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WEEK OF NOVEMBER 21-23, 2004

'Lost Boy' on mission to help homeland

*Sudan refugee
navigates series
of hurdles*

By Ben Dobbin
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROCHESTER, New York – Two days after crossing the border into southern Sudan, the pop of a blown tire halted Salva Dut's return journey to the war-scarred land he fled as a child in 1985. The two spares had already been shredded by sharp stones on rutted African backroads.

The 31-year-old church clerk from Rochester, one of the thousands of refugees "Lost Boys" resettled in the United States, waited by the road in 43-degree Celsius (110-degree Fahrenheit) heat all night and much of the next day. A United Nations aid truck finally came by, allowing him to drive back to a border town to buy four extra tires.

"I was a little scared," he recalled. "I didn't worry about wild animals or bad people, more about running out of water. It made me realize again how important the water is in our life."

For six months each year, beginning with that arduous trip in January 2005, Dut has been drilling wells in the mud-hut villages in semiarid southern Sudan. His homeland was wracked by a 21-year civil war that killed 2 million people and sent legions of orphans wandering for years through the wilderness.

The first seven wells tap into aquifers as much as 60 meters (200 feet) down, providing clean running water for at least 26,000 villagers. In one of the poorest spots on earth, they lend stability to tribes that have always had to roam far when water holes dry up - or become stagnant - during the October-to-May dry season.

Dut, the son of a Dinka cattle herdsman, expects to install as many as 20 more wells early next year using a \$67,000 trailer-mounted, American-made drilling rig that halves construction costs to \$5,000 a well.

"Even though that country caused me grief, I still have the heart to go back and not forget about it," Dut said while working his part-time job at Downtown United Presbyterian Church. "I'm glad I can help my people."

His adopted homeland has helped, too. In 1996, he was one of the first of 3,800 children plucked from refugee camps and sent to the United States. The war between Sudan's Muslim-dominated north and mainly Christian and animist south ended

Please see LOST/6A

Ripe for change

NEW FLAVOR FOR CHERRY

Redevelopment plans for the Cherry neighborhood call for construction of townhomes, apartments and condominiums, but longtime residents fear changes could gentrify the predominantly black community.



ILLUSTRATION/STONEHUNT LLC



PHOTO/CURTIS WILSON

RESIDENTIAL WORRIES

Reginald Patton, who grew up in Charlotte's Cherry community, hopes to live there after redevelopers turn it into a mixed-income neighborhood.

Historic Cherry casts future with developer

By Erica Singleton
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Reginald Patton wants to be part of the new Cherry neighborhood.

Patton, who grew up in Cherry, moved back two years ago. He's hoping to stay, but faces some uncertainty as the neighborhood struggles to remake itself as a mixed-income community.

"I was born and raised in Cherry," said Patton. "It's been my home away from home, even when I wasn't living there. My

credit is tore up from the floor up. Right now I would like to be a homeowner in the development...I know I can handle the payments, but the question is just getting the opportunity to sign on the dotted line."

In the 1960s, the cost to live in Charlotte nearly doubled from what it had been for residents in the prior decade. Recent Census Bureau information lists the median family income in Charlotte at \$24,167. The average cost of a home in Charlotte is \$225,000.

With its proximity to Uptown, Cherry is considered prime real estate. The Cherry Community Organization, the neighborhood's largest landowner, has kept developers at bay in hopes of staving off gentrification, but recently made a deal with StoneHunt LLC to redevelop the community.

StoneHunt principals Stoney Sellers and Anthony Hunt, acquired nearly half Cherry for an undisclosed amount, and plan to build 112 condos, 90

Please see CHANGES/7A

Dems wield control with care

*Congressional majority
moves on some issues*

By Hazel Trice Edney
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON – Over the years, Rep. John Conyers has championed an assortment of cutting-edge issues, such as reparations, the elimination of mandatory minimum federal sentences and ending disparate treatment of crack cocaine users. When he takes over next month as chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, all of those issues will have to take back seat to another cause – election reform.

"In every recent election, there have been well-substantiated allegations of attempts to discourage or prevent eligible voters from voting. There is also a widespread consensus that electronic voting machines are woefully insecure and subject to tampering and manipulation," states Conyers, the senior member of the House Judiciary Committee.

With African-Americans set to key committee chairmanships in the House, expectations are high. But interviews with those new power brokers seem to indicate while they have not abandoned their liberal leanings, some plan to proceed with safer issues, such as voting reform.

But to some, voting reform is a cutting-edge issue, especially the right to have votes by African-Americans cast and counted.

"For our democracy to survive, we must ensure that every eligible voter is allowed to vote and their vote is counted correctly," Conyers explains in a written statement. "I look forward to working with the Democratic

Please see DEMOCRATS/2A

thebox

NEWS, NOTES & TRENDS

Trading hoops for Habitat construction

By Paula Young
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

At 28 years old, Helen Darling has done more than most.

First and foremost, she is a single mother to 4-year-old triplets, plays guard for the WNBA Charlotte Sting and a budding entrepreneur.

So during Darling's off-season, one would think this would be the perfect time for some R&R.

Not. Darling's current role is the 9 to 5 working mom. She is working for Habitat for Humanity, trading in the basketball for hammer and nails.

"I enjoy community service," said Darling. "I love giving back."

Darling got the internship through a

Please see PROFESSIONAL/3A



Darling



Tired of the corporate scene,
Joseph Hart turned into a
full-time artist/1D

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