



Jeff & Diane Brown working to lengthen the list of tribes, peoples, and languages that worship God

This is the first BrowNews issue from the United Arab Emirates.

What in the world are we doing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), you might ask? Well...

First, Jeff is the General Manager and Acting Finance Officer for the Central Asia regional office of a UK-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that does humanitarian aid and development with people of four central Asian countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. Jeff manages the UAE-Central Asia regional office and does the bookkeeping for the Iran and Pakistan projects.

Second, there are semi-nomadic peoples whose homelands are in central Asia who, until the 8th century were not Muslim. They had their own indigenous religious beliefs. Beginning in the 8th century the Muslim conquest imposed Islam upon them, squelching their culture in the process. In addition to the humanitarian work, we hope to offer these people an option to that imposed religious system: a relationship with the Messiah. Back then they were not presented with alternatives from which to choose – unless we consider death an alternative. We hope to lay out another spiritual option on the table for them, and encourage them to explore it, and support them if they choose it, without unduly affecting their culture.

So, in what ways are we working on this second aspect of our work here in the UAE? We will begin to learn a couple central Asian languages; research the culture and customs of these peoples so as not to bumble blindly about; build relationships with central Asian people; network with other groups or individuals with similar vision to coordinate efforts; equip other, less “western” people to get involved with this work; gather and/or develop resources to leave with a central Asian



Jeff at a Central Asian market

nomadic people which are technologically and culturally appropriate for an oral, non-literate people; and whatever else we find useful to help us help them help themselves.

And, what is our life like here in the UAE, you might also ask? Well, the first day of looking for housing here in the city of Sharjah, we found our apartment. We thought we would *never* choose to move into an apartment again after our experience in Caracas. Ours is on the 24th floor overlooking a beautiful green park (in the desert!), a lagoon, and not too far in the distance you can see the ocean. There are many local groceries and shops quite nearby our apartment building, within walking distance. The opportunities to get to know neighbors are much greater in an apartment building than in a walled “villa” (house). We loved the fact that, stopping on various floors, we saw so many bicycles in each hallway. There was a lot of potential for to new relationships, for kids spaces separating us from our

We have two very friendly family is from India - a multi- the matriarch, who Daniel according to adding up the the places she has lived. Her with his wife and son live



like they are from around here, but they are from Connecticut. The husband only visits occasionally, as he still works in the US. Their two sons, age 7 and 10, are here to spend two years in a school solely for the purpose of memorizing the Qu'ran. The whole book, two pages a day! No other classes! Many, if not most, of the people who live in or work in the building speak one of the two languages we will try to learn.

To us, that seemed to say there community-building and easy access and adults alike... much better than neighbors behind security walls.

sets of next-door neighbors. One generational household. There is thinks is about 51 years old, figures she gave when telling us all two daughters and one of her sons, there also. The other family looks

Daniel and Alyssa were quite surprised to find out that they will be studying French, Arabic, and Islamic studies in their British school. Daniel is doing so well in his Arabic that he pointed to a sign and said, “Mom, see that little squiggle that looks like a smiley face, with two dots for eyes? It's the sound 'ta'.” The school has a swimming pool, so they'll each have swimming at least once a week also. Already we've realized so many differences between American English and British English. It's like they have a different word for *everything*! Tennis shoes are

"trainers", Alyssa's school uniform is not a jumper, it is a "pinafore". And Daniel found out the hard way that you are not supposed to say, "What?" You are supposed to say, "Pardon?" So much to learn! On the way to school one day, Alyssa said, "If you don't know what something is called, just say something like 'Twaddle bump', and the Brits will think you know what they're talking about."



Both kids have made new friends (something at which they have had much practice the last several years). Daniel was glad that a Welsh boy who took the Placement Exam with him back in June is in his class. They spend after-school and weekend time together. (Did we mention that weekends here are Thursdays and Fridays? That takes getting used to!) He also plays with a US home-schooled boy we met while

testing in June. Alyssa spends free time with the British-Indian girl downstairs and an Iranian girl in her class.

The office Jeff manages is on the edge of the city, next to the open desert. One of the steps in processing our UAE visas was to leave the country and come back. So, we drove through the desert to Oman. We saw lots of camels, some wandering in the highway like cattle do in the western US, and, yes, we stopped to shoot some video.

Speaking of the desert, Daniel's Boy Scout troop, which meets in the neighboring city of Dubai, went camping for two nights in October, once the summer, with its 115F afternoon temps, began to ease up. Jeff went also. Daniel is aiming for his First Class Scout rank advancement.

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