

July 25, 2012

To all donors and support team:

1.0 Family Reunion and Celebration in Duopu Village

Diaworseh was returned to her family in a large ceremony in Duopu Village that included dancing, singing, speeches, and hugs.



Photo No. 1 – Dancing and welcoming upon our arrival in Duopu Village

We didn't arrive until late afternoon, and the sun sets at 6:00 – 6:30 P.M. While children looked in through the open windows, adults moved into the largest room in the village. A small lawnmower-sized generator supplied a single naked light bulb until the engine ran out of gas. Dancing and singing continued inside.

Diaworseh walked to the crowd's applause. She gave a short but eloquent speech in English then sang a song in her native language, Geo, which translated says, "God has given me an unexpected blessing." Some in the group cried.

Others gave speeches. Marsha and I formally returned Diaworseh to her family. They expressed their gratitude. The family then returned Diaworseh to Marsha and me to be our daughter -- read "financial responsibility."



Photo No. 2 – Women dancing inside as one woman beats on a hollow bamboo.



Photo No. 3 - Diaworseh rose and walked to applause (Diaworseh loves children)



Photo No. 4 – Left to right, Diaworseh’s grandmother, Martha, Marsha, Diaworseh, Brian, Anne, Diaworseh’s mother, and her step-grandfather, Bernard.



Photo No. 5 – Diaworseh with her half sister and cousins in Duopu Village



Photo No. 6 – Diaworseh spent two days visiting with family in Duopu Village. Marsha and I brought refreshments for an afternoon of socializing. (Note Marsha in background sharing Diaworseh’s photograph album of her medical journey in the USA.)



Photo No. 7 – Diaworseh in midst of a difficult discussion with her mother, Anne

2.0 Diaworseh's Reunion with her Sister and Niece



Photo No. 8 – Diaworseh, her sister, Lisa, and her niece, Amelia

Diaworseh has been missing her sister, Lisa, ever since she left Liberia. Once we got back to Liberia, we had a hard time locating Lisa but finally, upon our return to Monrovia, arranged a reunion. Lisa, who is about 19, has a year-old daughter, Amelia.

3.0 School Search

When in Monrovia, we spent every weekday searching for an appropriate school in the greater Monrovia area as well as for tutoring, housing, etc. It was down to the wire, literally -- Sunday before we left it all seemed to be falling apart, but reason prevailed.

While there, we visited two boarding schools, but they didn't work out, and Diaworseh was anxious about living with strangers. Diaworseh dug in her heels — not uncommon for a teenage girl — and said that she did not want to live on campus.

If you are interested in the private school Diaworseh will be attending, Light International School, go to www.lightschool.net. Diaworseh was interviewed one-on-one by Ms. Linda Dean, vice principal of the Light International School in Monrovia. Diaworseh wowed the vice principal. The interview lasted for about 20 minutes. We could hear animated conversation and occasional laughter coming from her office. When they came out, I asked if Diaworseh had answered her questions, and Ms. Dean said that Diaworseh had asked most of the questions and that Diaworseh is “very bright.” I asked if Diaworseh would be accepted, and she said, “Yes, of course.”



Photo No. 9 – Marsha in one of the two 1st-grade classrooms



Photo No. 10 – The Light International School courtyard.

The Light International School is one of, if not the best private school in Liberia. The class sizes are small. It has a computer lab, and all grades use computers. The classrooms are air conditioned — otherwise unheard of in Liberia. There is a security fence and a guard at the gate. It is no surprise that the annual tuition is higher than others. It is not a boarding school.

4.0 Diaworseh's New Home and Our Extended Family

During our search, we met an impressive elementary school teacher at one of the schools, and after an interview with her, we hired her as a tutor during the summer for Diaworseh, hopefully bring her up to 1st- or 2nd-grade level by the time school starts in late August.

We came to an agreement for Diaworseh to live with this teacher, Ms. Georgette Diggs, and her eight-year-old daughter, Sugar, a bright, precocious child who is excited to have an older sister. Georgette is a single mom, and currently the two of them live in a single-room apartment. It has an outdoor kitchen and an inside bath. As this apartment is too small for three, we have rented a two-bedroom apartment for the three of them, paying rent a year in advance. The apartment is near both the school where Georgette teaches and Diaworseh's school. It will have indoor plumbing and an inside kitchen. As the apartment has electricity, a rare feature, we are buying a small refrigerator and paying for power each month in advance. Georgette and we have made an equitable arrangement for tutoring, room, board, power, water, cell phone, childcare, school transportation, etc.



Photo No. 12 – Our Extended Family: Left to right, Brian, Marsha, Diaworseh, Sugar, and Georgette



Photo No. 13 – Diaworseh, Sugar, and Georgette in a tee-shirt donated by ecomaine, Inc. of Portland, ME.

Marsha and I have set up an account with Ecobank, a prominent bank in Liberia. (I think that is called an “African Diaspora Account.” See www.ecobank.com.) Harry Yuan, who lives in the greater Monrovia area, is a signer on the account, and we are able to transfer funds from an account we will set up with CitiBank in the USA. We believe that this will be less costly than sending money via MoneyGram as we have been doing.

5.0 News Since We Left

We speak with Georgette by cell phone several times a week. She often puts Diaworseh on to speak. Sugar has been attending summer school, and Diaworseh insisted that she too be allowed to attend summer school. (The Liberian school year generally jibes with the American and runs from mid-to-late August through mid-to-late June. For reference, the rainy season runs six months, from April/May to October, and during that period roughly 300 inches of rain falls, one of the highest in the world, but I digress.) Georgette enrolled Diaworseh in summer school, and Diaworseh is making rapid progress.

Diaworseh takes one crutch to school, and at the end of the school day, leaves the crutch in the apartment and goes out to play with the neighborhood kids with no crutch – oh, the power of pressure from peers!

Marsha and I are paying to have the new apartment refurbished with repairs to the bath, painting of the walls, and new floor mats. We are buying a refrigerator and will pay the power bill. The landlord is installing new ceiling tile and more secure doors – the neighborhood is said to have a low crime rate.

Marsha and I are committed to helping Diaworseh for as long as it may take to get an education and her life secure. We may have to do this from our nursing-home room, LOL.

6.0 Duopu Village

Duopu Village consists of about four families. It is almost an entirely subsistence economy where they raise goats and chickens, occasionally trap fish and farm. Among other things, they grow rice, corn, and cassava.



Photo No. 14 – Mah Sarah next to the new village well.

In Photo No. 14, note the corn with rice growing in between in the background.

We are sending small necessities to the matriarch of the village, Mah Sarah. For example, she said that they need towels. I guess we can do that!



Photo No. 15 – The previous village source was surface water from here



Photo No. 16 – Mah Sarah in her bedroom

7.0 New Projects (as if we needed more!)

While Marsha and I have all we can handle with Diaworseh and several other Liberian individuals to whom we provide assistance, I met a 14-year-old boy in Tappita whose right elbow, the radius and ulna, project beyond his arm, the humorous, by about two inches. The arm is nearly unusable. He has had that condition since birth. His birth was attended by a midwife, and he has never had the arm looked at by a doctor. To my layman eyes, it looks as if it may have been dislocated. Since there is a new hospital built by the Chinese in Tappita, I asked that he be taken there for an x-ray of the arm. We have the x-ray and are having it delivered to Dr. Robert Kpoto, orthopedic surgeon, in Monrovia. Dr. Kpoto has agreed to examine the boy if he can be brought to Monrovia. We are hoping to arrange that.

Last week, I received a telephone call from a Liberian woman who lives in Worcester, Massachusetts. She asked if we could help her 9-year-old niece who has been hit by a car and, as a result, has a broken hip, a desperate situation. The girl lives with her mother in the greater Monrovia area. I am communicating with Dr. Kpoto, and he said that if the girl can be brought to his clinic, he will examine her.

In my meeting with Dr. Kpoto on July 6, he agreed to treat children on a pro bono basis. God bless you, Dr. Kpoto.

Marsha, several Liberian friends, and I have discussed forming a group to help handicapped individuals in Liberia. We are in the very beginning stages of forming that group.

Marsha and I have provided funds necessary for a Liberian woman we know to put a roof and doors on a home she has started. Her 13-year-old daughter, her aged and ailing mother, and she now squat in an abandoned unfinished house with no furniture. As her mother is so infirm, she must be with her most of the time and cannot sell goods at the market as she has in the past. It is too desperate for words, so we felt compelled to help. We are also paying school fees for her daughter who is exceptionally bright but stutters and is painfully shy. She loves Marsha and sits on her lap whenever given the opportunity. (For confidentiality purposes, I am not listing their names.)



Photo No. 17 – Marsha with the 13-year-old daughter in the house where she, her mother, and grandmother squat



Photo No. 18 – Diaworseh telling her story from her photo album to the daughter, infirm mother and kids.