

Christmas Greetings

From Dave Bezaire & Susi Havens-Bezaire

December 2010



Years ago Susi created a fundraising campaign called *Home is Where the Heart Is* for our local Habitat for Humanity affiliate, and that continues to be a fitting phrase for us this year. As usual, Susi & Dave were thrilled to travel and work with Habitat in faraway places, and we all appreciate how easy it is to stay connected with fun toys like computers, cell phone and the Internet. Nonetheless, many of this year's events emphasize the blessing of family and friends that support and care for us.

Many of you know how hard we will work to avoid shoveling snow, and 2010 was no exception. We volunteered from January to early-March with the Habitat affiliate in Tucson, Arizona, where we enjoyed living in the wonderful *Rincon Country West RV Resort* retirement community. Dave worked on a rehab build on Thursdays, and spent the rest of the week in the office helping fine-tune Habitat's *Raiser's Edge* donor and volunteer management system. Susi developed several new programs for the affiliate such as hosting Global Village teams and expanding into new communication media. Among our new friends were Gerry and Carolyn Keener, long-time Habitat volunteers from Oregon, who introduced us to Southside Presbyterian Church. This very diverse and socially active faith community even welcomed us into their choir—which was quite a stretch since they sing gospel hymns without the benefit of written music.

Surrounded by a state park, two national parks, five mountain ranges, and the Sonoran Desert, Tucson is a beautiful place to [photograph](#) and paint. On weekends we explored many other Arizona communities, and Dave's brother, Jerry, joined us to cap the trip with ten fun days in [Southern California](#) and [Northern Arizona](#).

After a few months at home to unpack the RV and finalize our preparations, we departed for Africa in mid-July to lead two Habitat Global Village teams in Botswana. Our first team—which was extra special because our daughter Rebecca joined us—built for two weeks in [Molepolole](#)—a sprawling farming “village” of 30,000 people. The second team worked on three houses in [Mahalape](#)—a slightly larger rural community. Village elders, innkeepers, van drivers, clerks in the markets, and people on the roads all welcomed us and helped to interpret this new world. The Habitat homeowners and staff with whom we worked to build a few safe, simple houses in which families can live, love and dream were generous and grateful.

Northern Botswana is a premier [safari](#) destination that thrilled fourteen of our team members with ten days of amazing Kalahari Desert vistas and close encounters with exotic wildlife in Moremi National Park in the Okavango Delta. We had a truly remarkable experience, learning a lot about the nature, history, politics and geology of Botswana from the fantastic [Capricorn Safaris](#) guides who became our friends as they kept us safe and comfortable while camping in this untamed land.

For balance, we rounded out our seven-week trip with a 10-day drive in South Africa along the Garden Route from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town. Winding roads nestled between the coastal mountains and the Indian and Atlantic oceans were reminiscent of California as we explored numerous small fishing communities, beautiful vineyards, national parks, and very modern cities. Susi enjoyed painting and we both captured [photos](#) in places like Gansbaai, Mossel Bay, Knysna, Storms River, Stellenbosch, St. James, and Cape Town. We stretched a bit too, learning to drive on the “wrong” side of the road, and [dropping hundreds of feet off the Bloukrans Bridge](#) at the end of a bungee cord! Most of all, we loved the interesting conversations about South Africa's development, problems, potential, and the World Cup with the owners of the small B & B's in which we stayed.

Rebecca remains committed to her stage management career and the dream of working in NYC, so after managing a 6-month educational tour for the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, she is living in Columbus for a while to save up funds. She keeps very busy, working as a nanny for children she adores, and putting in 30 to 40 hours-a-week at Starbucks (with health insurance!). Rebecca also picked up a gig with the Abbey Theater of Dublin to manage their production of *A Christmas Carol*, and talked Dave into trying out because they needed some more actors for the male parts. It was neat to watch her guide him through his first thespian experience (all of 3 lines and a couple songs and dances with a lot of middle-school girls). Rebecca loves to cook, and we all benefit from the fantastic meals she makes. Always the organized one, she posts a weekly menu and the rest of us just have to show up to eat and handle clean up. One of our favorites is a Moroccan Chicken that Rebecca created—yummm! What a gift!

Ben and Kelsey, who both joined the Army in April 2009 and then married in October 2009, are learning the painful truth of separation faced by so many couples in the service. While Ben works in Korea as a satellite communication specialist, Kelsey does squad administration work at Ft. Gordon in Georgia and cares for their growing snake collection. Ben has enjoyed seeing another country, especially the F1 race in Mokpu, but he finds that there is too little productive work to do on base, and even less in the satellite communications for which he trained. Kelsey earns kudos for her office work and is enjoying the chance to learn Excel, but the progress on her medical discharge (due to esophageal scars that restrict heavy exercise) is plodding along very slowly. Thank goodness that [Skype](#) affords free phone and video calls to help us all stay connected! Seeing the challenges of Ben & Kelsey's long-distance relationship makes us all the more appreciative of all our troops, and thankful for the sacrifices they make to help keep our country safe.

Our family expanded this fall to include Bobby and John, two of Ben's best friends. They have been living with us since September when they lost their mother Wendy, their brother Larry and Bobby's fiancée Anna in a [tragic electrical fire](#) that totally destroyed their house and belongings. Ben and Kelsey secured an emergency leave and rushed here in support, as did so many of Bobby and John's large group of very close friends. Most of us never have to face such tragedy, and we are proud of the way these two young men have dealt with three funerals, survival issues, and grief over such a terrible loss—not to speak of details like house insurance, death certificates, life insurance, house demolition, and so much more. We are happy to have John and Bobby with us as they begin to firm up thoughts for their future such as buying a condo together.

Last spring, we eagerly assisted Dave's mother, Mary, move into her new apartment in the *Friendship Village of Dublin* retirement community, and we are very gratified that she is healthy, happy and enjoying herself both there and in her winter home in Sarasota. We are less fortunate with Susi's mother, Marie, who learned in early-December that a rapidly growing brain tumor will take her life within a few months. Susi stepped in as a strong medical advocate, and we have been traveling to Indiana weekly for meetings and to assist in general care for Marie and Susi's father, Tom. Needless to say, we have canceled plans to volunteer with Habitat in El Salvador this winter and to lead Habitat teams in India next summer, so that we can celebrate and enjoy these remaining months with Tom & Marie. Once again, we are thrilled and thankful for the blessing of Tom and Marie's wonderfully supportive family and friends who are so important and helpful to them on their journey.

As we celebrate both joy and sadness this holiday season, we are especially thankful to have been blessed with an abundance of family and friends. Please know how much we appreciate your support, care, concern and love. You truly make the face of God present for us, just as the Christ child did for all of humankind.

With much love, we wish abundant blessings to you and those you hold dear,

Dave & Susi

Dave DLBezaire@gmail.com
Susi SHBezaire@gmail.com
Ben BDBoalie21@gmail.com
Kelsey praetori@mac.com

Rebecca RMBezaire@gmail.com
Bobby Ropp.13@gmail.com
John JRopp18@hotmail.com

