



CHARLES HONEY

COLUMNIST

'Bodies' exhibit is tasteful, respectful

And what's more, it's helping people learn better self-care

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works."
— Psalm 139:14

Darlene King took a good look at two lungs: one healthy, the second blackened and shriveled by cancer. She decided then and there to quit smoking.

"I've got to figure out a different way to deal with stress," she said.

If she sticks to her plan, King will be a success story for the "Bodies Revealed" exhibit at the Grand Rapids Public Museum. The recently opened exhibit of preserved human bodies and organs wants each visitor to "become an informed participant in your own health care."

It's also important to be informed about the exhibit itself, which is at once fascinating and controversial for the ethical questions it raises.

Specifically: Where did these bodies come from and what happened to the people who once inhabited them? And is it appropriate to thus display the remains of the dead, even for a laudable purpose?

Having toured it for an hour, I'll say this much for the exhibit itself: It is a respectful, tasteful and tremendously educational display about the amazing human body.

SEE HONEY, C2

African pastor sets his eyes on peace

Mathiang to speak in GR on work toward independence of Southern Sudan

BY ERIN ALBANESE
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

GRAND RAPIDS — A Sudanese pastor who said he has "contributed immensely in terms of tears, sweat, earnest prayers, and blood" to separate Southern Sudan from the northern part of the country is visiting Grand Rapids.

Pastor Steven Mathiang, of Bor, Sudan, will speak about his work in establishing Southern Sudan as an independent country, a referendum being considered during the country's Jan. 9 election.

"If our separation from Northern Sudan is going to stop the unnecessary oppression, exploitation and dehumanization of man by man and bring durable peace both in the north and the south of our nation, then it is worth doing," Mathiang said via e-mail.

SEE PASTOR, C2

IF YOU GO

Pastor Steven Mathiang

When: 7 a.m. Thursday
Where: Prince Conference Center at Calvin College, 1800 East Beltline Ave. SE
Cost: Free
Contact: 616-734-0940



PRESS PHOTOS/JESSICA SCOTT

Spending time together: Jan Oosterhout, a Family Promise coordinator for Calvin Christian Reformed Church, reads to Amaya Stewart, 4, while her sister, Kaylah Stewart, 6, writes in a notebook and their brother, Jayden Stewart, 2, stands nearby.

NONPROFIT OFFERS FAMILIES TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS BY PROVIDING A PLACE TO STAY

BY PAUL R. KOPENKOSKEY
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

GRAND RAPIDS — The future no longer looks bleak for Kintea and Cassandra "Kassie" Stewart, who recently were evicted from their apartment and feared losing custody of their children.

Homelessness was replaced with hope, thanks to Family Promise of Grand Rapids, an area nonprofit that works in concert with faith-based organizations that roll out welcome mats to down-and-out families.

The Stewarts are a prime example. Kintea Stewart, 29, lost his sales job earlier this year. Pregnant with their fourth child, Kassie was unable to work due to health complications.

Unable to pay the \$600 monthly rent at their Northwest Side apartment, the Stewarts were evicted.

With no place to call home, the couple feared they would lose custody of



A roof overhead: Kassie Stewart kisses her 6-month-old son, Allante, while spending time with her family inside the lower level of Calvin Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. The family is staying at the church thanks to Family Promise, a nonprofit organization that helps provide temporary shelter to homeless families.

their children, who range in age from 6 years to 6 months.

"We were devastated," said Kassie Stewart, 24. "We thought we would lose our kids."

Family Promise of Grand Rapids

helped the Stewarts cover their basic needs. It not only helped them find temporary living arrangements at local churches, but found jobs for both of them. They're also receiving budgeting advice, with an eye toward

finding a permanent place to live.

Key to Family Promise's mission is keeping homeless families intact, said its executive director, Cheryl Schuch. It helps families find housing within an average of 21 days. About 85 percent of families served find permanent housing and 94 percent still are in their homes a year later.

"That's because of the churches and volunteers being engaged to help families build new community resources," Schuch said.

"Prior to their experience (of being homeless), looking for jobs, child care, just general assistance to connect with community resources, is unfamiliar to many parents."

Unemployment, bad credit and foreclosure are the top reasons families find themselves without a place to live, Schuch said, followed by a relationship breakup or a financial crisis brought on by medical bills.

Helping families find a place to live is only the first step to independent living, Schuch said.

That's why Family Promise programs include helping parents secure short-term rent subsidies, case management for long-term housing, donations of furniture and budget advice.

Keeping the nonprofit going are 1,600 volunteers who set up spaces

SEE NONPROFIT, C2

Faith-based 3 Mile Project reaches out to teens

Renovated factory now is a youth amusement center

BY MATT VANDE BUNTE
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

WALKER — After shooting pool with his church youth leader, Jake O'Dell started an air-hockey game with his friend, Victor Trujillo. Suddenly, a second puck got tossed into play.

"Oh, double the fun!" exclaimed the youth leader, Mike "Puddle" Antuma.

Throw in sport courts, a skate park, indoor reball arena, video game center and miniature movie theaters, and the amusement multiplies fast at 3 Mile Project. The new 40,000-square-foot youth recreation center off Three Mile Road NW, east of Walker Avenue, opened recently with a mission to nurture connections between teenagers and area church youth leaders.

"The idea is to build relationships with kids, to give them a place that's safe where people will care about (them)," said Antuma, a pastoral

intern at Blytheville Hills Baptist Church in Plainfield Township.

And, for \$5 admission, "it's actually a really good deal," said Victor, 13, a Knapp Charter Academy student who sometimes goes to church with O'Dell.

"Just by looking at what they've done, you can see it's going to be spectacular," the boy said last month during the center's grand-opening preview.

With financial backing from nearby business leaders, including owners of the Walker-based die component manufacturing firm Standard Lifters Inc., the independent nonprofit 3 Mile Project spent about \$1 million remodeling the former Davidson Plyforms plant at 3050 Walkent Drive NW into a hub of adolescent entertainment. Surveys of area teens provided input on what amenities to include at the center, Executive Director Stan Kiste said.

There's an upstairs area of table games, including foosball, bubble hockey, air hockey and pool. There's a craft room and a cafe serving drinks and snacks. Downstairs, there's a 4,000-square-foot skate park, reball arena, three digital fire pits, two sport



PRESS PHOTO/DAVE ODETT

Safe and fun: Teens hang out in the video room at the 3 Mile Project in Walker. The building is a renovated plant site turned youth center.

courts and three mini-theaters with 4-by-9-foot screens.

Staffed mostly by volunteers, the center is open to middle school students 7-11 p.m. Fridays and high schoolers 7-11:30 p.m. Saturdays. "There are kids out there just not being reached by churches. They just won't make that first contact through a church

door," Kiste said.

On the surface, the center "is just a cool place to hang out with no expectations" of any spiritual engagement, Kiste said.

No sermons are planned, for example. Still, Kiste said, the 3 Mile Project aspires to provide a faith-based

SEE 3 MILE, C2