

A Crack in the Rock

VRRP's Volunteer Newsletter

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VRRP is a field office of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

Inside This Issue

Out of a Crack 1
By Judy Scott

Providing House and Home 2
By Karin Johnson

Pierre Mujomba at
Champlain College 2
By Gary Scudder Jr., PhD.

Food Stamps Changes to
"3SquaresVT" 3
By Karin Johnson

Cross Cultural
Communication 3

Meet Melissa Lang,
New ELT Coordinator 4

ECHO Vouchers are in! 4

UNHCR Shelter
Programme in South
Kivu Needs Fresh Funding 5
by Francesca Fontanini

Kaleidoscope Yarns 7

Community Buzz! 9



Out of a Crack

By Judy Scott

I love to laugh. When a Saturday morning opens up to me its unlimited possibilities of freedom and flexibility, what I love to do most is to listen to Car Talk on VPR. Those brothers, especially the one with the deeper voice, have the most contagious way of laughing. They laugh and I find myself laughing out loud.

My oldest daughter has a laugh like that. When she's laughing it's like the laughter pushes every other feeling out of her. If she was tired, poof! The laughter pushes all fatigue out of her. If she was irritable, poof! The laughter dissolves all cross feelings. When she laughs, she attracts everyone else's laughter. You can't stay separate from her; you join her without a thought.

They say that laughter is the best medicine. Who could disagree? There's something about laughter rolling through you that routs out the tightness that traps maladies and miseries.

But if your troubles have trained you to be too tight, melancholy takes hold of

you and no laughter can shake it off. You're too isolated from other people to catch their levity. If your memories force you to be wretched, nothing feels funny.

Being human, each of us is familiar with different types of laughter. Malicious laughter bites other people with its malevolent intent to hurt. Part of its cruelty is its inherent message that people are separate from each other and alone in their suffering. It isn't really laughter. Its outer core bears a slight appearance of laughter but it's devoid of the essential human connection that is the essence of laughter.

Nervous laughter deserves the name but it is thinned by its absence of joy. It's laughter that is thwarted by anxiety. It's like a bud trying to bloom when its whole being is stressed by lack of nourishment. But real laughter is full-bodied and complete. It rolls over you like a wave, carrying you away with it, surrounding you, buoying you up.

It seems to me that there's less laughter around than there used to be. I blame it on the recession. In the same way that VRRP is getting

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 254 volunteers, we are offering a new life to people who have endured the harshest conditions in hopes of a new opportunity.

fewer donations of second-hand beds, because the recession is holding people back from buying new beds, I'm hearing less laughter, because the recession is holding people back from laughing. We need to do something about this.

It's not that I think that people should laugh when they've gotten bad news or when they're wrestling with a problem. To every thing there is a season and a time for every thing under heaven. A time for anger and a time for gratitude. A time to work and a time to rest. A time for solemnity and a time for laughter. The recession is making us plenty solemn. I think we need more laughter.

This wouldn't have occurred to me, except that I spend a lot of time with former refugees, who spend a lot of time laughing. They do this in spite of the unusually stressful aspects of life that they can't avoid. Living in a country where your linguistic ability is limited is high-stress. Add to that minimal income, alien culture, harsh climate and you begin to wonder why anyone dealing with so many problems

VRRP's Mission

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.

Continued on page 8

Providing House and Home

By Karin Johnson

At VRRP case managers receive only a week or two notice before a newly arriving refugee family arrives at the airport. One of the first tasks case managers must accomplish is securing an apartment for the family. In a housing market that has low vacancy rates and few affordable housing units, this is no easy task in such a short time period.

Our case managers have worked hard to develop good relationships with landlords and property managers so that we can offer safe and affordable housing to newcomers. VRRP has had some unfortunate experiences with landlords from whom we will never rent another apartment. Yet we have had landlords whose work with VRRP has brought great opportunity and hope to the lives of our clients.

Evan Stainman is one of those landlords. Supriya Serchan, one of our case managers, met him in July of 2008. He was looking to rent a few units in one building and when Serchan called him and

asked if he would rent to some arriving Bhutanese refugees, he admits he was slightly hesitant.

Stainman says that landlords depend on meeting the prospective tenant when renting a new unit. Landlords use references, credit checks and meeting with those interested to get a gut feeling about them. At this point Stainman did not even have a name for the prospective tenant, but Serchan explained the work VRRP does and Stainman says he decided to take “a leap of faith.”

Since then Stainman says the experience has been wonderful and that his new tenants are “some of the most friendly, down-to-earth people I have ever had the privilege to meet.” They have shared their culture and language with him. Out of the kindness of their own hearts, they have helped him paint apartments for the next tenant. He now has seven refugee families living in some of the approximately 20 units he owns and manages.

Stainman quickly became involved as more than just a landlord. He posted ads on Craigslist and Burlington’s FrontPorchForum for more clothing and

winter coats for the new families. He passed on extras to help VRRP with winter outerwear needs for more new families coming to Vermont. Neighbors down the street started asking him if he needed other items for the families and soon enough seven bikes were given so the kids could get around.

He has guided the families through the process of living in a modern apartment. Stainman says he tries to put himself in the client’s shoes, “Everything is new: electricity, hot water, gas stoves.”

One tenant, Madhu Neupane, comments that “I can’t find words to describe him and his help. His willingness to help people is amazing and he is happy to help people without expecting anything of it. He doesn’t help his tenants alone, but helps anyone, whoever is in need of help.”

Stainman says the relationship between the tenants in his building and the new families has been great to see develop. “Incredible relationships have been formed between the other tenants and the families,” Stainman noted. Families have passed on clothing to other chil-

Continued on page 6

Pierre Mujomba speaks at Champlain

By courtesy of Gary Scudder Jr., PhD.

City of Refuge Writer in Residence Pierre Mujomba discussed his life in his homeland and the U.S., as well as read from his work.

Pierre Mujomba joined the Champlain College learning community this past fall as the institution’s first City of Refuge visiting writer and the second recipient of the Roger H. Perry endowed chair. The City of Refuge program is a national initiative that offers writers facing persecution in their home countries a sanctuary where they can continue to work. Pierre is housed in Champlain’s Institute for Global Engagement.

Mujomba, a playwright of international acclaim, is from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which he fled in 2003 after the French-language publication of his best-known work, *La Dernière Enveloppe* (English title, *The Lost Envelope*). The play, which concerns the regime of former DRC president Mobutu Sese Seko, has been translated into English, as has his *Kalemba’s Year without Pay*.

During his residence at Champlain, Pierre has worked on his plays and guest lectured at many Champlain classes. Being away from the DRC, he says, allows him to express himself more freely. “In Congo we have the system of censorship,” he says. “When I’m writ-

Continued on page 6



photo courtesy Gary Scudder Jr.

Food Stamps Changes its Name to 3SquaresVT

By Karin Johnson

The Department of Children and Families has announced that the Food Stamps program has now changed its name to 3SquaresVT. The 3SquaresVT name signifies how it helps Vermonters to put three square meals on the table every day. Families and individuals who received food stamps will continue to receive a monthly benefit and will see an increase in their benefit.

The Economic Stimulus Package, also known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, has created this increase in benefits. This increases 3SquaresVT benefits by 13.6% as of April 1, 2009. Notice of an increase in the ben-

efit should be received in the mail.

Families and individuals enrolled in 3SquaresVT receive a monthly nutrition benefit (payments for food), free school meals for children and the opportunity to help pay for a portion of phone bills. The amount is dependent on gross earned income, an earnings deduction (for taxes), other benefits received, a standard deduction based on family size, medical care deduction, dependent care deduction, and shelter deduction. Benefits can be accessed through an EBT or Electronic Benefits Transfer card.

This will greatly help refugee families as the recession has affected everyone, both new Americans and Vermonters. If you are assisting a refugee family as a volunteer, you may

see a notice in the mail of the benefit change. Please contact Karin Johnson at kjohnson@uscrvt.org if you have a question regarding your family's benefit.

Remember, food stamps benefit amounts for one month carry over to the next month. Any balance on the account will be added to the benefit received the next month. The amount that is received for one month does not have to all be spent in one month.

For more information on 3SquaresVT you can visit the Department of Children and Families website: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/3SquareSVT>.

Cross Cultural Communication Training

by Karin Johnson

On Thursday, April 2, 2009 the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program hosted a workshop for volunteers on cross-cultural communication. The workshop was facilitated by Tracey Tsugawa, an investigator with the Vermont Human Rights Commission who has an extensive background working with, teaching about, and living in diverse communities.

The workshop provided conceptual frameworks for understanding differences across and within cultures that impact both verbal and non-verbal communication, and some general guidelines for mindful, more effective communication. The facilitator drew upon the work and life experiences of participants to help illustrate key concepts. The workshop utilized an interactive format and include resource information and materials. If you would like more information contact Karin at kjohnson@uscrvt.org

Preschool and Summer Camp Resource Fair

Saturday, April 11th, from 10:30- 3:00 at the Champlain Senior Center in the McClure Multigenerational Building 241 North Winooski Ave., Burlington.

The CEDO We All Belong Americorps State Team is holding a Resource Fair for refugees, immigrants and low income families in Burlington to address the need for more information on registration for preschool and summer programs. Various preschool and summer programs will be present and there will be a table to help families fill out applications and scholarships. We hope to see you and your families there!

Meet Melissa Lang, ELT Coordinator

Melissa Lang joined VRRP's staff as the new English Language Training Coordinator back in September. Since then she has been hard at work assessing students, developing curriculum and teaching classes.

Where are you from?

I was born in Worcester, Vermont, a small town just outside of Montpelier. I grew up here, went to high school here, and even stayed for my undergraduate and graduate programs. I attended St. Michael's College, and that is where I was "bitten by the multicultural bug." Soon after befriending so many international students there, I decided to make my life's work teaching and supporting people from other countries. To be happy, I feel like I have to be around people from diverse backgrounds.

What interested you specifically in VRRP?

Throughout my career, I have taught students of many ages and cultural backgrounds. About half of my jobs were working with college students in Vermont,

New York, and Massachusetts. Other positions I've held were always in the public school system, working with K-12 students. I had especially rewarding experiences teaching ESL / ELL (English as a Second Language/ English Language Learners) elementary students in Montpelier, Waterbury and Burlington. Through the children, I came to know their parents and siblings. I have always wanted to help refugee families. And I especially like developing language teaching programs. I enjoy the diversity of this type of job. I get to design and support a program, train teachers and tutors, and teach a class myself, too. It fulfills all of my professional wishes! And personally, what could be more rewarding than helping newcomers learn their new community's culture and language?

What has your experience at VRRP been like so far?

A special "bonus" of working at VRRP is that I have a great supervisor and great co-workers. I have never worked in a place quite like this. Everyone is so supportive, and it is clear to me that – despite great

demands and a very fast pace – everyone is so dedicated to their work and mission here. I am excited that the departments support each other so well, and that we all seem to really enjoy each other's company.

Any particular challenges or experiences (best and/or worst) you'd like to share?

In just six months' time, I have met the most amazing people, and there have been many poignant moments when I have been blessed with glimpses into a refugee's life. I have learned a great deal about injustices that refugees have faced in their home countries, and in the camps they have just left. I thought I knew about war, about being relocated, families being separated, poverty, and so forth, from the news. I was wrong. No one can really know what it is like to be a refugee unless they have lived a refugee's life. The most we can do is be compassionate, listen, serve, and support.

Although every refugee who walks through our doors and into our classrooms

Continued on page 7

OPPORTUNITY FOR VRRP VOLUNTEERS & REFUGEE FAMILIES AT ECHO

The **ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center** has graciously offered VRRP 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.

We were so fortunate to receive five this year, which we'd like to reserve for families who will visit ECHO regularly. If you are interested in visiting ECHO with your refugee family, contact Marcia Stone at 338-4627 or mstone@uscrvt.org.

Call ECHO for information on their current exhibits at 864-1848 or visit www.echovermont.org



Photo by Karin Hanson

UNHCR shelter programme in South Kivu needs fresh funding

by Francesca Fontanini

BARAKA, Democratic Republic of the Congo, March 18 (UNHCR) – Pressure to provide new housing in South Kivu is mounting as more and more people return to the relatively peaceful and stable province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). But the ability of agency's such as UNHCR to keep pace with demand will depend on the continuing generosity of donors.

"The absence of adequate housing is one of the biggest challenges refugees face upon their return to South Kivu. After years of absence, most find their homes destroyed and have nowhere to stay," Sebastien Apatita, head of the UN refugee agency's office in Baraka, explained during a recent visit.

Most of the refugees returning to South Kivu come from camps across Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania. Last year, the agency funded the construction of some 500 shelters in the province's Uvira and Fizi districts to accommodate some 2,500 of the more than 14,500 returnees it helped back home, mostly via this lakeside port.

Over the next two years, with thousands more refugees expected back, UNHCR hopes to provide the resources to build 1,500 more houses in Uvira and Fizi for the most vulnerable families. But this ambitious target will depend on receiving sufficient funding during a time of economic recession.

"It's a very critical situation," said UNHCR Regional Representative Mohamed Boukry. "Unless we receive contributions, we will have no choice but to reduce this important assistance to thousands of Congolese refugees coming back home from Tanzania," he added.

UNHCR does not construct the new brick houses and shelters in South Kivu, but provides the materials and tools. This includes corrugated iron sheets for roofing, pre-made doors and windows, nails, axes, hammers and the like. The families then build their own houses.

Those who might find it difficult or impossible to build their own homes, including single women, the elderly and the ill, get

help from the community. Amina,* a single mother of four, did not know what to make of the shelter kit she received from UNHCR after being ferried across the lake to Baraka.

"I did not how to use it, but then – thanks to help of my brothers and sisters – we succeed in building a house," she proudly told visitors in the village of Sebele, located a few kilometres from Baraka. UNHCR and its partners follow up to make sure that the shelter kits have been used properly.

"It is a miracle to come home with almost nothing and almost immediately to have a house after spending more than 10 years in a tent in a refugee camp," Amina enthused.

The beneficiaries of the programme are identified by members of the community with advice from UNHCR and the government's National Commission for Refugees.

Years of devastating civil war in the DRC

Continued on page 7

Thank you ReCycle North Youth Build!

A group of volunteers came from ReCycle North's Youth Build program to clean out our warehouse for two days in January. The group did an outstanding job organizing furniture and household items.

Now our warehouse is a much more productive space to which has greatly helped us in preparing for arrivals.

A big THANK YOU to Youth Build from VRRP!

Human Rights in Africa: A Conference

**Saturday, April 11, 2009, 3:30 – 9 pm
Firehouse Gallery for the
Visual Arts
Church Street, Burlington**

An opportunity for the Burlington Community to gain a deeper knowledge of current events in Africa; in particular, of the three countries where many Burlington area refugees come from - Congo (DRC), Somalia, and Sudan - and also to spread awareness of the 35th Annual African Literature Conference that will be taking place at UVM April 15-19.

For more information contact: Robin Lloyd 862-4929, or Sandy Baird at Burlington College: 862-9616.

Pierre Mujomba

Continued from page 2

ing in Congo, I'm censoring myself. [Here] you're freer to write what you want. You have freedom to write all you can write . . . Also, when I'm here, I am not only a Congolese writer. I am an African writer. It is important because when I'm writing, I'm no longer writing for a very small group. I try to write as an African who wants to let people know here what happens in Africa."

Prior to coming to Champlain College, Mujomba was a visiting fellow in the Africana Studies department at Brown University in Providence, R.I. He also recently worked as a consultant on African linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston University and has presented his work and lectured widely in North America, France, Belgium, and his native country. He holds a master's degree in French and African linguistics from the National Pedagogic University in Kinshasa, DRC.



photo by Julian Harnois

House and Home

Continued from page 2

dren in the building, the children are getting more comfortable with the neighbor's dog, and in warmer weather they are all outside together.

One of his refugee tenants comments, "Evan is always careful to fulfill the needs of tenants and even satisfies their recreational interests by taking them out to the countryside.... He gives a party for all tenants once a year just to entertain them. He even dines with us whenever he is invited which is very unusual for landlords."

Stainman has also gotten used to the difference in meeting with the refugee families he works with and his other tenants. Oftentimes meetings that he expected to be brief, would last up to a half hour with a refugee family. He found that their expectations often included warm greetings and possibly a cup of tea. He learned that a little more patience was needed in these exchanges but, Stainman says, with a little planning he can conduct business as usual.

In his time as a landlord with these families he has seen a great improvement in

their English. Stainman commented that initially it was difficult at times to communicate important matters with some family members whose English needed help. Now he says he can converse with them easily and is very proud of them for how far they have come in such a short time.

Stainman has stepped into the role of a volunteer in many ways as well. He has helped with housing applications, Section 8 applications, and with general paperwork. Another one of Stainman's tenants, Ganga Ram Kuikel, comments, "He helped me to apply for Section 8 and gave me information about housing, Community Action, Good News Garage and many more.... His financial advice to every tenant as to how to become thrifty and not extravagant."

Stainman noted that he is used as a reference for other landlords who may rent to VRRP's clients. He has had five or six landlords call him to ask questions. It is difficult for landlords to say yes to clients they have never met and who cannot find jobs until after their arrival. Stainman has helped to ease their worries. VRRP does provide newcomers with temporary cash assistance and our employment counselors assist clients in

finding jobs.

From my own personal experience with Stainman, I have seen his integrity in the work he does. He takes great care in ensuring his units are a good place for his tenants to live and he is a friend to all of them. Refugees usually arrive at the airport late at night so that they arrive at their apartments way past midnight. Stainman has often been there just before they arrive making the final touches on the apartment, making sure everything is all set.

Kuikel added, "Evan is a hardworking and persevering person who works 18 to 20 hours a day.... Because Evan demonstrates many of these positive aspects in his daily activities, I would call him a wonderful and fabulous man. I really admire him."

In the future Stainman says he will "definitely, without a doubt" rent to families who are coming or have come to Burlington as refugees. VRRP staff and clients have the great good fortune to have formed a partnership with a landlord who has the acumen to run a successful business in such a way that it benefits the community.

Shelter in South Kivu *Continued from page 5*

formally ended in 2003, with a peace treaty. While human rights abuses continue to be recorded in South Kivu, the province has largely remained peaceful in recent years, unlike neighbouring North Kivu province, where conflict continues to displace people.

The relative improvements in security in South Kivu, Equateur and Katanga provinces has led to the return of more than 180,000 Congolese refugees, mainly from Tanzania, the Republic of Congo and Zambia, since UNHCR repatriation operations started in 2005. This year, UNHCR plans to help home about 35,000 Congolese from Tanzania and Zambia.

* Name changed for protection reasons

Kaleidoscope Yarns

Kaleidoscope Yarns is close to completing a knitting project to benefit VRRP.

Knitters are giving blocks to create a blanket. The blocks will build upon each other to create a

blanket. We thank them for their great efforts and for fostering a sense of community in the knitting community with our community!

You can check out more of what Kaleidoscope Yarns does at their blog:
<http://kyarns.blogspot.com/>



Meet Melissa

continued from page 4

is special and in great need, one man in particular made a huge impression on me. He came alone from Sudan. He was young, in his early twenties. As I gave him a ride home from class one of his first days here, he told me that he had walked to four different countries. His parents had been killed when he was three. He was raised by someone he called his "auntie." He came every day to my class, so eager to learn and to help me set up and pick up the classroom. He has since moved to Arizona (our winter weather was just too much I believe!), but I always think of him when I feel I am having a challenging day. He didn't complain. He did what was necessary. He walked. He lived. He kept on learning. He remained open to meeting and caring about his new friends, classmates, and neighbors. I tried to give him a ride home on another day, in a snowstorm, but he said he "liked to walk."

He also had the greatest answer to my question, "What is a noun?" He would always tell the class very clearly and surely, "A noun is the name of anything and anyone." I loved that answer.

Based on your experience, what are your goals for this year at VRRP?

I have many goals, but I'll mention two. My goals are to increase the number of classes we offer so that our class sizes don't remain so large. Smaller classes are better for language learning. I also want to increase our resources for teachers and tutors.



photo courtesy Lauren Berrizbeitia

Out of a Crack

Continued from page 1

would ever be moved to laugh.

Maybe it's a survival skill. Maybe we need to learn it to get through this recession. I think they've discovered a secret that most of us Americans aren't able to truly understand. It feels good to laugh. It makes you feel better to laugh. We should do it whenever we can.

I can hear a voice asking: what's there to laugh about in the middle of a recession? I sense that, in these times, this is a skill we're going to have to learn. What do former refugees laugh about? Here are some examples that pop into my mind. One happened when an interpreter and I were showing a newly-arrived family around their apartment. We pointed out the toothbrushes, explaining what they're for and that there was one for each member of the family. The father said something and laughed heartily. Immediately the interpreter started to laugh and their eyes were merry as they exchanged looks. Just hearing them made me laugh a little while I waited for them to enjoy their laugh and explain the joke to me. Here's what the father had said: "I won't have

much need of a toothbrush since I don't have many teeth."

I had trouble laughing at that. I didn't see anything funny about missing teeth. That reaction, I've since decided, is my problem.

Here's another example. One aspect of cultural orientation that all resettlement sites address is the importance of paying rent and paying it on time. We want to make sure that newcomers understand that the apartment belongs to the landlord, not the government, and non-payment of rent will result in eviction. It's fortunate that clients take this seriously but stressful for them to worry about it.

As a new population of refugees is resettled in the United States, individuals phone each other to exchange notes on the places where they live. Some of our clients know more about Phoenix and Atlanta than I do. A burning topic of conversation on these phone calls at the beginning of the Burmese resettlement in Vermont was: where do you go if you can't pay the rent and you're evicted? Refugees in other cities figured out an answer. They noticed that there were American (homeless) people who set up makeshift housing under bridges. The word spread like wildfire – if you get evicted, you go live under a bridge. This

is how it works in America!

Before long this solution came to the attention of staff members who, knowing the harshness of Vermont winters, were horrified at the idea and quickly busted the myth, explaining the reality to community members in greater depth. Ever since, when a Burmese person is worrying about having enough money to pay the rent, he jokes that next month he's going to go live under the bridge. Everyone gets a big kick out of it and laughs. The one making the joke may be worrying so much that he's lying awake at night but, come daylight, together with his friends, he's easing the fear by joining together in laughter.

I'm not so good at laughing in the face of toothlessness or homelessness. Nevertheless, I've realized that times that are new and different and tough require new skills. It's time for me to learn how to incorporate laughter into my repertoire of dealing with the things I fear most. I can't believe how lucky I am that my work has thrown me in with so many skilled people who can teach it to me.

Laughter brings us together, even when language and life experiences separate us. It's just what we need.

VRRP STAFF PHONE DIRECTORY

Please join us in welcoming our new interns to VRRP.

**Laura Cannon
Ruth Goodman
Kelsey Paquette
Danielle Patterson**

Our interns attend the University of Vermont and the Community College of Vermont.

You can call the Volunteer/Intern Office at 338-4633.

ChiengKuach Mabil	Americorps Community Engagement	802-338-4618
Fatuma Bulle	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1706
Htun Sein	Staff Interpreter	802-654-1728
Jacqueline Rose	Coordinator of Interpreting Services	802-654-1706
Jenelle Eli	Employment Counselor	802-654-1717
Judy Scott	Director	802-654-1700
Karin Johnson	AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer Office	802-338-4632
Kristen McCaskey	Employment Counselour	802-338-4625
Loan Nguyen	Financial Support Specialist	802-654-1701
Marcia Stone	Coordinator of Volunteer Services	802-338-4627
Matt Thompson	Coordinator of Programs	802-338-4625
Melissa Lang	ELT Coordinator	802-654-1704
Mukiza Noel	Case Manager	802-338-4617
Nada Popovac	Front Office Manager	802-655-1963
Rashid Hussein	Senior Case Manager	802-654-1707
Shawna Wakeham	AmeriCorps*VISTA ELT Office	802-655-2656
Supriya Serchan	Case Manager	802-654-1716
Tam Truong	Accountant	802-654-1733
Volunteers and Interns	Volunteer Office	802-338-4633
Wendy Reid	Relationship Enrichment Coordinator	802-338-1860

e-mail addresses follow this pattern: Marcia Stone = mstone@uscrvt.org (Exception: Volunteer Office = volunteer@uscrvt.org)

community buzz

Volunteers: What Are You Learning? Share a few words with others!

Each month, we pride ourselves on the fact that our newsletter includes articles by volunteers, former refugees, and staff members. Input from such a wide range of people involved in the resettlement process enables us to offer many different perspectives on the experience to our readers.

We would love to include an article about **your** experience, which will help us keep volunteers and community members abreast of challenges, successes, and questions that volunteers face. If you have a story to share but don't have the time to put it into words, one of our volunteers is a professional writer and has offered to work with other volunteers to capture their stories.

If you'd like to discuss an idea for an article, please contact Karin at 338-4632 or kjohnson@uscrvt.org.

Thank you to Evan Stainman for his time and contribution this month and to Melissa Lang.

Urgent Donation Needs at VRRP

In preparation for the arrivals coming in 2009 we are in high need of certain items to help provide for our new families. We are in need of:

**twin and full beds,
dressers, kitchen tables and chairs,
and couches**

Please call the Volunteer Office with any donations at 338-4633.

Volunteer Orientation

Volunteer Orientations provide a wonderful opportunity to learn more about our organization, our volunteer program, and volunteer opportunities. Marcia and Karin will be present to discuss our programs and answer your questions, and we hope that experienced volunteers will stop by during the second hour to share their stories or concerns. While attendance at one orientation is mandatory before beginning service, they are also a great time for new and veteran volunteers to check in with VRRP staff.

Upcoming Orientations:

Friday **April 17** from **12:30 to 2 p.m.**

Thursday **May 7** from **12:30 to 2 p.m.**

Tuesday **May 12** from **5:30 p.m. to 7p.m.**

We look forward to seeing you there!

If you have any questions contact Karin at 338-4632 or kjohnson@uscrvt.org

35th Annual African Literature Conference

University of Vermont

April 15-19

For more information check out:
<http://www.uvm.edu/conferences/AL>
A2009/

"Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?"

Come see a showing of this powerful film about health and how it is shaped by the social and economic situations in which we are born.

Viewings of two segments of the film will be followed by a facilitated discussion to identify how to improve the life of all Vermonters. Attendance to both sessions is encouraged.

Thursdays, April 23
and April 30

6:30-8:30 p.m.

UVM Davis Auditorium

Free, Open to the Public

RSVP requested but not required:

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

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 Ethan Allen Complex.

Coming from Essex, follow Route 15 west past Susie Wilson Road. Turn right at the next stop light to turn into 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.)