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Jason, Emily & Savannah Atkins

OUR VERY OWN CHEERLEADERS by Emily

There are a million things we love about working for Youth for Christ, but the best thing of them all is Paul and Virginia Nurmi! They are our pastoral care people with YFC, which means that they check in with us frequently, lead a team that prays for us, and visit us about once a year. The Nurmis have been with YFC for over 30 years and bring a lot of wisdom and experience to the table.

In March, Paul and Virginia came and spent ten days with us and we loved it! As soon as they arrived they jumped in and helped us get many little things done that we hadn't had time for. They painted walls and rearranged furniture, organized clutter, fixed and recalibrated several broken tools, hung a door in our house, helped us evaluate our schedules and priorities, and even changed the oil in our car!

After that, the five of us piled in the car and drove up to Senegal to spend a long weekend at the beach, talking and praying about our work and family and God's direction for the coming months and years. There's nothing like sitting by the crashing ocean to remind you of how big God is. ☺ Somehow nothing seems impossible compared to the overwhelming power of the waves!



Paul and Virginia Nurmi

Their visit was so encouraging to us and God used them to speak into our lives in a million ways. YFC has 42 different American missionary families working around the world and the Nurmis, along with three other families who have the same job, make a huge difference in the lives and work of these missionaries!!!



Virginia reading to Savannah while Mommy made lunch.



Savannah snuggled with Mommy while we talked about the joys and challenges of raising small children.



Virginia moved around my bookshelves and rearranged all of the books and toys on them. Our 600 square foot apartment has never felt bigger!



What a difference a little paint makes! Later Paul and Jason installed a door in the hole next to me.



Paul fixed all kinds of little things on our car between the time he spent fixing things in the shop.



The beach in Senegal — isn't it amazing!? Yes, those are cows, Savannah couldn't get enough of them! She waved and blew kisses tirelessly, mooing the whole time. ☺

Continued...

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MIXING IT UP by Emily

We had two purposes in mind when we built the shop here at the Youth Center – to build and maintain things for YFC and to support the local church. With the construction in Mansoa and the installation of the solar power system here in Bissau, we've had many opportunities to be involved in YFC's work in Guinea-Bissau. This past month we had a cool opportunity to help missionary friends of ours who are building a church. Their brand new cement mixer broke and they needed it fixed right away. They were able to bring it to the shop and Jason spent the day straightening it back out, reinforcing it with heavier steel plate, and sent it back out stronger than it was when they bought it. We hope that the shop will have tons of other opportunities just like that one to be a blessing to God's work here in Guinea-Bissau!



Giving legs to the church's cement mixer.

GETTING READY FOR THE RAIN by Jason

The shop is now a pretty great place to work (especially compared to most of the other "shops" around here where they work outside in the dirt!), and it's been fun learning as we build things we've never tried before. We made up a little design for desks for the new teacher's workroom, and in a few days we had desks!

The annual rhythm here is different than the four seasons we're used to at home. The dry season doesn't see a drop of rain for months and months and then the rains start, almost always in May, and continues every day for five months. With no possibility of rain for months, there is an unfortunate ability to gather a huge before-the-rain-comes-to-do list! As we look around and see electrical that's not water proofed, roofs that need to be repaired, cracks in plaster, and the like, we're glad for a little time before the rains come to be able to get our ducks in a row!

One other fun project that's been on the back burner for more than a year is a proper place for all of the school's computer network equipment. The equipment has worked so reliably (through dust, heat, humidity, daily power surges and outages, etc.) that it's easy to forget about it. The little shelf we had everything piled on was a poor excuse for an equipment rack, and after not having time to deal with it for so long, it was a giant relief to be able to take a few days and weld a proper server rack in the shop, paint it all up, and then install everything. The before and after pictures speak for themselves! ☺



The old equipment rack – looks a little crowded, huh?



The new equipment rack – yay! Everything's off the floor!

T-SHIRT FEVER

by Emily

I've always thought that there's no better way to relax and unwind than to spend time creating something useful. After I crocheted the rug out of old sheets for our room I decided to weave a rug from t-shirts for Savannah's



With t-shirt strips cut and rolled into balls, I started to weave the rug.



When the rug got too big to hold I had to move it to the floor.



Tada! The finished rug. Doesn't it brighten up the bare concrete floor!!!

room. I can buy used t-shirts here for 20 cents so I bought seven, cut them into strips, and using a fantastic tutorial I found on the internet, I wove them into a rug. It took me about a week working during Savannah's nap and evening free time ☺ and I'm so glad I did it. It brightens up Savannah's room and it makes me smile every time I see it.

While I was working on the rug I had one of my seamstress friends over to show her how to do it. After watching me for a few minutes she thought it would be too hard for her to do. I was pretty disappointed, but after I thought about it I realized that weaving is pretty different from the sewing she's used to. Right now I'm praying that I would find someone who likes to crochet that I could train to crochet and weave rugs from sheets and t-shirts. The rugs could easily be sold to help support her family. The things I loved the most about working with the women on the Ajuda Bajuda project two years ago were the relationships we built and the time I was able spend discipling them while we were working. I'm praying that God will give me the opportunity to do that again.



A dress that I sewed for Savannah out of a t-shirt I bought here. It cost 20 cents and took me about 2 hours. ☺

CAMPAIGN CRAZINESS CONTINUES by Emily

Thank you for praying for peace during Guinea-Bissau's presidential election! The international election monitors pronounced it "free, fair, and transparent" and the only violence we heard about was the apparently unrelated assassination of the ex head of military intelligence at his home that evening.

To win the presidency a candidate has to get more than 50% of the votes, and since there were nine candidates, that didn't happen. There is a runoff vote scheduled for April 22 between the two candidates who received the most votes, but five of the nine who were running are now claiming that the election process was riddled with fraud. It's possible that the case will need to be heard by the supreme court before a runoff vote, and that could take a while!

For now everything has been peaceful – no demonstrations and no more assassinations. We're praying that the peace continues and that whoever is elected will be able to reunite the country and move forward.

Jason + Emily