

MAGICIANS WITHOUT BORDERS performing in Middlebury December 13th

Tom Verner and Janet Fredricks, will perform on Sunday December 13th at 3PM at the Bridge School in Middlebury. **Magicians Without Borders** performs magic shows for children in refugee camps, orphanages and hospitals around the world -often in war torn places where love, laughter and magic are desperately needed. This special performance is the first in the Quarry Hill School Winter Family Entertainment Series and will bring love, laughter and magic to a local audience. The show is designed for children of all ages and will delight the child in all of us. Proceeds will benefit the local preschool.

Magicians Without Borders began when Tom Verner, traveling through Eastern Europe in 2001, did some magic shows in the refugee camps of Kosovo and Macedonia. The shows were so well received, that Tom decided to take a leave from his teaching career and perform full time.

Since that first trip in 2001, Tom and his wife Janet have taken six trips a year. Refugees in robes, rags or saris now stare as "La Fleur", with a sunflower pinned on her derby hat and performing as a mime and clown in the shows, blows soap bubbles - for many, magic in itself - before her husband (the very tall, very white, very bearded man) opens his suitcase of silk scarves, sponge balls and steel rings. They have traveled to Ethiopia numerous times, as well as Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, India, Bangladesh, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia Croatia, Ukraine, and Haiti. They performed for a month in Thailand and Burma after the Tsunami and traveled through Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina.

Tom and Janet, along with other magicians and theater teachers travel to El Salvador every three months where they perform for children in the countryside and are teaching magic and theater skills to a group of very poor teenagers. **Magicians Without Borders** sponsors a week long Magic, Theater and Art Camp for these children who live in grinding poverty surrounded by brutal gang violence. These young magicians have already begun to perform in orphanages, hospitals and disaster areas in El Salvador. One day some of them may travel with Tom and Janet to bring magic and laughter to other poor children in other parts of the world.

Tom says, *"I like to think that the magic brings not only laughter and surprise, but on some deeper level perhaps, magic plants seeds of hope. Hope that the impossible is possible. Hope that after years of waiting in a refugee camps, the waiting will end and the people will go home again."*

The most common question among people touched by *Magicians Without Borders* is: When are you coming back? With this return performance, we are pleased to say, "Sunday December 13th!"

Refreshments will be available. A suggested donation of \$15/family will be gratefully accepted at the door, as will non-perishable food items for our local food shelves.