



The Atkins Family

Jason, Emily, Savannah,
Nathaniel, and Miriam

Serving in Guinea-Bissau with



West African
Vocational Schools

September 2017

Jason is in Guinea-Bissau for October.

Collecting & Shipping *by Jason*

One of the exciting things we've been involved with during our time in the U.S. this summer has been the New Entrepreneur's Program (<http://wavschoools.org/nep/>). This WAVS program uses grants to help partially subsidize the cost of tool kits that the vocational students can purchase at a discount when they graduate. This enables them to open their own shops.



Rumario started his shop with a welding kit from the program last year.

I've spent a lot of time advising on the contents of the mechanic's and welder's kits, finding deals, purchasing the tools, and packing them all into crates to be sent to Seattle where they'll be loaded into a shipping container bound for West Africa. Along with all of the NEP materials, we've also been able to include some spare parts for our new vehicle, school books for the kids, a few new tools for the school's welding and mechanics departments, and also resupply a few household luxuries like maple syrup, walnuts, coffee, and parmesan cheese!

The New Entrepreneurs Program makes a big difference to the graduates that are able to participate. The need for qualified welders and mechanics is real, but with little developed industry in the country, there are not very many established shops. The tools to start working on their own will let them put their new skills to use supporting their families!

Called To Testify *by Emily*

One of our favorite parts of serving in Guinea-Bissau is the opportunity we have to connect people in the U.S. to the things that God is doing in us and through our ministry on the other side of the world. While in Guinea-Bissau, our newsletters and prayer updates give us the chance to share short glimpses, and when we are in the States we love having the opportunity to tell more of the story.

We were graciously invited to share with several groups of people in central and northern California this September (*including Healdsburg Community Church, right*). As we traveled around meeting new people and reconnecting with people we met when we were there two years ago, God reminded me again why He asks all of His children to testify to His work in and around them.

One story I have shared with several different congregations this summer involves a lesson God taught me in the middle of some intense loneliness. Each time I shared I was amazed at all of the people (representing many different life phases



Meeting with Jenna and Chris at his favorite coffee shop to finalize the NEP toolkits.



and circumstances) who spoke to me afterward about something that God had showed them about their own loneliness while they were listening to my story.

When we talk with each other about the big and small lessons God is teaching us, the times we recognize His hand with our own eyes, and ways that we are changed by the work of the Holy Spirit; we open the door for God to do those same things in and around the people who are listening. As they respond by sharing with us, the same thing happens in our own hearts. We serve one God who is working in each of our different circumstances with the same goal—to make us more like Him. Let's testify together.

October Trip *by Jason*

I'm excited to be able to make a four-week trip back to Guinea-Bissau in October. Emily and the kids are in Little Rock with her family while I'm away. Please pray for her, she also would love to be able to be back for a little while, hosting, seeing our neighbors, and working. Five plane tickets add up fast though, so she's graciously staying here with the kids so I can go back. I'll be there most of October, coming back November 1st to finish up our time in the U.S. and then all of us will return in late December.

The trip will be a busy one, trying to push several projects forward while operating without the support I'm used to (having Emily to cook three meals a day from scratch, line dry the clothes, interact with the many neighbors and visitors who stop by everyday, and keep the water tank full, among a million other things, haha). I'll be joined by Richard (the chemist behind the drinking water filter factory project and a dear friend). The hopes for the trip are:

1. Be there to help open the school year. We have a new group of welding students to start with, and are starting an internship program with previous welding students as well.

2. Reopen the shop after being shut down during the rainy season. Inevitably some things will need coaxing to life again. Going ahead of our return in December lets me evaluate what's broken and bring the appropriate parts back with us.

3. Fix the Explorer so Richard and I can move around during the trip and Jenna has something to drive after we leave.

4. Fix whatever has broken around the school and mission house. Last time we were in the U.S., the school's solar system was hit by lightning and suffered major damage. ~~Fortunately, we haven't heard about anything major during this furlough.~~ (Update: Since originally writing that, we've heard that the well pump at the school is broken.)

5. The water filter factory project is still growing, but is in need of several improvements and changes in order to get its production rate and quality up to the level needed to be ready for public sale of the filters. I want to keep moving forward on those improvements and I'll also be installing a solar-powered well pump to provide the first running water at the site! The whole family is already excited to return to Guinea-Bissau when the time comes in December, but we're thankful for the ability for me to make this trip back over to break up the time we're away and (hopefully) give several projects a boost to maintain momentum until we come back.

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September was crazy! Here are a few highlights:

California

- a week of meetings with co-workers
- a trip with the kids to see giant sequoia trees including General Sherman
- sharing at 6 events including speaking at Healdsburg Community Church
- reconnecting with friends and meeting lots of new people
- a trip with the kids to the Pacific ocean

Michigan

- researching and ordering equipment for the New Entrepreneurs Program, the shop, and our family
- receiving zillions of boxes and packing them into three large crates to be shipped to Seattle and from there to Guinea-Bissau

Little Rock

- driving down to Arkansas
- speaking at Immanuel Church of the Nazarene
- saying goodbye to Jason as he headed to Guinea-Bissau for the month of October



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