

RIPE *for Harvest*

WORLD OUTREACH

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I want to introduce you this month to a new friend of mine, Will Gordon (pictured right), and a very exciting new ministry partner, the *Christian Learning Center Network*—but first an update on our family; as we have been through a little “drama” the past few weeks...



Last month, we introduced you to Kelilah (“KK”), who came to live with us this year from the White Mountain Apache Reservation. Well, after just a little over three weeks, her sponsoring mission made the decision (in conjunction with her parents) for her to return to the reservation. This was KK’s first time away from the reservation, and she was going through some very challenging transitions (i.e. new school, new home, new church, new culture, new family). She suffered from homesickness, and discovered life outside of the reservation quite overwhelming. It appears she simply was not ready for the experience.

Your continued prayers for KK, the *Manos de Dios* missionaries who serve the Apache community, and for KK’s parents are appreciated.

Now, back to my new friend, Will... Over the past year, I have been in communication and conversation with the leadership of the **Christian Learning Center Network**, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The *CLC Network* partners with schools, churches, and families to create communities of belonging for persons of all abilities. As experts in inclusive education for nearly three decades, they come alongside Christian schools to help them include and support all of God’s children – regardless of their ability. This past week, I had the pleasure of spending a couple of days with both the founder of the CLC, R.H. “Bear” Berends, and the current Executive Director, Elizabeth Dombrowski.

During our time together, we visited several local schools, who are current partners with the CLC. That’s when I had the joy of meeting Will. Will is a graduate of *Northpointe Christian School* (which you may have recently read about in the news, as they have gained national recognition for their inclusion program, as well as their commitment to create individualized learning plans for their students). Will not only completed his High School program with great success, but today works as a manager for a local coffee shop and enjoys an independent and productive life. He also volunteers at his alma mater, and serves as a tremendous spokesman for the ministry that he personally experienced great benefit from. That’s the role I met him in, as he personally led me on a tour around the campus, which included a stop at the



school's own coffee shop that has a featured beverage—the "Gordanator" - named after me tour guide! We had a delightful time together.



At Desert Christian Schools (DCS) where I serve as Headmaster, part of our mission is to **Endeavor to Meet the Unique Learning Needs of Every Student**. That is a major calling, but with the partnership of the CLC, I am more confident than ever, that we can fulfill that mission. The CLC team of educational consultants and school psychologists partner with Christian schools like DCS all across the country, to help meet the educational, socio-emotional, physical, and behavioral needs of students at all levels of ability and disability. They come alongside Christian schools to transform teaching for all students — including those with mild learning differences, moderate to significant needs, and academic talents. *Response To Intervention* (RTL) is an important part of their work, as they seek to address student's learning challenges even before a problem arises.

The goal of CLC is to help the Christian schools who partner with them all across the country, to know students most excellently – including their areas of gift and need – and to help both the general and special education staff of those schools support each student, so that every individual they serve is challenged to reach their God-given potential.

My passion and commitment to meet the “*unique learning needs of every student*” really can be traced back to our years serving at the *Alliance Academy International* (AAI) in Quito, Ecuador. Pictured here, between me and Tannia from back in the day at AAI, is one of the dearest students we had the privilege of working with. A student, whom many would not have thought could succeed in the “real” world. His name is Marcello, and his example of commitment and endurance, to not only complete high school, but to matriculate into a university program, and enter the workforce, is an inspiration that has compelled me to recognize that any student, with support and internal motivation can succeed.



Marcello and Will, are also both precious examples of

what it means to be a godly man. Both exemplify what it means to be gracious and loving; especially to a world that often is very ungracious and lack compassion and understanding to those who struggle with learning and life challenges as they do.



In the coming weeks, we are looking forward to a brief trip as a family back to NY/PA to visit family. Then, in October, I'll be traveling to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to provide some consultation and training for a Christian school that is endeavoring to be a light for Jesus Christ in their unique community.

As always, thank you all for your support! We could not serve so many without your help.

- Toby (on behalf of Tannia, and Emma too!)



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