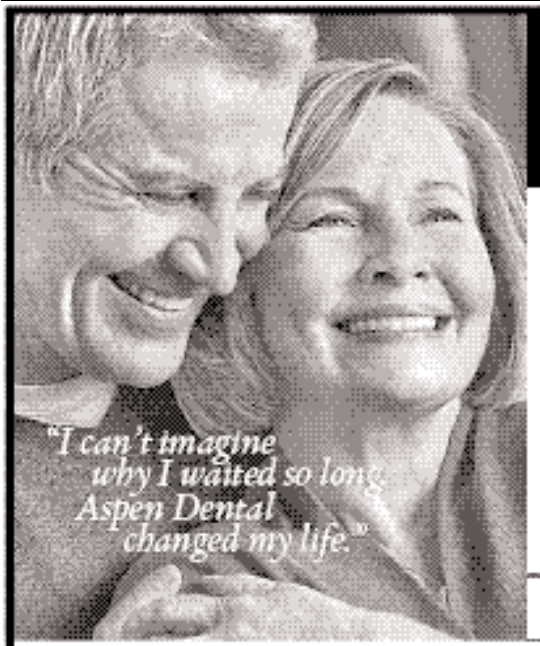

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