

Delta graduate finds her calling in Liberia

By THOMAS ST. MYER

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Loneliness creeps in when Seren Frost pictures her family together for the holidays.

"It's been tough since Thanksgiving," she said. "I've been here since Aug. 24 and this last month has been the hardest to be away from family. I get to hear about all the fun through the phone."

But those lonely bouts only last a brief moment before the 1998 Delta High School graduate shifts her attention back to the mission at hand.

The 28-year-old Frost lives in war-torn, financially-strapped Liberia where she operates a soccer league that incorporates Life and Change Experienced thru Sports (L.A.C.E.S.), a ministry of the Eden United Church of Christ in Muncie.

Frost formed the league to serve God through her passion for soccer.

"It's really cool to see all this planning and work and passion kind of become a reality," said Frost, who played professionally in Liberia. "The coolest perspective I've had is I've gotten to see it from start to finish."

The league kicked off about three weeks ago with 130 children, ages 10 to 14, divided amongst 10 teams. The names of the teams range from Gospel Shooter to Mighty Angel to Wisdom of Solomon.

The religious connotation spreads far beyond the team names.

"The program is ran through local churches," Frost said. "Our coaches have a requirement that they must be believers of Christ, and they have to figure out how to incorporate Christianity into practices. Each practice the children are taught a new value. Coaches have become creative in how they do it."

"I'm only one person. I can't accomplish this on my own. To see all these people working together and God being at the center of it ... It's amazing."

Frost hired Pastor Lewis Roberts and James Moore for her staff. Roberts mentors the coaches on how to communicate with the children. Moore, the program coordinator, handles a variety of responsibilities but one in particular stands out.

"He takes the ideas in my head and makes them relevant in our culture here," she said.

Frost counts on her network back in Muncie to provide moral and financial support that ranges from prayer to donated uniforms.

Delaware Community School Corp., Delaware County Soccer Club, Mt. Pleasant Community School Corp. and Starsoccer all donated soccer uniforms and in some cases equipment for the children.

Two prominent worldwide corporations played roles in delivering the uniforms and equipment from Muncie to Liberia.

Lon Fox, the owner of the UPS Store in Muncie, saved Frost hundreds of dollars by donating shipping boxes for the materials, some that he collected on his own.

Frost then saved thousands of dollars by partnering with Firestone to ship all the equipment free of cost from their plant in Noblesville to their plant in Liberia, a donation value of \$5,000.

"She's an extremely intelligent, articulate, bright woman that could be anything she wanted," said Jim Behrendt, the pastor at Eden United Church of Christ in Muncie where the Frosts are long-time members. "She's very resourceful. She found ways to get things done that boggled my mind."

Eden United donated roughly \$13,000 in the past year to its international ministry.

"Being a native daughter of the church, and with her being a dynamic young

woman anyway, it didn't take much for the church to say OK we're on board," Behrendt said. "We've budgeted financial support to try to do anything we can."

Two other local churches collaborated this month to provide financial support for L.A.C.E.S.

Blood-N-Fire donated \$3,000 in proceeds from its fifth-annual Community Christmas Store. Pastor Stacy Ball said Union Chapel Ministries provided 1,300 goods for the store and all but 20 sold at a price of \$2.50 each.

Every year, Blood-N-Fire donates all the proceeds from the store to a charity. This year, Stacy and her husband Bob Ball chose L.A.C.E.S.

"My son-in-law Colby Gray went to school with the Frost family and he helped (Seren) design the Web site," Stacy Ball said. "That got me interested and I went to listen to her speak. I was really inspired by what she was doing.

"We were looking for another ministry to support and decided we would send all the proceeds to her."

Frost said the generosity of others provides her motivation to push onward in her endeavor.

She will spend this Christmas in 90-degree heat in war-torn,

financially-strapped Liberia. And there will be bouts of loneliness.

She will miss the snow of Christmas pasts.

She will miss the home-cooked food that always lured her back for seconds.

Most of all, she will miss sitting around the table catching up on old times with her family.

But the loneliness will only last briefly.

The sight of smiling children playing soccer on fields, once covered in bullet shells, reminds her that she is where God wants her to be.

"It's like a dream come true," Frost said. "I go to each game and see the children playing and enjoying life and it's like, 'Wow. I have accomplished what was put before me.' I feel I've been called to serve this purpose."