



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Maureen Russo, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors
Tel.: 001 (57) 3132177600
E-mail: Maureen@learningenterprises.org

INTERNATIONAL NGO CELEBRATES THE SAFE RETURN OF ITS VOLUNTEERS
All Ethiopia Program Participants Detained and Deported by Ethiopian Government

Learning Enterprises (LE) is pleased to announce the safe return of its Ethiopia volunteer team and staff after the program was unexpectedly cut short due to actions taken by the Ethiopian government. The fifteen-member group of volunteers, composed of American and British college students, had been serving as English teachers when they were taken into custody by Ethiopian government officials early on Thursday, July 9, 2009.

The volunteers had been teaching free English language classes for the LE Ethiopia program's third consecutive summer, serving five suburban villages where they were welcomed by host communities. Upon being taken into custody, the LE program participants were transported to Addis Ababa, where they were detained at the Main Immigration Center and questioned about the nature of their activities. Finding no charges to raise against the volunteers, the Ethiopian government released them on Saturday, July 11, 2009.

All of the program facilitators, in addition to the volunteers, have returned home safely. Ethiopian authorities informed neither Learning Enterprises nor the LE Ethiopia volunteers of the cause of the volunteers' detention. The resolution of this incident has enabled LE to improve its programming, which has aided the organization's continued efforts to foster meaningful service opportunities for its volunteers. LE looks forward to further productive collaboration with the U.S. embassies, local governments, and in-country contacts. Learning Enterprises appreciates the work of the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia and their efforts to ensure the safe return of our volunteers and staff.

The organization is proud to have such dedicated and resilient volunteers, and is impressed with how they responded to a challenging situation that LE has never before encountered. While their summer teaching English in Ethiopia was cut short, they successfully served as teachers and mentors for the time that they were there.

Learning Enterprises is a 501(c)3 international non-governmental organization that sends 120 volunteers to 12 countries on 4 continents to teach over 6,000 students each summer.

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