



# The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,  
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau with



West African  
Vocational Schools

April 2017

We begin our trek to  
the US on May 16th!

## On Our Way To The USA *by Emily*

For the past couple of trips, we've found great deals on plane tickets flying through Frankfurt, Germany, which is great because extending the layover for a few days lets us spend some time with American friends who live there, and gives our kids a break from the parade of airports. This trip home, we are making a second detour to Oslo, Norway to take advantage of an amazing deal on tickets from Oslo to New York and to visit friends of ours who were missionaries here in Guinea-Bissau with us for several years. No matter which route we've taken over the years, the journey has never been dull and this one is certainly going to live up to that!

Our first month in the U.S. we will be in Arkansas for my brother's wedding reception and then back to Michigan for Jason's brother's wedding. (With 7 sibling between us, we are so grateful that we've been able to be in the U.S. for all of their weddings over the years.) The rest of the trip is still taking shape, but we know that we will be at Simpson Park Camp in July and out in California sometime in the early fall. This is our first time in the U.S. where we are not having a baby, so it's kind of fun to have the flexibility to speak in more churches and prepare for our next term. We're especially looking forward to finding more equipment for the shop and school, getting our next vehicle purchased, prepared, and sent over, and writing curriculum for classes, ladies' Bible study, and staff trainings.

We asked the kids what they're looking forward to doing in the U.S.:

6-year-old Savannah's top 6:

- go to the library (again and again and again)
- learn how to ice and roller skate
- eat strawberries
- attend church in English
- paint pumpkins
- go to Simpson Park Camp (we're raising this one right :-D )

3-year-old Nathaniel's top 3:

- play with his grandparents (because they are awesome and he loves them and he's pretty sure they will have some pretty cool toys, because he will when he's a grown up)
- eat chocolate ice cream
- play on a playground

1-year-old Miriam's number 1:

- be the adorable center of attention everywhere she goes with crazy faces, new words, and general toddler antics



## Atkins Academy Update *by Emily*

Kindergarten with Savannah is drawing to a close, and this past month we added a new student-Nathaniel officially started preschool. Keeping their attention on the task at hand, finding creative ways to make basic concepts fun, and challenging them to keep pushing when something is difficult is quite a task, (I'm sure every teacher is loudly saying, "Amen!") but both of them surprise me every day with how much they are learning.



## Village School Roof by Jason

The roof project for the village school in Tche-Tche has been making steady progress, but has not been without a struggle! Just before we were initially scheduled to go install the roof, the school mechanics decided the WAVS truck (which will carry the trusses and equipment to the site) needed a major engine overhaul. That repair is almost finished and we are done with all of the truss fabrication. So I called the missionaries in Tche-Tche and set a new date to head out next week only to find out that the ferry that crosses the river on the only way to get to the village is broken. The ferry can carry one vehicle across at a time. The motor that pulls the ferry along the steel cable is dead. So, closing in two weeks before we leave to come back the U.S., we're working on other projects, hoping to hear any day that the ferry is fixed and we can head out to complete the project before the rainy season arrives and we have to leave!



*The river crossing as we saw it in December.  
The broken ferry is on the far shore.*



*Finishing up the final truss half.*

## Welding Student Update by Jason

With the year at the vocational school winding down, we're finishing up training on some more advanced skills and wrapping up projects that have been ongoing. Our curriculum tries to maintain a balance between lots of hands-on practice with the "normal" skills a welder will need in Guinea-Bissau (such as making burglar bars, doors, and fish grilling baskets) and more advanced skills to set them apart from students trained at one of the few other welding schools in Guinea-Bissau. Advanced skills include using more mechanized equipment, welding repairs in aluminum and cast iron, and exposure to basic machining. We're hopeful that the graduates will be able to use their skills to find productive jobs and provide for their families.



*Door pulls the welding students recently made a batch of.*

*Right: Welding department talks cast iron repair theory while preparing to fix several broken pieces.*



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