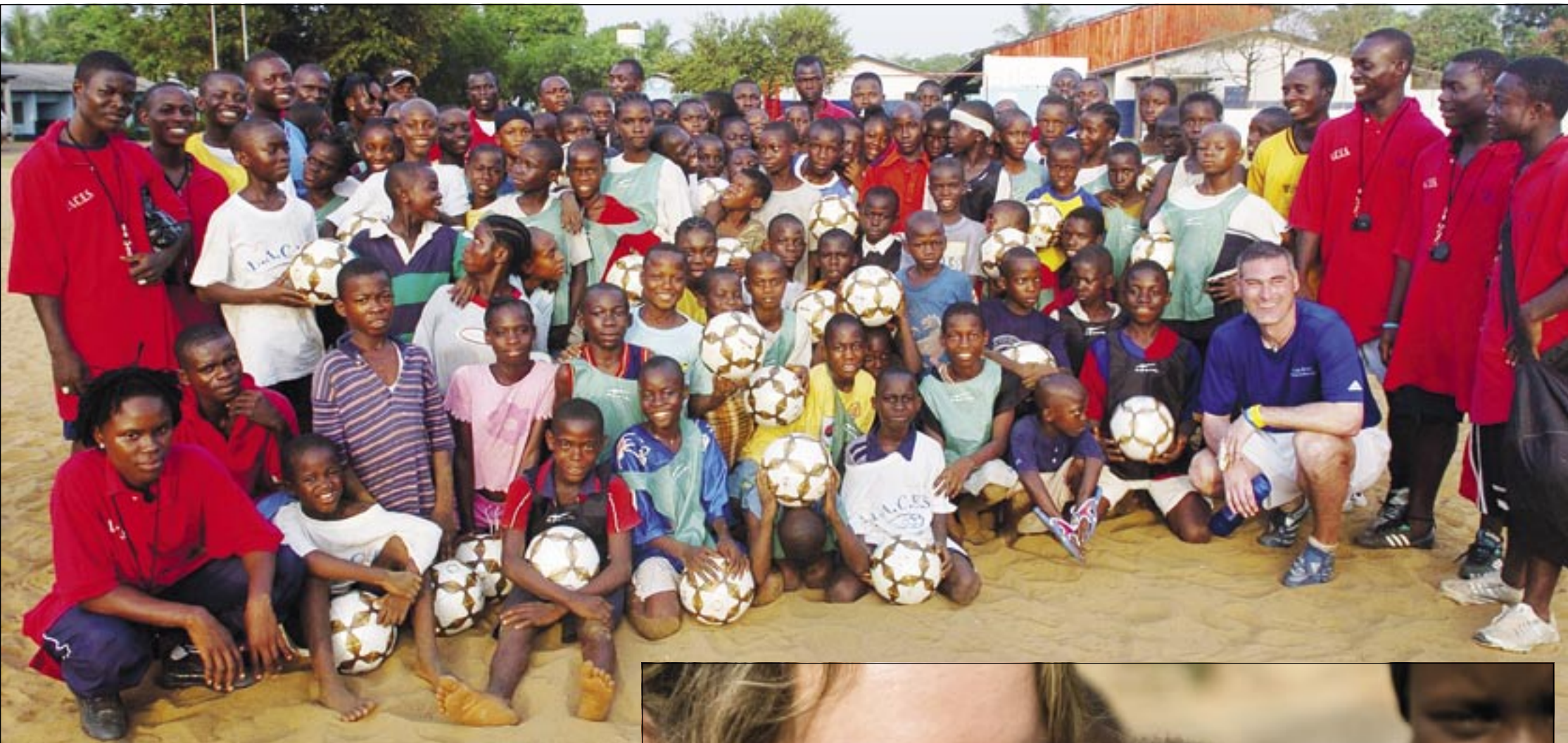


# Life style

SOUTHERN LAKES NEWSPAPERS

PHOTO BY SARAH GRILE *Lifestyle*

Since its inception last year, membership in the L.A.C.E.S. program has swelled to include 262 boys and girls, along with 36 coaches and support staff. Organizers of the group hope to grow that membership to 850 children in the years ahead.

## Reaching their goals

### Liberian children learn life lessons from local woman's soccer program

By Mark Dudzik  
STAFF WRITER

A Rochester native has dedicated her life to improving the lives of children in Liberia, using sports as an inroad to instilling biblical values into their daily lives. Combining both her love of soccer and children with her dedication to giving something back, Seren Frost is the founding member of the group

L.A.C.E.S., an acronym for Life and Change Experienced through Sports.

The organization, which was launched late last year, teaches team concepts such as the importance of relying upon one another and receiving mentoring through coaching to instill lifelong values in children.

Those values are especially important to the children of Liberia, many of whom have been abandoned by their own families and

subsequently are thirsting for the sense of belonging that team sports provides.

The seed from which L.A.C.E.S. grew was first planted when Frost visited Liberia with a charitable organization known as Mercy Ships, which serves the country by providing a floating medical hospital.

It was during the three months spent in the country with the organization that Frost found herself entwined in the plight of its people, eventually leaving her with a heavy heart when her stay there was up.

"As I really got to know the people of Liberia, that is when my heart truly became broken for the poor and broken over the injustices of this world," she said. "Saying Liberia touched my heart is an understatement — it ultimately grabbed my heart with full force and gave me a passion for people I had barely known for three months."

About eight months lapsed from the time Frost left the country in April of 2006 until the idea for L.A.C.E.S. was formally hatched.

Having played soccer since the age of seven and professionally for a period of three months in Liberia, Frost reflected back on the relationships she forged with coaches over the years and the prominent role they played in shaping her into the person she is today.

"I began remembering every coach who either had a positive or negative impact on my life (and) realized coaches were in a unique role to really mentor, impact and help shape who I was in my formative years," she said. "If we think about it, what a privilege and responsibility it is to be a coach for children and young adults. You have the unique opportunity to really help shape an individual, all the while having fun."

Having those positive role models around in a country that is largely absent of them as a result of a combination of both war and poverty makes the cause all the more critical.

"Unfortunately many of the parents here in Liberia have little involvement in their children's lives,"

PHOTO BY KEVIN FRYATT *Lifestyle*

Seren Frost bonds with a Liberian infant. The founder of the L.A.C.E.S. program established a bond and affinity for the children of the country when she was first dispatched there in 2006 to perform charitable work.

**Those interested in making a donation toward L.A.C.E.S. to help the children of Liberia can do so either by logging on to [www.lacessport.blogspot.com](http://www.lacessport.blogspot.com) or by sending the donation to:**

**L.A.C.E.S.  
10001 N. Co. Rd. 300 E.  
Muncie, IN 47303  
In addition to monetary donations, L.A.C.E.S. is also seeking out new or gently used soccer equipment such as shoes, shin guards and socks to properly equip children for play.  
Those wishing to make a donation of equipment can contact Frost by emailing her at [lacessport@gmail.com](mailto:lacessport@gmail.com).**

Frost explained. "Liberia currently has an unemployment rate of 75 percent and many children lost their mothers, fathers or family members during the war, so you find that many children are living with their distant aunts and uncles."

After getting L.A.C.E.S. incorporated as a non-profit in May of 2007, Frost worked feverishly over the next several months to raise the funding needed to return to Liberia and begin administering to the children there.

Since returning there to establish the program last August, 262 boys and girls between the ages of 10 and 14 are being taught in two separate villages by 36 coaches and support staff.

Going well beyond just kicking a ball around for a few hours a week, the L.A.C.E.S. program instills life lessons in the children that are taught in conjunction with the bible.

Those lessons are incorporated into practice — at which their coach will often recite to them a story in the bible and explain its meaning — to monthly gatherings each child attends, at which the group will sing

worship songs or put on skits and play games that are all rooted in L.A.C.E.S. seven values and what the bible says about those values.

The soccer games themselves are full of lessons in their own right, including instilling in children the value of things such as good sportsmanship, discipline and teamwork. Those lessons are subsequently building the self-esteem of children in the process, Frost said.

Ambitious in its goal to expand its brand of outreach to Liberia's youth, Frost said the hope for L.A.C.E.S. over the next three years is to have 850 children participating in the program throughout several villages.

To accomplish that goal, the organization needs to raise \$77,000, which breaks down to around \$150 per child.

Committed to living in Liberia for the next 18 months while she grows L.A.C.E.S., Frost explained she'll be returning stateside in June for six weeks to continue to advocate on behalf of the organization.

The soccer that L.A.C.E.S. brings to Liberia, Frost explained, provides a fun-filled outlet for children who are caught up in an environment where circumstances typically don't allow for them to live as children.

"You often find young children selling food or biscuits in the street just to bring home the family's 'daily bread' and if a child does not sell enough for the day, they are often scared to go home for fear they will be beaten," she said. "When you see the responsibility that children bear in this culture due to the effects of war, you can't help but to wonder where to begin to start helping this generation."

#### Take in these area events this weekend:

(check the area calendar for details)

- Buck Trail Archers Warm-up Shoot, Burlington.
- Senior citizen spring luncheon, Union Grove.
- Mother's Day event, Waterford.

PHOTO BY CHRIS HERWIG *Lifestyle*

Mustering all their focus and concentration, two children battle for the ball during a game of soccer. The games offer a diversion for the children from the difficult travails they face in their country, which has been torn by both war and poverty.