

USI to present “Wings for Dreams: The human face behind the Syrian refugee crisis”

10/21/2015 | John Farless

It's been called the greatest humanitarian disaster since World War II. The war in Syria has left over 250,000 people dead and another four million as refugees. The disturbing images emerging of Syrian refugees risking—and losing—their lives to reach safety inside Europe have awakened the world to the plight of the Syrian people. But who are these people? What are their stories? And how can we help?

The University of Southern Indiana's Center for International Programs and KESHO, a student organization that seeks to inspire and empower women globally, will host a fundraising dinner and presentation, “Wings for Dreams: The human face behind the Syrian refugee crisis,” at 6 p.m. on Monday, November 2, in Carter Hall, in University Center West.

The Wings for Dreams dinner will feature Evansville native and USI alumna Ellen Small Billard, co-founder and executive director of Road to Mafraq, a humanitarian organization working to support Syrian refugee families in crisis by increasing access to education and healthcare. (See story on page 12 of the Summer 2014 USI Magazine.)

Billard is a social worker, humanitarian and advocate with a passion for social justice and a love for the Middle East. In 2013, she founded Road to Mafraq, an organization supporting Syrian and Iraqi refugees fleeing violence in the Middle East. In addition to her work with Road to Mafraq, she has consulted for NGOs throughout Southeast Asia, serving under-resourced and disenfranchised communities, including orphans, refugees, and victims of human trafficking, and spent five years working to reform public benefits programs in the state of Connecticut.

She holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Connecticut with a focus in public policy and international social work, and a bachelor's degree in English literature from the University of Southern Indiana.

Tickets are \$30 per person, and include a dinner buffet, Middle Eastern music by Salaam Band and a presentation by Billard. All proceeds will benefit the Road to Mafraq project, specifically to support a school for Syrian refugees in Jordan.

Ticket reservations are due by October 27. Contact USI's Center for International Programs at 812-465-1248 or intlprog@usi.edu for further information.