

# Whirlwind Missions

## Ashley's Dispatch

March 2011

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I was in a little room with a gray concrete floor looking out the window at the middle schoolers getting off the bus. Two older girls, dressed in traditional American clothes, carry colorfully stitched bags with tassels, over one shoulder, a sign that they're probably from Nepal or Burma. They run past the window laughing loudly as a young Ethiopian boy chased after them. I felt a tug on my sleeve.

"I need help." Fa Da whispered to me. I'm pulled away from the scene and turn to help the young girl. She has dark curly ringlets hanging down around her olive face. Her eyebrows are crinkled in frustration.

I looked down at the homework which is a simple reading assignment; that is if you can read English.

"It says we need to pick out a book and talk about it. Do you want to pick out a book?" I asked

She walked over to the white, plastic bookshelf and grabbed a book. It's about a mouse that had to overcome obstacles when it moved away from home. Together we sit in the small room and read together.

At one point we stop and talk, "Did you ever have a hard time when you left home?"

"Yes," She says thinking back, "in my country, in Burma, I had to leave my uncles behind."

"It's always hard to leave family. How long have you been in America?"

"Umm..I don't know...my mother would know." She smiled a bit embarrassed. I smile back and we begin again.

You may be wondering, where is Ashley? I'm at Willow Branch, another mission, located down the road from Kensington. Mama and I have been serving here since the weather has been too cold to work outside at Kensington.

I really enjoy working with these immigrant children like Fa Da. Their life seems so different from the rest of America. Sitting outside you get a sense of community, or in this case it feels like a small village. Children run around barefoot in the dry grass kicking up dust with a few mothers keeping watch over them. Towards the right, an old Mexican man is digging up dirt and forming red clay bricks in his hands to build his fountain, two wrinkly old Burmese women pass by with colorful wraps and pierced gold nose rings. Everyone is relaxed and no one seems worried about checking their e-mail or seeing the latest Facebook update. I know I'm here to teach but I have a feeling they have a lot to teach me too.

