

Report on CAFAC/CHOIR Expedition to Ethiopia

April 25th – May 9th

by Bryce Meldrum

On April 25th I departed to Addis Ababa Ethiopia on a combined CAFAC/CHOIR adoption trip/expedition. I traveled with eight other families. The goal of our trip: to bring home eight orphans being adopted by the attending families. Because of the interest expressed by the families it was deemed appropriate to send a representative from CHOIR to organize humanitarian projects for them during their ten day stay in Addis Ababa.

In my opinion the chance the families had to participate in CHOIR humanitarian expeditions was a complete success. It was a rare opportunity for an adoption group, an opportunity that greatly enhanced their experience of bringing a child home from Ethiopia. This was demonstrated by the way they donated their time and materials, their comments, and the commitment they have to continue to support the projects that CHOIR is running in Ethiopia.

During our stay in Addis I organized three projects on five days in which the families could volunteer their time. The first two days we went to LiGA primary school, the following day to AHOPE Ethiopia, and the last two days to Kids Hope Ethiopia. All of the projects on the five days were well attended by at least ten individuals on every occasion.

On several occasions people expressed with their words the impact the humanitarian expeditions had on them with phrases like “I don’t know what I would have done with all the time I have if it was not for CHOIR.”, “ Seeing all those children really opens your eyes.”, and “ I love going on those humanitarian trips.”. This is only a sample of the positive feedback I was given about the trips.

The last two days we went to Kids Hope Ethiopia one of CHOIR’s major projects in Ethiopia. We sponsor forty children in this project which is facilitated partly through generous Canadians back home providing thirty dollars a month per child they sponsor. The people were moved. This was shown when the families gave promises to begin sponsoring nine children upon returning home to Canada. Further nearly each individual coming to Ethiopia brought at least fifty pounds of donations in kind to be distributed to this program, the CAFAC foster home, LiGA and AHOPE. In the end from this trip CHOIR and CAFAC generated at least; one thousand pounds of donations in kind, six thousand dollars of monetary donations upon arriving in Ethiopia, and promises of an additional eighteen hundred dollars in monetary donations.

I think it is obvious the impact this trip had on all those involved and the necessity of continuing these CAFAC/CHOIR trips.

There are also some similarly obvious items that need to be addressed in order for CAFAC and CHOIR to have the same success as was seen on this latest trip.

Firstly interest. Many members of this trip expressed an interest in doing humanitarian work

while in the country though to varying degrees. This is essential. However it is not essential that every member of the travel group express this interest. One family in particular did not seem very interested at the beginning when we went to the LiGA School. However after our return and sharing with him the great time we had he decided to come the next day. It was nearly impossible to tear him away from the kids when it was time for us to leave and I am sure he was one of the last in to the van. Slight interest will most surely grow when in the country.

It is also important that members of the travel group do not feel obligated to participate in the expeditions. This was the case on the most recent trip. Members of the travel group knew that the purpose of the trip was to bring their child home and that the humanitarian expeditions were a second priority. No pressure was or should be put on people to attend any of the outings.

A CHOIR representative is I believe necessary for a trip like this to work for at least two reasons. The CAFAC representative does not have the time or energy to in addition to their work take on the organizing of any humanitarian projects. Secondly when people were struck by what they saw and wanted to help there was someone to handle the financial matters discreetly.

Though preparation and sensitivity is needed to organize and effectively run the next CAFAC/CHOIR combination trip, the value, tangible and other wise, makes any time spent a worthwhile and essential investment.

Bryce Meldrum
Project Coordinator, CHOIR