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'Lost Boy' to tell tale of survival

*By Charles Menchaca
Wausau Daily Herald*

John Dau's 1,000-mile journey began in 1987, when he was just 13.

A civil war in the east African country of Sudan escalated to a kill order for all men in the southern part of the country, where Dau lived with his family.

Dau fled the county with 20,000 other boys and encountered militia attacks, starvation and scorching temperatures.

This week, Dau will tell central Wisconsin residents how he survived years as a refugee, something he hopes will inspire them to overcome the obstacles in their own lives.

Residents are invited to hear Dau speak at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Wausau East High School. About 1,800 middle school students from the area will hear Dau on Wednesday.

Dau, 36, has spoken about his experience to 500,000 people in North America and Africa in the past two years. Most of the people he meets want to know how he survived.

"I was not willing to give up at all," Dau said. "As long as I'm alive, I'm moving on."

Dau said he would pray and sing Christian songs in his head to ask God for water and told himself that his journey on foot could not last forever.

Educators in central Wisconsin said Dau's story of resilience would be worth the time and money to bring him here. Foundations and businesses helped raise \$13,750 so that residents could see Dau at no charge, said Edgar Elementary School teacher Colin Hanson.

Hanson and fellow teachers brought Rwandan genocide survivor Immaculee Ilibagiza to Wausau last year.

Dau ended up in a refugee camp in Kenya and was known as one of the "Lost Boys of Sudan." His life changed again when a church program sent him and three other Lost Boys to Syracuse, N.Y.

Dau still lives in Syracuse with his wife, Martha, and their two children. He returns to the Sudan once a year to continue the work of the John Dau Foundation, which aims to provide health care to those in southern Sudan.

Additional Facts

If you go

What: Presentation by Sudanese refugee John Dau

When: 7 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Wausau East High School Auditorium, 2607 N. 18th St., Wausau

Cost: Free

To learn more: Log on to johndaufoundation.org

Please arrive early to guarantee a seat.
