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## Jason, Emily & Savannah Atkins

### Dreams are Slowly Becoming Reality *by Jason*

The solar system is coming alive! This month we were able to reach several milestones in the installation and we are now very close to having the system up and running. We did a lot of hoisting and carrying to get the 20, 120 lb batteries up into the controller room and situated on the rack I made for them. We also got the solar controllers as well as the inverter/chargers up, mounted on the wall, and partially wired together. I made an enclosure to house all of the connections and breakers, and wired everything including the cables we buried last month to bring the power from the generator to the system and then back to the school. We had our first day passing all of the generator power through the solar inverters and then back to the center. This means that as soon as we have power coming in from the solar panels, we'll be up and running.

If only it were so simple! The next project to tackle is building, hoisting, and installing the mounts for the solar panels. The space the panels will fill is a big one, and the mounts need to be strong because of all of the wind the giant array of panels will catch (each mount will hold 6.5' x 30' of panels). We've begun construction of the first of the five mounts, each of which will house 12 panels. Progress is moving along steadily, but has been slowed by some difficulty with tool problems and availability problems with some of the hardware we need. Several helpful people coming to Guinea Bissau at various times have brought us screws, nuts, tools, and supplies in their airline luggage, which has been a big blessing.

We appreciate your prayers this month as we'll be finishing the electrical work on the system, dealing with enough electricity to easily cause serious injury if not handled properly – as well as hoisting heavy mounts and then working on top of the second story beams to weld them in place. I'm not a fan of heights. ☺

The project still has a lot of work in store for us, but I'm reminded as I look back to the beginning, 12 months ago when I started researching, buying, and packing the system away in the container, how far we've come and how many different things I've been able to learn along the way. I have a pretty cool job!



*A welder's work is never done*



*One of the five mounts that will hold six solar panels each*



*Using Grandpa Huntoon's hand-crank bellows and crucible to heat up the solder for the battery connections over a charcoal fire*



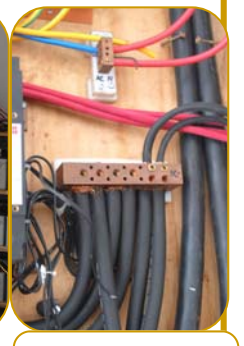
*Hmmm... it appears the solder got a little too hot!*



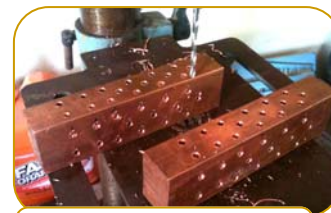
*The solar controllers*



*The inverters on the wall inside the controller room*



*One of Jason's bus bars during installation and working great*



*The bus bars Jason made out of solid copper*



*Each of those batteries weigh over 120 pounds*

*continued...*

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**Baby Girl is One!** by Emily

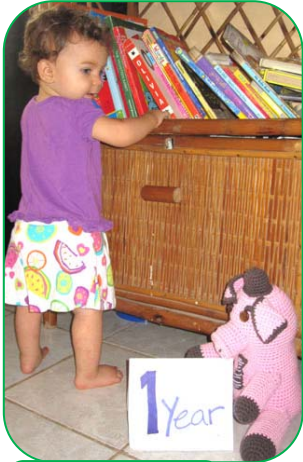
This month the cutest girl in the entire world turned one! We are amazed that it has been a year already and at the same time it's hard to remember our family without her. She gets more adventurous and more hilarious everyday and we are blessed to be her parents. She still looks exactly like her Daddy, but she chatters up a storm, which I am told is exactly like her Mom! 😊 We had a big first birthday party and we invited our friends from around the country. Tons of them came and we ate cake, had romper-stomper and three-legged relay races, and celebrated Savannah's life. Check out pictures and videos of the big day on my blog: [www.EmilyMarieAtkins.blogspot.com](http://www.EmilyMarieAtkins.blogspot.com)



A few of the people at Savannah's birthday party before the games began



Standing in her Norwegian dress and African shoes made out of some ribbon, some fabric and some old tires



"Well papa pig, what book would you like to listen to?"



One of Savannahs favorite activities is reading - actually, turning the pages while chattering constantly



Savannah and her Mommy opening up some birthday presents. The suspense is killing her



As you can see Savannah is very proud of how big her papaya tree has grown

**Moving** by Emily

This last month we had the opportunity to help our friends, Jason and Erica, move into the house they are renting. Erica and I swept and scrubbed and scoured while our Jasons led the group hauling all of the stuff. Since the move, Jason and Erica have been spending a lot of time getting water and power and internet set up, and we've been reminded again what a blessing it is to be able to live in the Youth Center with power from the school during class times, water from our well pumped into the tank on top of our house, internet that lets us communicate with people at home, and security guards at night letting us sleep peacefully.



Erica and I frantically cleaned while Savannah supervised



Our supervisor checked to see if the floors passed inspection



Jason and Erica loading their stuff and their dog, Sheba into the Youth Center's big truck on moving day



Jason and Jason muscling a fridge



Moving is hard work, time for some African food eaten African style - sitting on the floor all digging into the same bowl

Jason + Emily