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FACES OF CONSTRUCTION

Oregon-Columbia Chapter of the Associated General Contractors convened in Bend last weekend.

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THE DAILY JOURNAL OF COMMERCE, PORTLAND, OREGON

Local engineer's mission: peace

Engineer with HDJ Design Group has made two trips to region of Uganda plagued by conflict

By SAM BENNETT

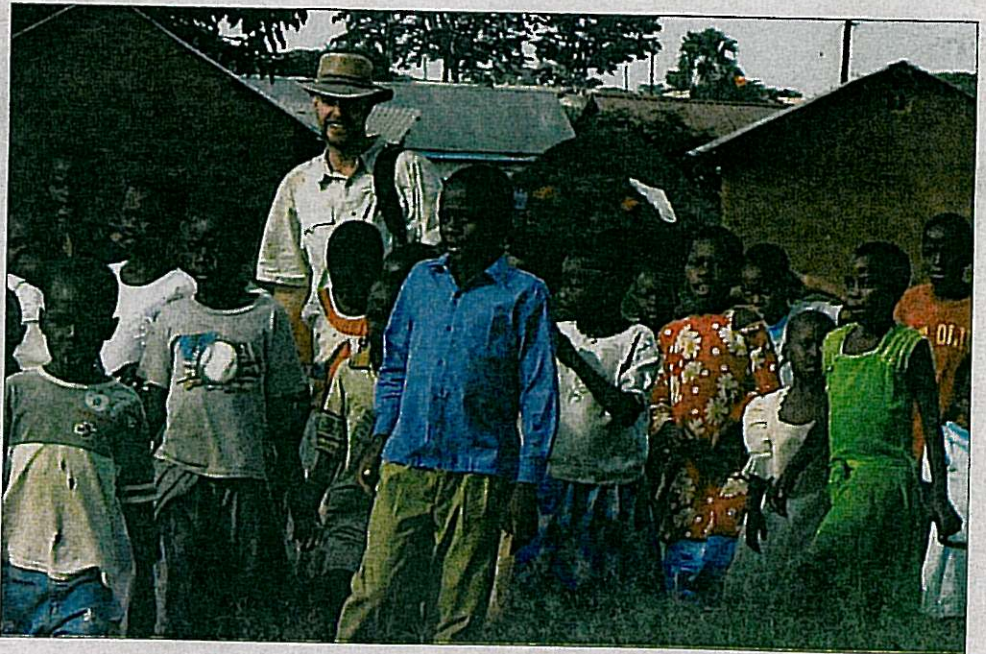
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As a civil engineer with HDJ Design Group, K.C. Schwartzkoph sees a lot of potential work in Uganda.

Roads need to be built to provide better transportation and holes need to be dug to supply water.

But on his last two trips, Schwartzkoph has traveled to a northeast section of Uganda to build peace rather than design infrastructure.

In a region known as Karamoja, two tribes have been warring for nearly a century. Despite efforts by the United Nations in



Schwartzkoph said he has had a lifelong love for the African people, and is compelled to do missionary work in the region.

Courtesy of K.C. Schwartzkoph

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Peace: Engineer plans to return to area next year

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recent years, the tribes have seen escalating violence with the introduction of automatic rifles.

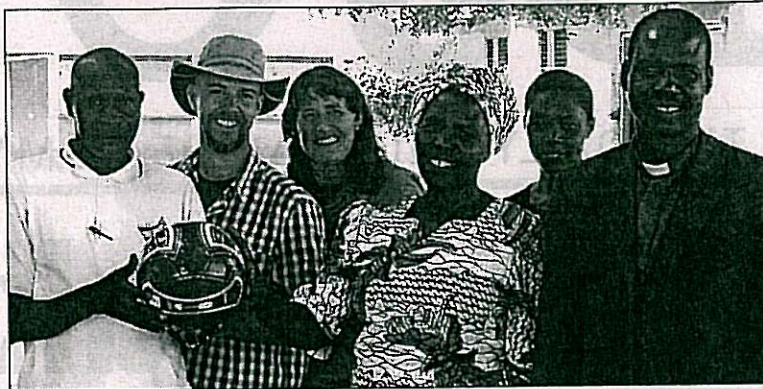
Last year, Schwartzkoph realized that "the time was right to see if I could do something about it." He arranged two trips through his church, Rolling Hills Community Church in Tualatin, in association with an international Bible teaching ministry called The Berean Way.

He has worked both as a missionary for his church and as a peace broker for the tribes. "In addition to showing warriors how they can exercise another means of gaining respect in tribes rather than violence, we're providing a biblical perspective for families and communities," he said. "Their main form of violence is they steal each other's cattle. They do want peace and they've been waiting for peace for a long time."

The conflict, he said, is often caused by tribesmen stealing livestock. "How do you react when someone steals your cattle and kidnaps your daughter? You think you have to retaliate," he said. Schwartzkoph said such incidents are "opportunities to forgive" and to move on to a more agricultural based lifestyle in which livestock do not play such a key role.

A key to forging peace between the tribes has been encouraging tribe members to develop villages in a valley in the Karamoja region called Nabwal.

On Schwartzkoph's most recent



Courtesy of K.C. Schwartzkoph

Local engineer K.C. Schwartzkoph, second from left, recently went to Uganda in an attempt to foster peace between warring tribes. Dr. Val Shean, third from left, is a veterinarian who helps Ugandans.

trip, in July, he said he went with the intention of convincing the tribes to create villages in the valley. In the last year, he said 60 "peace villages" have been created there and 10,000 people have moved to the villages. In order to prevent raiders from stealing cattle, the villagers do not keep livestock.

"We got people from both tribes living together and reaping the benefits of living in a more fertile area of Uganda," he said.

On his last trip to Uganda, Schwartzkoph was joined by doctors and other missionaries. They worked with a Uganda-based veterinarian named Dr. Valerie Shean.

The trips, he admitted, can be dangerous. In the summer of 2007, his group was near a village that was raided by one of the warring tribes.

But Uganda is not the dangerous place it was during the dicta-

torship of Idi Amin in the 1970s, when 300,000 people who allegedly opposed Amin were killed. The current president, Yoweri Museveni, has been accused of corruption and has abolished presidential term limits, but Museveni is seen as "somewhat stable," Schwartzkoph said.

The Karamoja region, he added, is "less civilized than the south and the people are very independent and generally govern themselves," he said.

Schwartzkoph plans to return to Uganda next summer to continue his work. "The peace movement is gaining traction," he said. "We want to show the warriors how they can save face and cultivate respect without resorting to violence."

His desire to help the Africans has been an ongoing theme. "I've been in love with the African people basically my entire life," he said.