



Newsletter of Jeff, Diane, Daniel & Alyssa ~ living and working in the Persian Gulf & Central Asia.

Desert Hoops ~

February is basketball season in Dubai. Daniel is on the Universal American School varsity boys team. While his teams have had good success the previous two years, this year has been tough. They lost all the regular season games in the Dubai Coast Conference (DCC), and at the Abu Dhabi invitational tournament. In the DCC tournament, they finally won and came in third. March 10th they travel to Kuwait to play in the season-ending International Schools Activities Conference (ISAC) tournament with schools from Egypt, Syria, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar. Daniel is a starting forward.

Alyssa is on the Universal American School junior varsity girls team. It was quite a step up from coming off the bench her last two years at American Academy for Girls, always the last place team in the conference, to beginning this season as a starting forward on a good team. Her team has won every game but two this season, losing only to the DCC champions, both in the regular season and in the tournament, coming in third. The junior varsity ISAC tournament is hosted by her school this year. We are glad to be able to see the games. Like her brother, she enjoys defense and is a good rebounder.

Self Development ~

One of the projects we have going on is a combination micro-finance and community development effort, which provides start up loans of between \$700 and \$1000 each for 13 businesses in a remote mountainous region that is struggling through several years of drought. Road building by hand

The businesses include: goats, hauling, crop agriculture, pharmacy, welding, and bulldozing. Each of the 13 families takes a set salary every month out of their sales, pays their business expenses, and the rest goes into a community pot, until each business has contributed the amount of their loan into the pot. The money in the community pot is used for a series of small-scale development projects in their area. When there is enough money from these

businesses in the pot, it is matched with a grant from our project fund, and the community organizes the development project and carries it out.



Left: finished road ~ Center: using the new road ~ Right: removing the obstacles before construction

The first project was repairing a windmill-powered well to provide a village with a local source of drinking water. Second, they built protection walls for some electricity poles that the government located in a dry river bed when it recently brought electricity to a village; but the river bed floods whenever it rains on the



Water is critical. Top left: goats drink from the new pool fed by the repaired well ~ Top center: a newly installed hand pump ~ Top right: women able to carry water from a local source instead of waiting days for water ~ Bottom left: a newly installed diesel pump ~ Bottom center: laying pipe from the repaired well ~ Bottom right: a faithful donkey carries water home from a local source

mountains. The third and fourth projects were building two roads, to connect 21 small villages to the outside world. The next project was repairing walls at a boys school and a girls school. The current project is to install some hand pumps and some diesel engines for wells that will serve four villages.

Folk Music Treat ~

Jeff and an American farmer travelled recently into some remote rural areas to do agriculture trainings. After one training, they were invited into the house for a meal. The house was one cement block room with a cement floor, and a small attached outhouse-type toilet room. After the meal, the translator, who is also a tribal elder of a different tribe than the one they were visiting, asked an older man to sing us a traditional song. The man started slapping his leg with one hand, about once a second. Then he started talking. The words of his talking were in rhythm with the beat of his hand on his leg. His voice was monotone. It was like centuries-old rap. It lasted about ten minutes. After the song, the translator said the song was about a famous person in their history. Jeff asked for another song. During this song, some of the people sitting around the room laughed from time to time. The translator said the song was about current political figures in that country – and not always flattering to them. The whole experience was a bit like being in a National Geographic documentary.

More community projects, funded by the 13 new local businesses. Left: building one of the school walls ~ Right: two flood protection walls for electricity poles



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News from Jeff & Diane

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