

OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER

MATT & JULIE WALSH—SERVING IN BURKINA FASO

FEBRUARY 2010

Focus on the Center

An ongoing look at the activities of the Handicap Center.



Trade training begins in the fourth year of school, when each student gets to try four different activities (two each day) for half the year. The next year, they select two of the four, and they do both each Thursday for the entire year. The last year, they choose one of the two for the entire year. Wood working and leather working are two of the activities that our school students participate in during their Thursday trade training.

The goal is to help each child discover their gifts and learn a job skill that can help support them and contribute to their families because for most of the children at our school, education beyond elementary school is not an option. However, the trade work is just a start. We cannot expect elementary school children to become “experts” at a trade after three years working one day a week.

We want each child to identify an area of interest so that we can help them continue. For some it means setting up an apprenticeship program. For others micro-loans or small businesses are created with the help of their family. We are also looking at starting a trade school to provide further training in specific trades.

In the wood working classes the kids learn how to use the basic tools as they work on projects for themselves, for the use of the Center and also for sale at our Artisan store. The leather working and wood working go together as many things are made with wooden frames and covered in leather.

Well Worth The Wait

Our family came to Ouaga on January 3rd to wait for the delivery of our third child. Thomas and Tessa both came early and we had high hopes that #3 would follow this pattern and that we would be able to attend our Spiritual Life Conference with all the SIM Burkina missionaries on January 21st. We waited and waited and soon began to realize that our plan wouldn't work. Everyone left for the conference in Fada, and we stayed in Ouaga. So we then had to come up with a plan B to make sure Thomas and Tessa would be taken care of if we had to go to the hospital. This was a big concern, but we were reminded again of God's faithfulness and attention to details as everything worked out.

At 2:45am on January 23rd, Stephanie Aline was born!!! She weighed 6lb 15oz and was 19.5" long. The delivery went smoothly and took place at the same hospital where Tessa was born. We put Thomas and Tessa to bed on Friday evening and then went to the hospital, and they woke up Saturday morning with a new sister. They are quite pleased with her, asking to hold her and smothering her with hugs and kisses. Thomas likes to read books with her, and Tessa likes to climb into the crib with her. Stephanie has been a very content baby so far.



News & Notes

Church Construction Continues

The foundation was poured last February as we were leaving for home assignment. After 9 months of giving we were able to pour the columns to support the wall. The next step is to raise money for the roof and walls! That is how churches are built here. Brick by brick over many years. We are encouraged by the progress and look forward to using the new building to bless the community. (Pics available on the website!)

New Website

Our New Year's resolution is to update our blog at least once a week so don't forget to take a look. Also, we will post extra photos that didn't make it into the newsletter each month. You can access our blog-style website at www.walsh.ergatai.com

Vehicle Decisions—Follow Up

We were able to sell our Landcruiser just before Christmas. We received about \$6,000 less than we had hoped. Buying and selling used vehicles in Burkina is more of an art than a science! A Nissan Patrol was available for the Johnson family and we are using it while they are away. We need to raise \$10,000 to buy something by July before they come back.

Prayer & Praise

- Praise the Lord for our new happy and healthy daughter. We are also thankful that we had a good stay in Ouaga and were blessed to have a house to stay in for the month.
- We were blessed with a visit from Julie's mom and aunt the last few weeks. They were a big help and an encouragement, and we enjoyed seeing them experience Burkina for themselves. Matt's sister also came and will be with us for several months. Pray that this would be a good experience for her.
- Praise the Lord that the Johnson family made their way through Europe and back to Pennsylvania safe and sound to spend the holidays with their families. Pray for them as they connect with friends and supporters as well as do fundraising for the Handicap Center.
- As we search for a vehicle, pray that we would find something suitable and affordable in the next few months.
- Pray for perseverance as we enter hot season, which makes everything we do, including sleeping, more difficult.

Kids Corner

We don't have as much Christmas activity here as most of you probably do, but the month of December was a busier time as we did some special Christmas projects and activities. Thomas was a big help in the kitchen, making Christmas cookies and other special treats. We do have a Christmas tree to decorate, but the only snowmen we made were out of construction paper. The children at the Handicap Center put on a Christmas program. For weeks after Christmas, Tessa requested "pum pum pum" ("The Little Drummer Boy") as her bedtime song every night.

We made the trip to Ouagadougou at the beginning of January for the birth of our baby. Thomas and Tessa practiced with their own babies as we anticipated the big event, pushing them around in their little stroller and kissing them goodnight as they tucked them into bed every night. We were so thankful to have a house to stay in that even had a yard with a tire swing. Thomas and Tessa figured out how to swing together!

The last few weeks, we enjoyed our first visit from family when Julie's mom and aunt and Matt's sister came. We had fun showing them around, and the kids loved all the extra attention. There was always someone available to read books or to go for walks with them.

