

September 2004



Dear Friends,

Above are photos from the gatherings of families with children from Ethiopia which took place late in August in New York and Washington DC. Two representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs from Ethiopia came to the U.S. at AAI invitation to meet adoptive families and learn about AAI's work. Eighteen families and twenty-six Ethiopian children attended. It was a wonderful opportunity for families to meet each other, as well. Some found that they live quite near each other. The children were delighted to find kids that they had known at Layla House and to get reacquainted.

The Ethiopian visitors talked with the children and their families and visited in some homes. They concluded the visit with some very nice comments about AAI's work. They had visited Layla House before traveling to the U.S. and encouraged our efforts to build a new Layla House in the near future and one said that AAI is setting the standard for other adoption programs to follow.

It was a special treat for Ted and me to be able to attend the gatherings and to meet so many of the parents and see, once again, the children I had gotten to know in Ethiopia. I was very proud of the children, I actually felt like a proud Grandmother!

Children have continued to arrive at Layla House, most often frightened and worried. It is amazing how quickly they begin to relax and enjoy themselves. Our other kids and staff are welcoming and having good food seems very comforting. Adoption processing is going quickly which means children are staying in our care for a shorter period of time.

Our program to provide sponsorships for older children, who have lost their parents to AIDS, is going well. We now have nearly 20 children identified and are working on getting more sponsors, if this would be of interest to you. We are also proud to say that two Layla House staff members, who were given scholarships through our staff scholarship program, have now graduated. Both have chosen to remain with their jobs giving us the benefit of a better educated staff.

A big step forward has taken place this summer, organized by Sophie, a nurse who volunteered at Wanna House. She identified and trained one of the house mothers to be responsible for the health of the children. She records heights and weights, handles simple first aid situations, arranges for doctors appointments, assures that immunizations schedules are maintained and communicates any health concerns to the social worker who passes them to me to share with the adoptive parents. We are delighted with this new position, created from within, and believe that children and families will benefit.

There is a new project for raising funds for the new Layla House construction which may be of interest to you, an on-line store with Ethiopian items. All profits go to Layla Building Fund, the web link is

<http://www.fromethiopia.us>

I want to close by telling you about greeting our Ethiopian visitors at the airport in Newark. Two children being adopted by an American single mom accompanied them. The boys, 11 and 9 were two of the children who had waited longest for a family when this adoptive mom told me she wanted to adopt the hardest child we had. There was no question about the 11 year old, at his age it is very, very difficult to find an adoptive family. His best friend, the 9 year old seemed a perfect brother for him. The boys were so excited to finally have a family. Ted and I waited in the airport with the mother. She has three bio kids and adopted a boy from Ethiopia a couple of years ago, so though we hadn't met, I felt I knew her well. Ted and I both got teary when the boys came bouncing out of the immigration area, spotted their new mom and broke into a run! What an amazingly wonderful thing for them. The first few days have been challenging for this family. The boys have many habits and behaviors at their ages that need to be adjusted, you could say that they are rough around the edges. But this wonderful family is growing stronger by the day, and these lucky boys will now have opportunities that they could hardly have dreamed of a few months ago.

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

Merrily and Ted