



Office of University Relations

5400 Ramsey Street • Fayetteville, North Carolina 28311-1498

800.488.7110 • 910.630.7043/7114 • FAX 910.630.7253

methodist.edu

For Immediate Release
July 10, 2012

Media Contact: Pam McEvoy
pmcevoy@methodist.edu
910.630.7043

MU STUDENTS ENGAGE IN A GLOBAL PEACE PROJECT

FAYETTEVILLE, NC—As South Sudan marked its one-year independence anniversary Monday, July 9, two Methodist University students were engaged in a summer project designed to cultivate peace in the area, which has seen decades of conflict.

Financial economics major Nyoma Clement Nickonora, a junior, and political science/international relations major Talata Evers, a sophomore, are originally from the region. They designed the project with fellow South Sudanese student Joy Minalla, who attends Macalester College in Minnesota. All three were born in what was then Sudan, but spent time as refugees in neighboring countries before getting scholarships to study at United World College schools.

In 2009, the students visited Yei, a town in the southern part of the country, where they saw firsthand how much of the area had been destroyed in Sudan's civil war, which was a protracted on-off conflict for 39 of the last 57 years.

Their project, "Rebuilding the Ruins and Promoting Peace" won one of this year's Davis Projects for Peace grants and was one of eight projects submitted by Methodist University students. College students across the country design and undertake "Projects for Peace" around the world, thanks to philanthropist Kathryn W. Davis. Now 105 years "young," Davis launched Projects for Peace on the occasion of her 100th birthday in 2007 and has renewed her commitment every year since. In 2012, nearly \$1.25 million was awarded in \$10,000 grants to students submitting the winning proposals for projects to be completed over the summer.

With the \$10,000 grant, the students have renovated the library of St. Joseph Secondary School in Yei, purchased textbooks and teaching materials, and are holding workshops on study skills while emphasizing the need for women's education in community development and youth involvement in the community's leadership. The school has about 450 students, but the library's resources will also benefit students in neighboring schools.

"The renovation of the library is all done," Nickonora said in an email July 3. "We just moved new study tables and book shelves into the library this last week. Yesterday, we received some of the text books from Kampala (Uganda). Today, we are receiving the second order of the books and tomorrow we shall be receiving all the books from Kampala."

On a website the students designed for their project, <http://www.youtheducationforpeace.org>, the students explain how they hope the library and books will help promote peace.

“This project will give youths a ticket out of poverty. Educated girls can eventually give their own families a good start in life. Educated boys can escape a family cycle of hard labor. This will have a ripple effect on their families and community.”

The project began June 1, when the students met with administrators and assessed the school’s need for textbooks. As well as purchasing the books, the students will also categorize, label and shelve them in the library.

The students are also holding study strategy seminars with the local students. In August, the students will hold a seminar on the importance of women’s education.

“We did one academics seminar, (‘Going Beyond Your Potential in Academics,’ and some alternative paths to a successful future) with the students,” Nickonora said in his email. “Today we did one workshop that focuses on problem-solving approaches. We gave the students different scenarios and divided them into groups. It was interesting. Tomorrow, we shall have a student leadership seminar with all the prefects and other student leaders.”

Before the students left the United States, they held additional fundraisers to help pay for their travel to South Sudan, which was not covered by the grant. The students held bake sales, asked for donations through their website, and from faculty and staff.

“They are moving along well within their time line,” said Jana Moore, International Programs assistant director at Methodist University. “With four to five weeks left to complete things, they will surely be able to meet all the planned goals and hopefully complete any additional seminars and training they had hoped to fit in should time allow.”

Methodist University is an independent four-year institution of higher education with over 2,400 students from 41 states and 53 countries. Methodist University offers over 80 majors and concentrations, 100 clubs and organizations, four master’s degree programs, and 19 NCAA III intercollegiate sports. For more information, please contact Roxana Ross, assistant director of marketing and communications, at ross@methodist.edu or visit methodist.edu. For more information on Projects for Peace, see davisprojectsforpeace.org.

###