

*There's No Place Like Habitat*  
By Lindsey Buchheit, Goosmann Law Firm, PLLC

“There’s no place like home.” While the late Judy Garland may have been the first to utter the famous phrase in the notorious, “The Wizard of Oz,” very few epitomize the meaning behind the phrase like Gatluak Diew of South Sioux City, Nebraska. In a few short weeks, Gatluak – and his family of ten – will move into their first real home, made available through Siouxland’s Habitat for Humanity. Unlike Dorothy Gale’s magical road back to Kansas, Gatluak’s journey to a home long awaited has been far more difficult.

Gatluak is a native of Sudan, a country of northeastern Africa. As a young boy, Gatluak found himself in the midst of the Sudan civil wars, and did not escape until he became a refugee and immigrated to the United States in 1995. Without knowing a single person and unable to speak or understand the English language, Gatluak settled in Minnesota, where he put himself through Job Corps., graduating with his diploma just two years later. Thereafter, Gatluak’s wife, Nyabiel Diew, also a native of Sudan, immigrated to the United States, and settled with Gatluak in Omaha, Nebraska. Gatluak worked as a welder for several years, and Nyabiel worked at a casino until the couple welcomed their first of six children.

Yearning for a tight-knit community and small teacher to student ratios for their children, the Diew’s settled into a two-bedroom apartment in South Sioux City, Nebraska, in 2003. Since then, Gatluak has worked as a welder for Sioux Tractor in Sioux City, Iowa. Nyabiel stays home to care for the couple’s children and niece and nephew, and manage the family’s daily needs and activities.

A family of ten, the Diew’s did not live in a house until 2007, when the First Lutheran Church introduced the Diew’s to Jim Kelly. Since then, the Diew’s have been living in a two-bedroom house, graciously made available by Mr. Kelly. Recognizing that this housing arrangement would only be temporary, the Diew’s submitted their application with the Siouxland Habitat for Humanity also in 2007. A mere two weeks later, the Diew’s learned that Habitat had selected them as the recipients of a new home. Due in large part to limited funding, Habitat was not able to commence work on the Diew’s house until the spring of 2010. Nonetheless, for a family which has never lived in a home of their own, a few years has been well worth the wait, and the Diew’s could not be more grateful to Habitat. Likewise, the Diew’s note their gratitude to Mr. Kelly, who has been a great friend of the family since 2007, as well as to the many members of First Lutheran Church in South Sioux City who have devoted a lot of time and effort in building the Diew’s home.

Gatluak realizes that without his devotion and dedication to education and the Siouxland community, his family would still be without a home. Since earning his degree through Job Corps., Gatluak takes courses at WIT Community College to earn his degree in social work, all the while maintaining a full-time job as a welder, fathering his six children, niece and nephew, and being an active member of the Siouxland Community. Gatluak and Nyabiel have instilled the importance of education in their children and niece and nephew, who range from the ages of two to thirteen years. The children look to their parents for inspiration, and fully understand and appreciate the gift that education has brought to their family. The Diew children rarely miss a day of school, and have dreams of helping African children when they grow up. The children are well on their way, as they have already, with the help of Mr. Kelly, assisted in establishing the Adura Foundation ([www.adurafoundation.org](http://www.adurafoundation.org)), which, among other projects, provides a well with clean water to the Adura, African community.

While it is certainly a relief for this large, deserving family to share six bedrooms rather than two, it is – in the Diew’s eyes – nothing short of a miracle that they are finally *home*.