

Suriname in September

September was an average month. School started the first week of September and students were getting back into the routine of things. This year, our school underwent several changes.

First, whereas in previous years most of our students came from missionary families, this year only 40% of our students have parents who are missionaries. This change in clientele makes the need to share the gospel even more important. Second, we installed a bell system. The bell signals the start and end of class, which means that class periods are now more consistent in length. In addition, that also meant that we could have the students go from room to room, as opposed to the teachers changing classrooms to teach, and the students staying where they were. Another really neat thing is that our school finally got a science lab. Students can now have both lab and classroom instruction as a part of their science classes. Last, school finally has enough electricity to run all of the air conditioners at the same time! It took one full year for us to get another transformer installed to supply the school with additional power.

Equally interesting, a new co-curricular activity started at school: student council. I'm told that, once things get underway and the students know what they are doing, that I'll be the advisor for the group (since I did so much with student government in college). If that does happen, I'm sure it will be a lot of fun! One event that student council organized was twin day! On twin day students are encouraged to dress the exact same as a friend, thus making them twins. Twin day is one of many spirit days the school will have, and students who participate will earn points for their team. I'm proud to say that my twin and I won first place in the staff competition. My twin was a palm frond. I put a shirt, sunglasses, and even a coffee cup on the palm frond and called "him" my twin. The students got a real kick out of it!

Perhaps the best addition to the school is the installation of satellite internet. With an "always on" connection, the school no longer has to rely upon the ISDN line to connect computers to the internet. Even better, the connection is a bit faster and more stable.

Youth group also started in September. This year we are teaching the foundational Bible stories during the message portion of youth group. The foundational stories are those "classic" stories that everyone knows, the major stories that make up the entire book that we call the Bible. The idea is that the students will hear these stories and then, as a result, be more or less familiar with the content of the entire Bible.

On a sour note, one scary thing to happen to me in September was being robbed at gunpoint. I was out in downtown Paramaribo with my housemate, another teacher, and a good friend of ours. We went into a part of town that we really should not have been in, similar to walking on the South side of Chicago. To make a long story short (if you want the full version, email me and I'll give it to you) the girls were robbed by a man who had a small gun (Adam was a block away). The robber came up to me and asked me for my wallet, but for some reason turned to flee before getting it. All in all, the two girls we were with lost

their driver's licenses, credit cards, a fair amount of money, the keys to each of their houses, and one camera. Despite this scary event, God was watching out for us, and we are all thankful that things did not escalate and that nobody got hurt. Since then, we are all being more "street smart" and careful about our actions.

Also discouraging is that, during September, Adam and I still did not have a phone in our house. Complications between the previous homeowner, the landlord, and the telephone company continued, with the end result being no phone. However, at the time of this writing, Adam and I do have a phone now! It was turned on October 2. Praise God! You can call us by dialing: 001-597- 530- 995. (There is no area code for Suriname phone numbers, and all telephone numbers are six digits in length. I think that 001 is what you need to dial to get an international line, but double check the phone book to make sure.)

On a positive note, the Christian lady who is working as a maid for Adam and me is awesome! She does such a wonderful job, and has incredible initiative! I wish I could take her back with me to the states! Our house looks fantastic after she is done!

Well, that's pretty much the news from Suriname during the month of September! Thank you all for your continued prayers, support, and emails. I miss being home in the United States (and each of you) but I know that what I am doing here is God's will, and that's a pretty awesome thing! Please continue to pray for me, Adam, the other missionaries here, the school, and our students. Also, if you wish to receive the school's weekly newsletter, let me know and I'll make sure that you start getting it. Last, should you wish to support me financially, feel free to download a form from my website at: <http://sdickens.tripod.com> or call NICS at: 1-800-887-NICS. Soon I will have pictures from twin day on my website, as well as pictures of places I frequent in Suriname. Keep checking the site for updates, and please stay in contact with me – I love hearing from you!

Living for Jesus,

~Steven