



*February visit to campus*

## “LOST BOYS” WITH AN UNBREAKABLE SPIRIT

*The journey continues at Concordia*

In the late 1980s, more than 26,000 young boys began a journey that would forever change the course of their lives. A civil war erupted in the African country of Sudan, a violent conflict between the Khartoum-based government in the north and the Christians in the south. Young boys watched as their parents were killed and their sisters were taken as slaves. When their once-peaceful villages began to burn, the boys fled.

For two months, the boys walked through the heat and the wilderness, surviving on leaves and what water they could find. A thousand miles later, they arrived in Ethiopia where they were sheltered for the next three years. In 1991, the boys were forced to flee again as the war raged on, this time south to Kenya. Red Cross relief workers

dropped supplies from above, but many boys died of starvation and dehydration. Thousands were killed by lions or by crocodiles as they swam across the River Gilo. Of the 26,000 boys who first began the journey, only 10,000 made it to the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

Named after the orphans in *Peter Pan*, the “Lost Boys” of Sudan spent the next nine years at Kakuma, with more than 65,000 other African refugees. United Nations and Red Cross relief workers provided the boys with food, shelter and medical attention, but many still suffered hunger and disease. Though they lacked books and classrooms, the Lost Boys began their education in the Kakuma camp, gathering beneath trees and writing lessons in the dirt. Ages and birthdates for most of the boys were unknown, so aid workers grouped them and assigned approximate ages. Many of the boys now celebrate their birthdays on New Year’s Day.

In 2001, the American government began the resettlement of Sudanese refugees. More than 3,600 Lost Boys moved to different cities across the United States. Massachusetts welcomed a number of the Lost Boys into the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program of Lutheran Community Services of Southern New England. Living in group homes or with foster parents, the Lost Boys have spent the past three years adapting to American culture.

On February 19, 2004, a group of Lost Boys from the Boston area arrived at Concordia College—New York. This soft-spoken, eager group of young men toured campus and had lunch with members of the faculty and staff. Having arrived in the United States with little formal education, the Lost Boys have overcome the challenge of mainstream high school and look forward to beginning their college careers. Concordia’s Christian community and individualized education sparked an interest and five of these remarkable young men will be proud members of the fall 2004 freshman class.

As we plan to welcome them to our campus, we are once again reminded from where they have come, and the hardships they have endured to find their way into the open arms of the Concordia community. And as much as they will learn here over these next four years, Sudan’s Lost Boys certainly have so much to teach us.

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