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Church gives back to the community

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New Year's Eve party planned at Sawtooth

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THURSDAY, December 28, 2006

Native says situation is dire in Sudan

Mohamed Yayha asks Americans to pressure elected officials to help

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Mohamed Yayha, a native of Darfur, addressed the Ministers Conference of Winston-Salem last week, giving those in attendance at the meeting a personal account of the atrocities currently happening in the African province, which is located in western Sudan.

Yayha is one of the founding members and executive director of Damanga, a group which advocates for peace and human rights in Darfur and all of Sudan.

Darfur has seen more than 400,000 people die and millions displaced since 2003 in a conflict in which Sudanese government troops and Janjaweed, pro-



Photo by Todd Luck

Mohamed Yayha speaks to local ministers last week.

Arab militias supported by the government, have been targeting black Africans.

Yayha told the audience the conflict goes back long before 2003. He said his small village in Darfur was completely destroyed along with many others in 1993. He lost 21 family members when they were burned alive in their grass and wood huts. His two sisters were raped. He said rape is a great shame in Darfur society, and that it's now being used as a weapon in the province.

Living as a student in Cairo in 1995, he joined with other Sudanese students to advocate for action in Darfur and together they sponsored many refugees that fled Sudan. Yayha has been speaking against the atrocities in Darfur ever since. In 2002, fearing reprisal from the Sudanese government, he sought and was granted political exile in the United States.

Yayha said the people of Darfur share the same culture, language and many of the same traditions. Most even share the same religion: Islam. He said the conflict was all about race, with Arabs killing blacks. He repeatedly showed disgust that Muslims could do this to other Muslims.

"I've studied Islam. I've studied Christianity. I've studied Judaism. I've studied other religions, all religions and none of them ... support this evil, this malice," said Yayha.

He said that it is a great shame that the international community can not stop the killing. The Arab League, a Cairo-based organization made up of Arab states, doesn't want to speak out against an Arab country like Sudan, he said. Yayha added that the United Nations is hesitant to call the conflict genocide, which

See Darfur on A11

LIFE & 'LIBERTY'

Local woman starts new 'healthy' career

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

When Tanya Ford's job was jeopardized by outsourcing, she decided to "take her destiny into her own hands," leaving behind a 17 year career as a lead analyst programmer at a local bank in search of something more spiritually satisfying. What she found was Liberty Fitness Women's Health Club and the opportunity to own a piece of the magic through franchise ownership.

First lady and head of the Women's Ministry at Beulah Baptist Church on Trade Street, Ford says she has always been passionate about helping women, and that opening her own women's health club just seemed to make sense.

"I wanted to make a difference in women's lives," she commented. "I knew I wanted to do something with women, and because I struggle with my own weight, I decided, let's do something with the weight loss."

The club opened its doors in November of this year amid much excitement and anticipation from the



See Liberty on A5 Tanya Ford sits in the lobby of the new Liberty Fitness.

Photo by Jason Pitt

EVERLASTING MEMORIES



Photo by Kevin Walker

Laverne Crews, Wanda Crews, Cheryl Lindsay and Brenda Crews all came to a recent memorial service at Hooper Funeral Home to honor their late brother, Ricky Crews, who died earlier this year. The funeral home holds the holiday service each year to honor those it has serviced throughout the past few years. To read more about the event, see page B12.

A DAY WITH THE GIRLS

Students have learning lunch

These Mineral Springs fifth-graders are participants in a leadership program for girls. School counselors from the school began the program, which promotes self-esteem, etiquette, social skills and various other life skills.



BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

It's no secret that kids today face enormous social pressures. The world, growing ever smaller because of technological advances, can be a confusing place for a young person to navigate, especially if he or she is not prepared for the challenges life presents. That's why Rev. Ron Harris, the youth pastor at New Hope Baptist Church, began his program for a small group of hand-picked boys at Mineral Springs a few years ago.

Harris, who has been youth pastor for more than 25 years, designed this program to help boys who were especially at risk of traveling down the wrong path in life.

"It's a whole lot better to impact ... peo-

ple when they're young and keep them going in the right direction, rather than rescuing them when their life's in shambles down the road," Harris said. "I believe that we have encouraged them to stay in school and to focus on doing something with their life and realizing that ... no matter what their situation in life, they can rise above it and be successful contributors to the community and leaders in the community."



Travis

Inspired by Harris' example, Keith Travis, Mineral Spring's head counselor, and Tamela Guess, the school social worker, began a similar leadership program for 10 fifth-grade girls at the

school. "Each week, we would cover topics like self-esteem, social skills, etiquette, how to

See Girls on A3



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