

Decade after settlement, tobacco on rebound

Special to Sentinel-Voice
MOUNT STERLING, Ky. — Lindsay Pasley is an eager young man in what used to be an older man's game — tobacco farming. He recently took 20 tons of his early prepared leaf to Clay's Tobacco Warehouse in Mount Sterling, due east of Lexington in the Appalachian foothills, where he said he earned enough to "have a nice Thanksgiving and Christmas."
The auctioneer's singsong

chant still rings out at Clay's and a few other tobacco-selling sites stubbornly hanging on with limited sales, but not nearly as often. Clay's is the last tobacco warehouse still conducting auctions in Mount Sterling, once home to four auction warehouses. Owner Roger Wilson, who has watched as longtime growers have switched crops or quit farming altogether over the years, hopes to sell more than 2 million pounds this season,

comparable to last year but down about half from the days before Congress pulled the plug on a Depression-era buyout program. Yet Pasley, 28, wants to quadruple his acreage. He has a contract to sell 10 times as much to R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. as he did at the auction. A decade ago, tobacco seemed destined to wither as cigarette companies shelled out tens of billions to settle lawsuits with states. Smoking bans then swept the country and — worst of all for the small-time grower — Congress cut off the quota system four years ago. As a rebound in production this year shows, however, Big Tobacco and individual growers alike have proven as resilient as

their leaf, aided by a boost in exports primarily to Germany and Switzerland and by new marketing tactics emphasizing smokeless options. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, production of all tobacco varieties fell 27 percent to 640 million pounds in 2005, the first year without the price support program, which entitled license-holders to a quota of the total tobacco crop capped by the USDA each year. The venerable program was reeling from steep declines in tobacco demand due to anti-smoking efforts. This year, production climbed to 805 million pounds — within 10 percent of the 2004 level of 882 million pounds. That 2004

output was half the production in 1997 and a third of 30 years earlier. The bottom came in 2005, when growers produced 645 million pounds. The uptick has coincided with the increasing consolidation of growing onto fewer farms. "We've had so many to drop out, that for the ones who stay in there are opportunities," said Will Snell, a University of Kentucky agricultural economist. Production of burley leaf, which accounts for about a quarter of all tobacco production in the United States, has lost about three-fourths of its growers since the buyout, Snell said. Yet some operations now cover hundreds of acres, a big

undertaking when much of the work is still done by hand. In 2004, the last year of the federal price-support program, there were nearly 26,000 farms with quota licenses to grow the more common flue-cured tobacco in North Carolina, still the nation's top tobacco-growing state. By this year, that was down to 2,500 to 3,000 farms, said Scott Bissette of the state agriculture department's tobacco marketing division. U.S. tobacco production was valued at \$1.3 billion in 2007, off from \$1.75 billion in 2004, according to the USDA. Domestic cigarette sales are falling by 3 percent to 4 percent a year, a decline that has worsened since the

HIV

(Continued from Page 4)

take the test at school or who have changed their minds and want to test can contact the St. Louis County Health Department directly.

The health department also set up a hotline for Normandy, along with "an aggressive educational campaign for the students, parents and staff of the school."

For reasons of confidentiality, the Health Department said it will not disclose method(s) of potential HIV transmission being investigated in the Normandy situation; however, it does want to shut down a rumor involving tattoo parlors.

A statement by the Health Department reads:

"No information it has obtained during the course of the investigation indicates that tattoos, the receiving of tattoos, or any particular tattoo business has played any role in this case of potential HIV transmission."

Sandra Jordan writes for the St. Louis America.

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Winfrey wants defamation suit out

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Oprah Winfrey wants a court to dismiss a defamation lawsuit filed by the ex-headmistress of her girls school in South Africa.

Nomvuyo Mzamane (num-VOO'-yo m-zah-MAH'-neez) is suing Winfrey in federal court in Pennsylvania over remarks she made on her Chicago-based talk show about a sex-abuse case at the school. A dorm matron who worked under Mzamane is charged

in South Africa with abusing six students at the school for poor girls. The ex-headmistress lives in the Philadelphia area and says she cannot find work because of Winfrey's comments.

Winfrey says she and her defendant companies have no business ties to Pennsylvania and should not be sued there.

Winfrey also says the school contract calls for arbitration in such cases.

Immigration Conference empowers Utahns to make a difference in their state

(Continued from Page 4)

businesses, schools and those who have religious organizations. "Our first three years were dedicated to building capacity," Augustin said. "We had to do a lot of outreach and make sure community foundations and funders knew the work we were doing. We had to ask volunteers to come in and help. We formed partnerships with resettlement agencies and worked toward the common goal of helping newcomers."

Money just didn't come to PAA.

"I had to learn how to develop funding opportunities," Augustin said. "This is among the most important skills of a director. Funders want a clear idea of the community you are serving. We wanted to be inclusive and not exclusive, including refugees, immigrants and exiles."

In the year that Chicago son Barack Obama was elected president of the United States, PAA stayed out of politics.

"There are no political activities within our organization," Augustin said. "PAA is a welcoming place for all Africans, regardless of ethnic

or tribal background. We have achieved this goal and remain a non-political organization."

Before starting PAA, Augustin describes himself as having been "an activist in Chicago's Haitian community."

PAA is represented in the community culturally.

"We encourage those we assist to keep their cultures and share their cultures with the community," Augustin said. "We created the Pan-African Association Dance Troupe and the Pan-African Association Drum Ensemble. Cultural offerings allow us to make sure the community at-large understand who we serve and that they can become a part of our community."

PAA launched on Martin Luther King Day in 2003. In the beginning, PAA faced numerous challenges.

"There was lack of a proven track record," Augustin said. "Funders didn't feel comfortable funding PAA. We needed to be under the umbrella of a successful organization known throughout the country."

Recruiting the right staff that can handle confidential-



Sentinel-Voice photo by Albert C. Jones/Diversity Times

Melineh Kano, president of the Pan-African Association board of directors, presents with Patrick Augustin at the Utah Refugee Conference. The conference was a success.

ity is important, Augustin said. Board development and involvement are important, even if board members are not able to attend all meetings.

"Board members will help

carry the load," he said. "They will be on your side and bring consistency within your organization."

A successful organization must have good fiscal management, be prepared for au-

ditions and requests for financial records by funders, Augustin said.

"One of the key factors to always keep in mind is we are here to help empower our communities," he said. "This very important role is to be a self-help organization and teach the community to take care of each other. If we can have an empowered community that cares for each other, we will be able to promote successful integration."

A religious organization is where Kano's IRIM gets involved. IRIM was founded in 1982 as part of the Illinois Conference of Churches.

Kano said PAA receives about \$500,000 annually in funding and provides services to 1200 throughout all programs, equally among men and women.

"We have a lot of volunteers," she said.

"At any given time, it's about 200. Volunteers help with a number of things, including teaching English as a Second Language and citizenship classes that lead to successfully completing the U.S. citizenship application."

Kano's story is just as intriguing as the refugees and immigrants she has been

helping daily for nearly 25 years.

IRIM resettled her family in Chicago in 1984 from Rome, Italy.

Fluent in five languages, Kano was invited to join the staff of IRIM and within two years she was promoted to program director. She developed IRIM's Women's Empowerment Program, Senior Services Initiative Program and Youth Program.

Paul LaSuba is former president of United Africans of Utah. He concluded the Utah Refugee Conference was beneficial.

"It's very empowering. It's very educational," said LaSuba, a refugee from the Sudan.

"This information received from Mr. Augustin directs me to be more specific. It has given me more tools to do more work within our community and association."

"We are able better to see where we are as an organization," he said. "The model of the Pan-African Association is the model we need to have here in Utah."

Albert C. Jones is founder and publisher of The Diversity Times.