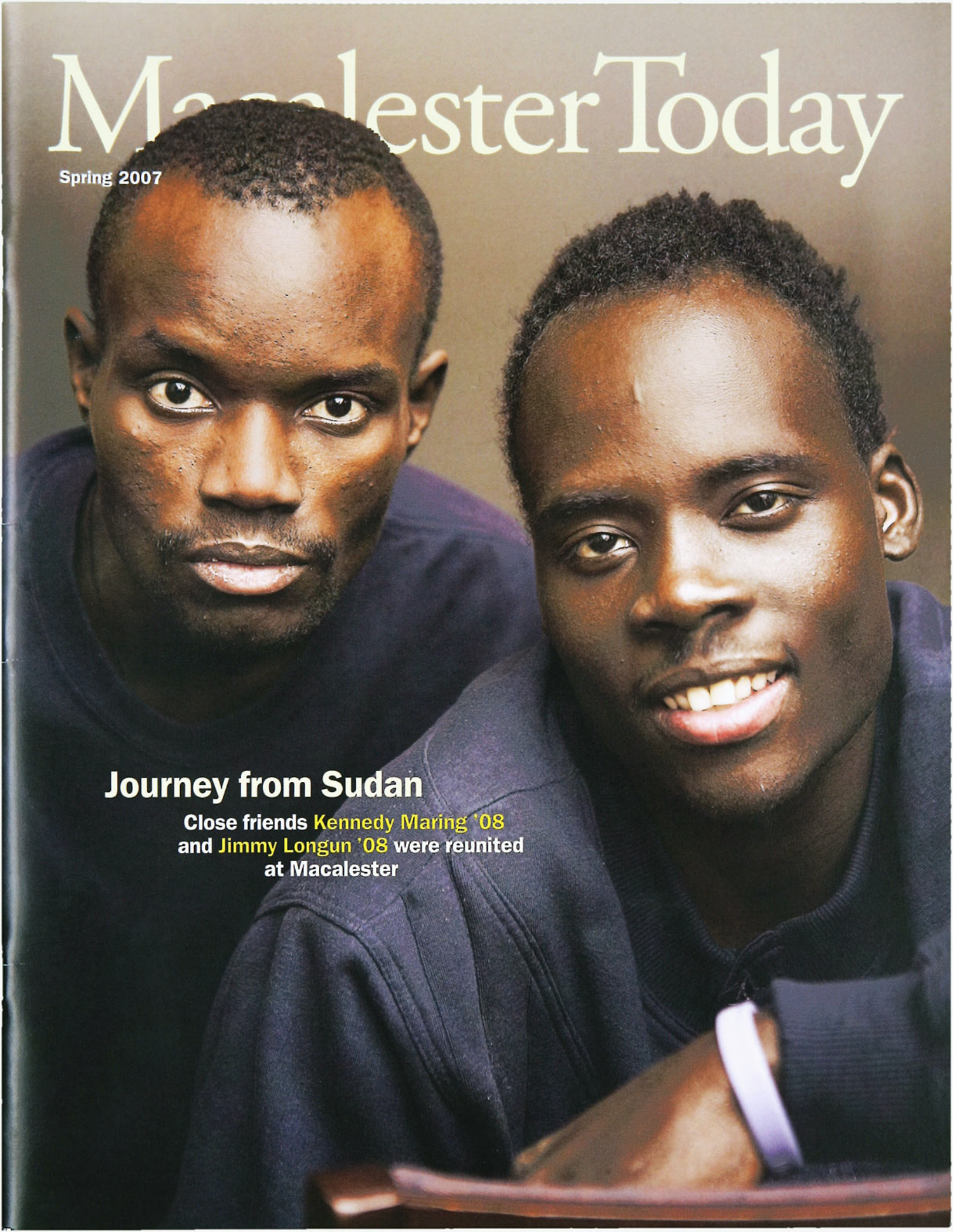
Macalester Today

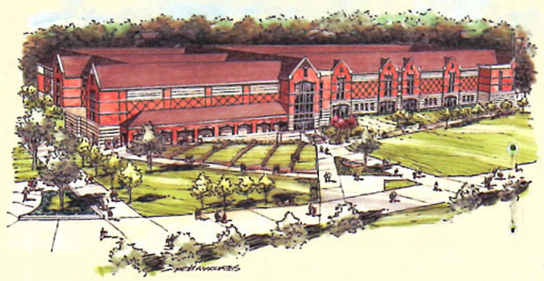
Spring 2007



Journey from Sudan

Close friends Kennedy Maring '08 and Jimmy Longun '08 were reunited at Macalester

Making a (environmental impact) statement: the new MARC



MARC is the acronym for Macalester's new Athletic and Recreation Center, and MARC is a mark of the times. Expected to be completed in fall 2008, the $45 million facility includes environmental design features both obvious and subtle.

Athletic Director **Travis Feezell** says architects designed a bigger but still environmentally smart space that will cut down on energy costs. Many athletic and recreation facilities are linear buildings with long hallways that suck up heat and air conditioning, but the architects for Macalester crunched the original blueprint to reduce wasted hallway space. MARC's Field House will be on the second floor, above locker rooms, offices and the fitness center. "Suddenly, it's an incredibly efficient space," Feezell said.

Instead of a windowless Field House needing banks of electric lights, MARC should have enough natural daylight so athletes will be able to exercise without flipping a switch. Zone lights and dimmer switches will adjust the Field House lighting as needed.

STUDENTS who are part of MacCares (the Macalester Conservation and Renewable Energy Society) lobbied the college to build green. **Timothy Den Herder-Thomas '09** (Jersey City, N.J.) said MacCares students got involved early. "We did try to push for ground source heating [to be installed under Shaw Field]," he says. Although that didn't happen, the students also focused on daylighting, which is key to the new building.

The students' green concerns contributed to the whole project. Den Herder-Thomas and other students are still involved in the process. This semester, a student committee will look at flooring, counters and other interior design decisions.

MARC will also be greener in less visible ways, with thicker insulation and water-saving technology. Even Mac's old Field House won't go to waste. Rather than bulldoze the old one and haul it to landfills, the college hired a Rogers, Minn., firm to deconstruct the building. The firm estimates that about 96 percent of the old Field House will be reused or recycled. Some of the old beams and structural columns will end up as a horse barn in Monticello. Even the old concrete foundation will be recycled as base materials for new roads.

When construction is completed next year, one of the college's most heavily used spaces will be bigger, lighter and greener.

—Kate Havelin '83

Laura Blau '76:

Creating a 21st century home in 19th century Philadelphia

Laura Blau's name means blue. She lives in a tan house. But it's clear she's green. Blau and her husband, Paul A. Thompson, remodeled their 19th century Philadelphia rowhome, which won a 2006 Commonwealth Award for sustainable design from a Pennsylvania citizens group.

When Blau became an architect in 1995, sustainability was barely on the horizon. She and her husband started their own firm, BluPath Design, in 2003. They are among the vanguard of architects and builders who are LEED-accredited, meaning they've met the tough national standards for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. Blau predicts the LEED trend will bloom, as more communities see the need to sustain the environment.

As an art major, Blau says college taught her to think creatively about the common good. "What Macalester always had was a sense of civic responsibility. You're put on this earth to serve society."

She hopes her own home renovation helps sends a message. "We want to say, you can be green and be beautiful. Green is not just something that you do out in the country and off the grid. It's urban and it's renovation." The Blau-Thompson home had been a luncheonette with two apartments above it in Philadelphia's Italian Market. After a year-long renovation, the couple and their 4-year-old son live in a modern rowhouse featuring solar collectors, fiber optic lights and a roof made of rubber. "When architects build for themselves, they're often trying out some things." She admits it's sometimes hard to convince clients to pay more for radiant floors and solar collectors that save money in five to eight years. "Even people with good intentions start backing out when they see the initial costs."

Blau already reaps benefits from her green home. Simply coating the roof white rather than the standard black has meant a 20 percent savings in air conditioning. From the white roof to the catch system that sends rainwater to the back garden, she is finding ways to build a greener world. "It just seems unethical to say you're green and not build green when you're building your own home."

She and her husband are a poster couple for sustainability. Pictured on the original Philly Car Share Web site (www.phillycarshare.org), they were the first to sign up for a community-based shared-car program. Now, Blau is focusing on food, working with others in Philadelphia to get local produce into poorer neighborhoods. Blau concedes that eating green means spending more for groceries, but she tries to keep the big picture in mind. "Since I ride my bike, I spend less on gas. We're spending less altogether." Blau suggests people focus on one area such as transportation, housing or food. "Every year we try to take on one thing. If you try to take it all at once, it's overwhelming."

"When architects build for themselves, they're often trying out some things," says Laura Blau '76. She and her husband Paul A. Thompson, pictured with their son Nandor Van Duc, won an award for sustainable design for the remodeling of their 19th century Philadelphia rowhome.

'Green is not just something that you do out in the country and off the grid. It's urban and it's renovation.'