

DIOCESAN NEWS

School appeals for funds to pay refugee girls' way

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Edward Kpor walked slowly with a cane into the living room of his Rochester apartment. He sat down to talk about his life as an immigrant to the United States from the west African nation of Liberia, where he could have lost his life.

Kpor must use a cane because he was beaten severely in 1990 by rebels who had overthrown the government of Liberia's then-president, Samuel Doe. Doe was eventually killed that year. Kpor said his older brother, John, who served as aide-de-camp to Doe, was also killed.

In the wake of the revolt, Edward Kpor fled Liberia's capital city, Monrovia, with his extended family, but he was beaten before he got to Liberia's neighboring country, the Ivory Coast. That the rebels didn't kill him like they did his brother, Kpor attributed to "luck."

But more suffering was to follow for him and his relatives in a refugee camp administered by the United Nations in the Ivory Coast.

"We were too much in numbers, so the food was not sufficient to feed us," Kpor said.

The Kpors were among 2 million Liberian refugees created by the civil war that began in 1989 and ended in 1996. The country is still recovering from the war's ill effects, which included destruction of much of the nation's infrastructure and economy.

Kpor lived in the camp for seven years. Then the United Nations helped him move himself and several family members to the

United States, where they were resettled in Rochester through the efforts of Catholic Family Center's refugee services in 1998. Today, Kpor and his wife, Dorothy, share their apartment with four of their seven children. Several other relatives live in the area as well, some in the same apartment complex.

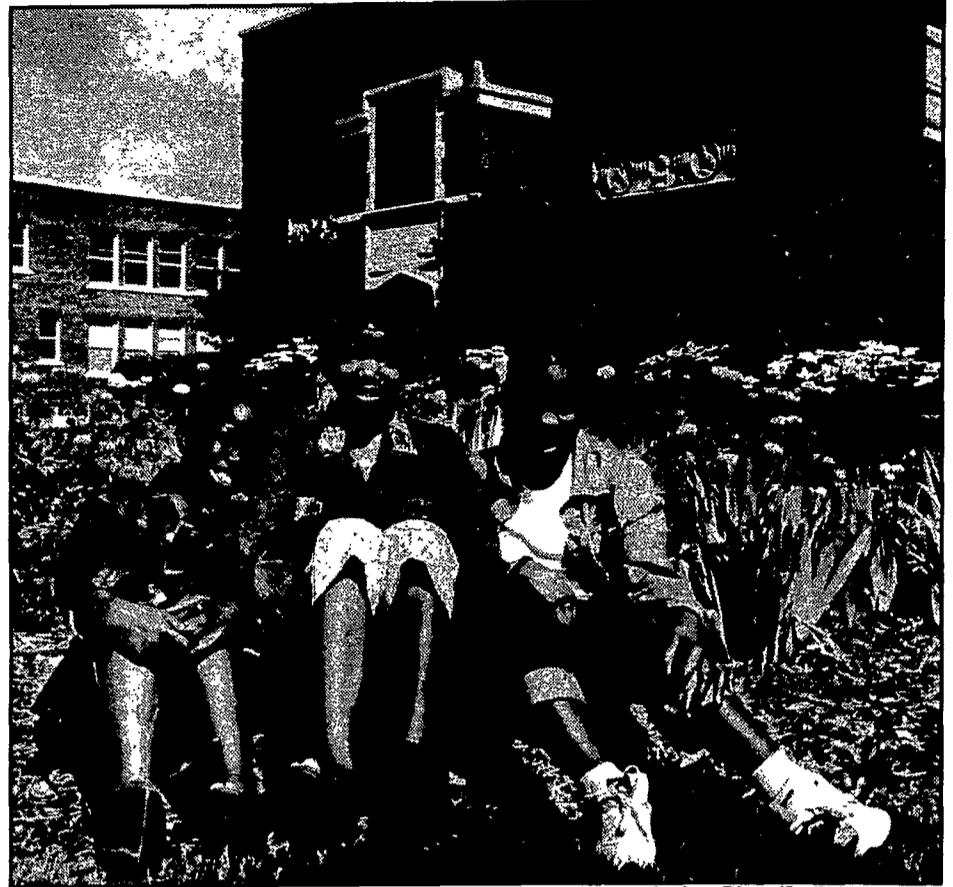
The Kpors harbor a simple, yet profound dream for two of their daughters and one of their granddaughters: that together they will be able to attend Hope Hall in Gates, an alternative nondenominational school founded by Sister Diana Dolce, SSJ.

"We want them to get a good education," Kpor said.

Already, one of the Kpor's daughters, Sailon, 14, has completed one year at the school, fifth grade, and will attend sixth in the fall. The school is designed to help students master the same curriculum taught to all New York state students, but through nontraditional methods of learning.

The Kpors want another daughter, Tekpo, 9, and their granddaughter, Zandohn, 12, to also attend the school. Currently, both girls are going to St. Boniface School in Rochester, where Sailon also went until the third grade. All three girls were attending the school on scholarships. The Kpors pay part of Sailon's tuition, and also receive scholarship aid. But the Kpors cannot afford to send the other two girls to Hope Hall, and are hoping Catholics and other community members will donate to a scholarship fund for the kids.

If the fundraising drive is successful, Zandohn will be able to enroll in Hope Hall's seventh grade and Tekpo in third grade this fall.



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

Sisters Tekpo (left) and Zandohn Kpor, ages 9 and 12, and their niece, 14-year-old Sailon Kpor (right), enjoy the sunshine outside Hope Hall in Gates July 2. The girls and their families are refugees from Liberia.

Hope Hall is appealing through the local news media for help for the Kpors. The school hopes 1,000 diocesan Catholics and/or families will consider donating at least \$20 apiece to a fund that has been established, Sister Dolce said. She noted that if that happened, there would be enough tuition money available to cover the cost of the girls' schooling until they graduate. (Hope Hall goes from grades three to nine, and students are prepared at the school for entrance into mainstream high schools upon graduation.)

Sister Dolce said that many students receive financial aid at Hope Hall, but the Kpors are unique in that they have no relatives in the area on whom they can fall back for help. Hence, she said, Hope Hall decided to make this rather unique appeal.

The girls' biggest advocate these days is Sister Kathleen Clary, SSJ, who started an education program at River Park Commons where the girls live. Refugees like the Kpor girls have a difficult time making it in a traditional classroom, and not just because English is not their first language, she said.

"Most of their schooling was very sporadic," Sister Clary said of their lives in Africa. "Many times they had to go into hiding in the bush for days."

However, Sailon has made dramatic improvement in her studies since enrolling at Hope Hall, the two Sisters of St. Joseph said. They hope the same results can be achieved with Zandohn and Tekpo. During an interview at Hope Hall, the two women religious pointed out that Sailon rapidly

progressed over the last year from being a shy, withdrawn young lady to an active, involved student.

"In just one month, she grew in all her areas," Sister Dolce said.

Sailon concurred, and added that she's excited about playing baseball in sixth grade next year, and hopes to be a doctor someday. Her sister, Tekpo, wants to go to the school so she can learn better and play soccer, and Zandohn said she, too, wanted to be a doctor someday so she can help people.

"We've got three children here who have the potential to be productive citizens in our country, and right now they are extremely at risk," Sister Dolce said. "I think that we can give these girls the language background they need and the social background they need."

Unlike the Kpor girls, students from this country have "years and years of information" in their heads they pick up from simply living here, Sister Dolce said. The girls need a nontraditional learning environment to help them catch up with their peers who were born here.

"I think what we can do is offer these kids the opportunity to learn the curriculum, master the language ... and develop a sense of who they are," she said.

EDITORS' NOTE: Tax-deductible donations for the Kpor girls' scholarships may be made to: Hope Hall, 1612 Buffalo Road, Rochester, NY 14624. Indicate in the memo area of checks that the donation is meant for the "Refugee Outreach Scholarship Fund."

Seventy-first Annual NOVENA TO SAINT ANNE

2001 Guest Preacher: Fr. Bernard Finerty, OFM Cap

Tuesday, July 17 to Wednesday, July 25

Nine Days of Prayers, at 7:30 PM

Vespers, Sermon, Novena Prayers

Tuesday, July 17	Real love has high expectations (Jn 15:9-17)
Wednesday, July 18	Identity with Christ: everyone's vocation (Acts 2 & 4)
Thursday, July 19	"Upon this Rock, I will build my Church" (Mt 16:13-20)
Friday, July 20	Francis of Assisi: Mirror of Christ (Lk 12:22-34)
Saturday, July 21	The prayer of Jesus is our best prayer (Lk 22:14-23)
Sunday, July 22	There is Hope...especially for the hopeless (1 Pt 1:3-5; 13-17)
Monday, July 23	Search the way/Seek the Truth/Share the Life (Ex 3:1-14)
Tuesday, July 24	Mary, beloved daughter of Saint Anne (Lk 1:26-38)
Wednesday, July 25	Remember Me! Remember! Remember! (Jn 6:35-38)

Thursday, July 26, 2001 at 7:30 pm

Feast of Saints Anne & Joachim

Solemn Celebration of the Eucharist



Fr. Bernard Finerty, OFM Cap is a young priest forty years ordained, and has served in the Capuchin Order for 45 years. Along the way he has taught in high school and college seminary, served as assistant novice master, directed a large retreat center, and has worked in the preaching ministry full time since 1980. He has carried the Ministry of the Word to all parts of the U.S.A. and beyond.

SAINT ANNE CHURCH

1600 Mt. Hope Avenue • Rochester, NY 14620-4598

The Church building is air-conditioned, wheelchair accessible, and looped for the hearing impaired.

Prison ministry given new name

Corpus Christi Prison Ministry — a ministry of Corpus Christi Parish from its founding in 1980 until it incorporated separately in February 2000 — is being renamed Solid Ground. Its executive director is Elizabeth Netherwood, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church, Waterloo.

The ministry sends about 52 volunteers into the Albion Correctional Facility for women; Groveland Correctional Facility for men; and men's and women's areas of the Monroe Correctional Facility on East Henrietta Road, Brighton. Volunteers work with inmates to prepare them for their eventual release. The organization operates two residential placement facilities for former inmates — Rogers House for men and Pearl House for women — and refers them to agencies that provide assessments and in-depth counseling.

The ministry also ran Rogers House Restaurant, which trained former inmates

for work in food service, but closed the business in 1999 to focus on prisons and residential programs, Netherwood said. Volunteers currently make 60-80 "encounters" a week with inmates, she said.

The ministry recently received more than \$23,000 in proceeds from a benefit event at the Paley Studios Ltd., including a \$5,000 gift from the studios and \$10,000 from the Perkins Foundation.

Netherwood said individuals interested in volunteering with the ministry should call 716/482-2694. Volunteers are needed to assist with prison visits and support groups; serve as role models or mentors in residences; cook meals, especially dinner; help in the office; and participate on committees or on the board.

The ministry's current volunteer base is drawn from a variety of churches and includes Catholics and non-Catholics, Netherwood said.