

Walkathon to aid local, global causes

Michelle Walbaum/Correspondent (Issue date: 10/26/06 Section: University) Posted: 10/26/06

Students have a chance to make a difference both locally and globally if they choose to participate in the Walk-A-Thon from Douglass College Center to Brower Commons on the College Avenue campus on Saturday.

Proceeds from the event will go toward refugees in Darfur in the Kakuma camp, as well as fund the New Brunswick teen center.

"The volunteers have to collect pledges - they bring them to the walk," Douglass College Government Association 2008 Class Representative Sara Kasman said.

Volunteers are expected to raise over \$100 to contribute. Suggestions on how to gain contributions include asking friends, family, roommates, spouses or baking cookies for co-workers, holding yard sales and walking your neighbor's dog for donations, according to a pamphlet given to interested students.

Anyone can register at 9:30 a.m. Oct. 28 in the Douglass College Center. The walk will begin an hour later but will continue until 11:30 p.m. The five-kilometer walk will extend all the way to College Avenue.

The goal of the event is to raise \$10,000 in donations. The group hosting the project, Galvanizing and Organizing Youth Activism at Rutgers, wants to promote literacy throughout the world, which coincides with their mission: "education through service."

"This group is about community service - organizing students to be active in community, encouraging people to maximize potential for service," said first-year student Shari Wejsa, a Douglass College unclassified representative.

The event will support education programs for Darfur refugees.

Darfur, a western area of Sudan in Africa, has been in conflict since the 1950s. The conflict involved differing outlooks about government and politics at first. In the early '70s the conflict became a response to perceived discrimination of the Arab government toward the Animist and Christian part of the country.

In the '80s, the government attempted to impose Sharia law on the entire region, and the region exploded into civil war.

In 2005, a peace agreement was signed, but the crisis of violence has not ended in the region. There is also tension over grazing rights of nomads and farmers, and a demand for greater political rights for different communities in the area.

"What really struck me a lot of times is it's difficult for Rutgers students to get involved in globalizing change," Kasman said. "We don't know how to participate."

Kasman thought GOYA gave the chance to be a part of global volunteer work to Rutgers students who wanted to participate.

"Honestly, I think lots of people want to participate in community service. This is great way to do it, to give back to the community," he said.

Kasman also pointed out that the event did not take that long and was easy to get involved in.

Locally, the donations from the event will fund the New Brunswick Teen Center on Joyce Kilmer Ave. The center, a warehouse converted to a hub of activity includes a swimming pool, a batting cage, a video game arcade, golf green and theater. New Brunswick Mayor James Cahill said yesterday that between 100 and 300 teens come to the 15,000 square-foot center everyday.

The Center, according to the City of New Brunswick's Web site, provides city residents aged 13-19, "with a place to join together outside of the traditional school hours." The center also provides homework assistance, computer labs and training, professional development skills workshops, and recreational programming, according to the Web site. The teen center is also still under construction but expects that soon, even more activities will be available for the use of teens. The new facilities are expected to open in the summer and include a computer lab, a weight room, a dance studio and locker rooms.

"I think people overlook the fact that Americans also have problems reading," Sara Kasman said. "GOYA is helping to foster literacy here."

The Douglass College Government Association passed a resolution in support of the event last Tuesday night because part of the mission of the council is to strengthen Douglass College through community service.