

ST. JOHN'S STUDENTS RAISE FUNDS FOR PEACE IN CONGO

Students will blow Whistles for Peace in April 15th gift-giving ceremony

DALLAS, TEXAS, April 11, 2011 – Typically, the sound of a child blowing a whistle is joyful, bringing to mind pleasant memories of carefree youth. So, when Middle School students at St. John's Episcopal School in Dallas learned that for young Africans raised in Congo, a whistle represents fear and possibly death, they launched into action. Eager to make a difference, students raised nearly \$5,000 in support of *Falling Whistles – A Campaign for Peace in Congo*.

The student-run fundraising project will be highlighted by a whistle-blowing ceremony at St. John's Episcopal Church on Friday, April 15. The event will begin at 2:50 p.m. Mr. Yves Muya, a refugee from The Democratic Republic of Congo who fled the country in 1994, will speak to the students and receive their financial contribution on behalf of *Falling Whistles*. The ceremony will include a blessing of the whistles, African music and drumming, prayer, and an outdoor procession during which students will blow their whistles for peace.

While researching years of civil war and armed conflict in Congo, St. John's students learned that children who are too young to hold guns are given whistles and sent to the front lines to warn of the enemy's approach. Their weapon in the face of this conflict and destruction has become a symbol of peace and a rallying cry to raise awareness of their tragic situation. It's estimated that several million people, including children, have died in the war. As many as 50 million Congolese have either been displaced or forced to seek asylum.

St. John's involvement in *Falling Whistles* began in October 2010 after 14 students participated in TEDxKids @SMU and committed to four hours of community service. Ten of those students selected *Falling Whistles* as their service project after listening to Mr. Will Watson speak about the program at TEDx. Working with St. John's teachers Mrs. Jayne Davenport and Ms. Liz Shepherd, the students created a plan to raise awareness of the campaign for peace in Congo among their peers and sell symbolic metal whistles to raise funds.

As their service project comes to an end, the St. John's students have become advocates for peace in Congo. The students have collectively spent more than 40 hours on this project and are proud to donate the substantial proceeds of their fundraiser to *Falling Whistles*. After learning of their commitment and witnessing the results, *Falling Whistles* has asked the students to form a circle to continue their efforts. The students who have driven the project are eighth graders Camilla Adams, Katie Billings, Blake Bordelon, Bo Hughes and Austin Wallace; and seventh graders Dane Bender, Lauren Chester, Libby Kraemer, Tucker Roemer and Walker Tindall.

About Mr. Yves Muya

Mr. Yves Muya fled the Democratic Republic of Congo with his family of seven when he was 10 years old. They survived in refugee camps in Zambia and Malawi. By selling what little food they received, they managed to save enough to leave the camp and walk to South Africa. Eventually, Muya received a Fulbright scholarship and studied media in hopes of telling the stories of his homeland. He met Sean Carasso, the founder of *Falling Whistles*, with whom he partnered to build a nationwide coalition for peace in Congo. Since then, he has been a guest speaker at universities across the country including Dartmouth College, Duke University, Sidwell Friends School, University of California Berkeley and University of Chicago, among others.

About Falling Whistles

Falling Whistles encourages people to use their voices as weapons and become whistleblowers for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Using metal whistles on chains to spread the story of war and Congolese refugees, *Falling Whistles* partners with local leaders to advocate for and rehabilitate those affected by war in Congo.

About St. John's Episcopal School:

St. John's Episcopal School is a pre-k through eighth grade co-educational school in East Dallas. Created as an outreach of St. John's Episcopal Church in 1953, St. John's is the oldest Episcopal school in Dallas and remains committed to the five tenets of an Episcopal education:

- Academic excellence
- Corporate worship (Episcopal/Christian chapel)
- Religious studies based on basic biblical content
- Meaningful and integrated community service and service learning projects
- An inclusive community where the dignity of every human being is respected

Contact:

Pam Jordan
Director of Communications
St. John's Episcopal School
214-328-9131 x223
<http://www.stjohnsschool.org>

XXX