



Adoption Advocates International Families for Children

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GHANA VOLUNTEER WORK GROUP IMPROVEMENTS TO EBAN HOUSE



Dear Friends,

It begins to smell and feel like fall. We are full of energy and there are many good things happening. A week ago Ted and I returned from two weeks in Ghana and Ethiopia. In Ghana we saw the new AAI Eban House, which I hadn't seen before. It was functioning well with a wonderful staff which had been hired and trained mostly by Gail, our coordinator who had come over from Ethiopia for a short time. They were caring for seven children, six of whom I had met on my previous trip but they almost looked like different children, healthy now with shining eyes and smiles that looked like they came from the heart.

One of our adoptive moms had organized a group to travel to Ghana. The school room was tidy with small tables, posters and books and baskets of toys and activities such as legos, on the shelves. Children have been taught to take down the baskets, play with the toys then to pick them up and return them to the shelves. A volunteer teacher is working with them on many skills and I was quite impressed.



These Ethiopian girls, Tsion, 12, Meskerem, 11, and Harmela, 10, are lovely sisters waiting for a



family of their own.

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Our most memorable event was a trip to a rural village, Awate, about three hours from Accra where we stayed. The "queen" of the village (actually the widow of the former chief) invited us as she said they had many orphan children. As we approached the village school, fifty or so children in brown and orange tattered uniforms greeted us and sang and

marched up the drive to the school yard while we followed. School desks had been brought outside under the trees and children seated themselves. Ted, the "queen" and I were seated at a table across from them and we were treated to singing, dancing and drumming. Villagers gathered as well, sitting on the ground.

Then, after speeches by folks of importance in the village and one from me, the queen asked the villagers which orphan children should go to American to join new adoptive families. There was a great deal of discussion, children were



brought forward and the group got quite large. I said that we could only accept five at this time and they shuffled kids in and out of the chosen group, discussing amongst themselves which were the most needy. I can only imagine what the kids thought. Finally they had selected six children and we spoke with each guardian about the circumstances of the child, and got names and ages. Our social worker will return to get more info and we expect that these youngsters will move to Eban House very soon. It was unreal sitting under the trees, drinking Coke out of a bottle and watching the village in this process. I was a little uncomfortable but they were clearly seeing this as a good solution of the situation of these children.. Later we got a tour of the village which has no electricity, a central water hand-pump and a village church.



Continuing our trip in Ethiopia, I was busy as usual and Ted spent some time visiting with our son Nate who now is assigned to helping adoptive parents while they are staying in Ethiopia to receive their newly adopted children.

I want to share the story of one of the Ethiopian children, now age 10, and living in Ocean Shores with her new adoptive mom. Mulkamsau is deaf and spent about a year at Layla House. No visitor there could leave without



noticing her, she is a child who does not hold back. She is cute and very smart and was eager to begin learning sign language. Her social skills were sadly lacking however and as she had had to push for

everything she had when she was on her own, sharing was not a part of her experience. She was adopted by an slightly older single mom in Ocean Shores who had experience in working with deaf children. I was delighted to know that there would be an adopted Ethiopian child here in the community where we spend most weekends, but nervous about the behavior of this particular child, who makes herself very visible. I need not have worried, the community embraced her. They thought she could do no wrong but her mother was firm, set good boundaries and in a few short months there has been a remarkable transformation. Today she attends school in a regular classroom with an interrupter and is enthusiastic about her many new experiences, horseback riding, riding on a train, and swimming for example. Her mother is thrilled, truly a perfect match.



It was a pleasure while in both Ethiopia and Ghana to see the many improvements that have been made because of donations we

have received. The house in Ghana now has a generator and a large water tank. In Ethiopia a new commercial clothes dryer is being installed. There are many smaller improvements as well which are making life easier, healthier and more pleasant for the kids and staff. We are grateful as always for your help and support.

Sincerely,

Merrily and Ted

Adoption Advocates International