

*“These people have changed a family’s life today.”
~Majok Reth, New Homeowner*

Habitat for Humanity Home Completed

*See a full photo slide show from the dedication at the end of this article.

LOUISVILLE, Ky (March 29, 2009) - On a Saturday afternoon in March, more than 60 people stood shoulder to shoulder inside the front room of a home on Shelby Street in Louisville, Kentucky. Their numbers flowed out onto the front porch and into the hallway of the home. Tears brimmed on the eyes of those listening to a young man, whose long journey brought him to this moment, a moment that meant he and his family would finally have a home of their own.



Majok Reth holds up the keys to his new home. |

Majok Reth is among the men the United States media has dubbed the “Lost Boys of the Sudan.” He was just seven years old when he was forced to leave his village. At a time when children should be learning to ride a bike and worrying about nothing more than playing with other children, Majok began his journey across the Sudan in search of safety. As war ravaged his home, Majok’s only place to run was a refugee camp crowded with other children like him, including members of his own family. He arrived there at the age of nine.

Years later, in 2001, Catholic Charities helped Majok come to Louisville, a place that offered true safety from the fighting that continued in his homeland. One by one, he worked to bring his mother, his brothers, and other family members here to the safe refuge found in what may seem like an unlikely destination.



Majok and his family attend the dedication of their new home.

After years of working two jobs and living in rentals with his family, he met with Habitat for Humanity to find out how he could become a homeowner. The rules were strict. He and his family members must help others build their homes first. They had to put in hundreds of volunteer hours. The family also had to take part in

building their own home, even as each member worked two jobs to survive and some also attended school. It would not be a free home. Majok would be responsible for a mortgage once it was built, but it would be interest free and something he could afford.

The journey Majok began as a young boy would eventually lead him to the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville. In 2008, the Sisters celebrated their 150 year anniversary. Three Sisters from Germany answered a call to come to Louisville in 1858. They too faced peril as they crossed an ocean to a world unknown to them and, incredibly, within a year of arriving in Louisville they had established a school, the first of dozens.



Sisters Raymunda Orth & Terence Schmitt



Sister Rose Ann Muller

The Ursuline Sisters of Louisville at the Dedication of the Habitat Home



Sisters Martha Jacob, Jamesetta DeFelice, Lelia Kirchner and Evelina Pisaneschi

The Reth's family home was built in the same area where those three Sisters first lived. The Ursuline Sisters partnered with others to sponsor Majok's dream because, like their foundress, they too were immigrants.

The "raise the roof" event began on November 6, 2008, and the home was dedicated on March 28, 2009, just four months and 22 days later. From the Louisville Fire Department to students from Sacred Heart Schools to alumnae of Ursuline established schools, hundreds of volunteers showed up at the Shelby Street site to help build Majok's home. Others showed up to make lunch for the crews so they could work through the day.

On Saturday, March 28, dozens of those volunteers were among the men and women crowded into the front room of the Reth family's new home to hear words from each group connected to the building of this Habitat for Humanity home. When it was Majok's turn to speak, it was clear why so many were drawn to him and his story, why so many people wanted to help.

"Today is a blessed day for me and my family. It will be forever remembered by our family as an historic event," Majok said. "I would like to thank the Ursuline Sisters for the good they have done. I would like to

thank you all for the good you have done. This is the day we will never forget. You have changed the lives of people who suffered for so many years. We started this together and today we finished it together.”

View Photos

by clicking here: http://ursuline.smugmug.com/gallery/7760225_9p5UF#501941270_rfi4c