

Group helps African orphans

BY LINDSEY BAKER

Members of a new organization hope to make it possible to help feed Africa's hungry children without having to dial the 800 number at the bottom of the television screen.

Save Sub-Saharan Orphans Inc. was established this year by UNL graduate student Nelson Okuku Miruka after he traveled throughout Africa and recognized the growing number of children being orphaned by the AIDS/HIV pandemic ravaging the country.

"I saw Africa and I saw suffering," said Miruka, the organization's president. "Millions and millions of children are becoming fatherless and motherless."

There were 8.1 million orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1997, Miruka said. By the end of 1999, the number had increased to 12.1 million. By June of 2000 there were 13 million.

Richard Uku, head of African External Affairs at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., acknowledged the pandemic as a serious problem facing not only the African children but African adults, as well.

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Nelson Okuku Miruka
UNL Graduate Student

"(AIDS is) taking away adults," Uku said. "Unfortunately, children tend to be one of the products of this pandemic."

Professor Robert Hitchcock, coordinator of African Studies and director of International Studies at UNL, agreed.

"The AIDS crisis has been so severe (Africans) have whole villages now of orphans," he said.

Uku said AIDS is rampant throughout Africa because of a lack of communication and prevention of the disease.

"In many parts of Africa, it's still a taboo to talk of AIDS," he said. "As openness grows and as people acknowledge this a bit more openly, it is addressed a bit more seriously."

Miruka said many of the orphaned children are turned away from orphanages already filled to capacity. One of his goals

for the organization is to use donations to expand orphanages to accommodate more children, as well as to provide for food and education.

"The point is that it is really easy to support or sponsor a child in Sub-Saharan Africa," Miruka said. "\$20 can take one child to school for the entire semester. \$1000 can make a building that can accommodate 20 children in different areas."

Miruka is hoping to receive donations from the community, sponsors and the student body to deliver directly to African orphanages in need. He emphasized that all donations to the organization are tax deductible and appealed to the entire university for help.

"This effort should not only be left for our few students," Miruka said. "We are going (to Africa) to save lives."

Old sexual-contact law disputed

BY JOSH FUNK

The trial questioning the validity of Lincoln's first sexual-contact ordinance may be moot.

A federal judge considering that ordinance asked both sides to submit briefs arguing why he should rule on the law, which already has been repealed and revised.

In February, the City Council passed the first sexual-contact law, which banned contact between a customer's or employee's breasts, buttocks or genital areas and another person in any Lincoln business.

Then the majority owner of Mataya's Babydolls Gentlemen's Theatre Club, John Ways Jr., challenged the law as overly broad and vague. Mataya's, which opened in November 1999, is a juice bar that features topless dancing.

Ways argued the law would ban activities such as ballet, kissing in a business and even Nebraska

football where players or performers touch each other in prohibited areas.

In March, U.S. District Court Judge Warren Urbom issued a preliminary injunction preventing the city from enforcing that law in response to Ways' challenge. A trial was held on that lawsuit Monday.

After the injunction was issued, the city repealed that first sexual-contact ordinance and passed a new law in April, which makes exceptions for theaters, arts centers and similar venues.

The second law was applied in an Aug. 11 raid on Mataya's, 5620 Cornhusker Hwy. Most of the 13 citations issued that night are still pending in Lancaster County Court. The second ordinance has been challenged in a separate lawsuit on similar grounds.

Urbom gave both the city and Ways until Nov. 3 to submit arguments on whether the challenge to the first ordinance is now moot.

Today's tests identify depression

Free screenings in the Nebraska Union offered as part of national event.

BY JILL CONNER

Because suicide can be the end result of letting depression go untreated, UNL will participate in a nationwide screening today that aims to alert people if they, or people they love, are depressed.

Suicide prevention is the goal of National Depression Screening Day, an effort to catch the symptoms of depression and help those in need.

Free screenings in connection with National Depression Screening Day will be given today from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Colonial Room of the Nebraska Union.

"We want to help people early on identify signs and then get a treatment," said Dr. Robert Portnoy, director of UNL Counseling and Psychological Services.

Early signs of depression are: not enjoying past activities; extreme sleep, eating, and mood disturbances; withdrawal; irritability and problems with concentration and academic performance.

Physical symptoms include headaches, digestive disorders and continuous pain that doesn't respond to medical treatment.

Those who are screened will fill out a questionnaire and then speak with a counselor who can provide further help.

Videotapes also will be shown about depression.

The intent of the screenings is to provide information to those who are struggling with

depression and don't know if they should be seeking help, Portnoy said.

"We do not diagnose. What we are able to do is tell folks that the signs and symptoms they are telling us they have are consistent with depression," he said.

This is the 10th year for National Depression Screening Day. Portnoy said UNL has participated for seven or eight years.

"Depression is the ninth-leading cause of death in the United States, claiming 30,000 lives annually," said Jennifer Snyder, the University Health Center marketing coordinator.

An element added this year to the screenings is Signs of Suicide, or SOS.

If people are worried someone in their lives may be showing signs of depression, the SOS program teaches them to identify warning signs.

As part of the program, people can fill out a questionnaire

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identifying characteristics of their loved ones. The questionnaire will then be evaluated to determine whether the loved one might be experiencing depression.

The screenings are sponsored by Counseling and Psychological Services of the University Health Center, the Employee Assistance Program and graduate students in clinical psychology.

Snyder said the screenings are open to students, faculty and staff members, and are completely confidential.

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HYPNOTIST

Andrew Becker

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