



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Children from Uganda take a look at firefighting equipment in the United States during a tour on Oct. 4.

Ugandan choir tours Dallas fire

Group visits United States to raise awareness, plight of orphans

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Dallas Fire & EMS volunteer Sean Condon, dressed in full firefighter's gear, dared the group of children surrounding him to poke him in the eye.

The children, all members of the Imani Milele Children's Choir, hesitated for a few seconds, not sure if he meant it.

"Come on, try to poke me in the eye," Condon said from behind the safety of his mask.

That was all the encouragement they needed to converge on the kneeling firefighter, giggling at their unsuccessful attempts to poke him in the eye.

The choir, from Uganda, has been on tour for almost eight months in support of Imani Milele Children, a nonprofit that rescues and educates orphaned children in their home country.

The tour of the fire station on Oct. 4 was part of a break between performances in Salem that morning and at Dallas First Christian Church that night.

Dallas Fire & EMS Community Service Officer April Welsh led the tour, showing the children and choir chaperone the department's fire engines and other fire and rescue vehicles. They saw firefighters go out on a call and an ambulance return from a call.

Welsh turned the tour over to Condon to show them all the safety gear and turnouts firefighters must wear when battling blazes. He told them about the material of the pants and coat, and passed around the air tank that allows firefighters to breathe in a fire.

"How much do you think all of that gear weighs?" Welsh asked.

The children guessed 25, 50 pounds?

All the equipment weighs about 65 pounds, Welsh said.

"Oh, my goodness. How much do you weigh?" choir chaperone Olivia Nabulime asked Condon, laughing.

"Depending on what day it is, I'm going to say 185, I put an extra 65 pounds on," Condon responded, grinning at the question.

"Do you have to workout to carry that?" she asked.

"I do as much as I can," Condon said.

The same could be said of the choir, which books several performances each week, bringing music and the story of Uganda's children with it.

"What we do is raise awareness of the plight of orphaned and vulnerable children in Uganda," said Brian Mjuba, another choir chaperone. "The total of orphaned children in Uganda is over 3 million."

He said the crisis began decades ago during the rule of dictator Idi Amin in the 1970s and persists today.

Imani Milele, a Swahili

phrase meaning "always believe," helps about 3,000 orphans. Members of the choir are children the organization rescued.

The group has performed in schools, churches and other venues across the country. They will return to Uganda on Nov. 22.

The group's stop in Dallas was a chance for the choir's children to view fire engines and ambulances up close.

"This is the first time our children have seen what you guys have and what you can do," Nabulime said.

Nabulime said they have felt welcomed on their visit to the U.S.

"The hospitality is awesome," Nabulime said.

The Altar Society of St. Patrick's Catholic Church - Fall Bazaar
Saturday, Oct. 14 • 9 AM to 3 PM
 Soup & Pie Lunch will be served.
 Items for sale: garden produce, baked goods, white elephant items, and arts & crafts.
 Also several items will be raffled.
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NEWS IN BRIEF

Human rights topic of presentation

MONMOUTH/INDEPENDENCE — Roberto Mendoza Perez, from Mexico's National Network for the Defense of Human Rights, will speak about "Human Rights in Mexico: How U.S. Policies Affect State Violence, Militarization, and Displacement."

Mendoza Perez will speak at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday at the Werner University Center, Western Oregon University, Columbia Room.

He will present again at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday at Central High School in the library.

Mendoza Perez is on a speaking tour with Witness for Peace in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana.

A professional translator will be provided at both presentations.

For more information: Emily Plec, 503-838-8819, or Carol Christ, 503-551-6495.

Tax refunds harder to claim after Friday

SALEM — Anyone who has not claimed tax refund money may find it more difficult to do so after Friday.

According to the Oregon Department of Revenue, thousands of Oregon taxpayers have money waiting for them.

After checks expire — two years from their issuance date — there's a limited window of time to get them reissued before more requirements apply.

That window is Friday.

Each October, the department sends any expired checks to the unclaimed property program at the Department of State Lands.

To claim property from DSL, taxpayers need a notarized claim and copies of identity-verifying documents.

Visit www.oregon.gov/dor to get forms, check the status of a refund, or make payments.

For more information: 503-378-4988, or 800-356-4222, email questions.dor@oregon.gov.

Video contest asks students to be safe

SALEM — High school students across Oregon are invited to create a video increasing awareness about safety on the job for young workers.

The annual, "Speak up. Work safe." video contest is open for submissions. The deadline is Feb. 1, 2018. Videos can be mailed in or submitted online.

Students may create a 90-second or less video that inspires young workers to do at least one thing differently to stay safe on the job.

Videos must educate young workers about the importance of speaking up in the workplace.

Participants are encouraged to develop a key message or slogan, use humor, and get creative while emphasizing ways to protect themselves and others from getting hurt on the job.

The top three entries will earn cash prizes ranging from \$300 to \$500.

For more information, including judging criteria: youngemployeesafety.org/contest.

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Sudoku
 Difficulty: ★★★★★

Solution on Page 11A

4	2	8	9	7	3	1	6	5
3	7	6	1	5	2	4	8	9
5	1	9	4	8	6	7	3	2
8	6	3	5	2	1	9	4	7
7	4	1	6	9	8	2	5	3
9	5	2	3	4	7	8	1	6
1	8	5	2	3	9	6	7	4
2	3	7	8	6	4	5	9	1
6	9	4	7	1	5	3	2	8

4	3	2	8	1	6	7	5	9
5	6	9	3	7	4	8	1	2
1	7	8	9	5	2	4	6	3
3	4	7	2	8	5	6	9	1
2	1	6	7	4	9	3	8	5
9	8	5	1	6	3	2	7	4
7	9	1	4	3	8	5	2	6
8	5	3	6	2	1	9	4	7
6	2	4	5	9	7	1	3	8

How to do Sudoku
 Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in every column, row, and three-by-three square. See example above.

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