



Adoption Advocates International Newsletter

October 2008

**AHOPE kids at Reach Camp
with their new families
Summer '08**



Did you know that AAI has placed 44 HIV+ children with adoptive families? Presently there are 19 more somewhere in the process. Erin Henderson, AAI's HIV+ Adoption Coordinator, reports however that there are 67 more HIV+ children waiting at AHOPE and Kidane Mihret in Ethiopia. Most of the waiting children are 6 or older and some are part of sibling groups. Now that some of the older children have joined their forever families, the children who remain all have hopes that they too will someday have a family of their own. For more information, please contact [Erin](#).

Dear Friends,

Fall is in the air. The sunflowers on the side of our office building are huge and will soon begin to droop. I'll be leaving for Ethiopia over the weekend. Due to the grandchildren joining our family, I have not traveled since the end of May, the longest time I have been away from Ethiopia since we began 10 years ago. I look forward to catching up on events there.

In this issue I am going to deviate from the usual and share with you a story written by Julie Hehn, adoptive mom of many and a professional in the field of education who has worked on a contract for several years for AAI, helping with the Layla School. This is an account from her visit last spring. Next issue we will share the rest of the story--from the perspective of the adoptive family.



Thank you to everyone who is helping us celebrate our 25th anniversary with a donation to our humanitarian programs!

If you haven't done so yet, just go to our [Donate Now](#) link

AAI Fall Family Gathering

Chicago, IL

Sun., October 26

11am-2pm

University of Chicago

Merrily Ripley and Susan Poisson-Dollar will meet with AAI families from the midwest. Waiting and prospective families also welcome.

We'll be holding a silent auction to benefit AAI's Opportunity House, a facility benefiting developmentally delayed children in Ethiopia. Items are still needed. Mail them to the AAI office indicating that they are for the Chicago auction. For more information and directions to the gathering contact coordinator [Sandra Spadoni](#).

Merrily and Ted

Mintesinote's Story

contributed by Julie Hehn



In April I was in Ethiopia doing some work for AAI on the Layla School as well as taking care of some personal business.

Gail, the Layla House coordinator, knew that I wanted to travel to Nazret, a town south of Addis and she asked if I could travel with the AAI social worker, Tefera and help bring back three babies that were ready to be admitted to Layla House. My first impression was that they were all so small. In addition to the three babies, there was a boy about 4 years old. We were told one of the babies was sick.

Because I am an experienced mom I was given the baby who was sick to care for on the ride home. As they handed him to me I noticed that his blanket was wet. I asked that they find a new one for him assuming that he had wet through his diaper.

It's that time of year again!

The **AAI Holiday Project Drive**
has begun



Layla House Children
in their holiday finery last year

This year all donations to the **Holiday Project Fund** will provide both a gift to a child in Ethiopia or Ghana as well as a \$10 donation to humanitarian relief projects in both countries. Because times are difficult for many people across the African continent, we felt that the impact of our traditional holiday giving should be more widespread this year. Please consider being especially generous and spreading the word to friends and family. **Holiday Project donations are a \$25 minimum and can be made at our [Donate Now](#) site.**

For more information or to designate your donation for a specific child, contact [Mandie Doak](#), our Holiday Fund Coordinator.

Our Waiting Children--Help spread the word!

Meet **Kalkidan**, a lovely 13 year old girl at Layla House

They took him from me and came back with him wrapped in a dry blanket. I asked his name and was told it was Mintesinote.

Mintesinote was certainly very ill. His lips were blue and his color ashen. He was fussy and was only soothed by drinking from his bottle. He was just a few days old. I talked with him throughout the trip telling him it would be OK, that there were people who cared for him. I worried for him as he was so small and frail. I didn't know of his severe medical issues at the time but I knew that something was seriously wrong and that he needed care as soon as possible.

When we arrived at Layla House I gave him to the caregivers and instructed them to call the doctor immediately to examine him. They were very concerned and agreed to do so.

When I returned to Layla the next morning Gail shared with me that the baby I had transported had spina bifida. I went immediately to the clinic and talked with the doctor. Mintesinote was in the clinic, lying on an exam table. The doctor shared with me what his condition was as he examined him and said that there was nothing he could do to help the baby. He said that this condition is fatal and that he could only survive a year or so as he would



Kalkidan had a rough start in life with traumatic experiences. Despite these early challenges, she is a sociable and engaging child who works diligently in school and is one of the top students at Layla House.

Kalkidan's teacher wrote: "If she continues working strongly, I am certain that she will be a significant person. Well done."

Another teacher wrote "She is very active in class and understands what the teachers teach. She has good manners and has good relationships with other students."

Kalkidan would benefit from the love and support of a flexible, resourceful, and compassionate adoptive family. Families with experience parenting older children, especially older adopted children, are

surely develop an infection with the spina bifida. The doctor stated that there were no surgeons in Ethiopia that could do the surgery that he needed and further that no hospital would admit him because it was a hopeless case so there was nothing he could do.

I stood over this little baby listening to all that was being said and felt the weight of the world. The sadness came from knowing that had he been born in America we wouldn't be having this conversation ~ there would be hope, not despair.

I shared with the doctor that Gail was working right now to find this little one a home. I knew there were families that would adopt him and wanted the doctor to keep him as healthy as possible. In America they could do the surgery that he needed and he could lead a long and wonderful life. I pointed out that he needed to get stabilized on oxygen as he was cyanotic and that he could certainly be put him in the hospital for that.

The Layla doctor was amazed that AAI felt that they could find a home for this sweet little baby. He knew that in America there were the means to help and began to see the possibilities. It was wonderful to see him become excited as he planned what he could do to stabilize this

encouraged to inquire about Kalkidan.

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frail little boy, Mintesinote! As it turned out, there was a volunteer at Layla who was familiar with giving oxygen and was able to help and train the child care workers.

I was only with little Mintesinote a short time but he certainly touched my heart. I have followed his story as he was able to be adopted so quickly with the support of AAI, the help of the Ethiopian government and the special love of an adoptive family. Life is precious, and the work that was done to save this little baby's life shows that there are many people who understand this.