

Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe Honored by Time Magazine

4-25-14

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NORMAN – The University of Oklahoma is a second home to Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe from Northern Uganda who today was named as one of Time Magazine’s 100 most influential people in the world.

Sister Rosemary’s mission in Uganda is to save the women, girls and children who had been victimized by years of civil war perpetuated by Joseph Kony. She began a school to rescue these young women and children to provide them with practical skills so that they may have a sustainable future. She is credited with saving thousands of young people, restoring their hope and ability to live. As a Time 100 honoree, Sister Rosemary will attend a Time Gala on April 29 to receive her award.

There is no other American university more involved at Sister Rosemary’s school in Uganda than OU, whose students and faculty are at the forefront of service learning with their regular support of and engagement with her school, St. Monica’s School for Girls, in Gulu, Uganda. Beginning more than four years ago, students and faculty from the OU College of Medicine, OU College of Law, OU College of Engineering and other programs have been working, learning and serving at St. Monica’s.

OU alumnus and co-founder of Pros for Africa, Reggie Whitten, says, “It’s well known that Sister Rosemary has changed the lives of thousands of young people in Africa. What is not so well known is that she has influenced so many young people right here in Oklahoma by being such a great role model for our students. She is truly a modern day Mother Theresa.”

The OU College of Medicine sends students, interns, medical residents and physicians to the clinic at St. Monica’s to serve the school’s community. OU physicians also visit the Medical School at the University of Gulu to enhance training of local medical doctors. In addition, the OU College of Medicine sponsors an annual gala in Oklahoma City to raise funds that will support the tuition of one Ugandan medical student each year. For many years Dan O’Donoghue, OU Health Sciences Center professor, has been working with Sister Rosemary and Pros for Africa. O’Donoghue says their goal is “to help the people in Uganda in the way they want to be helped – not to tell them what they need. By being there and serving, we can be transformed by them.”

For the past three years, students and faculty from the OU College of Law also have been engaged at St. Monica’s School for Girls and the Law School at the University of Gulu. These experiences provide law students unique professional opportunities to serve as volunteers in a developing country and to be inspired by the work of Sister Rosemary. “This is an

extraordinary honor for an incredible woman,” says the Dean of OU’s College of Law, Joe Harroz. “Her work has touched thousands of lives, and her love of others knows no bounds. We are all better for knowing her, and we cannot think of a more deserving recipient of the 2014 Time 100.”

One of the most urgent needs at St. Monica’s School for Girls is clean water and proper sanitation. Students from OU’s College of Engineering and Water Center have traveled to Uganda to develop and install eco-latrines so that the school’s residents have access to more hygienic conditions. Professor Dave Sabatini, Director of OU’s Water Center, says, “Sister Rosemary is truly an amazing woman, and I am so pleased that our students have had the opportunity to work with her on water and sanitation projects in Uganda – a truly life-changing experience for them. Sister Rosemary’s bravery, vision, passion, and, even more impressive, her unconditional love in the face of unbelievable challenges, make her story inspirational.”

One of the sustainable sources of revenue that Sister Rosemary has developed to support her school and students is the production of pop tab purses. These beautiful items are made with tabs from aluminum cans, which, once sold, provide a source of income to the women and girls who produce them. Students at OU’s College of International Studies have organized and implemented pop tab drives to collect and deliver tens of thousands of pop tabs for Sister Rosemary to use at her school. “Sister Rosemary has been such a source of inspiration for all of us,” says Suzette Grillot, Dean of OU’s College of International Studies. “We cannot thank her enough for the work she does in Uganda, for the education she has provided to us, and for the continual source of joy and goodness she always shares. If you want to change lives, take the first step and read *Sewing Hope*, or watch the film by the same name – both of which document Sister Rosemary’s projects and the plight of the girls at St. Monica’s. Believe me, your life will be changed as well.”

For more information about Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe and the University of Oklahoma’s international programs in Uganda, see our YouTube video here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm5mkTQEhUo&feature=youtu.be>. You may also contact Suzette Grillot, Dean of OU’s College of International Studies, at sgrillot@ou.edu or 405-325-1396.

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