

February, 2007

Dear Friends,

Things have never been busier at Layla House in Ethiopia, which means they are busy for us in Port Angeles as well.

Late in November the father of a family that adopted one of the first Ethiopian children processed through AAI called and asked me to write a short proposal about something that is needed in Ethiopia. He said he would submit it to a foundation he is involved with and try to get funding for us. I do get calls like this from time to time and sometimes they work out and sometimes they don't but I communicated this information to Gail. She and I have both been worried about the babies and young children who have been referred to AAI for adoptive placement but who turned out to have serious delays or physical problems making it difficult to find adoptive families for them. We had talked in detail with one volunteer who has experience in working with these kids and we were both impressed at how much progress these special kids made when someone who knew what she was doing actually worked with them to help them learn basic skills like feeding themselves. We talked about opening a separate small center for these children where they could have special attention and training to help them develop. This was our opportunity!

In December we got the word, our proposal was accepted and we would be able to move ahead with plans, with start up funding in place. We are confident that once established we will be able to raise funds to keep it going. So, Opportunity House will likely be a reality before you receive the next newsletter. These children will have an opportunity that very few special children in Ethiopia have. There is very little being done for children with special needs in Addis and of course, nearly nothing in the country side. Our hope, at this point, is to establish the home, train staff, then in a year or two look for another organization that would take over and continue the work, making sure that our children will have a place to receive these services in the future. We want to be able to continue to focus most of our attention on providing adoptive families for children

Samson, our legal representative was asked if AAI could help by setting up one or more small receiving homes in remote towns where currently the police have no where to take abandoned children. Orphans who have no extended family or neighbors to take them in are simply left on the street. Last week Samson traveled with government officials of that region to three towns to determine where it would be most useful to have such a center. I don't have Samson's report yet, but expect that we will be establishing a small center where children can be cared for while legal paperwork is gathered. Then they will be transferred to Layla House for placement into adoptive families. Again, I believe that we will be able to move forward on this project fairly quickly.

For the second time in my 30+ years of working in adoption, we have triplets

available for adoption. They are cute and healthy babies born to a young unmarried mother. She simply could not support them and, with help from her family, went to court and petitioned to relinquish them for adoption. This is a fairly new occurrence in Ethiopia where children who could not be parented by their own parents were always taken in by extended families or friends. It is an indicator of the current situation for orphans in Ethiopia. There simply are not enough healthy adults to care for all of them in some parts of the country, which is why we are seeing so many available for adoption.

At Layla we continue to have older children who wait too long for an adoptive family. AAI is making special efforts to assist families interested in adopting older children. We have declared 2007 'The Year of the Older Child.' Proceeds from this year's Layla Quilt raffle ticket sales will benefit the Older Orphan Children Fund. We want to have adoption fee assistance (through the GRACE Fund) and grant funding to assist families needing special services to help the older child transition into life in an American family. One key to the fund's success will be the [Layla Quilt raffle ticket sales](#). We hope you will be able to help by selling tickets for this beautiful quilt -- just send an email to Rita at ritaai@olympus.net and she will send raffle tickets to you. Tickets are \$5.00 each. You can see a photo of the quilt online at the AAI web site and donations to the project can also be made by clicking on Donate Now. While you are there, have a look at the web site, it is being updated and there are several new features and more coming. <http://www.adoptionadvocates.org>

Thank you once again for your support, working together we are making good things happen for kids and families.

Merrily and Ted

2007 Layla House Quilt Raffle to benefit
Adoption Advocate International's
Older Orphan Children Fund
finding families and assisting with
post-placement services for older orphans.
Tickets \$5.00 Drawing to be held June 24, 2007
in Port Angeles, WA (need not be present to win)