

BERKSHIRE RECORD

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Couple bridges the gap between two worlds

By Will Whitehorn

GREAT BARRINGTON—In between trips to Africa, Anne Weglarz and Howard Ross Patlis — since their transformation known simply as Ina and Esu — are enlisting their South County brethren for assistance.

The altruistic pair — who recently in life have begun directing their time and resources to goodwill to at least two African nations — is intent on returning to the continent in mid-January. In the interim, they are collecting supplies and money for an effort they call their “divine choreography.”

“It’s been intense,” Ina said of the couple’s experiences in their latest trips to Burkina Faso and Ghana earlier this year. “It’s been intense because it’s getting clearer that this is what we’re sup-



Photo contributed

Esu, left, and Ina, right, with an African native during a goodwill trip.

posed to be doing.”

Humanitarian as well as cultural ambassadors, Ina and Esu, through their BARKA Foundation, make routine trips to the other side of the world in order to assist in the preservation of Burkina Faso and neighboring Ghana. Their trips include supplies and monies to be allocated to the citizens of Burkina Faso, a sub-Saharan country and the third poorest and most illiterate nation in the world.

The couple said it intends to build houses and improve the schools in Faso’s villages. The couple would like to bring as many supplies — including pens, paper and books for the relatively barren schools — and is at-

tempting to raise \$50,000.

The money will be used in part to dig wells that will provide a water source for villages and improve irrigation, hence agriculture, in the chronically drought-stricken countries. BARKA also intends to purchase a piece of shore line in Ghana to preserve local culture and commerce.

But despite their efforts, Ina and Esu would be the first to admit that they are not missionaries.

“We’re actually the reverse of that,” Esu said. “Missionaries go places, but they impose things, beliefs on the people of those nations. We’re not doing that. We’re trying to preserve what’s still there.”

That region of the world

is in the path of what Ina called a “tsunami of change,” namely encroaching Westernization, which she said has eroded a relatively undocumented culture. The citizens have gravitated toward popular culture and Coke, for example, and are leaving behind ritualistic dance and music.

As part of their cultural preservation effort, Ina and Esu — when they eventually begin operating their base out of Faso — intend to construct a recording studio there to document the sights and sounds of the native culture for future generations.

In the interim, they said they are making the rounds locally to garner assistance for the humanitarian ef-

fort. That will include a round of appearances on local radio shows to explain their plight, and continuing to ask for assistance when needed.

“When we head back there, on our trip in January, we plan to construct buildings,” Ina said. “We’re going to make mud-huts, make mud-bricks. And we’re also excited about doing things like curing illnesses, creating alternate sources of energy.

“We’re trying to bridge the two worlds,” Esu added. “We’d like to integrate gifts from both worlds ... and create a sense of reciprocity.”

For information on helping the nonprofit BARKA Foundation, call 413-528-3360.