

ECDC NEWS

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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August Youth Summit Will Reunite Resettled "Lost Boys" of Sudan

A reunion for 225 of the so-called "Lost Boys of Sudan" who were resettled in various parts of the United States last year will be conducted Aug. 25-30 at the YMCA's Camp Letts near the Chesapeake Bay in rural Maryland, according to Tsehaye Teferra, president of the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC).

The "Southern Sudanese Youth Summit" will include activities traditionally associated with summer camp experiences, supplemented with practical workshops and other educational components designed to enhance their acculturation process. A day trip to Washington, D.C., with visits to Smithsonian museums, national monuments and other sites, will help them learn more about the history and culture of their new homeland, Teferra said.

They are among some 3,360 young men who arrived last year through the United States refugee resettlement program. ECDC, one of ten national resettlement agencies which provide initial reception and placement services under cooperative agreements with the Department of State, is planning the reunion, funded by a grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Most of the young men are now in their early twenties and have shared a 14-year struggle for survival since fleeing Sudan's civil war in the late 1980s. Some were then only seven to ten years of age. After trudging across southern Sudan to Ethiopia, fleeing another war there by walking back to Sudan and confronting ongoing violence and discrimination, they finally found a measure of security in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.

"Until they left the camp for the United States, these young people had rarely been separated, although the camp sheltered as many as 70,000 refugees," Teferra said. "For those whom we will be able to accommodate, the summit will essentially be a family reunion."

Local agencies which resettled the youth are being asked to nominate participants, and to provide volunteers to assist in program management and logistics. All transportation and accommodation expenses for accepted participants and volunteers will be covered through the grant. For more information, contact Gregg Deinhart or Saba Berhane at (703) 685-0510, or by email at: info@ecdcinternational.org.

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