



September 2010

WORKING FOR REFUGEES WORLDWIDE

Dates for your diary:

Sept 5:

Aguang family welcome

Sept 8:

Ordinary meeting

Sept 22:

Annual General Meeting

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Sanctuary Northern Rivers

Keeping in touch

Finding the ground of human dignity

The month of August was, for me, one of mixed blessings in terms of public discourse. The media was saturated with political commentary, and again featuring strongly in this commentary was dialogue and politic around refugees. More politic than dialogue, and the refugee question became distilled to “boat people” and further embroiled in a wider discussion on population. The discussion was, for the most part, demeaning to us as a society, where a political debate was framed by defensiveness, where human need was tossed about like their boats in the waves. The voice of compassion became the caricature. There could be no intelligent dialogue. If our measure of society can be determined by our respect for human dignity, we have failed in this discussion. We have failed to frame policy that upholds that dignity as the highest value. One may have hoped that an election time was a time where policy could have been projected in its most considered form—and yet what we had was policy that reacted to an ill-formed electorate, and pitched to the antithesis of respect for the poor. We can do better.

Counter to this, was the gentle and uplifting arrival of two families into our community. They had walked different journeys—one family from the Congo, and the other from Sudan, and yet they had shared the common experience of war and persecution and fear. There was little of that experience evident as they arrived on our soil, with beaming faces, and tears of joy. “We have reached our promised land” said Meurrisse, “We have reached our land of freedom”. For those of us who have not walked that journey, it is impossible to imagine that type of liberation.



Meurrisse, Kitumaini and Baraka see and feel the ocean for the first time in their lives

That sense of blessing is most manifest through the “angels” that serve them. Those that locate their housing, that enrol them in school, that take their hand in encouragement to say “this is your home now, make it as you dreamed”. These are the seeds of public discourse, sewn in fertile ground, where dignity is the binding virtue.

Michael Douglas, President

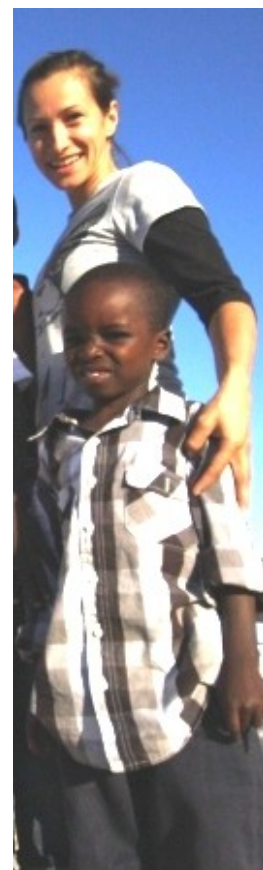
The Conference,

considering that many persons still leave their country of origin for reasons of persecution and are entitled to special protection on account of their position,

recommends that Governments continue to receive refugees in their territories and that they act in concert in a true spirit of international cooperation in order that these refugees may find asylum and the possibility of resettlement.

United Nations Convention of Refugees and Stateless Persons, Geneva, 1951

Sarah, Jantos, coordinator of settlement for the Masonga family typifies the warmth, energy and charisma of the volunteers who provide the channels for which new arrivals can finally say they have found their home



Two new families arrive in August

Lismore welcomed two new families in early August—the Masonga family—Meurrise, Kitumaini, Dieume, Gloire, Bulonza and Baraka from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Aguang family—Hellen, Stephen, Atem, Aguang and Dut from South Sudan.

There must have been a bigger hand at play for the Masonga family—with Kitumaini with child, despite our best efforts to have that child delivered in the safety of Australia, we received word that travel could not take place after August 5. The next day, tickets came through and the family were with us within 4 days—on August 5. The family were hosted for their first week in the home of Kerry Burn and Dave Noble, prior to moving into their permanent home.



Sudanese brothers Stephen, Aguang and Dut, with Sanctuary volunteer Murray Garde on a shopping excursion.

Hellen Deng and her family arrived just seven days later. Hellen has been writing to us for over three years—and at last, our efforts have borne fruit.

The herculean effort of Julie Webb and Deidre Dowsett have achieved houses for both families—no small feat. It is always one of the high points of our work to have these families with us, opening up for them a new freedom and the scope of opportunities that all peoples on earth have a right to.

Their settlement has been supported by two large teams, coordinated by Sarah and Murray Garde. Thank you to all involved.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: update on schools programme

Schools continue to express interest in our offer to donate a wall hanging of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The latest schools to receive the wall hanging are Vistara Primary School and Alstonville High School – the latter request coming from our participation in the Human Rights and Social Justice Equity forum back in June (see the June 2010 Newsletter).

Future presentations are planned for Mullumbimby Primary School, Nimbin Central School and Lismore and Kadina High Schools.

Interestingly I have been advised that at the Lismore Heights Public School Open Day this year, the Principal specifically drew attention to their UDHR wall hanging in their hall and went through the items on the banner and thanked Sanctuary NR for the donation. In addition to all of the students being present, there were some 80 adults in attendance.

Hopefully that is one group of students and a number of adults who are much more aware of the Declaration than would have been without our project in operation.

Our project concept has been picked up by the Sanctuary group in Townsville who asked first for one of the wall hangings to see if there was any interest and now has requested a further two. It is good to see this initiative starting to spread wings and hopefully other groups will learn of the idea and take it on as well.

If you would like to support this initiative, check out the website at www.sanctuary.asn.au and look under Projects / Universal Declaration of Human Rights or contact Russell Trebilcock on 6624 7458.

The society in which you live should help you to develop and to make the most of all the advantages (culture, work, social welfare) which are offered to you and to all men and women in your country.

Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Welcome to Aguang family

The Sudanese Community Organisation is inviting friends to come and celebrate the coming of Sudanese family who **arrived from Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya on Thursday 12/08/2010**. One of the Sudanese Community objectives is to promote unity within Sudanese members and the wider community of Lismore; this is why we inviting friends to come and join with us in this happy moment and make this new family feel at home. Sudanese Community is taking this opportunity to introduce them to friends and good people

of Lismore Community. We encourage you to come and meet this family and hear their fascinating journey and **share lunch** with us.

Your presence will be highly appreciated.



Where: Lismore Community library ground floor

When: Sunday 05/09/2010

Time: 1 pm

For any inquiries contact

Chairman of Sudanese Community

Mr. Philip Thokluel Kuol

Mobile Number:

0432

5999 32 or

Mr. Hezron Leju

Mobile Number:

0421

5609 44



Atem and Aguang on their first day at Lismore High School.

From the office . . .Comings and Goings Administratively

There has been quite a bit of activity on the administrative level in Sanctuary over the past 2 months.

Firstly after 12 months at 2 days a week and then 6 months at one day a week, Cherie has decided not to renew her employment contract with Sanctuary (through LNC) and will no longer be our Administrative Assistant. Cherie has provided the Board with a great deal of support, been the public face of our office, organised our Newsletter into a regular bi-monthly affair and identified a range of fund raising opportunities for us to engage in.

Her initiative and drive have embodied the public persona of our organisation making it one that is welcoming, dedicated and increasingly more proficient and responsive. She has set a high standard for those who follow and though we wish her well in her new role with the Byron Bay Community Centre, we will miss her direct involvement greatly.

Cherie intends to remain engaged with Sanctuary as both a member and a volunteer.

This leads me to introduce our new Administrative Assistant, Linda Wirf. Linda comes to Sanctuary from her role in coordinating and managing the administration of the Lismore Community Garden on behalf of the NR Social Development Council.

Linda will be in our office at the Neighbour Centre on Wednesdays from 9 am until 4.30 pm and be able to be contacted on the same phone number and email address that you used to use to get to Cherie.

Linda brings a wealth of experience to our organisation and we look forward to her contribution and support over the coming months. Please make



Cherie (in foreground) farewelled at the Neighbourhood Centre, with Linda Wirf (to take the baton) looking on.

Linda feel welcome when you next get in touch with Sanctuary.
(Russell Trebilcock, Vice President)

Fundraising

During this year, we have taken a different approach to fundraising. In order to reach a wider cross section of the community, and create opportunity for more casual conversation around the plight of refugees, rather than the mode of gala dinner of recent years, this year we have endeavoured to reach through a series of smaller events. This has panned out finding opportunities—rattling the bucket at market gates, providing the cake and coffee at community events. And what is proving to be a very successful approach is the “family and friends” dinner. Following on from the Nash’s French Dinner in Nashua, the wonderful Vonnie Pfeiffer has raised \$950 by entertaining her friends with a curry night (Vonnies has got this down to a fine art), and the Daley’s of Kyogle hosted a typical warm and wholesome dinner along with a silent auction, rising over a thousand dollars. All remarkable people doing remarkable things and enjoying every moment of it. So give it some thought—a night with friends and family, while making a little cash to assist in our ongoing efforts to reach those in refugee settings.

Fund Raising

Report by Rosalie Ellis

Yvonne Pfeiffer has been holding Curry by Candlelight Dinners on a fairly regular, annual basis over the years and it is an event which discerning diners now look forward to. Some of them are friends and many of them bring curries and sweets to supplement the ones which she creates. The cost is a very affordable \$13.50/head because of these food donations and her lounge and dining room are converted into an ambient candlelit, chatty-happy atmosphere. During the evening, her husband spends a lot of

time at the kitchen sink!

This year the event was held on 30 July at her Ballina home and it raised \$950 plus more has been pledged by people intending to attend but unable to do so.

Yvonne says it is her way of help supporting Sanctuary's resettlement vision.

I have put my name down for next year. Curries on a cold night for a good cause is worth the drive!

Fundraising target for 2010/2011:

\$15,000

During July and August our first steps toward this target realised \$3,981. A very impressive start!

Paul Spooner, of the Byron Bay Community Centre very generously offered Sanctuary to provide the refreshments at the "Meet the Candidates" night on August 19. It was a success from many perspectives—raising \$426, providing an opportunity to reach out to new people, and have the chance to hear the hopes of our aspiring leaders.

Thank you Byron Bay Community Centre!

Sanctuary Northern Rivers were charity of the day ' at Byron Bay community markets on August . We raised an astounding \$1600 - well done to all!



Kerry Wallace, Leanne Llewellyn, Bernie Daley and Therese Hamilton, all of the very beautiful Daley

family, cooked up a storm in Kyogle in late August. In addition to the first class meal and delightful setting, they hosted an auction of donated items— raising over a thousand dollars in the process.



Grant news

Policy Officer – Volunteer Coordination



As indicated last Newsletter we were successful in gaining a grant to fund a part-time position to help develop the policy framework for coordinating our volunteers.

The successful candidate for the position was Judy Singer – a Sanctuary member who has considerable experience both with refugees and in policy formulation and advice.

Judy will be liaising with various volunteers and settled families over the course of the next few months to help check and validate the policies and procedures she prepares to guide and train our settlement volunteers (and others).

At the end of this project, we expect to have in place the framework that will ensure we can take on everyone who offers to volunteer with Sanctuary and place them in the best possible role that will make use of their time, skills and interests, while being as appreciative and supportive as we can of their goodwill.

If you come across Judy in her capacity as Policy Officer, please ask her about her role and assist her in whatever way you can.

Any pearls of wisdom?
Contact Judy:
judysinger@bigpond.com
Ph: 0400 400 309

Finding Common Ground project

Despite our best efforts to get this project off the ground, it has not been possible to bring together the support persons this project has needed to be a success.

We have therefore terminated our agreement with the Department of Immigration (the funding body) and have indicated that we will return their funds to them.

We still believe this project has merit and should another opportunity arise to give it a try, and provided there is widespread and tangible support from across the community for this initiative, then we will again look for funds to give it a go.

We wish to thank Steve Askew-Smith for his persistent efforts to get this project going.

Some goings-on in Mullum . . .

Beatrice, Helene and Eudoxie who arrived in March, had the chance to spend quality time with their family in Wollongong during early August. The occasion was a double family wedding—which was extended to two weeks of heart to heart time discovering the journeys of their 10 siblings. Jean-Pierre and Kizito did join them for a few days, while Bertin stayed home with the kids. The spies were out to discover Bertin in the Mullum to Bruns walk . . . It was suggested that he was setting the pace for local refugee advocate and champion of the Mullumbimby settlement cause, John Morris.

Community Education Co-ordinator

Sanctuary was also successful in gaining a grant from the Connect Australia Foundation to fund another short term part-time position. We welcome Gillian Welstead to the position, also a Sanctuary member, who comes with years of experience in employment assistance and social administration, both in Australia and overseas. The role is to assist the refugee community to be better informed about local services available, specifically in regard to safety, education, employment and health agencies, and in turn to encourage local agencies and the broader community to have a fuller understanding of the needs of our 'new settlers' community.

It is hoped that Gillian may have the chance to interview many of those who have settled here following their refugee experience about their needs in settling in the Northern Rivers, and also past work experiences. Another key point in the process will be to involve members of the African community to participate as volunteers in training local families in emergency response using a safety card which is being developed.

Sanctuary Northern Rivers Annual General Meeting**Wednesday 22 September 7.00 pm–8.30 pm****Water/tea/chai/coffee with munchies available from 6.30 pm****Red Dove facility****Keen Street Lismore****Guest Speaker: Hon. Janelle Saffin**

The Annual General Meeting provides the chance for all who are interested in the work of Sanctuary Northern Rivers to hear of progress and shape the vision. It serves some very important administrative functions—election of Board members, tabling of the annual report and ratification of several constitutional amendments. Papers for the meeting will be available on the Sanctuary Northern Rivers website (www.sanctuary.asn.au) by Sept 9. Anybody interested in a presence on the governing board are most welcome to discuss with Michael (0413 693900) or simply send in a nomination form. If there are more nominations than positions, an election for positions will be held.

Sanctuary Northern Rivers, August 2010

WORKING FOR REFUGEES WORLDWIDE



Lismore Neighborhood Centre
PO Box 1146
Lismore NSW 280

Contact:
02 6621 7397
(Wednesday only, messages other times:
0413 693900)
info@sanctuary.asn.au
www.sanctuary.asn.au

**www.sanctuary.
asn.au**

Sanctuary Northern Rivers Inc is an organisation committed to the betterment of the life and welfare of refugees throughout the world. It accepts that persons flee their home and country for fear of persecution – be it for their race, their religion, their nationality, political opinion or because they belong to a particular social group. Many of these people are unable to return home. Frequently, they remain in intractable situations, in makeshift shelter, dependent upon inadequate sources of food and water, living with prevailing hostility and daily vulnerability. Their fundamental human rights of freedom, and their aspirations of hope are elusive, their lives seemingly without opportunity for a future of stability and joy.

Sanctuary Northern Rivers Inc brings together people and institutions of all persuasions and common interest, in an effort to better the lives of refugees in a compassionate and just manner.

Membership is now (over) due . . . annual renewal is needed!

Membership helps us all! It allows those at the organisational end of Sanctuary Northern Rivers to gain input, seek support and provide a conduit into community feeling; It supports the member by providing the chance to shape who we are, and keep in close contact with the evolution of a core social justice concern in our community.



And it confers voting rights, insurance, provides this newsletter, and brings you into closer fellowship with a very special group of people.

We value your support!

We need you to become a signed up member—it helps us help our friends

There are three levels of membership:

Individual—\$30

Family—\$45

Corporate—\$100

If you cannot afford the annual fee, please let Linda, or any of the Board members know and we can organise a subsidy

Membership form can be found on the website, or by calling Linda at the office,