



Whitewater Arts Alliance

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Whitewater Arts Alliance Presents “More Than a Village”

(WHITEWATER - January 10) On February 1st, 2021, the Whitewater Arts Alliance will be presenting a gallery exhibition of work created by Mark Lawrence McPhail. This exhibit will be on display through February 28th in the Cultural Arts Center located at 402 W Main St Whitewater. The gallery will be open Fridays-Sundays, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm in accordance with our COVID-19 safety precautions. Fridays the gallery is open for high-risk individuals only (those 65 years or older or with pre-existing conditions), and all are welcome on Saturdays and Sundays.

“More than a Village” is a photographic exhibition that documents the work of the Akola Project (formerly the Uganda American Partnership Organization--UAPO). During 2009, Mark served on the Board of the UAPO and traveled with the organization to Northern Uganda, where he worked with a local refugee community on several development projects. He documented the experience during his visit through explanatory photographs of the work being done, and portraits of the people served by the organization.

An artist’s statement provided by Mark Lawrence McPhail:

“This collection of images offers a commentary on the well-known Yoruba proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." In Africa, a continent underdeveloped and exploited for centuries, it takes more than a village to serve and support children displaced from their homes and families by war, conflict, and environmental disruptions. It takes people of conscience, compassion, and generosity to truly raise a child. In working with the Akola Project, an organization that seeks to serve and support the least, the lost, and the left behind, I had the opportunity to document and observe the power of people of conscience to serve as an extended family for children who had lost the families into which they were born.

The Akola Project, founded by Brittany Merrill Underwood as the Uganda American Partnership Organization (UPAO), employs hundreds of women in Dallas and Uganda to make jewelry, selling their designs at exclusive stores including Neiman Marcus. In 2009, UAPO traveled to refugee camps in Northern Uganda to assist with several development projects and work with women in their communities to build sustainable businesses. These images tell the story of the kindness, compassion, and commitment of the UAPO volunteers, and the hope, appreciation, and joy clearly captured in the eyes, expressions, and smiles of the children they served. For a short period of time, both had the opportunity to experience what it means to be part of a human family that transcends differences of geography, class, and culture.

This is a story that needs to be told in a time when division, conflict, and disease seem to have undermined our collective capacity for empathy, kindness, and generosity. At a time when cruelty and indifference seem to have crippled our politics, and threatened the wealth and health of nations, perhaps those of us who too often take for granted the privileges we enjoy might learn from children for whom such privileges are a distant dream. In Uganda, I discovered that when our privilege is tempered by compassion and motivated by a spiritually inspired commitment to serving others, we will raise children who can help us realize and appreciate the dreams of democracy, freedom, and equality to which we aspire. As these images indicate, it may take more than a village to raise a child, and yet it might well be the children who teach us the simple lessons of life that define our humanity, and remind us of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's recognition that 'We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.'



Big thanks to our sponsor!



The mission of the Whitewater Arts Alliance is to promote the visual and performing arts through an alliance of artists, individuals, educational resources, and organizations to promote creativity and diversity that will serve to educate and enrich the lives of the residents of the Whitewater community and surrounding areas.

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