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Families for Children

November 2008



## Greetings from Thailand!

Dear Friends,

It is a long way to travel for a week of work, but with the help of the government social worker we will visit six orphanages in different parts of the country. We are identifying children with special needs who are available for adoption.



On Friday we were in Bangkok and visited three orphanages and saw 38 children. All are under the age of seven: a few have serious special needs but most problems are not serious. I think that the Thai government has the best orphanage system in the world in terms of the care that the children receive, but I also believe that growing up in an adoptive family is a better plan for kids.

We will have a DVD of available Thai children in about three weeks. You do not need to have a current application with AAI to receive the DVD, contact Michele at [michele@adoptionadvocates.org](mailto:michele@adoptionadvocates.org) if you would like one, still only \$10.

Ted is home with our little grandchildren and we are all gradually adjusting to each other. It is nice to think of the approaching holidays with little ones at home again.

Please do remember the [Holiday Project](#) for the children in Ethiopia and Ghana. The children in the sponsorship projects especially have little to look forward to and your gift is sure to bring a smile to a little one. Consider giving this as a gift to your friends and relatives, it is an opportunity that will make the holiday more special for you too.



You should be receiving this the week of Thanksgiving. I am so grateful to all of the wonderful AAI families who have opened their homes and hearts to children needing new and permanent families. We also thank the many others who support our work through sponsorships, donations, advocating for adoption and AAI and in so many other ways. As we share with our family this week we will also be giving thanks for you all.

Sincerely,

Merrily and Ted Ripley

Do your Holiday Shopping to Benefit AAI's Humanitarian Programs at [this link!](#) You can also donate to the **Holiday Project** here.

## Mintesinote's Story: Part Two---Home to a Family

By Hudson Vanderhoff, Adoptive Father

Would little Mintesinote survive while we gathered the needed paperwork to bring him to the States? That was the question my wife Patti and I pondered when we were first asked if we were interested in him on April 17, 2008. We decided to take a leap of faith on this tiny baby with severe spina bifida at AAI's Layla



House facility in Ethiopia.

We were told that the doctor at Layla believed Mintesinote had only perhaps a month to live without intervention. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia warned us that we might be traveling to be with a baby who would never make it home and we were prepared (or so we thought) to go be with him while he passed away.

The court date was set for May 12, 2008. At the airport that same day we received word that Mintesinote's case had passed court. However our Congressman's office also informed us that the new visa center did not have our paperwork. It was a long flight wondering just how crazy we were for leaving our family behind to be with an infant who might never make it home.

We arrived at AAI's Layla House late on May 13, 2008, and were thrilled to find a beautiful Mintesinote who had been taking donated antibiotics to prevent meningitis. He was more handsome and charming than we could have dreamed. With clothes on, it would be impossible to see anything amiss. Without knowing his uncertain future, several Ethiopian women told us his name meant "God can do anything or go anywhere".

While in Addis we traveled around with an AAI social worker every day to get passport pictures, submit paperwork, see the embassy doctor and finally appealing to the embassy to quickly issue a visa. The embassy doctor was one of the few people who saw him without his clothes on. He kept saying "this is bad, this is really bad". It was touch and go to get the visa approved in time and we are so grateful to all the amazing people who worked overtime that week to give Mintesinote a chance at life.

Once we arrived safely in the U.S., Mintesinote was immediately admitted to the hospital and received surgery. Six months later he continues to be a happy, friendly, 7 month old who weighs nearly 13 pounds now (7 lbs on arrival). We've renamed him Otto which means strong one/emperor. He is rolling over, can sit with support, and absolutely loves having lots of interaction with his large family. Otto will always be paralyzed from the waist down because of the spina bifida, but will be fitted for braces as he grows and will learn to "walk" with crutches, or use a wheelchair in our already handicapped accessible home. We can't imagine life without him in our family!

A **Waiting Child** in Thailand  
Needs a Home -- Help us find  
one!



Pruak is a healthy boy, nearly five years of age, His mother had some mental problems but he has shown no signs of similar issues. He needs a family! Pruak is doing very well at the orphanage. The kids do two years of kindergarten there and he is in the second year. He speaks well and has lots of friends. For more information about our Thai program, [click here](#).



**The Holidays are coming!**

How about skipping the shopping altogether and honoring a special person in your or your child's life with a donation to our [Dessie's Dream Project](#)? For a \$25 donation, a teacher, grandparent, or special friend will receive a beautiful "ornament card" with the photo to the right, inscribed on the back with the words *"A donation has been made in your honor by (your name) to AAI's Dessie's Dream Project--- You are helping to give an orphan child in Ethiopia the education so vital to a successful future."* Tied with a red ribbon, it will make the recipient's holiday season even brighter.



Make your donation [online](#) or by mailing a check and the designation instructions to the AAI office.

Donations made by December 18th will allow cards to arrive by December 25th.

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Adoption Advocates International  
709 South Peabody  
Port Angeles, WA 98362  
(360) 452-4777