



ETTIE NEWLANDS / FOR THE HORRY INDEPENDENT

Coastal Carolina University student and Haitian native Pierre Henry Valdema, left, plays with Luke, the family dog at the home of Richard and Rebecca Lovelace. Valdema is a native of Haiti and studying at CCU's campus.

## CCU Haitian student blessed by miracles

BY ETTIE NEWLANDS  
FOR THE INDEPENDENT

The distinctions between blessing and miracles blurred for Pierre Henry Valdema long ago.

His life has been defined by them, but he is anything but casual about them.

The only Haitian student at Coastal Carolina University, the junior has just been given a scholarship that will cover the balance of his tuition — including books, meals and housing — until he graduates.

That's on the heels of learning that no family member was hurt in the Jan. 12 earthquake that devastated his country.

Valdema was in the Walmart parking lot in Conway when he learned about the earthquake via cell phone from a friend in New York.

He'd been waiting for his sister, Nathalie, who was inside shopping.

He called her on her cell phone and they went home, looking first on the Internet and then on CNN.

The irony was that

Valdema had said his good-byes to his family in Haiti just the day before, when he came back to Conway after a month-long Christmas break.

He'd gotten back to Horry County around 11 p.m. Monday, and the earthquake happened Tuesday at about 5 p.m.

It was about 24 hours before he spoke with a friend who lived 10 minutes from his family and who was able to assure Valdema his family was safe.

Valdema, who lives with Richard and Rebecca Lovelace in Conway, has been in the United States about five years, coming as a result of connections through local families doing mission work with his parents in Haiti.

Rebecca Lovelace is involved with the Christian Haitian American Partners (CHAP), an organization that supports the charitable work of Valdema's Haitian family.

His father is an Episcopal

PIERRE VALDEMA, B7

## Pee Dee Land Trust excited to be in Horry

*PDLT held its annual Oyster Roast Saturday*

GEORGETOWN - The Pee Dee Land Trust held its annual Oyster Roast at Hobcaw Barony in Georgetown Saturday.

For the fourth year in a row, 250 members and guests enjoyed the finest oysters and chili prepared by Ben Moise as well as the music of local band Lost Highway.

Although the land trust owns more than 12,000 acres in eight Pee Dee counties. This is the first year that the group has had inroads into Horry County.

The Horry easement, closed in December of 2009, represents PDLT's first protected land in Horry County, an exciting step for the Land Trust.

Working with Martin Barrier, PDLT protected the Todd Swamp Tract along S.C. 905.

Black bear are known to inhabit this area, and the swamp feeds into the Waccamaw River very close to the Waccamaw Heritage Preserve.

PDLT is glad to be able to extend its conservation reach into Horry County and looks forward to additional projects there in 2010.

"Working in Horry County has long been a goal of the PDLT, and we are glad that the project with Mr. Barrier worked out so well. There is a great need for conservation along the coast, and the Pee Dee Land Trust is well-positioned to assist landowners willing to take bold steps like Mr. Barrier," said Jennie Williamson, executive director of the Pee Dee Land Trust.

Barrier and his family joined land trust officials for a tour of Bellefield, another historic home on the

grounds of Hobcaw Barony, the morning of the Oyster Roast.

PDLT also works with a group called American Rivers, based in Conway, on their Blue Trails initiative. That project aims to promote nature-based tourism along the Waccamaw River.

The PDLT will be participating in the Grand Strand Green Fair coming up March 20 at the Market Common.

"Thanks to the support of our members through events like the Oyster Roast, we have been able to grow exponentially since late 2005," Williamson said. "We are thankful to our sponsors, members, and guests for making the 2010 Oyster Roast such a tremendous success."

Sponsoring this year's Oyster Roast were Arbor One Financial, First Bank, Pearce Land Company, Dargan, King, & Knight, LLC, Environmental Banc & Exchange and Chase Oil Company.

The Pee Dee Land Trust's mission is to protect, and to promote an appreciation of, the significant natural, agricultural and historical resources that define the Pee Dee Region. Landowners make the greatest ambassadors. Many, after granting conservation easements, go on to educate their neighbors about the benefits of protecting land.

During this year's roast, the Land Trust presented the William H. Chandler Stewardship Award, the highest honor conferred by the organization. Receiving the award was Michael G. McShane of Charleston, the outgoing chairman of the Board of Directors of

the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

McShane was chosen to receive the award for his dedication to preserving ecologically and historically important lands in the Pee Dee Region during his tenure, which began in 2003.

The Marsh Furniture Tracts and Woodbury Tract in Marion County, for example, were purchased by DNR during this time.

The William H. Chandler Stewardship Award was established by the Pee Dee Land Trust in 2006 to recognize individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to the stewardship of the natural, agricultural and historical resources of the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina. The Award has been given only once before, to William H. (Bill) Chandler, posthumously, in 2007.

"We are proud to recognize Mike McShane as the second recipient of the William H. Chandler Stewardship Award," said Ben Zeigler, former chairman of the board of the Pee Dee Land Trust. Zeigler, who worked with McShane on the Woodbury Tract project, is particularly appreciative of McShane's attention and dedication to the Pee Dee.

"Though Mike is from Charleston, and has been very active in the lowcountry conservation efforts, he is cognizant of the fact that conservation in South Carolina is inextricably intertwined among our varying regions. By acknowledging the importance of the Pee Dee's natural resources and history, he is taking a strategic approach that benefits the entire state," Zeigler added.

## Stegall to perform Chopin concert

Gary Stegall, professor of music at Coastal Carolina University, will perform a Chopin 200th anniversary concert at 7:30 p.m. on Monday in Wheelwright Auditorium.

General admission is \$3 and children 10 and under are admitted free, but must be accompanied by an adult.

The program will include Chopin favorites such as "Military March," "Fantaisie-Impromptu" and "A-flat Polonaise," among others. Zhong Liang Chen, a student of Stegall's, will also be performing "Ballade in G minor" in the program. Chen is a sophomore at Waccamaw High School.

Stegall is regarded highly both as a soloist and chamber musician, with performances throughout the

United States, Europe, South America, Asia, Africa and Canada. He has served as resident pianist for the Beau Geste Trio, the S.C. Chamber Orchestra Soloists and as guest artist with the dePasquale String Quartet of the Philadelphia Orchestra. He has also appeared as piano soloist with such orchestras as the Los Angeles Solo Repertory Orchestra, the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Orchestra and the Chestnut Hill Orchestra of Philadelphia.

Stegall earned a bachelor's degree in musical arts from the N.C. School of Arts, a master's degree in musical arts from the University of South Carolina, a doctorate in musical arts from the University of Maryland and the Diplôme/prix d'excel-



Gary Stegall

lence avec grande distinction from Académie de musique de Boitsfort of Brussels, Belgium.

Call the Wheelwright Box Office Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 349-2502.

## Relay for Life needs teams

The American Cancer Society Relay For Life of Conway/Aynor is just around the corner.

Businesses and individuals can register their teams today by visiting [www.relayforlife.org/conwayaynor](http://www.relayforlife.org/conwayaynor).

This "celebration of life" brings the Horry County community together in a unified effort to fight cancer.

Former and current cancer patients, those who have lost a loved one to cancer, families, businesses, civic organizations and the public are invited to take part in this exciting team event.

Relay For Life of Conway/Aynor takes place from 7 p.m. on May 21 until 7 a.m. on May 22 at the Bay Village Mini Mall in Conway.

Relay For Life of Myrtle Beach/South Strand takes place from 7 p.m. on April 30 until 7 a.m. on May 1 at Valor Park at the Market Commons in Myrtle Beach.

The American Cancer Society Relay For Life is a family-oriented event where participants enjoy the camaraderie of a team and also raise funds to help eliminate cancer.

Participants camp out at the Relay site, and when they are not taking their turn walking, they take part in fun activities and enjoy local entertainment.

The event helps communities celebrate those who have faced cancer, remember loved ones lost and fight back against the disease. Teams from companies, churches, organizations, hospitals and schools collect donations and can win individual and team prizes for their efforts.

"Relay For Life brings the progress against cancer to the forefront," said John Zilinsky, event chair. "Many participants are our family, friends and neighbors who have dealt with cancer themselves. Their involvement is proof of the progress that has been not only reducing death rates, but also in the quality of life following cancer treatment."

"The funds raised enable us to continue our invest-

ment in the fight against cancer through research, education, advocacy and patient services," said Zilinsky. "Thanks to the generosity of corporate sponsors, the money raised by participants goes directly to the lifesaving Cancer Society's programs."

Information about how to form a team or become involved in Relay For Life is available from The American Cancer Society at 213-0333 or online at [www.RelayForLife.org/conwayaynor](http://www.RelayForLife.org/conwayaynor).

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service.

Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States.

Call 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

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