

08/07/2026 TEXAS – OnBoarding

Hi there !

WE ARE IN TEXAS! Having arrived safely during the night of June 28-29, we are now in Texas, at the Mercy Ships International Support Center in Lindale. Here, you can find a warehouse where equipment from America is gathered to be loaded into containers bound for the hospital ships thanks to MSC (the same setup exists in Rotterdam for the Old Continent). It is also home to the *Mercy Ships International* offices (the NGO's headquarters), which handle accounting, IT support, global and US public relations, as well as the *Maritime Training Center*. The latter provides mandatory training for crew members, and Philippe has already taken courses there covering maritime safety and security, crowd management (such as ship evacuation), firefighting, and sea survival. We are really looking forward to the next steps, which we will take as a couple (*Gateway*), running in parallel with the children's program (*KidsOnBoarding*). To top it all off, we will experience the *Field Practice* as a family, starting here in Texas and continuing on board the ship once we join it!

This first newsletter from across the Atlantic will therefore be a bit longer, allowing you to enjoy more photos—which feel essential to us... just like this state where everything is bigger, taller, and wider!

The journey: Surprisingly, the trip went rather well. The first flight was a very nice experience for Lyas, Mahé, and Nayah-Lou — as well as for Noâm, who barely remembered his flight at 1.5 years old. The layover in London went smoothly; we made good use of a playground where they could burn off some energy, and during the long flight to Dallas, there was honestly nothing "difficult" to manage! The screens helped, everyone managed to catch at least a little sleep, and we landed safely around 6:30 PM local time after a loooooong day. On top of that, we had to wait for another person who arrived over an hour later and shared the same "taxi" with us. We treated ourselves to an "In-N-Out" fast-food meal on the way (which hit the spot) — simple, fresh, and efficient; the whole potatoes drop almost directly from the cutter straight into the oil! In short, we arrived at our accommodation almost at midnight (local time — so early morning for our bodies).

The schedule and jet lag: It took a good 5 days for us to start waking up at around the same time as in Switzerland. Philippe suffered the least, but even he wasn't fully fit for the first few days... but now we can say we've made it! That said, we are quite tired by the evening — the heat plays a part, but immersing ourselves in the English language is also draining our energy reserves. As for the daily schedule, we are gently getting used to having dinner at 5 PM... it works out fine and eliminates the need for an afternoon snack 😊

The campus: It is large, friendly, and pleasant. A true "base" that allows people to meet, learn, but also recover from their travels. In addition to the training center and the warehouse, there



news



site

is a gym and fitness center available, as well as a swimming pool, which is highly welcome with temperatures hovering around 35°C (95°F). As for the administrative section, it is almost like a museum, still housing original chinaware from the *Anastasis*, which was a luxury cruise ship before being transformed into the very first Mercy Ships vessel.

Our new acquaintances and English: We finally met the family from the Netherlands whom we had contacted this winter: they are lovely, help us with our English, and, by a happy coincidence, happen to be our neighbors here! There are several other families and "solo" volunteers here too, ranging from the very young to the older generation. The kindergarten teacher who will look after Nayah-Lou is here with us; she is from Norway, and we are already getting along great. There is also a family from New Mexico whose father owns the largest Lego UFO in the world (*Bricktown: Alien Attack*), and a guy who manages a home care service south of Vancouver, but who also sits on a public hospital oversight board in his region and runs a real estate company on the side. We've met two or three nurses, an occupational therapist from Costa Rica, and an Anglo-Norwegian family whose parents met a long time ago... on the *Africa Mercy*! The soccer World Cup is usually broadcast in the dining hall, which helps build connections, and the children are already playing well with the others despite not mastering the language yet. That includes Nayah-Lou! It is beautiful to see how children, once the initial shyness passes, can build bonds, "bridges," and enjoy playing together... while practicing the language!

The National Day, "July 4th": It was a wonderful experience. We joined a Baptist community that organized a meal, games for children (including bouncy castles and water slides), and fireworks to finish. Surprisingly, we thought there would be even more decorations! Food was provided for everyone (250 to 500 people: hot dogs and hamburgers), along with music, endless games and activities for the kids (really great!), and then a long fireworks display.

Dallas: On Sunday, we took the opportunity to see the skyscrapers, the JFK Memorial... and the football stadium, where the game was broadcast on a big screen (the actual match wasn't taking place in Dallas anyway). McDonald's for lunch (nothing special except the decor... and the local regulars, or rather, the downtown crowd), and tacos on the way back, so there was something for every taste. It was a beautiful, hot walk, but we returned with eyes full of wonder and a night sky full of stars (and not just one—a nod to the Lone Star State 😊)!

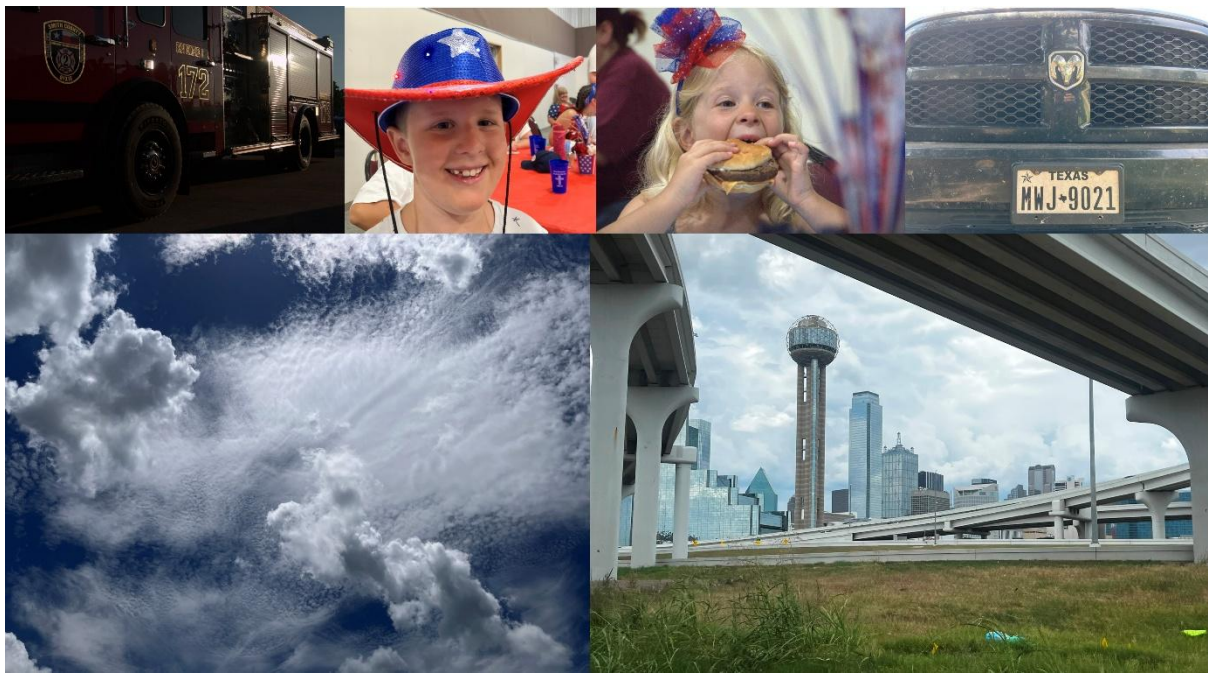
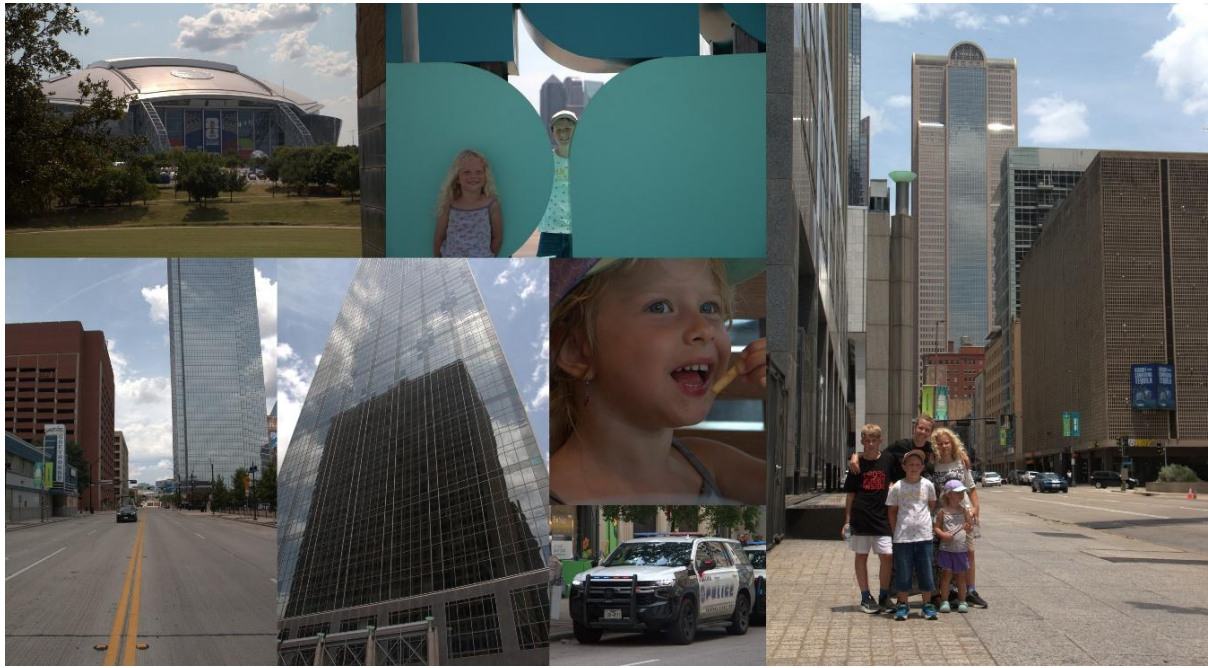


news



site

As promised, here are some photos:



news



site



Upcoming dates :

- **July 13 - 24:** "Gateway" training for Laura and Philippe.
- **July 13 - 24:** "Kids OnBoarding" for the boys; Nayah-Lou will join them from time to time.
- **July 27 - 31:** "Field Practice" in Texas, as a family.
- **July 3 - 7:** Continuation of the Field Practice on board.
- **August 1 - 2:** Flight from Dallas to Las Palmas via Madrid on August 1st, arriving on the ship on August 2nd!!!

Challenges : for:

- Making our English more fluent so we can find our words easily and connect with people on a deeper level 😊

We are also ideally still looking for:

- A few regular donors.

LAURA
Philippe
Noam
NAYAH-LOU
LYAO
MAHE

In the next issue: Texas, part two? Or will we have already arrived on board?!



news



site