

**Bennett & Idong Ekandem**  
MSC Missionaries in Georgia, USA

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Blessings to you in the New Year! We pray that you have received God's direction for you and your families for this year and are beginning to see His plans develop in your lives.

The Lord blessed us immeasurably in 2007 with our facilities renovation, new volunteers, new churches becoming involved, better organization of our after-school program, just to name a few. We want to use these improvements as spring-boards to further God's goals for our ministry, Family Heritage Foundation.



Our missions emphasis for this year is Mentoring & Discipling God's people. We want to focus on the growth of those who have already given their lives to Christ while continuing to reach the lost. We strongly believe in following up with new believers, as soon as they come to the Lord Jesus, so that they can grow in their walk with Him. Our goal and desire is to make disciples among the people groups we serve and then teach them to go out and replicate themselves by making more disciples within their own cultures.

It is always important to meet people where they are before we can expect them to hear about spiritual matters. With that in mind, we kicked off a new micro-enterprise program that will allow refugees to start their own small businesses by providing them with small loans, after they have attended mandatory (Christian-based) training on how to start a business. The goal is to mentor men and women by helping them become successful in business and therefore financially independent. This Christian-based organization provides a 13-week training program taught at our facilities by qualified micro-enterprise trainers. So far we've had about six regular participants who are learning the principles of business ethics in line with God's word. It is exciting to see how this is all unfolding!

Our after-school ministry resumed in mid-January with 36 children in attendance. The children were so glad to be back. This place is like another home for them where they are loved and helped in ways their parents are unable to do because of language barriers.



We have talked about our music program, but we'd like to expand on that a bit, as it is growing and the children are blossoming because of it. It's been shown that learning music can raise IQ levels in children, and so we are so grateful to Cham and Sylvia Meredith, who come weekly to lead the music program here. We are delighted to be able to offer our students this opportunity to improve their minds along with their appreciation of music.

Cham is a violinist in the DeKalb Symphony Orchestra, and in addition to giving music lessons at Willow Branch, he has been able to expand our children's horizons by bringing them to musical performances. This



month they attended one of his orchestra concerts at Georgia Perimeter College and also a performance by the Gwinnett Philharmonic Symphony at the Gwinnett Performing Arts Center. For children who have never had this kind of experience, it is quite mind-expanding in giving them a window on the world outside their small arenas. What child (or adult, for that matter) would not be thrilled to hear "Peter and the Wolf" among other well-known musical masterpieces.

Some have become interested in learning to play an instrument themselves. God has wonderfully provided, through Peachtree Corners Baptist Church, violins for five of our children who have shown progress and an interest in music. Cham will spend extra time giving group violin lessons to these young musicians when he and Sylvia come on Tuesdays. The children are very excited about this, and so are we!

In parallel with these cultural experiences we are teaching them about the Golden Rule; they are learning how to treat others respectfully as they would like to be treated. A group from Peachtree Christian Church in Atlanta came on a Saturday to host a "Hands for God Day" at Willow Branch. Part of the event was a Golden Rule craft project to reinforce what we are trying to do daily.

As you can see, our children's ministry is thriving, both culturally and intellectually. We do still have a need for more volunteers, however. We have a waiting list of families who want us to serve their children, but we can't do it without more help. We have a couple of math experts but we could use more. There was a day when it took three adults to figure out how to solve a fourth-grade math problem (thanks to the new math)!

Please continue to hold us up in your prayers. It takes much prayer to combat the forces of the enemy who would hold these people in bondage to false religions. Pray that by our efforts to help these children and their families with their practical needs, their hearts would be open to hear about the one true God and His son Jesus.

Thank you also for your financial contributions; it does take money to run an organization like Family Heritage Foundation. You are making an impact on people's lives that you may never know about until you get to Heaven, but your Heavenly Father is pleased and will pour out His blessings on you.

God bless you.

Bennett Ekandem

*Please support our ministry!*

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