

Drama of Karen persecution

A GROUP of young Karen refugees will use a performing arts showcase in Belgrave Heights to depict their stories of escaping persecution in Myanmar.

The group comprises six former members of Karen State in southern Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, who were forced to flee the country's military rule.

The group members, who range in age from 18 to 24, sought protection in

refugee camps on and around the Thai-Burmese border.

The performance, involving dance, drama and song, aims to help the refugees overcome the trauma of their pasts and gain acceptance from the community so as to better integrate in to society.

It will aid the youths in carrying on the Karen culture to the benefit of future generations.

The assembly will allow the youths to communicate ways that audience members can help those affected by Cyclone Nargis through donations.

Burmese refugee Jordan Pe, 35, will be attending the event.

Mr Pe has lived in Australia for 14 years, after being forced to escape Burma during a military coup which targeted ethnic minorities such as the Karen.

"Our women were raped and thousands of people were tortured and killed," Mr Pe said.

John Bolton is directing the performance and The Reverend Ron Browning of St Martins Anglican Church is coordinating the event.

The young Karen refugees are holding telling their stories at St Martins Anglican Church, 78 Colby Drive, Belgrave Heights, on Sunday 8 June between 10am and 11.30am.

Swiss family's modern message

A SWISS family travelling the world solely on natural sources of power will make a presentation at Burrinja on World Environment Day.

Dario-Andri and Sabine Schwörer and their two children Salina, 2, and Andri, 1, have been on their mission to climb a mountain on every continent and cross seven oceans using wind, solar and human energy since 2002.

The family hopes the world record-breaking trip will raise awareness about climate change and demonstrate the successes that can be achieved in harmony with nature.

The Schwörers, who anticipate their ToptoTop Global Climate Change Expedition will take 14 years, will use their presentation at Burrinja as an opportunity to motivate others by discussing the ways Australia is currently practicing ecological responsibility through an educational program for children.

"We've found that by



highlighting the positives, people get more excited about stepping in," Mr Schwörer said.

Mr and Mrs Schwörer are especially impressed with planning and economics specialists at SGS which has carried out extensive testing of dishwashing machines to

determine energy star ratings.

Mr and Mrs Schwörer believe educating children on environmental sustainability is key.

So far, the Schwörers have presented their educational program to 7000 students Australia-wide, including 700 at the Victorian Outdoor



Above: The couple are exploring new frontiers to promote awareness of climate change.

Left: Dario and Sabine and their two children Salina and Andri are travelling the world.

Education Conference last Thursday. The couple define themselves, not as environmentalists but as sports people and say it is only 'fair play' to give something back to the environment.

Mr Schwörer said: "The enjoyment we take from its (the environment's) beauty is

like a gift, especially here in Monbulk, so we need to pay it back," he said.

The Schwörer family will be at Burrinja cultural centre at 351 Glenfern Road, Upwey, on Thursday 5 June.

Anyone who would like more information can visit www.toptotop.org.