

# Duluth News Tribune

## Simple solar ovens can save Darfur refugees' lives

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It may be a cliché, but it doesn't cost much to make a difference in parts of war-torn eastern Africa. That's the message several student groups at the College of St. Scholastica and Temple Israel want to spread, as they raise money this week for refugees from Darfur, Sudan.

Money from an African dinner and cultural show on Friday at St. Scholastica will go toward the purchase of solar ovens — two per family for 100 families living in the Toulomb Refugee Camp in Chad. The ovens cost \$25 for two.

"It doesn't take a lot of money, but it saves a lot of lives," said Gary Gordon, a Temple Israel member and St. Scholastica professor who is helping to organize the event.

The Duluth to Darfur Project is part of a much larger effort taking place this week, Global Days for Darfur.

Women in the camp sometimes walk more than 10 miles to find firewood for cooking, Gordon said. They risk rape and murder by the janjaweed, militiamen blamed for raping and killing Darfur civilians since 2003.

Solar ovens "allow mothers to spend time with their daughters because it's like a slow cooker," Gordon said, and keeps them in the safer confines of the refugee camp.

Rhonda Lee, a junior from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is a member of the United for Africa club at St. Scholastica. She wants to show that the lives of women are at the forefront during war.

"There are lives at risk for just going out to get firewood and to provide a meal on a daily basis," she said. "There is a lot of atrocity, a lot of turmoil and a lot of pain, but these women are trying to make something of themselves, trying to make things better for their children."

One oven is meant for boiling water and the other is meant for a crockpot-type meal, said Dylan Kesti, a freshman and member of Earth to Action at St. Scholastica.

The ovens will be built within the village, creating jobs for people who will make them and teach others to use them.

"These are mostly Muslim farmers, their houses burned, driven out of home villages," Gordon said. "Essentially it was like the Holocaust. We're trying to give hope to people in the camps and also something tangible."

Violence against refugees hasn't ended, Kesti said, and work still needs to be done.

"So many people are, for the lack of a better word, ignorant to what's going on," he said. "Sometimes once the worst of a situation has happened there's not a lot of attention given to it. It's still happening."

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