

# Help wanted

## South County couple has much work left to do in Africa

**By Derek Gentile**  
Berkshire Eagle Staff

GREAT BARRINGTON - Howard Ross Patlis and his partner, Anne K.W. Moffett, don't really see themselves as missionaries when they visit Africa.

"It's not really about us helping them," said Patlis, who also answers to the African name Esu. "It's also a very real process that entails saving ourselves."

Both concede, in fact, that these pilgrimages are as much about helping themselves as they are about helping others.

### Many trips made

Patlis and Moffett, who also is known as Ina, have made several trips to Ghana and Burkina Faso, two of the more poverty-stricken countries in Africa. Both are in western Africa.

The couple will be returning in January. Patlis and Moffett are asking for donations to help the indigenous tribes that occupy these countries.

According to Moffett, they are looking for people who are willing to donate children's clothing, school supplies and, most importantly, sturdy shoes. They also need to find a grant writer who will work with a foundation or nonprofit to channel either funds or goods to those countries and a Web master to help them design and maintain a

Web site. Cash donations also are welcome.

Patlis added that they also would be grateful for donations of frequent-flier miles because it costs about \$1,500 for one two-way ticket to Ghana.

To better facilitate these donations, Patlis and Moffett founded the Barka Foundation in Housatonic in 2006, a 501(c) nonprofit organization. Barka, an African word used across borders and languages on that continent, means "thank you, please," according to Patlis.

"It implies partnership, a relationship of respect and trust," he said.

Patlis is a former television producer for Fox, CNBC, CNN and other outlets. Moffett lived in Maine for most of her life, raising a family. But over the past several years, they both had a sense that they could do more to help.

"I realized that I needed to be more of service than I had been," admitted Patlis.

Still, both emphasized that their plan was not necessarily about going to Africa just to drop off supplies and clothing. The two have become charmed by the culture and people of the region and believe that they can learn much from the individuals who occupy it. That is why they plan to sell their home in Housatonic and move to Africa full time.

"What we see when we go there is a people

who have a real sense of community," Patlis said.

Another part of their plan is to document the musical tradition and oral history of the region. The tribe with which they are connected, the Gour'mache, have little or no written history, Moffett said. It is passed down from generation to generation. There is an urgency to collect some of that before too many more generations die.

### Different opinion

Patlis and Moffett are comfortable with their decision. Others are not. The couple have a radio talk/music show on WBCR 97.7 on Tuesdays from 3 to 5 p.m. One caller suggested that the pair should take care of people in their own backyard.

"And, actually, we did," said Patlis. "We produced the Housy Day Fair in 2005 and HousyPalooza in 2006."

Moffett is moved to tears speaking of those who already have helped, such as a friend of a friend who recently wrote out a check for \$200 after listening to their radio show.

"We want to thank everyone who has helped us," she said.

To contact the couple, for donations or more information, call (413) 528-3360 or e-mail [hpchannel@yahoo.com](mailto:hpchannel@yahoo.com).

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To contact Derek Gentile: [dgentile@berkshireeagle.com](mailto:dgentile@berkshireeagle.com), (413) 528-3660