

# A Crack in the Rock

VRRP's Volunteer Newsletter

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VRRP is a local program of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

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## VRRP's Mission Statement

The Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program brings hope and opportunity to the lives of refugees and immigrants. We act to defend human rights, promote self-sufficiency and education, and forge community partnerships through a full range of services and programs.



Photo: Rose McNulty

## Out of a Crack

*By Judy Scott*

Early one winter, a few years ago, a volunteer had the wonderful idea of taking to the movies the family of the woman she was tutoring. It was a big undertaking. Being fairly new to this country, the family had never been to the movies. It required two cars to transport everyone in the family. The volunteer discussed it with her husband and they agreed – first – that they could afford to purchase all those tickets and – second – that they would each drive a car.

Without an interpreter, it was quite a challenge to explain the plan to the family and the volunteer was aware that she had had limited success communicating it. But she did her best and they headed off to see Peter Pan. They arrived at the theater late, just as the promos were finishing. As they walked in, the theater was dark and very crowded. The only place they could find seats together was the very front row. As they sat down, the movie started, showing the dog – a huge English sheepdog which was immense on the big screen – barking and barking. Sensing that Peter Pan was trying to get in the nursery, the dog barked on and on, ever more ferociously.

The members of this family, originally from Somalia, were very familiar with working dogs and with wild dogs, both of which are fierce, dangerous, and unpredictable. They couldn't imagine the existence of dogs that lived in a house with people, were fed from a dish, and snuggled to sleep on a person's lap. They knew from experience that to even be near a dog could be fatal. It would be the equivalent of my deciding to offer myself as a meal to a hyena.

And there the whole family was in a cavernous theater, unable to see how to get out, with an enormous monster howling, growling, and snarling at them as if it could jump out of the screen. And this was a children's movie! When the mom began shaking, the volunteer took her arm and led the whole family out. Back outside in the light everyone recovered.

Fears are as individual as food preferences. You have to know someone pretty well to be able to walk into a restaurant and order for them. Other people's fears are often so hidden that they're even harder to ascertain. Here's a fear I have that

Our world often seems to be a hard, rocky place. Manmade and natural disasters strip people of what they need to survive. But Vermont is a crack in the rock, widened by the smiles, persistent efforts, and adventurous spirit of its people. Thanks to 203 volunteers, we are offering a new life to people who have endured the harshest conditions in hopes of a new opportunity.

you probably didn't know about me: I have Movie Fear.

It's not that I'm scared of dark places although once, on a very sunny afternoon, my daughter and I entered a theater so dark that we slid down the aisle unable to see even one person sitting in the theater and sat down directly in front of the only other two people in the entire place!

And it's not that I'm scared of sitting next to strangers, though my allergy to perfume makes my vocal cords swell if I sit next to a scented person. I totally lose my voice until I get back out into fresh air.

And it's not that I'm scared of movies that are bad, average, comical, or unrealistic. What overwhelm me with fear are the movies that acutely portray excruciating realities of life. I've actually come a long way. When I was a little girl, I couldn't even watch Lassie on TV – it was too sad!

In the same way, I avoid watching movies that are unbearably accurate in showing what is cruel and horrific in human nature. When Hotel Rwanda came out, several people invit-

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## The Shudder

By Anne Geroski

I was out in the community recently, and I heard someone talk about his volunteer work with “under-privileged” kids. I shuddered at the term, *under-privileged*. I was visiting an agency that works with “under-privileged” families. Again, I shuddered at the term. Why is it, I have come to ask myself, that I shudder at the term, *under-privileged*?

*Under-privileged* is a category under which many of the VRRP clients fall. That is partially why I shudder. As one VRRP staff member commented a few years ago, at some point we (our agency, our community, our nation) need to come to terms with the fact that we accept refugees from other countries and then settle them into poverty. Although perhaps not what the Statue of Liberty had intended, indeed many of us, or our parents, or our grandparents, started our lives on U.S. soil in poverty. So, yes, I shudder at the harsh reality that takes families from their beloved homelands and resettles them into the most challenged neighborhoods in our communities.

But that is only part of it.

Perhaps The Shudder comes from *privilege-guilt*? Undoubtedly, there is some of that. But, more consciously disconcerting to me is how that simple, complex, value-laden term, *under-privileged*, positions the kids and families whom I have come to know, love, and grow with.

## “God Grew Tired of Us”

Benefit movie screenings of “God Grew Tired of Us” will be held at Merrill’s Roxy Cinema, on the corner of College St. and South Winooski Ave. in downtown Burlington, March 16th - 18th. Tickets are \$10. VRRP will share the proceeds of the first five showings (Friday night at 5pm, 7pm, 9:15pm and Saturday at 1pm, 3pm) with the New Sudan Education Initiative ([www.nesei.org](http://www.nesei.org)). The last five showings will benefit the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf. Tickets can be bought in advance at City Market and our office in Colchester. Following the movie, Sudanese refugees resettled by VRRP will speak and answer questions. Please join us!

Talking about work with “the under-privileged” has a way of positioning the “worker” in a special place while reminding everyone that the “other” is needy. This is The Shudder I feel when I hear the term *under-privileged*. This is the shame I feel when I reflect on all of the times (the most recent *Burlington Free Press* coverage I received, included) that I have made my work with the VRRP families known to others and, as a result, have received credit for being a do-gooder. Even if I don’t use the term “under-privileged,” there it sits, squarely in how people see me. Even if I don’t want to feel good about the unearned privilege I have, it always invites me to feel good. And, it always reminds the VRRP families of where they sit, too. I wonder: If I am a saint, what role is left for the VRRP families with whom I work? Why do I

get all the glory of being so special when I have not had the hard work of leaving my home and creating a new life for myself in a new and foreign land? What kind of future does the *under-privileged* message predict for the kids of this family I have come to love? Privilege has a way of reducing complex and mutual relationships into dichotomies that are weighted with have and have-not, good and bad. Relationships and individuals are too complex for privilege categories.

Yet, the truth is that I am privileged and my hosted family is not privileged in the social, economic, and national ways that I am. And this fact is at the foundation of how I’ve come to understand the role of a VRRP host family. The term, *cultural brokering*, which is introduced by Mary

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## Vagina Monologues

VRRP would like to extend our appreciation to the UVM Women’s Center, whose benefit performances of The Vagina Monologues on February 15th, 16th, and 17th raised money and awareness for the global movement to stop violence against women and girls.

In concurrence with the V-Day 2007 theme of Reclaiming Peace, the performances highlighted the impact of conflict and war on women, and VRRP was chosen as one beneficiary of proceeds from the sold-out shows.



Photo: Rose McNulty

## A Personal History

*As told by David Tabaruka and Jean-Luc Dushime*

*Recorded and transcribed by Ned Castle*

In the spring and early summer of 1994, an estimated eight hundred thousand Rwandans were killed in the span of just one hundred days. Although members of numerous ethnic groups were counted among the victims, the basic reality remained unavoidable: Hutus killed Tutsis. Following the genocide, nearly two million Hutus—the killers and the guilty by ethnic association—fled Rwanda as the Tutsi-lead Rwandan Patriotic Front took control of the country. The bulk of the Hutu militias responsible for the genocide retreated to Zaire, where they remained protected amongst a human shield of non-combatant Hutu refugees. When a Zairian rebel force, backed by Rwandan soldiers, dispersed the refugee camps in 1996, many of the people returned to Rwanda. Nevertheless, thousands of Hutus decided to take their chances in the jungles of Zaire, rather than return to Tutsi neighbors who might judge them guilty of murder on the grounds of being Hutu. At this point the story breaks company with the large numbers and becomes meaningful from the

perspective of just two brothers: David and Jean-Luc. Born to a Hutu father and a Tutsi mother, returning to Rwanda after the genocide would have been both complicated and dangerous. Instead, they walked to safety through more than four thousand miles of war-torn Zairian jungles. And at times they ran.

**David:** Can you imagine if all the government—in one night—got killed and then in the morning you had to make another government?

**Jean-Luc:** In 1994, things were starting to get worse. Then the President got killed and the genocide started. I was not in Kigali. David was there with my mom and sister, but I was at school at the time. I was supposed to go home Friday, but the President was killed Wednesday, so I was stuck at school with all my friends and



*Photo: Ned Castle*

classmates. They put all of us in the cafeteria and closed the door. These guys walked around the windows with machetes, talking at the door, "We want to come inside! You are hiding people!" The school director had asked everyone to put on their uniforms so we could not be identified. They were looking for Tutsis.

In the capital, that was a very bad time. There were many things going wrong—you could not understand what was

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### In their own words

*By Ned Castle*

"A Personal History" and the accompanying photographs are part of a larger work being conducted to help share refugee stories within our community. This project is called "In their own words" and is dedicated to gathering stories from Vermont refugees through words and images.

The stories will ultimately be exhibited within the community—striving to share a collection of experiences that are likely to deviate sharply from those that many of us have considered—or even imagined. The value of such an encounter is difficult to anticipate; nevertheless, I feel that it's an exercise worth undertaking if for no other reason than to widen the scope of perspectives that we are challenged to consider as a

collective community.

The reality—if the project is ever to be realized—is that I need others to care and believe in this idea as much as I do. I need help identifying people who are willing to share their stories for this purpose, something that many are not comfortable doing. So I am asking: If you know someone who might be interested, please ask him or her if they are willing to share their story. It's not a decision that needs to be made right away, as there is much that needs explaining before any kind of commitment is given. I think—and I'm hoping not misguidedly—that people will be more eager to share their stories when they understand why they are being asked to do so. I need your help to initiate that first spark of interest; without it I don't think any of this is possible.

If you know of someone who might be

interested please contact Judy Scott. I would also be more than willing to speak individually with anyone who has additional questions or comments regarding the project. I am asking for your support, but I am also open to your criticism.

As a final note, I have decided that I will remain anonymous in terms of the public exhibition of the photographs that will accompany the refugee stories when they are shared with the community. I do not want to confuse my intentions and, although I know it's largely symbolic, I hope this gesture will help convince you that my passion for this project genuinely originates from the beliefs I have expressed above.

For further information, I can be contacted at: 310-0163 (mobile), 425-3522 (home), or nedcastle@gmail.com.

## Feel Good

by Supriya Serchan

Known as the land of the Himalayas, Nepal is the only official Hindu kingdom in the world. With its network of many rivers and streams and the highest mountain in the world, it is indeed a world of its own for explorers. Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, is where I was born, raised, and received an education. I spent my childhood years growing up in the diverse culture of Nepal, celebrating different festivals and rituals. With my experiences, I have gained some knowledge of different Hindu gods and different festivals. I am bilingual. While I was living in Nepal, I traveled to many rural areas. During my visits to villages, I came across many people who had no education. People believed in superstitions. I felt ashamed of myself because I was there with an education and yet I could do nothing for those people at the moment. I learned a lot of things from every village that I went to. I learned about their generosity, hardworking nature, hope, and the way they treated people equally. My goal is

to pursue a degree and then return to my country to help the people who are trapped inside these caves, without an education.

I came to the United States three years ago, and I am now a senior at UVM. My major is Agricultural and Resource Entrepreneurship and my minor is Community and International Development. Right now I am working as a research assistant at UVM's Center for Rural Studies. When I was traveling throughout Nepal, I always thought of doing something to make a difference in the lives of people. I think that my degree will help me fulfill my dreams.

Right now, my goal is to help people as VRRP does in many ways. To this end, I have been making and selling *chia*, traditional Nepalese tea, at UVM every Friday from 11-1. My stand is located in the UVM Cook Commons, next to the "FEEL GOOD" stand. It is just a dollar for a cup of tea, everyone loves it, and all proceeds go to VRRP. Even though I am not selling a lot, I really feel good about selling 15 cups of tea. I always remember Judy's quote: "Don't feel sad about

what you can't do, feel happy about what you are doing." I would like to thank Michael Moser, Judy Scott, Becky Wang, Heather Fitzgerald, all my family and friends, and especially "FEEL GOOD" for supporting me and helping to make my dream come true.

In the future, my plan is to teach refugee women some skills and learn from them as well, sharing the skills everyone has and selling the products we make at the Farmer's Market and City Market. All the proceeds will go to women who worked hard and also to the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program in order to help new families who just arrived in Vermont. I am also interested in joining NGOs like WHO and CARE in the future in order to help people and motivate them to be more independent and educated. I was inspired to do this by my mother's friend, Wendy, who as a foreigner worked at the non-profit organization CARE in Nepal. VRRP is providing me with some knowledge and ideas to fulfill my mission and also helping me to shape my career choice as well. Thank you.

## Bush to allow 7,000 Iraqi refugees to immigrate to the U.S.

By Anne Gearan

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration plans to allow about 7,000 Iraqi refugees to settle in the United States over the next year, a huge expansion at a time of mounting international pressure to help those who have fled in the nearly four-year-old war.

The United States has allowed only 463 Iraqi refugees into the country since the war began, even though some 3.8 million have left. A senior State Department official described the expanded program on condition of anonymity ahead of a formal announcement later Wednesday.

The administration also plans to pledge \$18 million for a worldwide resettlement and relief program. The United Nations has asked for \$60 million from nations around the world.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met Wednesday with U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres to outline the expanded U.S. program. The 7,000 would be resettled from nations outside Iraq where they have fled. The U.S. proposal also includes plans to offer special treatment for Iraqis still in the country whose cooperation with the U.S. government puts them at risk from sectarian reprisal.

Most refugees have fled to Syria and Jordan, both of which have recently tried to restrict the influx. The U.N. estimates that 40,000 to 50,000 people flee Iraq each month and have dwindling options of where to go.

U.S. diplomats have discussed the situation directly with the Syrian government, the State Department official said. That is notable because of the administration's reluctance to engage Syria in high-level discussions about security in Iraq. The U.S. has also discussed the refugee problem with Jordan, a close ally, the official said.

## ECHO Vouchers

The ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center has graciously offered us discounted admission vouchers and annual passes. Admission vouchers are good for one adult and one child to enter at \$2 each. Annual passes can be used for families of up to five, but we have only ten passes so we'd like to reserve those for families who will visit ECHO regularly. If you are interested in visiting ECHO with your refugee family, contact Judy Scott (338-4627 or [jscott@uscrvt.org](mailto:jscott@uscrvt.org)). The current exhibit explores tree houses and those who find their homes there! For more info on the ECHO Center visit [www.echovermont.org](http://www.echovermont.org).

## CITIZENSHIP CLASSES BEGIN

The Citizenship Project at VRRP would like to announce that the new series of Citizenship Classes has begun! The first class was held on Wednesday, February 28, 2007 from 7:00pm to 8:30pm at Spectrum's Downtown Education Center at 19 Church St. in Burlington. Classes are also held on Saturday mornings from 10:00am to 11:30am at the same location. The first Saturday class was held on March 3. These classes will help anyone interested in obtaining citizenship to prepare for the naturalization interview. Subject matter will include English language as well as U.S. history and government. Material taught on Wednesdays will be repeated on Saturdays to give students a chance to attend the class that is most convenient for their schedule. Each set of classes will run for eight weeks. If you have questions about the citizenship classes, please contact Clare or Laura by phone at 338-4632.

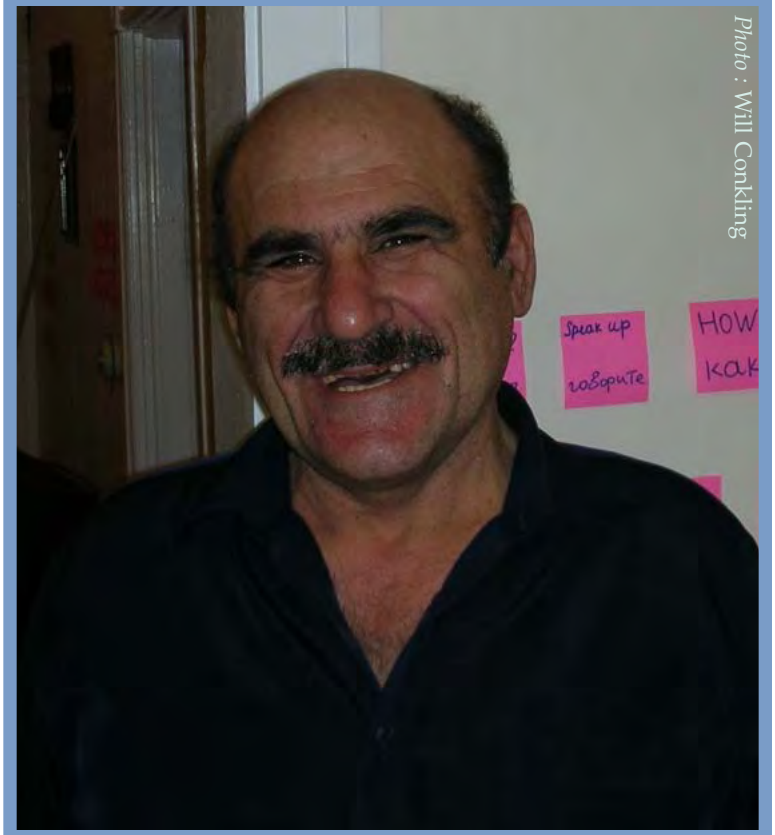


Photo: Will Conkling

### U.S. Government to Raise Citizenship Application Fees by 80 Percent

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced today that it plans to increase fees for naturalization applications by 80 percent. USCIS will raise fees for an adult's application from \$330 to \$595, and a child's from \$255 to \$460. These increases will be examined by Julia Gelatt in an MPI Fact Sheet released February 1.

Highlights from the Fact Sheet show:

The proposed increase would make applying for U.S. citizenship more costly than in any country with a significant immigration flow. The citizenship application fee for an adult (in U.S. dollars) ranges from \$85 in Canada and \$93 Australia, to \$330 in Germany and \$525 in the United Kingdom.

High application fees may be a factor

discouraging eligible people from applying for citizenship. In 2000-2001, 17 percent of lawful permanent residents who were eligible to naturalize but who had not yet obtained citizenship had incomes below the poverty level, and 41 percent were considered "low income" (with incomes below 200 percent of the poverty line). Those who had recently naturalized had notably higher incomes -- only 11 percent had incomes below the poverty level and just 28 percent had low incomes.

Congress has directed that citizenship application fees cover not only processing citizenship application costs, but a variety of other unrelated costs. These include asylum and refugee services and conducting record checks to support other government agencies' enforcement duties.

USCIS reports that the new fee increases are necessary to fully cover basic services as well as the move from a largely paper-based system to more

efficient online processing -- measures that will become more important if an immigration reform bill is passed legalizing millions of immigrants or establishing a temporary worker program.

"The Congress has put USCIS between a rock and a hard place by forcing it to fund a wide range of government operations through fees charged to immigrant applicants," said Margie McHugh, co-director of MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. "There is widespread bipartisan agreement that lawful immigrants should adopt American values and fully join our society. Republicans and Democrats should be equally concerned that this fee increase will make it more difficult for immigrants to naturalize and therefore, consider more seriously an appropriation to make sure that becoming a citizen remains affordable."

The Fact Sheet is available at: [http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/FS15\\_CitizenshipFees2007.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/FS15_CitizenshipFees2007.pdf)

## THANKS!

### \*Riley and Mullein Carbone \*Ioulia Bespalova

When Riley and Mullein Carbone's grandparents gave them money for the Solstice, they challenged the girls to find a place in the community to donate it to. Having studied world cultures at school, the 10- and 8-year-olds decided to offer their money to VRRP to support its work with refugees. Mullein bought three

dolls from the New Sudan Education Initiative, who had recently visited her class. Riley purchased household items like trash cans, detergent, shower curtains, and a quilt, thinking of how cold the winter days are when many refugees would be arriving.

In a similarly inspiring manner, Ioulia Bespalova organized a drive at South Burlington High School, asking fellow students to look through their cupboards and bring in any unused household items. She collected over \$85 dol-

lars of spare change as well as toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, and deodorant, to name a few!

Like Riley and Mullein's donations, these items are used to make New Arrival Welcome Kits. Refugees arrive with very few belongings and, while VRRP supplies furnishings, small household and personal items go a long way to make a new family feel welcome. Welcome Kits are put together solely by generous donations like these. (For a list of Welcome Kit items please contact the volunteer office at (802) 338-4633.)

### A Personal History

*Continued from page 3*

happening. Those people were there to kill. When the genocide started they went everywhere in the town and started to kill people. Today you can see the pictures—see the movies. People made documentaries about the people that were getting training. We did not know for what, but we saw the result when the President died and they started to kill people. People were getting trained to fight—trained to kill.

I was at school for a month. After three weeks the director had to call the authori-

ties. They sent three soldiers to keep the school safe. When those soldiers came—after three days—the director came and said, "All those kids who have military parents, there is a car coming by and I want those kids to leave." So, I had to get in the car, but that was really scary because on the road I saw corpses—corpses all around on the road. By that time the genocide was pretty much done. That was something I never quite understood, being fourteen years old and seeing corpses. I couldn't understand why, why people were doing that. I didn't know that I was Hutu, or that my friends were Tutsi. I knew that we were just friends—we were Rwandese.

I remember when the genocide began, when we moved out of Kigali. The genocide started on April 6th, and we went to my grandmother's village on the 11th. Then we went to a military camp, because my father had been in the army and people knew him. We asked for protection. We got an apartment with two bedrooms, and Jean-Luc, he came to meet us. We spent a month in this military camp. There was a guy who had a passage to get out of Rwanda. He

had a truck. At that time he was a priest in the army, he helped us get out of Rwanda to go into Bukavu, Zaire.

We didn't live in the refugee camp because my mom had friends in Bukavu. So, we stayed in their house for two years and a half. We had to move again because a war started in that region [First Congo War, a.k.a. Kabila Rebellion]. The Tutsi soldiers, under the cover of the Kabila rebellion, were destroying the refugee camps and killing people. So we had to move—and move—and move—across the Congo by just walking for six months.

When we left the town, I was with my mom and Jean-Luc. We had to put Mom in the back of a car to get her to the next camp, Kashusha. Jean-Luc and I, we had to walk thirty miles. We spent a night walking the thirty miles. Then we spent three weeks in the camp before the Kabila attacked. When they attacked the camp, it was Saturday in the morning. We just ran. I took my mom and my young sister. My mom had the baby on her back.

There were a hundred thousand people walking. Some people were going that way—some people were going straight—some people were going back—so I didn't know exactly where to go. They [David and the others] took the way in the forest, and I thought they couldn't have taken that way. So I took the road, and we got separated.

*David and Jean-Luc's personal history will be continued in next month's newsletter. If you know someone who would like to participate in this project, please see details on page 3.*



*Photo: Ned Castle*

## Free Tax Program in Burlington and Winooski

Rio and Drew from VRRP are volunteering at Casey Family Services in Winooski from 4:45 pm - 7:00 pm every Tuesday and Thursday until the end of tax season. Both are IRS-certified tax assistants. If your family would feel more comfortable filing taxes with VRRP staff, please encourage them to make an appointment! Volunteers and clients can use the hotline to schedule appointments by dialing 2-1-1. Because this system requires English proficiency, however, clients are welcome to call Rio directly at 338-4633. We need to know the name and contact information of the clients who need appointments. If an interpreter is needed, please let us know the requested language. Other free tax preparation sites include CVOEO and Burlington City Hall. CVOEO is open for taxes on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. Burlington City Hall is open on Mondays from 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm. Casey Family Services is open Tuesday and Thursday from 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm, and on Saturday from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. All services are provided by IRS-certified tax assistant volunteers. Interpreters will be provided for clients who need them.



Photo: Rose McNulty

### The Shudder

*Continued from page 2*

Pipher in her book, [The Middle of Everywhere](#), is the model that I use for thinking about the work of a host family. Mary Pipher suggests that the role of the cultural broker is to help newcomers navigate the complexities of American life in a way that is like a confidante who is looking after someone else's best interests. I like this role, I think, because it gives me a good place to put my unearned privilege!

In my simple mind, this translates to: introducing, teaching, and kinship. At first the relationships between my family and the hosted family that lived with us centered on introducing them to the objects and ways of American life in our community. These included learning words for things, the use of objects, and how to navigate doctor's offices, schools, and grocery stores. More complexly, this also included introductions to "how things are done here in America." Whatever that means (you know what it means when you're doing it). When the hosted family living with us began to feel more comfortable here and when they developed a bit of savvy and ability in mastering some of the fundamental tasks of getting settled, we slowly began to slip from introducing to teaching. The difference is that teaching invites indi-

viduals into knowledge and scaffolds decision-making so that the "student" begins to make decisions for him/herself. Now we don't advise our hosted family on very much of anything; we sometimes do inform them about options and encourage them to make decisions that are best for them. Often this means talking through the options and the implications of each option that exists. It also includes pointing them in the direction of information or actually getting that information and sharing it. And movement into this kind of relationship frees us up for other things to happen between us. Now, "relatives" is, perhaps, the best description of the relationship we have with our hosted family, two years after they lived in our home. Kinship ("relative") relationships, I think, invite a higher degree of mutuality and a unique form of closeness. In our kinship, there is caring, a knowing, and mutual respect. There is a genuine interest in how everyone is doing – in both families. Decisions are negotiated and there is not a sense of neediness or obligation between us.

How do we move to kinship mutuality when one is positioned with privilege and the other is not? This is not an impossible task, but it truly is complex. For me, moving mutuality into a more forefront position in our relationship

with our hosted family is about working with the categories of privilege in thoughtful ways: watching how I benefit from relationships that are storied to make me good and others needy. So, I usually try to avoid opportunities for "press coverage" (literally or not) that story me as good and others as needy. Being careful to hold back on suggestions, knowing that regardless of my intention, they do come from a perspective of privilege and that does afford them an additional weight. Being aware that regardless of the developing mutuality, privilege affords me the responsibility to help the family navigate complexities and issues that they may need help with (yet the wisdom to know when to do this does not automatically come with privilege :). Privilege gives me the ability to "throw my weight around" when I truly need to, when it is responsible to, and when I am asked to do so. Kinship mutuality requires me to manage my own privilege-guilt so that it does not paralyze or dictate the flow of the relationship. Believing that the most important gifts grow from relationships, not from the store shelves, is helpful, too. Being continually vigilant about this issue of privilege and being bold enough to push myself into uncomfortable thoughts, conversations, and confessions (like this one!) also serve as a meager step in managing The Shudder.

## Out of a Crack

*Continued from page 1*

ed me to go with them; I never did. When it came out on video, I brought it home and watched it in the security of my own home.

On the other hand, I don't want to hide myself away from the truth of what's happening in the world. Every time we welcome a new refugee family to Vermont, we know they are coming from harsh realities that no one should ever have to experience. Part of helping them to acclimate to life here has to be developing an understanding of what they came from. I'm happy to be able to offer you a couple of ways that we can develop that understanding. If you too experience Movie Fear, I can assure you that you need not fear seeing a new film which will have its Burlington premiere March 16th.

"God Grew Tired of Us" is a fine film, winner of both the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival. It explores the indomitable spirit of three "lost boys" from Sudan who leave their homeland, triumph over seemingly insurmountable adversities, and are chosen to resettle in America. Here they build new lives in a complex and confusing western world, while trying to maintain their connection with family and friends left behind.

Merrill Jarvis, owner of the Roxy Theater in Burlington, has generously offered the proceeds from the first five performances (on the evening of March 16th and the afternoon of the 17th) to VRRP. We will be sharing that money with the New Sudan Education Initiative. These showings will include Sudanese speakers who will introduce the film and offer a question and answer period afterwards. This will be extraordinary – not to be feared! – but to be

relished – a chance to see experiences beyond what most of us can imagine. Tickets are on sale at City Market and at our office. If you can join us, I know you'll be glad you did.

Now, I find that my Movie Fear doesn't extend to books. Perhaps that's because I can close them whenever I choose – to think through the scene as long as I wish – until I'm ready to continue. When you're reading a book, you have a little more control – you can read at the speed you choose.

When I read What is the What by Dave Eggers, I opened right up to it, eagerly absorbing every thought and every image. It is a hard-hitting account not only of the horrors that Sudanese refugees survived but also of the dispiriting and daunting struggles faced by those who resettle in this country. I didn't read it out of the obligation that it will be our first book club selection. I read it willingly, hungrily, because it offers knowledge and understanding. I recommend it to you whether or not you join our book club (which, if this is the first time you've heard about it, you can join by contacting me at [jscott@uscrvt.org](mailto:jscott@uscrvt.org) or 338-4627).

Reading this book, like seeing the movie or coming to our weekly open houses (for

dates and times see page 9), is one more way to enrich your understanding of the courageous newcomers who have endured terrors to start new lives in a strange and sometimes incomprehensible new world. One in which people actually pay money to sit in a dark room with strangers to watch a ferocious dog torturing you with barking! It is a challenge for people with different backgrounds to understand each other. Newcomers plunge into our society. For those of us who've grown up here, we have to search out ways to develop our understanding of other cultures.

Reading the newsletter is yet another way to do that. This issue features the beginning of a personal history by two brothers, originally from Rwanda, who came to this country in June of 2004. The history was written in conjunction with Ned Castle, a volunteer who has offered to work with other newcomers to help them write their histories as well (please see page 3 for more information on this project).

So we hope you'll choose the ways you best enjoy to expand your knowledge and understanding: join us at the movies the 16th or 17th, become a member of our book group, come to open houses, peruse the newsletter, and let us hear from you.

## VRRP STAFF PHONE DIRECTORY

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	Barre Office	802-479-7547
Amila Begovic	Direct Services Manager	802-654-1716
Bob Sanders	Director	802-654-1700
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Drew Loizeaux	Accountant	802-654-1733
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Megan Cannella	ELT Coordinator	802-654-1704
Michele Denault-Reynolds	Financial Support Specialist	802-654-1744
Nada Popovac	Front Office Manager	802-655-1963
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*email addresses follow this pattern: Judy Scott = [jscott@uscrvt.org](mailto:jscott@uscrvt.org)  
(Exception: Jessica Bassett = [vista@uscrvt.org](mailto:vista@uscrvt.org))*



*Photo: Rose McNulty*

# community buzz

## April Issue

The deadline for the next issue of this newsletter will be March 20th. We'd love to include **your** article on your volunteer efforts, what you've learned from this work, or what you've figured out about how to go about it. Any photographs you'd like to share will be welcome too. Or if you have news of a local or world event, please consider contributing it. In the same way that VRRP staff can't do our work the way we want to without volunteers, the value of the newsletter is enriched in direct proportion to your involvement.

Please e-mail your contributions to [jscott@uscrvt.org](mailto:jscott@uscrvt.org) before March 20th. We'd love to hear from you!

## Free Computer Workshops

Fletcher Free Library is offering Computer Workshops appropriate for beginner computer users starting in March. Classes include Intro to Windows Explorer, Intro to Microsoft Word, Email Basics, and Beginner and Intermediate Internet Exploration. Classes are offered on weekends and after school. Pre-registration is required. For more information check out the Computer Center's website ([www.fletcherfree.org/ComputerCenter.htm](http://www.fletcherfree.org/ComputerCenter.htm)) or call 865-7217.

## Volunteer Open Houses

In March, volunteer open houses at VRRP will be held between 5:30 and 7:30 on Wednesdays. Open houses provide a terrific opportunity for new volunteers to drop in and get together with Judy, other staff members and other volunteers to ask questions and learn more about the services provided by VRRP. You can also pick up a volunteer application to fill out. If you'd like to fill it out here, remember to bring contact information for three references. For experienced volunteers, the open houses give us a chance to talk over how things are going, to get new ideas, and to ask questions. **Because it's particularly helpful for new volunteers to talk with experienced people about their involvement, we encourage you veterans to come and share your knowledge!** Refreshments will be served. We hope you'll come!

April open houses will happen on Thursdays between 11:00 and 1:00 for those of you who prefer coming in the daytime. Put it on your calendar -- we'd love to see you!

## SAVE THE DATE! Volunteer Trainings

### Lead Poisoning Prevention

Friday, March 26

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Presenter: Sally Tappan, Department of Children and Families

### Food Stamps

Tuesday, April 3

5:30 pm - 7:00 pm

Presenter: Cassandra Gekas, Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger

The point of these trainings is provide our wonderful volunteers with the training and support they deserve by making different processes, organizations, histories, and cultures more transparent — not to generalize or stereotype them. For this reason, **we encourage volunteers of all experience levels to join our discussions, learn from our speakers, and share valuable personal experiences** so that we can all contribute to the refugee community in the most informed way possible.

While a formal RSVP is not necessary, please let Rio Holaday (338-4633 or [rholiday@uscrvt.org](mailto:rholiday@uscrvt.org)) know if you plan to join us. Feedback on past sessions and suggestions for future trainings is always appreciated!

Unless otherwise noted, all trainings take place at the VRRP office.

Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program

462 Hegeman Ave, Ste 101, Colchester, VT 05446

Phone: 802-655-1963 Fax: 802-655-4020

E-mail: [volunteer@uscrvt.org](mailto:volunteer@uscrvt.org)

Volunteer Office Phone: 802-338-4633

## Directions to VRRP

**Coming from downtown Winooski**, follow Route 15 east past St. Michael's College. Continue past Camp Johnson Military Facility. Take a left at the next light and turn into the fort Ethan Allen Complex.

**Coming from Essex**, follow Route 15 west past Susie Wilson Road. Turn right at the next stop light to turn into the fort Ethan Allen Complex.

Hegeman Avenue is the third road on the right. VRRP is at 462 Hegeman Avenue (the third building on your left — a brick building with a green on white sign out front.)