Before becoming a human rights activist, young John Prendergast began an unofficial Big Brother relationship with three black youths. A new memoir tells of the ties that developed.

By Amy S. Rosenberg

Byline: Staff Writer

John Prendergast is nowhere in sight and this is not the banks of the White Nile in Southern Sudan, but John Prendergast is on a humanitarian mission nonetheless.

It's Sixth and Tasker Streets, a place in deep South Philly where Prendergast, 46, the dashing (but once awkward and scared) human rights activist and celebrity pal rented an apartment in a rowhouse one hot summer in 1984.

As Prendergast recalls, the sweet old ladies who sat on folding chairs went as frosty as a cherry water ice from John's when he walked onto the block with three young African American boys with whom he had begun an unofficial Big Brother relationship. "They were lovely, loving people who were really into my stories of life, bad me over for dinner," Prendergast said one day last week, outside that rowhouse (on a block that he noted with astonishment is now predomi-

See PRENDERGAST on D4
Pew to aid nine arts projects

A total of $874,900 will be awarded to groups located across the Philadelphia area. By Stephen Salisbury INQUIRER CULTURE WERTHEM

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage has awarded $874,900 to 11 projects throughout the region, including an unusual outdoor exhibition and several projects around revitalization and preservation of graffiti at abandoned Holmesburg Prison and a 10-year museum retrospective of work by photographer Zoe Strauss, known for her installations beneath I-95.

Pennsylvania, which organized an international graphic arts festival in 2010, received $80,000 in support of "Doing Time," the Holmesburg Prison graffiti show. The project involves a six-week residency by two Spanish artists who will remove graffiti, transforming it into...