

Well, despite the fact that it does not seem possible, another month has passed since my last update. As I'm sure you can anticipate by now, the last month has, as always, been extremely busy. The addition of our social worker has been wonderful, but until we have a Neema House vehicle and he has his driver's license, it does not lighten my load because I cannot yet send him to do visits on his own. However, it has sped up productivity because he is an extremely hard worker and we have ordered a Neema House vehicle so hopefully within the next few months (we're anticipating by April or May?) it will arrive and clear customs so that he can begin working more independently. In the meantime, I have been steadily busy with the following:

- Adoption home studies. We finally ensured that the paperwork for the first family was put in the mail to the TZ Commissioner. Sadly, this was only after we learned that the social welfare office had locked it in his drawer for a month while trying to get money out of the family (corrupt government workers are a big problem). Also, it was the first packet that this social welfare officer has ever completed in his 15 years and I am 99% sure that it was extremely incomplete. It is hard to tell, however, how much the Commissioner will or will not care about that. We are also close to getting a second adoption packet (much more complete) sent to the Commissioner for another two children. Thankfully, the social welfare officer has been much more accommodating and willing to work quickly this time around. I think he is trying to keep up with my American pace of getting things done quickly (which is completely opposite of everything Tanzanian.) By the end of the month we should have reports submitted to the social welfare officer for two more families to adopt as well.

- Our children from last month are doing well. One of the extremely malnourished twins has even started crawling! It's amazing how quickly they begin to catch up developmentally once they begin regaining strength. We had another malnourished child placed with us as well (11 months and 8.5 pounds). We now have 22 children at Neema House and 4 in the community that we are visiting.

- We visited Zepha, our child who went home at the beginning of October. He is doing incredibly well! When we first arrived, he seemed extremely unsure of

what we were doing. In fact, he would come to me and sit in my lap, but he would squeeze his eyes shut and refuse to look at me. I finally realized that he was afraid that we were going to take him back with us. After I reassured him that we had only come to visit and that he would stay with his dad, he began playing and laughing. It was obvious that he was comfortable in his new home and happy. Successes like this are so reassuring and reaffirming of the work that we are doing here!

- We took our last deliver of formula to our baby who was reunited with her family in March. She will turn a year at the end of this month and then able to drink cow's milk. She has continued doing amazingly well. We will visit her in December and then probably again in March. If there continue to be no problems, we will officially close out their file, though they will be able to call us in the future if there are problems.

- We conducted a Nutrition Training for our staff. It has been my hope to do trainings every month or every other month. However, I have not known who to talk to or ask to do trainings and Bernard has never been very helpful. Our new social worker has been great at finding resources and the nutrition training was amazing! All of our staff loved it and it was so exciting to see them excited about learning the new information.

- We finally started writing Policies and Procedures for Neema House. Obviously, this is something that should have happened before the home ever opened and it has been on my "to do" list since we took over in February, but it just kept being pushed down in the list of priorities. However, I finally had to force time to start working on them because we needed set expectations in place. We are hoping to go over about 4 each month during staff meeting until they are all completed (because they are very time consuming to review). I feel better and more like we are a legitimate organization now that we have things in writing, though.

- We have been working on the possible reunifications of three more of our children which will hopefully happen within the next couple of months. This has involved a lot of visits and report writing and meetings to try to plan for this.

- I took one of our Supervisors and our Social Worker to visit a children's home in Mwanza. This home is run very much like I would like Neema House to. However, getting some of the changes made is like beating my head against a wall at times. I'm pretty sure they sometimes think I'm just a crazy American with crazy ideas and they don't really understand why it is better for the children. Creating change and breaking very bad habits that were developed long before we came has proven very difficult. It was amazing to see their reactions when they were able to actually see some of the things being implemented, however. Our supervisor even told me, "you have been telling us to do this but they are actually doing it! Now I understand!" I'm hoping this will be a turning point for us to really start changing some of the processes and standards of care now.

- We've started the process of getting a driver's license for Lucas. It is the most convoluted process to get somebody a driver's license here but we have finally figured it out (I think) and he starts driving school tomorrow. Woohoo!

- We are working on planning a first ever Neema House Christmas Party for our children, staff, and their families. I am still not totally sure what all this will look like because I want it to be a cross between American and Tanzanian. I think we will serve some Tanzanian and some American foods. We will give gifts to all of the staff (probably a bag of rice) and to all the kids (the child sponsors are sending a new outfit and new pair of pajamas for each child). We will play Tanzanian music and celebrate Tanzanian style.

- We have started constructing a gazebo type structure in the Neema House yard to offer more shade / seating to guests when they come (for interviews or to visit children) and even for when the children eat outside (which is often, if it is not raining). We are also moving the fence line to take back a little more property from the farm because our land is extremely limited. I hope to also soon start construction on an additional room on the front of our main home in order to serve as a "mud room." Right now, everybody's shoes get soaking wet every time it rains and/or people track mud straight into the home. We have a similar room / porch on the front of our home and it helps so much. Plus, it can be an extra room for the children to play / be separated

into groups on rainy days. This will be very helpful because the actual home is very small.

- I met a man in town who had a disabled child and was looking for help to pay for an operation for her. He had a lot of documentation from the hospital and government offices to support his story, but I found myself questioning what he had been told. He had been told that his daughter needed brain surgery because she had been given the wrong kind of blood during a blood transfusion. However, to me she looked like she had cerebral palsy. I took his information and then contacted both my sister (the doctor) and a home in Mwanza that I know has cared for children with cerebral palsy. My sister confirmed that there is no way that wrong blood could cause the issues that I had seen and confirmed that it sounded like cerebral palsy. The home in Mwanza then told me that families of children with cerebral palsy are almost always told that their child needs brain surgery because the doctors do not know what is wrong and cannot think of any other way to help. Often, obviously, this results in death. I then contacted the father and told him what I had found and offered to take him to Mwanza to talk to the other home and see children with the same condition. Thankfully, he eagerly went with us (along with his daughter). They educated him on the condition and encouraged him to not get surgery for her. They taught him how to massage her, what kind of chair to have made for her, and how to best feed her. In the end, he was relieved and, though he had learned that his daughter would not improve, he had a much better understanding and willingness to follow the home's advice. He does not live in our region so I may not ever see him again, but he has our phone number if he has additional problems and concerns. I thank God that I stopped and talked to this man on that day instead of dismissing him as somebody just begging for money from the white person and that maybe I was able to play a small part in saving that little girl's life by preventing an unnecessary and life threatening surgery in an extremely unhygienic environment.

- At the request of several missionaries in Geita / Mwanza, Scott is beginning to put together a budgeting class that he can teach in village churches and even to our staff. People here have no concept of budgeting or saving money. However, they constantly have emergencies (especially medical) and

there is no such thing as credit cards or anything. Scott is very excited about this new role just for him because he really enjoys teaching and he excited about filling an niche that others are unable to fill. He will, of course, continue handling all the financial and government (i.e.: tax, social security, land, security, etc...) issues for Neema House.

In other news, the Regional Social Welfare Officer (the highest level that we deal with) has asked us to write a report about our "best practices" because she said that Neema House is the best children's home in the region and we have the healthiest children so she wants to be able to pass along information to other homes so they know how to do things better. She told me "we give you children that we think are going to die and then two months later they are so fat and healthy!" (Which pretty much confirms my thoughts that they do purposefully, at times, give us very ill children because they think we are a better chance of their survival than the hospital.)

We are also continuing to strategize and plan a program for community outreach. I am fairly confident now that we are going to be targeting malnutrition in children because that seems like one of the issues that we are dealing with most regularly. However, we need to plan out what it would involve, costs / source of funding, where referrals would come from, length of time involved, etc... and we have been asked to present it at a committee meeting at the beginning of next year that meets to address the issue of malnutrition.

As far as personal life, our family was able to participate in Halloween through the Gold Mine this year. The Baileys helped to make costumes for our children and then the school teachers arranged Trick or Treating through the Gold Mine community of ex pats. It was a lot of fun and felt like a little taste of home and normalcy.

The Tanzanian Presidential Election happened on October 25. There was a lot of anxiety in the build up of the elections because the country was very politically charged. This was the first year in its history that there was a possibility that the opposition party could unseat the ruling party. We were warned to stay out of town that week and that riots were being

planned. Watching trucks with police and military come into town wearing gas masks was, admittedly, very unsettling. However, we were pleasantly surprised at how peacefully everything happened. Geita had no problems at all and we even ended up going in town every day that week. Even Mwanza was reportedly more calm than the previous election when the stakes were not nearly as high. There were definitely a lot of answered prayers in the calm after the elections.

And, in another plus, our electricity has returned since the elections! We had 4 months of having less than 12 hours of electricity a day and it was always only at night. However, since the elections it has been more regular and more consistently on during the day instead of at night. While, ultimately, our family is very blessed with solar power at our home, it was still difficult to get things done in town (such as welding, copies, etc) when businesses had no power. Plus, it makes it hard to trust chilled foods in the stores in town (such as yogurt).

Caleb had a Sports Day at school, where they competed in Ripper Rugby and Soccer against a school from Mwanza.

We slaughtered another pig because we were all running out of pork. It's still amazing to me that Scott participates in this because I NEVER would have envisioned him slaughtering an animal. It's amazing what somebody is willing to do for some bacon, though! :)

We have reentered rainy season. Oh the rain. Every day it rains. I'm hoping this is going to slow down by the time my parents arrive. Rainy season means cold showers every day (because our water heater is solar only) and thick mud / slippery roads when going to villages and difficulty drying clothes and diapers at Neema House. On election day, I spent the morning working at Neema House because staff was arriving late due to voting. However, after our staff arrived, I then spent the next 10 hours doing nothing but taking loads of laundry to my house to put in the dryer because Neema House had no dry clothes or diapers due to constant rain.

Because I have had an extreme increase of visits to families in villages and am now going to homes 4-5 days a week, Scott has been having a difficult time getting his own work done because he always had Asher. As a result, I have started taking Asher with me 2-3 times a week to these home visits and into the villages. This has been a wonderful experience because he does so wonderfully in that environment. He plays with all of the children (and EVERY child from anywhere around comes out just to see the white kid). He is so unphased by it (though he does occasionally ask me why they are all just staring at him). He eats well at people's homes and amazingly does not freak out when every strange Tanzanian woman wants to hold him. I absolutely love that I have a job where he can go with me and it is seen as a blessing by the places we are visiting and not a burden.

Anyhow, I think that is the bulk of what has been going on in the past month. As always, I hope all is well in FL!!

Cheryl