

EDUCATION AND SUDAN'S FUTURE

(Saturday, June 18, 12:30-2 PM)

JENNIFER ERNST

In 1999, many southern Sudanese began arriving in the United States, having spent years in refugee and displacement camps as a result of ongoing civil war. A group of "Lost Boys" was settled in Richmond, VA, and Jennifer and Darryl Ernst began helping them through their church. They heard cries for education then, and again in 2002 when Jennifer visited the Kakuma Refugee Camp where 80,000 southern Sudanese were living. They decided to raise funds to sponsor young men and women for the secondary school education they so desperately desired. Over 38 young Sudanese men and women have graduated from secondary schools in Kenya and Uganda as a result of the scholarship program. In 2004, the Ernsts and their Sudanese "son," Maker Mabor Marial, founded Hope for Humanity, Inc., dedicated to growing educational opportunities for the future leaders of Sudan. Jennifer volunteers as Hope for Humanity's board President, and Darryl is a member of the board of directors.

In 2005, the Ernsts and a team made their first trip to Sudan and reunited Maker with his family. At that time, plans were laid for the construction of a secondary school in a village called Atiaba, just six miles from Akot. Upon their return, they began raising funds for the school's construction and Hope and Resurrection Secondary School was built in 2007. In April, 2008 the school opened with 60 ninth graders and is now in its fourth year of operation. Hope and Resurrection offers a quality education to its 204 students and will graduate the first class in December, 2011.

CAROL FRANCIS-RINEHART

In 2001, Carol and Richard Rinehart became mentoring "parents" to a dozen "Lost Boys" who had been resettled in Denver, CO, partly through St. John's Episcopal Cathedral. In May 2005, Carol traveled to southern Sudan with Isaac Bher who had discovered his mother was still alive. On that trip they heard the cry for education loud and clear, despite the many other needs of the community. Carol and Isaac returned home with a mission – to help communities build schools in southern Sudan – and in October, Project Education Sudan (PES) was formed. The mission of the organization is to help fund and support indigenous Sudanese organizations and communities that build primary and secondary schools, and to train teachers in rural villages in southern Sudan. PES currently is working with three communities where they are helping build four schools in Bor and Twic East Counties.

Carol, who is executive director and president, travels regularly to southern Sudan. Her husband Rich is an organizational consultant and CFO, and is PES board treasurer and teaches local community Sudanese school and clergy accounting methods on trips to Sudan. Carol has worked on refugee resettlement for more than 25 years. In addition to her advocacy on behalf of Sudan, she is an active proponent of equal education for girls. She was an English and journalism teacher at the high school level earlier in her career.

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