

While attending the Mayerson Leadership Conference, Moeller High School students Will Tardio, Brian Harmeyer, Brian Stiens, and their math teacher, Connie Ring, saw a documentary about the "invisible children" of Northern Uganda. These Acholi children leave their homes and villages to walk to hospitals and bus parking lots in town in search of safe places to spend the night. From the time the Moeller students and their teacher heard about the invisible children, they knew they couldn't just sit back and do nothing.

The Lord's Resistance Army abducts children ages 4 to 12 and indoctrinates them through violence to kill. The Moeller students wanted to raise awareness about the children who sleep underground on wet floors and in hospital corridors and verandas to escape the rebels. Tardio, Harmeyer, Stiens, and Ring decided to show the documentary about the invisible children to all 950 Moeller students.

"We can make a change in Uganda by viewing the film which I can guarantee will make you want to go and act and help these children out," said Moeller student Zach Opatken.

"The response was amazing," said Ring. "More Moeller students became involved in raising money and awareness." Invisible Children, Inc. plans to use the money to educate the children of N. Uganda. They hope this will give the children a better chance to succeed.

Then, Ring, and the students heard about a suburban safari being sponsored by Invisible Children Inc. College students taking a semester off from their studies planned to travel across the United States in RV's to talk about what was happening to the children of Northern Uganda. Ring, contacted the organization about the suburban safari and said, "Please come to our school."

She and the Moeller students coordinated a day of events on April 21 that revolved around the visiting college students and ended with a fundraiser dinner. To prepare for the "empty bowl" dinner, the Moeller students contacted businesses in the area for donations.

Panera Bread, Perkins on Montgomery, Mimi's Café on Mason/Montgomery, and Krogers donated soup and bread. Moeller National Honor society donated money to support the event. Invitations were printed and envelopes donated by Office Max and Office Depot. The invitations to Moeller parents requested "Bring an empty bowl, we'll fill it. Bring an open mind, we'll fill it."

"The Invisible Children Tour (the college kids) was of inspiration to the Invisible Children Committee here at Moeller and personally to me," said Tardio. "To give up a semester of their school work to travel the country in an RV and educate people about a humanitarian crisis, what big hearts they have!

"The assembly was great and it was a pleasure to work with the students and to see the response we got in donations after the assembly attributes to its success (\$2,000). They gave me hope for the future and had such concrete and sensible personal opinions that made a lot of sense to me. I'm looking forward to the night commute."

On April 29, Ring and about ten Moeller students joined in the nationwide Global Night Commute, a simulation of the Acholi children's experience. They traveled on foot

to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center where they joined over 135 other people in activities and a sleep-out.

“I feel more connected to the invisible children now than I did when we started,” said Opatken.

**Photo:** On the floor left to right:

Scott Carroll (11), Brian Harmeyer (12), Will Tardio (11), Connie Ring (mentor), Aaron Bushman (12)

1<sup>st</sup> row standing left to right:

Michelle Larson(age 24, RV Team), Joe Bello(age 18, RV Team), Scott Wernery (12), Scott Alexander (12 ), JP Atlhaus (12), Ben Merritt (12), Sarah Shreves (age 19, RV Team)

2<sup>nd</sup> row standing left to right:

Zach Opatken (12), Michael Franchi (12), Brian Stiens (11), Andy Lehn (10), Mark Motz (12), Darren Burrdett(age 20, RV Team).

Members of the Moeller IC Committee not pictured:

Chris Damon (10)

J Paquette (10)