



JUBILEE PARTNERS REPORT

December 2015

*A child is born to us!
A son is given to us!
And he will be our ruler.
He will be called, "Wonderful Counselor,"
"Mighty God," "Eternal Father,"
"Prince of Peace."
[Isaiah 9:6]*

"We knew that our son was different. So we called him *Ywa Hay Tha*, God Given," says Kyaw Naing, 29, sitting at a table in his Comer apartment.

Beep! Beep! Across the living room a device mounted on a wheeled IV pole sounds loudly. A small plastic tube lined with a film of white liquid hangs from the device and slips under the hem of Ywa Hay Tha's shirt. The boy is three years old and weighs just 25 pounds. He lies serenely on his back in the middle of a bare twin mattress and box spring set on the floor. His mother, Paw Paw, 25, rises from the table and presses a button on the device to silence it. His eyelids quiver in her presence.

Paw Paw and Kyaw Naing are two of the many ethnic Karen who fled violence in Burma to refugee camps across the border in Thailand as children. Their son was born healthy in Mae La Oo refugee camp but later became jaundiced. He was taken to a hospital, but proper treatment was not available. Ywa Hay Tha then developed cerebral palsy, which left him severely disabled.

"He just looks up into space like that all the time. We have cared for him like this until now. Step by step God's blessing followed us, but we did not know what to do or how to help him," says the father, Kyaw Naing.

Kyaw Naing came to America by himself in March 2014 to prepare a way for his wife and son. He was earlier in the queue for resettlement and there was no money or help available for Ywa Hay Tha in the refugee camp, so he made the difficult decision to travel ahead, send money back to Paw Paw, and wait in hopes of their reunification.



Proud parents Kyaw Naing (L) and Paw Paw (R) with their son Ywa Hay Tha. Jubilee arranged for them to have extra time in their stay with us, so that the numerous health issues faced by Ywa Hay Tha could receive more attention.



Sweet potato harvest time! Our October tradition, with lots of shovels and willing hands, is digging up those healthy yams which will get us through the winter. Lots of pies, fries, and stews - and just baking them plain. Virginie, from Congo, is holding a prized clump that just came out of the ground.

Six weeks later, on May 6, 2015, Paw Paw and Ywa Hay Tha left Thailand accompanied by a medic. Ywa Hay Tha again slipped into fever. When they arrived at the airport in New York City, he was hospitalized. They spent one night there until his fever lifted and they were able to travel to Atlanta. Kyaw Naing came to meet them at the resettlement agency office. While the eagerly anticipated reunion was happy, it was also marked by the stress of a medically fragile child. Kyaw Naing was committed to his family, but disappointed to see that his son had not grown or developed in the year since he had last seen him.

Paw Paw and Ywa Hay Tha came to Jubilee for their first few months in the United States. Kyaw Naing came to visit often and then moved in with his family here at Jubilee as soon as he was able to find a job locally. He also took the initiative to lease an apartment in Comer where they could move after their sojourn at Jubilee.

Ywa Hay Tha finally began to receive the medical attention he so desperately needed. He received oral surgery to remove infected teeth, putting an end to his fevers. A speech therapist also found that food was entering his lungs when fed orally so he had surgery to install a feed-

“When I arrived in America, I lived with a friend and I worked and slept, worked and slept,” he recalls. I went to the agency to ask about my wife coming, but they could not tell me anything, and my marriage license is in Karen, so it did not mean anything to them. I felt discouraged and heartbroken. When I got the call that my wife and son were coming, I could not believe it.”

In March of 2015, Paw Paw and Ywa Hay Tha finally left the refugee camp for Mae Sot, the nearby Thai city. Ywa Hay Tha soon became feverish as he often did in those days.

“We didn’t ride in a car like here in America,” says Paw Paw. “We traveled in the back of a drafty truck with many other people and cargo. It took one whole day of traveling like that to get to Mae Sot. When we arrived, I had to go with my son to the hospital. If you have a fever you cannot travel to America. We stayed in the hospital until my son got better.”

Happy Birthday! Our “community grandma” Coffee Worth recently celebrated her 96th birthday. She still lives by herself, walks up to the K House for community meals, and is always good for a story.



ing tube. With the support of several Jubilee staff, Paw Paw quickly learned how to feed her son in this new and time-consuming way. Her ability to participate in our ESOL program was limited by Ywa Hay Tha's feeding schedule and frequent appointments, but she remained a determined mother and eagerly acquired the knowledge and skills required to care for her son with these new medical resources.

Jennifer Drago, our refugee health coordinator, occasionally provides respite care for Ywa Hay Tha in addition to helping him access medical services. Paw Paw carefully and confidently orients Jennifer to use the feeding machine and exercise other special considerations for Ywa Hay Tha on each occasion. Jennifer continues to be impressed by Kyaw Naing and Paw Paw's ability to comprehend all of the details necessary to care for their disabled child and the amount of love, joy, and pleasure that they take in him.

"Ywa Hay Tha has definitely gained weight and seems more alert since his arrival in the United States," says Jennifer. "I am always surprised by the hundred and one different faces that he can make. He can communicate in his own way and people really respond to that."

280 people from 15 different countries gathered at Jubilee to celebrate Thanksgiving on a glorious mild, sunny day. Our Athens neighbor, Pleh Htoo, who came to Jubilee as a refugee from Burma in 2009, chooses from a yummy array of pies and desserts.



Ywa Hay Tha receives countless special services through the Madison County School system. Physical and occupational therapists work with him in the home. He is currently being fitted for a special wheelchair so that he can go to school starting in 2016. Until then, Laura Standard, a dedicated Pre-K Special Needs instructor, does homebound studies with him every week. She quickly fell in love with this family and helped them furnish their new apartment as well.

An exciting moment occurred when school system staff tested Ywa Hay Tha's eyesight by moving a fuzzy ball back and forth in front of his face and repeating the word, "ball." To everyone's surprise he responded by saying, "bah."

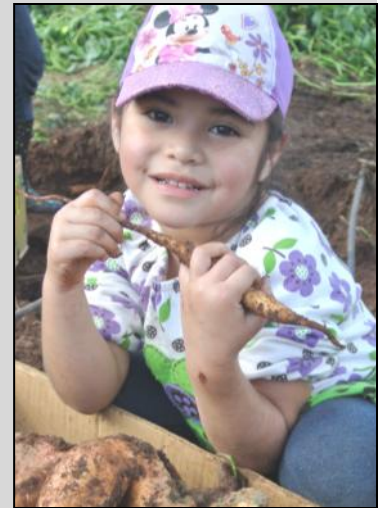
"We don't know what he is capable of doing because none of that has been tested or tried before. So I imagine there will be many other good surprises along the way," Jennifer says. "He is the product of a war, if you really trace the roots of his condition. This is what happens when money is spent on weapons rather than medical care. But his name means 'God given' and this is how it will be. He is not a burden. He is a gift. How will we love and care for God's gift?"



Jubilee friend Carrie Veriede portrays "Lady Liberty" while 1,400 marchers (including six Jubilee folks) file past. The destination was the gates of the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, GA. We were there to protest this privately run, for-profit detention center that holds some 1,700 immigrant detainees, most facing eventual deportation. Advocates for the men held there describe "intolerable conditions."

Please join us in prayer for Ywa Hay Tha, Paw Paw, and Kyaw Naing. This Advent season may we remember all of God's gifts around us both in our own families and in families coming to us from around the world.

from the people of Jubilee



Thank you for your generous response!!

All of you on our US mailing list received our recent appeal on behalf of the refugees who have been driven from their homes and are stranded out in the northern Iraqi desert right now. We are thrilled to report that letters and checks are coming in every day - already enough to feed 5,000 people for a month or more – another miracle of God's love feeding hungry people in the wilderness! What a privilege it is to have friends like all of you. We share your sympathy for these children and their mothers and fathers, and it brings us great joy to be the link between such suffering people and compassionate folks like our Jubilee network of friends.

Who we are

Jubilee Partners is an intentional Christian service community in north Georgia. Our primary ministry is offering hospitality to newly arrived refugees. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization; donations are thus tax-deductible. Your donations and support of our work are most appreciated.

Jubilee Partners

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[donations via PayPal can be made on the website]



Our community life is greatly enriched by the presence of our three energetic and enthusiastic apprentices. (L-R) Jess Ice, Chris Planer, and Phoebe Gould have made one year commitments to the life and work of Jubilee.



Kate Brown, a two time volunteer here, waxes eloquent in her expression of thankfulness during our worship service on Thanksgiving day.



After six years at Jubilee, Resident Partner Josefina Chable and her children Tally, Yasaira, Berto and Danny (not pictured) moved to Brunswick, Georgia to be closer to family. It's a good thing they still come back for visits, and will always remain part of the Jubilee "Familia."

Here is a look at Jubilee by the numbers for 2015

- **94** refugees lived at our Welcome Center from Burma, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Honduras
- **11** languages spoken this year (Karen, Karen-ni, Chin, Burmese, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Lingala, French, Spanish, German)
- About **360** medical and dental visits
- **22** local families gardening at the Jubilee Neighbors field
- **Over 5000** pounds of sweet potatoes harvested in October
- **25** kinds of grapes, **12** varieties of figs, **11** kinds of blueberries and **1200** blueberry plants, **7** varieties of bamboo, all grown on our property
- **12,000** eggs gathered from Jubilee chickens
- Jubilee is home to **7** bovines, **7** goats, and **1** donkey named Sadie
- **1,000** gallons of hand-milked milk
- **600** pounds of locally grown wheat got turned into countless loaves of bread, pizza crusts and pancakes.
- **5** washing machines and **200** yards of clothesline shared among 60 people (with a few undocumented trips to the laundromat dryers on rainy days)
- **10** cars shared among **23** staff
- **460,000+** miles on "Pearl" our 1999 Toyota Camry (original engine!)
- **450** two-hour sessions of English classes taught

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Yes, we do depend on our resident volunteers to teach English classes, work in the garden, fix bikes, churn butter, and a host of other important jobs in the community. But they do get to have fun too! Here are (L-R) Barrett, Rebecca, Ian, and Erika enjoying the fall camping outing to Montreat, North Carolina.

