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Helping the children of Darfur Inspired by Danbury High film, workers vow to raise \$50,000

Author(s): Eileen FitzGerald
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Women risk rape, mutilation and branding in their 20-mile walks for firewood. In one refugee camp, seven humanitarian aid workers and one doctor care for 137,000 people. In the last four years, 400,000 residents of **Darfur** have been killed and 2.5 million others, mostly women and children, have been driven from their burned-out villages in a genocide carried out by militia backed by the Sudanese government.

On Monday, Danbury High School seniors Max Delahanty, Alysha Rashid and Sabrina Wirth, along with actress and activist Mia Farrow, spared no details in describing the horrors and needs in **Darfur** to employees at Cartus Corp. in Danbury. Cartus is a provider of global mobility management and workforce development solutions serving corporate, government and affinity markets.

"Surely, if we are indeed a human family, all of the children of the world are our family. If we turn away, all of us are diminished," said Farrow, 62, who lives in Bridgewater. "This is a seminal moment: If we will step up and do our utmost to help the children of **Darfur**."

Farrow joined the students as she has for some of their many presentations in the past year to discuss the urgency of helping the people of **Darfur**.

Cartus employees announced their pledge to raise \$50,000 for Save the Children to build a school in **Darfur**.

"Two years ago, following a Live Aid concert, the Cartus Save the Children committee was started," said Douglas D'Joy, a senior

programmer analyst for Cartus and chairman of the committee.

"Of all the tragedies taking place beyond our border, nothing is worse than **Darfur**," D'Joy said. "We have set a goal ... by 2010 to build a school in **Darfur**, and we've invited all Cartus employees to join us in trying to build the school."

The company has 1,700 Danbury employees and 1,100 additional employees worldwide.

Farrow showed photographs from her four visits to the region and told personal stories about some of the residents she met.

She urged support for the deployment of the already authorized U.N. peacekeeping force, strengthening the African Union force already in **Darfur**, and for people to divest their stock in companies that support the militia, including Fidelity Investments.

According to an April 11 Los Angeles Times story, Fidelity is one of the leading U.S. shareholders in PetroChina Co., part of a company involved in one of Sudan's largest oil projects. Oil revenues fund Sudan's military.

The three students showed an award-winning documentary about the genocide in **Darfur** that six DHS 2006 graduates made last year. The eight-minute documentary, called "The Promise," highlights the promise made in 1947 not to let the Holocaust occur ever again.

"We know the genocide is 90 to 95 percent complete, because most of the villages have been destroyed," Wirth said. "Now we want to raise awareness and focus on raising money for the people in the camps."

Deb Thibault, an international assignment consultant at Cartus, said the presentation was sad and overwhelming.

"I had very little knowledge of the conditions there," she said. "The children have no parents, no food and no water. They're young, and the first thing they request is protection, and we can't give it to them."

Thibault said she'd rather the billions being spent to fight in Iraq could be diverted to **Darfur**, since "it's more a need than the excuse we have to fight in Iraq."

She was impressed with the students' work, "to see dedication in someone so young."

Danbury High Assistant Principal Tim Salem first lectured to students about **Darfur** as a teacher in 2004.

The fighting in that country started after a group of residents rebelled against the government, which had come to power by coup, for not fulfilling their basic needs. In response to the uprising, the government launched an attack on everyone.

Salem said students asked him how they could help. He wrote the video and helped six students make it over four months in 2006 as a way to raise awareness about the issue, at least in their school.

Delahanty, Rashid and Wirth asked to continue that work and have made more than 40 presentations so far this year.

In addition, the video has served as a fundraising tool for some of the 600 schools, colleges and organizations that requested copies of it.

The DHS students went to a high school in Michigan in February to show the video and they shared the stage with Paul Rusesabagina. He was the hotel manager who housed over a thousand Tutsis refugees during their struggle against the Hutu militia in Rwanda and was the subject of the movie "Hotel Rwanda."

"He (Rusesabagina) had a great message I hope to pass on to my peers," 18-year-old Delahanty said. "He saved thousands of lives by the power of words. That's what he focused on, the power of words."

Max said he learned more outside the classroom this year than inside, and he's asked himself what he can do in the future.

"It's not just about the success of the project, but the impact I can have on others when I am informed and passionate about a topic," he said.

The students also showed their video April 19 in Washington, D.C., to about 60 staff and members of Congress, including the two major House policy leaders on **Darfur**, U.S. Rep. Donald Payne, D-N.J., and U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif.

U.S. Rep. Christopher Murphy, D-5th District, organized the presentation, which proved to be a standing room only, and for days afterward he heard from lawmakers who were impressed by the video.

"The video is inspirational and Washington needs a little inspiration on the issue of **Darfur**," Murphy said. "There are so many other foreign policy issues that need attention, but if we don't intercede right now hundreds of thousands more people will die."

Murphy said it was a chance for him to meet the **Darfur** policy makers on the hill.

"There is no better way than to bring students from a district who care

about the issue. The event was my way of becoming a leader on the issue of **Darfur**," Murphy said.

Salem also was impressed that Lee and Payne came to the presentation.

"The only downside of this is that there are no real tangible results in the (Dafur) region. Every day the condition gets worse," Salem said.

"Three million people are in desperate need of help. We are desperate to bring humanitarian aid to the region, and it's possible that those three million will perish if we can't."

For more information visit:

www.dhsthepromise.com

www.miafarrow.org

www.savedarfur.org

www.cfr.org/darfur_guide

Contact Eileen FitzGerald

at eileenf@newstimes.com

or at (203) 731-3333.

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