

November 2004



Greetings,

The snow is creeping down the mountains in Port Angeles and it seems winter is headed our way. It has been such a busy time and I am not sure where fall went.

I was in Addis in September and saw record numbers of children waiting to be admitted to Layla House. There are simply so many orphan children. I made a new video of available children with about 80 children on it, including 29 sets of siblings. As I did the video and talked with the kids, the stories sounded so similar, father died and mother died shortly after, stayed with an aunt, or neighbor for a time, then came to Layla House. At the end of one day after seeing about 30 kids I began to ask myself why I am doing this job as it seemed simply too hard. Of course a few hours later I realized that I must do it - these kids need help and we are in a position to provide it. We have record numbers of families applying who want to share their lives with these precious, helpless kids. So we continue working harder and faster, getting as many as possible into new adoptive families.

A highlight of the trip was going one morning to the town of Nazaret, which is two hours south of Addis, to pick up two babies. These babies had been found by the police and were being cared for at the hospital. I was touched when a crowd gathered around the car as we left the hospital with the babies. Folks were saying very positive things such as "lucky babies" and "Going to America." It was good to know that folks were seeing adoption as a very positive thing for these children. Samson, our lawyer, drove and a friend and I each held a tiny wrapped bundle. Each time we approached a bump (and there are many) in the road Samson would call out, "Bump coming!" so that the babies' sleep would not be disturbed. Both of the babies are now in the adoption process, and it is likely that at least one of them will be home by Christmas.

Our special joy was to escort three children to their new families. The oldest was a girl of nine who had waited a long time for a family. The other two were babies and it was not only a joy but a relief to hand them to their new families after the long journey.

We now have more children than ever at Layla and Wanna Houses. The need for our new Layla House is more and more pressing. We hope to break ground in the new year. Rita, who volunteered for us in Addis this summer, is working on fund raising ideas. We will be sending more information as plans unfold.

One of our adoptive parents has set up a web site to sell Ethiopian products with all of the proceeds going to the New Layla House Building Fund. If you would like to take a look at what is available, the link is <http://www.fromethiopia.us>

As Thanksgiving approaches we know we have a long list of things to be thankful for. We have wonderful staff both here and in Ethiopia, we have great adoptive families, and we have you, our loyal supporters, as well as many volunteers who do a wide variety of projects. I am grateful to be able to work to benefit needy children and though the work seems overwhelming at times, when I hear the sad stories and see the sad faces of the orphan children who are transformed in only a few months into cherished members of loving families, I know that I am very grateful to be involved in this work.

Thanks for you help. Without it we wouldn't be able to do what we do!

Best wishes.

Merrily and Ted