

# Avanti Italia Bible School

Update: January 2010

**Ciao! Buon Anno A TUTTI!!** [Hello! Happy New Year to you all!]

Our activities and bible studies have kept us rather busy since I last wrote to you...

## In October...

- **"Girls' Night:"** hosted by Emily, Jillian and I-a simple dinner and DVD/Movie. We had a great time...I believe the next one is a sleepover!
- **American Breakfast:** one Saturday morning we offered Pancakes and bacon...always a hit. French toast has been requested for the next event!]
- **Rosa's 25<sup>th</sup> year of service:** Rosa's entire family came to lunch and helped us celebrate here at the Avanti Italia Bible School building. I prepared Mexican food-which happens to be Rosa's favorite! In preparation...we collected old and "updated" photos, cards, and letters, from former Avanti Italia workers & friends from all over the world, literally!

We presented Rosa with a small gift in appreciation for all she has done for the school. It was a lovely time. Rosa was very touched. Thanks to those who helped us gather photos & contact information! (See "Avanti Italia 2" on Facebook to view photos or brief video clip.)

### In November...

• **The "Thanksgiving Feast:"** was fabulous! Our 4 days of cooking and hard work paid off. Thirty-three of our Italian friends and Bible/English students came to sample all of the goodies. By far and without a doubt...."corn bread dressing" and "pumpkin pie" stole the show! [big grin] These dishes were VERY strange to our guests-as a result of this event, several of the Italian ladies asked me to host an "American Cooking School" for them-which I plan to do ...of course!!

The evening was really very special and so much fun. The last of our guests left just before midnight. I must add a special thank you, to my mother, Shirley Heffington, who was here and helped with the cooking. She is still is a whiz in the kitchen at age 76! Also, many thanks to Emily, Jillian and David, excellent job guys!! We are a good team! (See "Avanti Italia 2" on Facebook to view photos.)

## In December...

• **David & I** were in America (Texas and Arkansas) for most of the month. *[I feel sure Erica & Elizabeth grew tired of all of my hugs! Ha Skype is great---but nothing like the real thing!]*

**Galveston, Texas:** After one night in Dallas, we headed down to Galveston and had a wonderful visit with our youngest daughter, Erica, and her husband Justin. It was great to see their new apartment, where they live, see the places they frequent, & enjoy, etc. (...you mamas know what I mean!!)

**Back to Dallas:** After a few days we drove back to Dallas to spend Christmas with my mother, brother, sister and her family.

One evening we had dinner one evening with Kelly & Marco Masini (both members of the Church here in Florence!) Robbie, Mona, and David Shackelford were able to join us, as well, which was so much fun!

**Momentous Meeting:** David was able to meet Gary Williams for coffee one morning and they hashed out all the problems of the world 😊 (Gary was the former director of Avanti Italia Bible School.) (hmm...sorry-do not go to Facebook...alas...there are no photos documenting this momentous meeting...hee hee)

• On the 26<sup>th</sup>, most of the Woodroof Clan gathered at the

Embassy Suites in Little Rock for 3 days of fun & frolic- it is always good to be together! However, I must state for the record...the Embassy Suites will never be the same!

•**Our time in Searcy:** After fun & frolic in Little Rock, we drove to Searcy, which is always a special time. It was great to see so many of you! The frustrating thing is time is just too brief! Sadly, it is impossible to see everybody...

•The 2<sup>nd</sup> Italian Cooking School/Fund Raiser was held. The event began with appetizers and a small Art Show before sitting down for the dinner & demonstration portion. It was a lovely evening & very successful. Thank you very much for your support, kind words, and encouragement!

It was great to have David with me, this time, for the Cooking School-he is a huge help, a calm in the storm, and oh so very handy!! (David made the frames for some of my paintings.) We "SKYPED Emily in" from Italy, she watched (via computer) as she knitted! Ha (See "Avanti Italia 2" on Facebook to view photos.)

Deep appreciation & special thanks to Sara Shock, Elizabeth Woodroof, Jamie Simpkin, Rachel Simpson, Clara Carol, Carol Franks, Liz Howell, Cyndi Denney, Connie Muncy, Ann McLarty, Cassie Jones, Amber Boyd,

Heather Burchfield, and Rusty Jones!! These special evenings/fund raisers would not be possible without your help!

And what can I say about Marie Jones...this would still be just an idea, if not for you...a huge "thank you" for everything Marie!

What very special friends. ...you cannot know how much you mean to me. I am so thankful for the many blessings I receive from your friendship & love!

### General Overview...

- We have had lots of visitors and over-night guests, which is always a pleasure!
- My ladies supper club, here in Florence, continues to be a joy. We have grown...there are 6 of us now.
- Emily & Jillian completed their language studies...they advanced to the highest level offered by their school. Kudos to them...they are doing so well!! Their students just love them, naturally. 😊 They are both so receiving and friendly. I know all of their students feel warmly welcomed.
- In December Emily and Jillian went to visit Molly & David Dawidow (missionaries in Poland) who, similar to our situation, also offer free English lessons using the Bible

as their text. While in Poland, Emily & Jillian taught English lessons for a week, spent a few days seeing some of the sights, and came back with some ideas they can use in their lessons here at AI. They did not go to the States for Christmas.

- While David & I were away...Emily & Jillian were very busy. They were graciously invited into several Italian homes for meals...so sweet & special. They hosted an English Movie Nights, a Christmas gathering, and had a couple of "girls' night" sleep-overs...fun times.

- "English Movie Night:" just about once month Emily & Jillian organize, publicize and plan for our Bible study students & friends. Light refreshments are served-sometimes students will bring drinks and/or snacks. It is a fun time!! (See "Avanti Italia 2" on Facebook to view photos.)

- Lately, most Saturday mornings, the Woman's Retreat Planning Committee meets here, at the Bible School. It is quite an undertaking. It has been so encouraging, working all together! Normally, we eat breakfast together, discuss, organize, plan and work like crazy. I am really pleased with our results and with the commitment to attendance. February 5<sup>th</sup> is a sleep over-work party...enough said! ha

•Convegno delle donne [Ladies Retreat] is March 5, 6 & 7, 2010, here in Florence. We (the Planning Committee) found a beautiful large old Villa about 15 minutes from the Bible School. It will easily hold the 70-85 ladies we expect. The ladies here in Italy really look forward to getting together.

Many churches do not have large numbers and they are hungry for fellowship. Our theme is "For a time such as this..." We will be looking at the book of Esther.

The committee has put together a "pre-study" packet of materials for our study of the book Esther-we hope to distribute most of them via email in just a few days. The Speakers, activities, meals & events are set.... **Please pray for this important endeavor!**

[If you'd like to view the site and get a better idea of where we will be, just "google" Poggio Ubertini in Florence.]

### **In January...**

•**Ladies Bible Study** meets here at the Bible School on Monday nights. It is going really well! We have 8-12 ladies who attend. We finished our study of James the first of December. In January we began our study of the book of Esther. It is our hope this study will be good preparation for the Ladies Retreat. We meet from 6:30-

8:15, each week we serve a very simple supper, and we take turns "leading" the study. Each week, we look forward to our special time together!

Well, I cannot believe it. I have run out of things to say!  
Ha

This has to be the shortest "Update" to date! As always, thank you for your support, your encouragement, and your prayers-as we need them!

I appreciate your notes...I miss you so very much! You cannot know how much you mean to us and how it seems your acts of encouragement (in what ever form) always come at a time when we most need it!  
(...hhmmm...imagine that...)

Much love....debbie

(☺ If you do not know about Facebook...ask someone much younger than you & they should be able to hook you up!  
ha)