



The Atkins Family

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Erica, here on a two-week visit, grocery shopping with me in the open-air market in Canchungo.

New Entrepreneurs Program by Jason
One common problem with vocational training in a place like Guinea-Bissau is the risk that you’re training students who will enter a job market with very few jobs. Businesses have a hard time starting and surviving here, largely because of an abusive tax system, political instability, and low expectations. Often our students graduate and aren’t able to find work or become unpaid interns at a shop for several years, until they can scrape together the tools to start their own little shop.

The New Entrepreneurs Program is a trial program this year, subsidized by a grant from the US Embassy, to provide discounted sets of tools or equipment to graduates, so they can start working for themselves rather than waiting for jobs that might not exist.

Last year while we were in the States, I helped create the equipment lists for the “kits” that would be made available to welding, auto mechanics, and computer students. I found good deals on the best stuff we could get for the money we had available. The equipment was included in a shipping container that left Seattle



Rumario, a welding student, with the tools he purchased from the New Entrepreneurs Program.



Boxes of tools that came in the shipping container, ready for the students to purchase.

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last December. Due to some logistical issues, we weren't able to get them to Canchungo until this last month.

Now that the equipment has arrived and been sorted, the students are taking advantage of the program! The amount they're being asked to pay is meaningful for them, but still a great discount. Check out the picture of Rumario, the first student to grab one of the five welding kits.

On the Hunt by Emily

Several times a month churches, schools, businesses, and missionaries contact Jason to get quotes on large construction and fabrication jobs; and people often stop by the shop with small machining and repair jobs. Some leadership changes at the vocational school also mean that Jason is spending several mornings a week in meetings to help with goal setting, staff task assignments, and accounting. All of that plus Jason's regular projects around the school and work with the welding students, means that Jason is buried underneath a to-do list of great things that he would love to do.

We are on the hunt for someone we could hire as a shop assistant. Jason could get more stuff done, and it would give him the opportunity to start training on the machining work. Please join us in praying that we would find the right person to fill this position!

Car by Jason

It's been an interesting month for our vehicle! In the same way that a year in the presidency seems to age our presidents by five years, a "rural West Africa" vehicle year is not the same as a "normal paved road" vehicle year! Deep puddles, big potholes, scorching sun, and copious speed bumps conspire to make driving and vehicle maintenance a major chore.

There are a few main paved roads in Guinea-Bissau connecting the major cities. These roads are (generally) decent, so you can buzz along at a pretty good clip, while keeping a watchful eye out for kids, pigs, dogs, or cows. Our route to Bissau, which I drive two or three times a month, includes something like 32 speed bumps - many of them completely unmarked. I generally have the route pretty well memorized, but a few weeks ago didn't remember one of the speed bumps. At 40 MPH, these sharp speed bumps are worthy of a rally-cross circuit and broke one of our front springs. We had to leave the car by the side of the road. The Creole word for speed bump means "spring breaker", so this shouldn't be much of a surprise. Anyway, after a few trips out to the car and back to the shop, the broken part was repaired well enough to get us by until spares can be sent over later this year.

After all of that you would think we'd have a break from car issues, but about a week later I was trying to tow a trailer with a heavy water tank from one side of the drinking water filter factory to the other and ended up in a three-hour marathon digging event trying to get the truck unstuck from some sloppy mud while rain poured on us. We got it out in the end and it lived to drive another day.

Jason + Emily



Jason and our friend Jason getting the broken strut off of our car on the side of the road.



Jason almost gave up digging the car out of this muddy mess!



Building her name out of railroad tracks during our afternoon kindergarten time with Mom.



Dancing in church on Sunday morning on the final day of a youth conference.