

# The Wimberley View Newspaper

## Front Page Story

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#### Local support makes library in Africa possible

Last week my family returned to Wimberley from a long journey that saw us travel 3 airlines, 6 planes and travel over 7000 miles. Our mission was to establish a children's library in an orphanage called Horizon House in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Our undertaking took many twists and turns and ultimately, we were rewarded with overwhelming gratitude and appreciation of many of the impoverished children of Africa.

Our goal would not have been achieved without the tremendous support our project received from residents and businesses in Wimberley. The idea to contribute a library to the orphaned children of Ethiopia began as a passing thought. We were returning to Ethiopia to visit my son's birth family. I have many friends whose children have outgrown their books. It occurred to me that I could put these books to good use in Africa. From there - the idea exploded.

I gave a brief presentation of my small project to the Rotary Club of Wimberley. When the Past President Carrie Campbell said to me that I would have the full support of the Club - I had no idea what that meant. From that day on, every Tuesday when I arrived at our regular Rotary meeting, there were boxes and shopping bags full of books waiting on me. These books came from Rotarian's children, local businesses, friends and relatives. The Curves of Wimberley even posted a sign in the window and with the support of Nora Turner contributed over 200 books. Aunt Jenny's Attic contributed much need funds and we were off and running. I called the book drive, The Davis Moon Project, after my son. We had small stickers designed with his picture on them so we could track the books on our return visits.

About a month before our trip, I received the news that the room at Horizon House that was to be used for the library had been turned into a sleeping room for children as the orphanage is simply overrun. The agency told me about a small library located 4 blocks away from the orphanage that the children of Horizon House were allowed to use. The library is the Shola Children's Library, the first free children's library in Addis Ababa. It is open to young readers every day of the week. My mission was slightly altered but still on course.

We took a dirt road down a narrow path to arrive at the Shola Children's Library. I was amazed and awed to see the library and children inside. The children used canvas tents and railroad cargo cars as "classrooms". The library was small but very neat, organized, and filled with well cared for books. The children at the library were very respectful of the books and extremely well behaved. We met with the library's founder, Yohannes Gebregeorgis, and began unpacking the books.

We had carried almost 500 pounds of books with us and shipped and purchased even more. In all, the drive contributed slightly more than 2000 books with help from Central Texas residents and beyond. Yohannes called us in for a meeting to outline his plans for approximately 600 of the books. He told us the books would be loaded onto a wagon and that the wagon would be pulled by a donkey. He called this a donkey mobile library and said the books would be shipped to a village called Awassa 6 hours south of Addis Ababa. I was stunned. Awassa is the village that my son was born in

and where his family still lives. He has a 6-year-old brother who will likely use this very donkey mobile library. My hope is that he will see the photo of his brother on each of the books and it will bring him joy.

This project was such a labor of love for me. We plan to return to Ethiopia every 2 years and take more books with us for the Shola Children's library and the donkey mobile libraries that are spread throughout the country. Literacy in Africa is such an important initiative. My family is honored and privileged to represent Wimberley's contribution to discovering all the untapped potential in these bright and eager children.