

August, 2006

Dear Friends,

This month we will be saying good-bye to Merelene, who is retiring. Merelene and I have worked side by side for 29 years. She has a wealth of knowledge about adoption processing and her kind, calm voice is the one anxious families hear most often when they are moving through the adoption process. She has been my partner and sounding board and I'll miss her. In her honor, a web page has been created at <http://olyphen.com/aai>. Please take a minute to sign the guest book and share your thoughts. Merelene and her husband John will be doing some traveling and relaxing and we wish her well.

She will be honored at a Family Gathering in Seattle on August 26. Please see the enclosed information and do register as we need to be sure there is food for everyone.

At the gathering on August 26, we will have the drawing for the Layla Quilt. If you haven't bought your tickets, or sold tickets, there is still time. Be sure to return your ticket stubs to the office. August 25 is the absolute deadline. We hope to see many old friends at the Gathering.

The coming weeks will be a time of transition as newer staff members assume new duties.

Some changes are in store and we think that this will be a time of both challenge and growth.

Things are going well in Ethiopia. Many children have joined their families over the summer and our attorney, Samson, was able to get a record number of adoption cases into court before it closed for the Ethiopian New Year break, which lasts from early August through early October. This is the time of year when many new children arrive at Layla House and Wanna house, and one day last week I got word of three new sibling sets in one day. We are finding good families for many of the kids. Recently a family committed to a very special set of five siblings and we are so pleased that they will be placed together. Another family read in the child report that the four year old girl they were referred had an older half-brother, 12. We had made arrangements for schooling for him in a sponsorship program but they insisted that they want to adopt both to keep them together. We are so pleased when a family is able to stretch themselves to accept siblings so that they can stay together.

Many of the longer waiting older children are finding families as well, but Mahlet and Tesfay, brother and sister who were pictured in the last newsletter, still wait for a family. It is also exciting to see so many HIV positive children being adopted. Kids who we thought would be sick and languishing in Ethiopia are

now receiving anti-viral drugs and are now about to grow up with families in America.

Last month a group of volunteers from California, including dentists and dental technicians, spent a day at Layla House. They brought portable dental chairs and examined and cleaned the teeth of over 100 of our kids. They gave lessons in brushing teeth and dental kids to each child. Children with immediate dental needs were identified and those kids are being taken to a dentist whose office is across the road from the Layla House. We would be happy to accept donations specifically for the dental program. We hope to be able to continue to provide dental care for children while they wait at Layla House for their forever families.

The volunteer program has grown and our volunteer house is now often overcrowded. It is wonderful to see the volunteers giving their time and energy so freely to enrich the children's experiences and provide help and assistance wherever needed. An inter-orphanage soccer league has been organized by volunteers and the kids love it. Even the older Wanna kids attend the games and join in the cheering. We are also grateful to Julie Hehn who will make her third trip of the year to Layla House in August to work with the Layla School. She is training the teachers, working on assessments for the students, and generally working to improve the quality of the education the kids are being provided.

We continue to find families for babies from China and babies and children with minor to major birth defects or medical issues from Thailand and China. The program to place children from the Washington State foster care system continues to grow as well and these children are getting permanent adoptive families rather than being raised in foster care.

We are always grateful for your caring and support and we hope to see you at the Family Gathering in August.

Sincerely,

Merrily and Ted