

NEWS

Allen Consulting, Inc.

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89 Middletown Road, Holmdel, NJ 07733

Phone 732.946.2711 Fax 732.946.8032

www.allenconsulting.com

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Contact: Sylvia Allen

sylvia@allenconsulting.com 732-946-2711

Monmouth University Shines Light on Ugandan Orphans Through Lens of Holmdel-based Charity

WEST LONG BRANCH, N. J. – Monmouth University’s School of Social Work and the Center of Distinction for the Arts presents “Sylvia’s Children,” a two-month-long exhibition of the Mbirizi Advanced Primary and Day Care School in Mbirizi, Uganda, Africa.

The educational public display officially kicked off with an opening reception on Friday, March 5 at the Pollak Theatre Gallery, Monmouth University, 400 Cedar Ave, West Long Branch and will have a closing reception on Friday, April 30, 2010.

Exhibition attendees will be able to view dozens photos of the school and its 1,001 students, as well as have the opportunity to view and touch genuine artifacts from the surrounding area, including African musical instruments, clothing, woven mats, toys, baskets, bark cloth and other items indigenous to Uganda. In addition, products made by the children at the school will be for sale including beautiful beaded jewelry, baskets, woven purses, nativities made from banana leaves, “garbage” balls, Ugandan slave bracelets, and beads of life necklaces.

The exhibition is the brainchild of Sylvia Allen, the Holmdel-based founder of Sylvia’s Children, a charitable organization created with the mission of supporting children at the Mbirizi Advanced Primary and Day Care school in the village of Mbirizi, by raising awareness and funds to educate, feed, clothe and shelter them. One-quarter of the children at the school have been orphaned due to the AIDS epidemic.

Since launching the organization in 2003, Allen has succeeded in ensuring an annual sponsorship for 93 of the 235-orphaned children and has raised \$300,000, all of which has gone directly to the school. She has also constructed a well; built and fully stocked a

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library; purchased seven acres of land; donated an Internet-equipped computer; constructed a dormitory with triple-decker bunk beds; built a playground; provided sporting and musical equipment; and built three additional double classroom blocks as well as hiring a full time nurse and building new stoves for increased cooking efficiency.

“We are so excited about this opportunity to showcase our school and our children and their talents,” said Allen. “We are also grateful to Monmouth University for providing us with the space and exposure. The exhibit is exciting, interactive, educational and inspiring. We are particularly grateful to Alphagraphics in Red Bank who designed our display boards and provided us with such professional and ethnically accurate look.”

Through the gallery exhibition, Allen hopes to inspire and educate the public on how they can participate in helping to create a self-sustainable model for underserved third-world schools, like the one in Mbirizi, and thus supporting the children.

The closing reception is open to the public; if you would like to attend, please RSVP by calling Allen at (732) 946-2711, or by e-mailing Sylvia @sylviaschildren.org, no later than Feb. 26. For more information on Sylvia’s Children, visit www.sylviaschildren.org. To find more information on the exhibition, visit www.monmouth.edu/arts_events/exhibitions.asp.

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