

# The Pueblo Chieftain

Your print and online news source for Southern Colorado

Sunday, May 24, 2009

## 'Torn From Home'

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**InfoZone exhibit shows plight of refugees**



COURTESY PHOTOS/INFOZONE NEWS MUSEUM -- One station in the exhibit about refugee children lets visitors try to build a shelter with the few available materials.



Toys made of clay and wood by Sudanese and Congolese refugee children are shown in the exhibit, 'Torn from Home.'



A model of a schoolroom is part of the exhibit. School recently was recognized as an essential right for refugee children.



A life-size cut-out of a Sudanese girl sits inside a tent in the 'Torn From Home' exhibit to show conditions refugees face in camps.



Displaced children from Kosovo (left), Colombia (center) and northern Uganda are among the ones whose portraits are shown in the exhibit about refugees.



COURTESY PHOTOS/INFOZONE NEWS MUSEUM -- A refugee-camp medical clinic is one of the stations in the 'Torn from Home' exhibit.

By **MARY JEAN PORTER**  
**THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN**

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Nearly one-third of the world's 30 million displaced people are children, and you can bet they aren't whining for the latest electronic toy.

These kids have more immediate concerns, like what they'll eat today, where they'll sleep tonight, how they'll find the least bit of privacy when using a public latrine - if the luxury of a latrine even exists.

The plight of refugee children and the importance of human rights are the subjects of a national traveling exhibit that opens June 5 at the InfoZone News Museum at Robert Hoag Rawlings Public Library, 100 E. Abriendo Ave. "Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee" is intended to be an interactive experience - both between children and the exhibit materials and children and their parents - for ages 8 to 12. It was created by the Lied Discovery Children's Museum of Las Vegas, and Pueblo is the only Colorado venue on its four-year tour.

Maria Sanchez-Kennedy, InfoZone manager, says she's excited about hosting the hands-on exhibit, which has been a long time coming here.

"I saw it was available, that it was a new traveling exhibit, and I thought

it would be a great way to bring an important global issue to Pueblo," Sanchez-Kennedy says. "It's designed to show what's happening around the world."

The entire fourth floor of Rawlings Library will be devoted to "Torn From Home," which takes visitors from station to station, beginning at home. Three representative houses - in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia and Afghanistan - are used to show some of the people affected by the refugee crisis and where they live before fleeing. The other stations are leaving home; camp registration - exhibit visitors will get a registration bracelet and an ID card; refugee camp - visitors are challenged to build their own shelters using the few available materials; medical clinic - children can see the "bare bones" medical care that's available in camps and can compare their height and weight to that of refugee children, many of whom are malnourished; school; and going home again - if that's possible.

At the stops, children and parents are encouraged to discuss questions such as: What does home mean to me? What would you take if you were forced to leave home? Why is clean water important and how would you keep your water supply clean? How would you and your family stay healthy in a crowded camp where disease spreads quickly? What would your future be like if you couldn't attend school while at a refugee camp, as many children can't? Why is returning home so important to many refugees?

A large world map in the leaving-home station shows the numbers of refugees in different locations and features children's portraits and artwork and written words by refugee children.

Sanchez-Kennedy says younger children can view the exhibit with their parents, even though its theme is sensitive. Because it's scheduled for the summer months, there won't be school tours, but she's trying to get the word out to youth groups, Boy and Girl Scouts and other organizations working with children, and special activities involving the exhibit will be scheduled.

The free exhibit will run through Aug. 30 at the InfoZone. It's sponsored by philanthropists Pam and Pierre Omidyar; he's the founder of e-Bay.

For more information about "Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee," call the InfoZone at 553-0205, or visit

[www.TornFromHome.org](http://www.TornFromHome.org).

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## Refugee numbers

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The United Nations Refugee Agency states there are 32.9 million "people of concern" worldwide.

Of them, 80 percent are women, children and elderly people.

They live in 33 areas of the world where their numbers have totaled 25,000 or more (per area) for at least five consecutive years.

They live in 324 refugee camps in these areas.

One out of every 100 persons in the United States is a refugee or the child of a refugee. Since 1975, 2.7 million refugees have been resettled in the U.S.

*- 2007 statistics, the latest available at the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Web site; compiled by Mary Jean Porter*

## IF YOU GO . . .

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**What:** "Torn From Home" exhibit about refugees

**When:** June 5-Aug. 30; 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Saturday, 1-5 p.m. Sunday

**Where:** InfoZone News Museum, Robert Hoag Rawlings Public Library, 100 E. Abriendo Ave.

**Cost:** Free

**More info:** 553-0205, [www.TornFromHome.org](http://www.TornFromHome.org).

## ON THE NET

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**Torn From Home** [www.TornFromHome.org](http://www.TornFromHome.org)

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