

Postcards from Iraq

IT WAS A GOOD DAY TODAY!

**by Art Bennett
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Eleven year old Abdul was brought to me back in 2005, by his father. We met on a hot summer day to discuss transportation projects in Basrah province. Abdul's father pulled me aside after the meeting to present a letter from his sons' doctor describing a medical condition I had never heard of.

I pondered the letter on my several hour trip back to home base. The next day I spoke with a friend, Bob Bauer, at GRS District Headquarters about what had just happened. In 2005 the Iraqi medical system was strained and still is. It was determined that the only way Abdul could be treated was to leave the country.

Many emails later, doors of possibility began to open. Abdul was accepted by a Palestinian aid organization for treatment out of Iraq. I redeployed to the U.S. in late 2005 but stayed in contact with the family. It was encouraging to hear that Abdul was recuperating and learning how to be an active young man for the first time in his life.

Today I was able to meet Abdul and his father again here in Basrah. Abdul is now able to attend school like any other 11 year old, which he could not do prior to the surgery. He likes to play soccer and has a smile I will never forget.

We clicked a few photos and said our goodbyes. His father expressed great appreciation for our efforts here in Iraq and to all American's for their sacrifices to help their country. We will grow as friends in the coming years. The people of Iraq will have better medical care, schools, and so much more because of the sacrifices of the American coalition.

I share this that it might encourage you in whatever you do in this overwhelming mission away from home. Abdul thanks you! His brothers and sisters thank you. His father and mother thank you. His grandmother thanks you. Hearts have been forever changed. *ESSAYONS!*



Art Bennett, GRS project manager of Basrah Children's Hospital with eleven year old Abdul after his full recovery. (USACE photo).