



The Atkins Family

Ministering in Guinea-Bissau
www.jasonandemilyatkins.com
jatkins@myyfc.org
eatkins@myyfc.org



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The school’s solar power system is fixed, the shop equipment is almost all back online, and we’re starting to get things done!

The Jason Atkins Diet *By Jason*

My wife keeps telling me that one of these days the few dozen extra pounds that I gain every time we come back to the States will not be so easy to lose, but I’d like to take the opportunity to say that the Jason Atkins Diet is once again working. I’ve lost 15 pounds in the two months we’ve been here. Here’s how it works: you drink tons of water and eat a huge amount of carbs, protein, fat, and vitamins. What, that doesn’t sound like it would work? Oh, and also work with heavy pieces of steel in my crazy hot shop every day. The weight just falls right off!

Putting the Pieces Back Together *By Jason*

The tropical climate here (being so dry and then so humid) is hard on things that sit. When it’s dry, lubrication and seals dry out and when it’s humid, clothes get full of mildew, electrical circuits fail, and steel rusts.

For example, when we got back the batteries in the UPS that powers the plasma table computer, they were dead. We replaced those and the computer still wouldn’t turn on. Replaced the motherboard. Computer turned on and started smoking. Replaced the fried serial port card. Plasma torch wouldn’t fire. Why? Bees had made a nest inside the hose that the compressed air has to go through. Took care of that. Table finally started to move but won’t cut. Interface card was bad. Team brought over a replacement, which works but shows another problem further up the line... Still working on it and that’s just one tool!

Last December I was here, partially, to repair damaged parts of the school’s solar power system. Fortunately, on that trip I was able to fix enough of the system to get the school going again, but the last inverter that I couldn’t fix prevented most of my shop equipment from working or even being turned on to test what else might have broken.

On a few Saturdays for the past two months, I have temporarily converted the system to power my equipment (but not

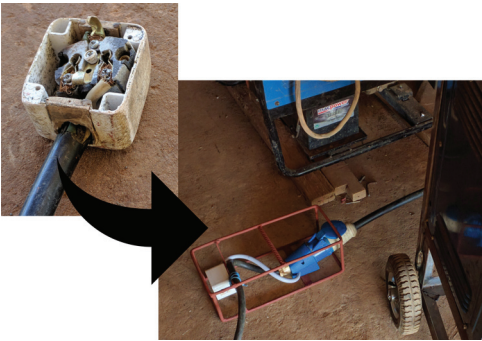
Continued on page 2



Mill tooling that rusted in the humidity, cleaned up, and put into a new sealed cabinet Jason built.



Working on a sight word activity for afternoon kindergarten with Savannah.



Jason’s version of an extension cord

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the rest of the school) so I could test things out. Fortunately, the simpler machines don't seem to have suffered any serious ill effects. Before leaving, I had covered everything important with oil, grease, or wax, and then tarped the big equipment. On returning, anything electronic got opened up, the dust blown out of it, and put back together. Other than dried out belts and such, most everything (except the plasma table) survived just fine with that treatment.

When we came in March, we brought several more boards with us to try to fix the inverter that I couldn't fix in December. After installing those parts, the inverter started to turn on, but showed another board was also bad. Just yesterday, a team brought that board, and after 10 months, the school's power system is now fully functional again!

Today, except for the plasma table, things are officially back up to full strength. Good thing, too! Missionaries and schools have been lining up with projects for us to do while we've been away. It's time to get rolling!

Wazoo *By Emily*

When Americans make short trips over here it's usually just adults (which we understand, it's a difficult and dangerous place to visit), but our kids do miss being able to play with other kids who speak English and share their love of Wild Kratts. They've got a lot in common with their Guinean friends (every kid likes to fill cups with sand and smash play dough), but there are still many American things about them and the way we are raising them makes them different. That's not always easy for them to understand.

The kids always love it when visitors take the time to do fun things with them. Games of sorry, knock-knock joke-a-thons, stories read aloud with silly voices, and even running jokes that the kids talk about for weeks.

Good friends of ours, Chris and Holly, were here with us for March, April, and May. They had a running prank with a little bird made out of a gourd that they called the Wazoo. It started with them hiding the Wazoo on April Fool's Day, and when the kids found her, they talked her into flying off with a bag of Chris and Holly's coffee. Even though we tried to reform the gourd-bird's ways, she often continued in her life of crime: munching all of the cookies and swiping Miriam's pacifiers. Sometimes the Wazoo mixed it up by choosing kindness: baking brownies, reading stories, and even throwing a tea party.

With kids, the little things are the big things. The Wazoo bird on our shelf, awaiting the return of Chris and Holly next year, is a sweet reminder to our kids that there are people other than their parents who see the world like they do and understand their silly ways.

Jaxon + Emily



Brownies the Wazoo baked as a peace offering.



Caught in the coffee stealing act.



Munching all of the cookies.



A trip to Doctor Bun-Bun for a bandaid after the Wazoo fell and broke her tail.



Reading a book about manners.



Even prank playing birds have time for a tea party.