



Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

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For Immediate Release.

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Stowe Event to Raise Awareness, Money for Iraqi Refugee Women and Children

New York, NY, September 5, 2007 – The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children will be the beneficiary of an event to be held at the West Branch Gallery in Stowe, Vermont, on Saturday September 15. Funds raised will support the Women's Commission's advocacy on behalf of Iraqi refugee women and children who have been forced from their homes by the war.

"Iraq has the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world," says Sarah Chynoweth, program manager at the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, who recently returned from a fact-finding mission to Jordan. "Around 2.5 million people have been displaced inside Iraq and over two million have fled to neighboring countries, where they are living in dire conditions."

Current estimates put the number of refugees in Jordan at between 500,000 and 750,000, in a country whose total population is 6 million. As Jordan does not recognize them as refugees, most are living in the country illegally, with limited access to schools, jobs and medical care.

After reading about the huge needs of the refugee women and children in Jordan, Marguerite Thompson, a resident of Stowe, decided to organize a fundraising event.

"Iraqi women and girls in Jordan are vulnerable to economic exploitation and sexual and domestic abuse," says Ms Thompson. "It's easy to feel helpless, but I realized there was something I could do to help. Everyone's been so supportive: the West Branch Gallery has donated their sculpture garden, Magic Hat brewery has provided beer, while Gypsy Eyes Records recording artist Mikal Evans, local musician Jeff Nicholson and Vermont's own Crop Dusters will be playing for us."

In addition to live music, a silent auction and a kids' corner with arts and crafts, the event will feature short presentations by Ms Chynoweth of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, and Ria Kulenovic, executive director of the Center for Balkan Development, and herself a former refugee. A short film shot by the Women's Commission in Jordan will also be shown.

"We are so grateful to Marguerite Thompson, the Gallery owners and everyone who's contributed to this event," says Ms Chynoweth. "The money raised at this event will be a tremendous help to the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children's efforts on behalf of refugee women and children."

NOTE: Interviews can be arranged with Sarah Chynoweth, Ria Kulenovic and Marguerite Thompson.

Contact: Diana Quick, 212.551.3087 or 347.834.1195, diana@womenscommission.org to arrange interviews.

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Sarah Chynoweth

Sarah Chynoweth rejoined the Women's Commission in 2005 as Program Manager in the Reproductive Health Program after previously working in the Reproductive Health Program from 2003 to 2004. Sarah is a graduate of Columbia University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, with a Master of Arts in Human Rights focusing on reproductive health. Sarah is also the co-founder of a nongovernmental organization, Circle of Health International, which provides women's health services to conflict-affected women and girls. Her professional experiences include health and gender-related projects in Darfur, Sudan, Jordan, Egypt, Tibet/China, Palestine/Israel, Nepal, Romania, Malta and Germany. In addition, she conceptualized, designed, implemented and managed maternal and child health trainings for women and girls in rural Tibet, a population that is extremely inaccessible due to political restrictions. Sarah is originally from Germany.

Ria Kulenovic

Ria Kulenovic is the Executive Director of the Center for Balkan Development (CBD). A refugee from Bosnia, she left her native country immediately following the war in 1995 and resettled in the Boston area. During the past ten years she has worked with the Boston and New York offices of the International Rescue Committee, she is on the Board of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and the former board chair of Refugee Women's Network.

Marguerite Thompson

Marguerite Thompson lives in Stowe with her husband and two young children.

Tickets for the event will be available at the door. \$25 for adults, \$10 for children.

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children works to improve the lives and protect the rights of refugee and displaced women, children and youth worldwide. www.womenscommission.org