

'Lost Boy' reaches out to homeland

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with a 2005 peace agreement establishing an autonomous southern Sudan.

Contributors, mainly in western New York, have donated \$280,000 to Water for Sudan Inc., a church-sponsored nonprofit organization he launched in 2003.

Dut had just turned 11 in December 1985 when war blazed through his birthplace of Lounariik, shattering his family along with so many others. He only found out his parents had survived when his father, sickened by contaminated water, showed up for surgery at a U.N. hospital in 2000.

Dut was cheered by his father's recovery but his anguished experience focused him on a goal of bringing clean water to his people.

At first, his fundraising was limited to church gatherings. But as word of his mission has spread, he has been invited to speak at high schools, civic clubs and charitable foundations and drawn bene-

factors like Rotary International to his side.

Speaking to youngsters who filled a lecture hall last month at the upscale Harley School in the Rochester suburb of Brighton, he said, "You are growing up and soon this world will sit on your shoulders. We need each other no matter what part of the world we're from. The little things you decide to help with, that's what counts."

Teacher Doug Gilbert is hoping his class can find creative ways to help, such as selling bottled water with "Water for Sudan" stickers. Dut's "track record of success getting important things done very cost-effectively," Gilbert said, helps encourage donations.

The actual work in Sudan is often grueling and filled with anxiety. Dut negotiates with village chiefs to decide where to drill, organizes local drilling crews, and trains villagers how to maintain the wells and arbitrate water disputes.

When revisiting a well drilled in 2005, Dut said he not only found the community building houses around it but a shift in the social order.

"Women no longer have to walk miles and miles to bring water to their family, and the girls can go to school," he said.

Hurdles are unavoidable in his work. Last January, after a month of waiting at the Kenyan port of Mombasa, Dut had to pay an extra \$500 in bribes to get the drilling rig delivered to Sudan via Uganda.

"I'm stressed out there - it's too much work, I'm not comfortable with heat," said Dut, who loses about nine kilos (20 pounds) on his already skinny frame during each trip. "I don't realize I'm making a difference until I get back."

The difference he makes can be glimpsed in his photographs - of adults collecting rocks to help build a well's concrete base, of children with nothing of their own playing with toys donated by Rochester students.

A recent photo-and-video presentation at the George Eastman House photography museum documented Dut's efforts.

After attending the show, Dr. Dean Arvan, a fellow parishioner at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, said he expects Dut to take on other needs of his native land - food, health care - just as he has worked to bring water. "Salva is very unassuming, very open and dedicated," he

said. Nancy Frank, who has toured Sudan as mission-and-outreach coordinator at St. Paul's, imagines Dut eventually becoming a well subcontractor for groups wanting to build a school or a clinic in underserved places.

"In Africa, they're in need always," Dut said. "If I have a way to help, I will help. You cannot turn your back."

On the Net:
www.waterforsudan.org

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PHOTO/LAS AMIGAS

LAS AMIGAS HONORS: Jeanne Holtzclaw (center), president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Chapter of Las Amigas, helped recognized community leaders recently at Bette Rae Thomas Recreation Center. Awards were presented to (from left) Sarah Stator, Almetto H. Alexander, Dwight Patterson, Mrs. Johnnie Collins and Joyce McMillan for service and community leadership, as well as and Yvonne Pettis (not pictured). Cynthia Shepard was presented an chapter award as the longest-tenured member of the local chapter.

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