

March 2005



Greetings to Everyone,

There is so much news, I hardly know where to start this letter. I returned from Ethiopia a week ago after an extremely busy trip. As you know we have been raising money to build a new Layla House to house the children in our care there. Our greatest problem has been not in the fund raising, but in acquiring the land to build the house. As we were discussing this with some Ethiopians we were told of an existing compound that might suit our needs and after seeing it we agreed! If we are successful in purchasing this compound we will be able to move the children into better living quarters in a matter of months instead of years. The location is excellent, building construction seems above average, and now we are doing structural inspections, inspection of septic systems, title search and so forth. The owner has agreed to half down and half in a year so if we move ahead we have enough to make the initial payment, but will have to continue fund raising efforts to assure that we can meet the remaining payment in a year. This all seems nearly too good to be true.

At the same time construction of the new AAI office building is nearly complete. It is located just up the street from the current office. The new office will give us space for expansion. We need more staff but haven't had a place to put a single additional desk. By the time I write again in May we should be moved.

Plans are progressing for the Summer Gathering of adoptive families on August 19th and 20th in Port Angeles. Please mark you calendar. Tours of the new office will be included and we will be looking for items for the Silent Auction and of course performers for the talent show!

On Tuesday I'll leave with Janelle for Thailand to visit the orphanages there and identify children with special needs who can be placed for adoption. AAI has

received over \$2500 in donations specified for tsunami relief and will be able to deliver that to the Child Welfare Department.

Let me close with a story. Our staff in Ethiopia received a call about a sibling set of six orphan children, the oldest, age 7. When our social worker went to meet them she discovered that actually the oldest two children were teenagers and the younger four were age 4 to 9. We agreed to take the younger four, though placing sibling sets of four together is never easy. At the same time I received an email from a family asking to adopt a sibling set of four or five. I told them about these kids and they were very interested. The kids were taken to Layla House and given HIV testing and medical exams, and it was determined that the youngest is HIV positive. The adoptive family thought it over for a day then decided that they wanted to adopt all four including the HIV positive boy and they want to sponsor the two older boys so they can attend school. So, we will work with this family, through the extra procedures involved in getting a visa for an HIV positive child, and this little boy will have medicines that he would not have available to him in Ethiopia. And the younger kids will remain together and in contact with the older brothers. How amazing is that???

One last thing, a dear friend of mine is a talented quilter. She prepared and sent 100 squares of muslin to Layla House and asked to have the children color pictures on the squares. She then chose a few and has sewn them into a stunning quilt. The colors are rich and vibrant, deep blue, red, gold and green, and the fabrics have an African flavor. Our hope is that everyone will be willing to sell a book (or more) of raffle tickets to help raise money for the new Layla House. If you are willing we will send you a color photo of the quilt, a book of tickets and some brochures. I think it will be an easy way for you to ask your friends for help, and I believe that when folks see the picture it is going to be an easy sell. Tickets will be \$5.00. If you are willing to help sell raffle tickets, please email Rita, as she will be mailing out the packets beginning next week. There will be prizes for those who sell the most tickets. There will be winners in three categories, child 10 and under, child 11 and over and adult. The drawing will take place at the Summer Gathering in August. We need your help!

Best wishes to all. Your gifts, prayers and support are very precious to us!

Merrily and Ted

