

July 2004



Dear Friends,

It is rainy season in Ethiopia, rain every day, damp and chilly. It is difficult to get laundry to dry and in the baby nursery they sometimes have to use disposable diapers. Recent visitors report that the children remain cheerful and busy however.

You may remember reading in my last letter about Tekua, the boy with the gun shot wound in his foot. I am pleased to tell you that he came through the surgery just fine. He was returned to Layla House but later had to return to the hospital due to excessive bleeding. Once he understood that he would have to stay on the couch for several days until the wound had healed enough for him to be about, he has done fine. He is a cheerful, lively little boy and there was no shortage of other kids who were happy to join him on the couch for a game or a chat. His foot has been saved, his life has been saved, and now he needs a family! Your donations made his surgery possible.

The school term has ended for the older kids and soon there will be an awards ceremony with prizes for students in many categories so that everyone is honored for something. Let me describe the classrooms we are using at this time. The largest classroom is at one end of the sleeping room for the oldest girls. It is separated by a row of book shelves. There is no window and lighting is not good. The second is in a small building about 12 x 12 constructed originally for storage of cement blocks with a cement floor. There is a small window near the ceiling and no electricity. The third classroom uses the perimeter wall for one side and a corrugated metal wall fastened to poles for the other side, dirt floor, no windows and no electricity, and about six feet wide. That our kids can learn anything at all in these circumstances is amazing. I have no doubt that the quality of our little school will improve once we have proper classrooms in the new Layla House facility.

About 20 children will join their new adoptive families in July. However, crowding at Layla House remains a problem. For example we had agreed to take a six year old boy but when he came, his twelve year old brother was with him with no where to go. Could we say "No?" Fortunately, the numbers of families wanting to adopt these kids are increasing also. We are concerned about doing the best possible job with each adoption situation and not losing the personal contact that being small allows us. Such a dilemma.

I'll be traveling over again in about two weeks to update the video of available children, work on tightening our medical procedures, work on establishing a more formalized program for volunteers, and to move forward on the new Layla House Building Project.

Over the past few weeks I have been working to develop a PowerPoint presentation to tell the story of Layla House, the need, the program, and plans for the future. It consists of about 75 slides with many pictures of the children and their daily life. It is now ready to distribute and we believe it will be useful for those who are interested in presenting a program about adoption in Ethiopia with an eye toward raising money for the new Layla House. One of our adoptive families has developed a new brochure as well. You can order the Layla House CD using the enclosed form, or give us a call or send an email.

Also, please note these dates: Ted and I will be meeting with adoptive families and friends on Long Island in August 28, and in Washington DC on August 29th. Everyone is welcome. Check the AAI web site for details. These will be informal picnics, and Samson, our Ethiopian attorney, will attend as well.

I hope you are having a wonderful summer. We have been blessed with the nicest weather for June that I can remember.

Thank you once again for your help with the work for the children without families.

Merrily and Ted