

Artists needed for Sudan project

By Robin Walluck
Staff

Cynthia Davis is calling all artists and budding artists to help raise funds to educate women in southern Sudan. She is looking for donations of artwork to her "Sudan Canvas Project."

Davis asks that people who want to help create artwork and donate it to be put up for sale at the Fairfield Arts Center in November. All funds raised from the sales will be donated to the Hope for Ariang, a trade education program for women in Ariang, which is a war-torn village in southern Sudan.

Her interest in the struggles in Sudan was piqued after her children became involved in the STAND group at Trumbull High School. STAND is a student anti-genocide coalition.

"They have them in high schools and colleges all over the country," Davis said about STAND. After STAND hosted speaker Gabriel Bol Deng — a lost boy from Sudan — Davis wanted to know more.

"When I heard him speak, I couldn't just walk away," she said of Deng.

Davis then looked into who the Lost Boys are — 20,000 orphaned boys who were forced from their homes in the 1980s. They walked for miles across Sudan and Ethiopia before coming to a refugee

camp in Kenya. She then discovered acts of genocide and the struggle of women in the country.

Davis formed the Sudan Canvas Project after becoming a fellow with the Carl Wilkens Fellowship program. "I've been an artist in the Trumbull area for years," Davis said. She said the Sudan Canvas Project will bring the community together to raise awareness of the plight of women.

"Watching the development in Ariang has been life-changing for me, beginning with seeing the villagers have clean drinking water for the first time, to having their first protected area in which to learn," Davis wrote in a brochure.

She said educating women through the project will lead the village to success.

"I truly believe that the empowerment of their mothers will bring the most positive change to the village," Davis said. "Many of these women have lost multiple children to the war and the terrible conditions for decades after."

Besides the art project for women, other fund-raisers have led to the improvement of the Ariang village. Davis said the 400 children in the area are now excited to go to school.

"We are working on a solar

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Cynthia Davis stands with Sudan Lost Boy Gabriel Bol Deng. Davis has begun the "Sudan Canvas Project" to help educate women in Sudan. (Submitted photo)

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energy project so the school can open in the evenings for the women," Davis said.

The Fairfield Arts Center

has donated space for the exhibit. Paintings for the Nov. 27 exhibit are due by Oct. 15.

Information: hopeforariang.org, thesudancanvasproject.org, or e-mail info@thesudancanvasproject.org.