

FRINDS OF KOLKATA'S ELDERLY NEWSLETTER

JULY to DECEMBER 2012

It is always a joy to share the gifts which God gave us so much in abundance. Sometimes we don't even realise how fortunate and blessed we are as we tend to take everything for granted. God chooses people in this World to do different things, but He appoints the very special ones to look after the poor who are HIS very own! With the dawn of the New Year we wish that each one of us who do small things with great love may always feel His presence around.

Life is a journey and we are all travellers. We thank each one of you for the wonderful journey with the various ups and downs! Visitors, friends', well-wishers, staff all played their best roles to make life comfortable for the elderly we serve. We thank the staff especially for rendering 24 hours care...and money cannot buy the massive contribution they make.

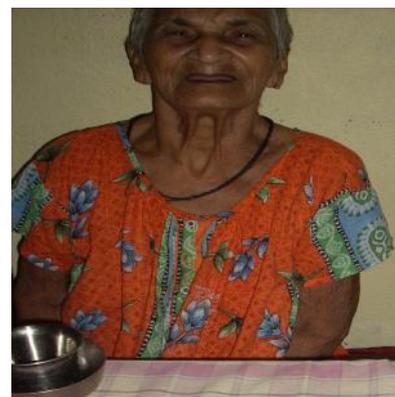


As part of our journey we have made several efforts to meet groups like the Rotarians and individual friends to help us in our effort to sustain the work with the elderly. However our emphasis is not only funds but also to bring in an awareness regarding the care of the elderly in our country, which is now a major concern for all. We had put up a stall at the Loreto College fest where we raised Rs. 600/- , but our main intention was to make the students aware of the need and importance to care for the elderly.

We have also applied for the salary to Concern India and if all goes well some funds will be available from April 2013.

Very few newsletters have been written where there has been no obituary. This for us is the toughest part as words fail when we try to write for those who leave us forever. But it is their love, gratitude and trust on us that keeps us strong and going.

Parvati Devi: A lady with great dignity and a heart warming smile was on our food programme in Sealdah railway station since we began. Losing her son and husband at a very young age life was not easy; working as maid was the only way of survival. When she came to live with us in Madhubati (2006) after about 7 / 8 months she decided to leave hoping to find the people she worked for. It was very difficult for us to bring her back to Sealdah Station but we could not force her to stay. Sadly her desire to find the family or live with them was not fulfilled as after few weeks on the station she send words with the Rainbow students, to be taken back home to Madhubati. We quickly did and soon she had her femur bone operation and life was once more happy and restful for her. Her love, appreciation and everlasting smile will never leave us.



Shubhadra Biswas: was identified in Howrah Station and thanks to Carrie Anna who was volunteering in Howrah station at that time and had the courage to take the risk of removing her from the misery she was in. Subhdadra had a good two years with us but being a diabetic patient she was always under strict diet and constant medical supervision. She had a second life after being quite ill in February this year...however this turn was bad enough and there was no way of reviving back, She was in Dr. Fuad Halim's nursing home (private hospital) from the 4th of November till the 8th of December when she passed away at around 11: 20 am. A very special thank you to Rosy our ex Rainbow who nursed and cared for Subhadra for 2 weeks in the nursing

home.

New Members: Parveen : A Muslim lady with a great sense of humour was referred to us by a local lady who looked after Parveen for some months. Parveen has a blind son who is unable to care for her and hence she was on the street. She was in Dr. Fuad Halims Nursing Home for one and a half months where all her cardiac treatment along with cataract operation was done. We are in the process of finding her family.



Debika was referred to us from an NGO called TRACKS. As a widow Baby does not have any support from her only son. She was only met once by her son since identified by the staff of TRACKS in Howrah railway station last year. Baby has some minor heart ailment but overall she is very active and is more like a staff in the home.

We are trying to contact her son and hopefully he will come to visit her one day.

Our festivals: Puja Parikrama: We had a lovely celebration of the Durga Puja this year as the members of the both the homes came together and in tuk tuks and 2 cars we took our members out to see the Puja Decorations. The greatest delight was ofcourse the food – special Biryani which was so lovingly sponsored by our very own Mrs Lovina Khan - President Rotary Club along with the new saris for the our ladies. Dear Lovina we really appreciate your friendship and care. The day was much enjoyed by the staff and it was a real team effort. Thanks to all the auto drivers who took special care with our ladies.



Christmas was celebrated with great joy with distribution of cakes to all. On 22nd December we had a great celebration with the nativity play put up by the children and staff. The day was marked with food and gifts for each and every one. Our special thanks to Sean and Fionnan Garvey, their family and friends and for making Christmas extra special for everyone in the homes, as well as for the children.

Outreach news: Blanket distribution: Like all year we never failed to continue with our yearly blanket distribution in and around Kolkata. On 28th December we had our first distribution of blankets and on 31st we had another run. Thanks to Sean and Raju Buxani for sponsoring the blankets and also to Khanna Enterprises (who had been supplying blankets to us since 2002) for kindly donating us 50 blankets this year. We have also distributed the blankets around our two homes, to our non- residential members and 15 blankets were given to an organisation for donating to the poor old people in their area.



Medical Camp: we organised a free eye check up camp in Madhubati on 15th December with the help of Dr. Fuad Halim and his doctor Md. Habib along with brilliant assistance from Rajendra and Kakoli the nurse.

We had 71 patients from around the 3 villages. 8 villagers were identified with cataract and they were offered free cataract operation. Villagers who were identified with power got their spectacles for only Rs. 40 and we contributed from our organisation Rs. 60 .

Our members and staff in the home were also checked where Khudiram, Lovina, Ganga will need cataract operation. HOPE Hospital has promised us to see to the cataract operation as all of them were referred to us from HOPE.

On 18th December, Tara, and Shanti had their cataract operation in NRS Medical College Hospital free of cost. Thanks to Champa our assistant secretary for all the effort and making this possible. We are also very grateful to our Rainbow girls Sunita and Rosy for looking after them in the hospital. Our heartfelt gratitude and thanks to Rajesh Shah who generously supplies us the basic medicines for the 2 homes from his wholesale medical shop - Florence India.

Inauguration of the Library on 14th November in celebration of Children's Day.

Our children all dressed up in their best clothes, excitedly chatting together and eyeing the bookcase where three shelves had been filled with books. A red ribbon adorned the freshly painted yellow bookcase, a faint smell of new books mingled with the whiff of paint. With a little speech to encourage the children to read more books and avail of the opportunities given to them by the library children were also explained the rules of the library, how all the books had to be handled with care and attention to make sure no damage was done to them and they were not torn, how precious books are as a source of knowledge and entertainment, and that in the beginning the books could only be read while in school and not taken home. On the lower shelf, there is a collection of Bengali and English books for the youngest children, whereas the books for the older children filled the two shelves above. The children could see some enticing book covers through the glass doors of ghost stories and fairytales.



Then the program for the **Children's Day** opened with teachers and children performing dance with great grace, along with recitation and songs with great confidence. All laughed and cheered when two of the elderly ladies Ganga and Parul threw themselves into the dance, slowly swirling around the courtyard and having fun.

Shabana –our new member and Khudiram the only male member, inaugurated the library by cutting the red ribbon and then some books were shown to entice the children, and everyone was given a book to handle and look through. Eager hands were raised for the books and pages were turned by all the children sitting on the veranda in front of the bookcase

Then the children and our members all gathered in the courtyard in two big circles, and lit that shone like stars. It was such a joy to see the sparkles amongst the old and young.

Finally everyone was given a plate of bananas, sweets, cakes, hot grams and an egg, which was eaten and even shares taken home. We thank the generosity of Kiya Ryan **and Concern India** for providing such a wonderful opportunity to the rural students.

All our students are also promoted to their new classes.

Self Help Group: Each of the 4 groups conducts their meetings twice a month when Surajit is present and the minutes of each meeting is well recorded by Surajit, which itself is a very valid document for the bank.

Group savings at a glance:

SHG name & no of members	Savings per month	Total savings till Dec 12	Loan issued from the bank
Pronoti - 14	Rs30/- "	Rs 26, 940/-	Rs. 40, 000/- (approx Euro 570)
Joyti - 14	Rs30/- "	Rs 26, 940/-	Rs 40, 000/-
Minoti - 14	Rs30/- "	Rs 20, 580/-	-----
Bonophol -12	Rs30/- "	Rs 2, 880/-	-----

After refunding the previous loan the groups have received another 40,000 (both loans were given with 50% subsidy from the bank) and the bank has promised to give Rs. 1 lakh (Euro 1430 approx) per group. These loans are solely used by the ladies to invest on water pumps, machines for irrigation which they then rent out for a stable income.

Upcoming programmes and visits from friends:

- Participation of the students from Madhubati in the Rajiv Ganguly Tournament held on 12th and 13th January organized by Friends of Calcutta in Loreto Entally.
- Visit of Maura Allen and Fr. Pat Hogan's group from Ireland and Kerry Luxton from Sydney
- To continue networking with organization and friends for fund raising in India and in this context we would like to share that we have already applied to Concern India for funding the salary for our staff members.
- To continue with the repair/ renovation and specially new electrical wirings in Bhalobasha while Michael is in Kolkata
- Staff appreciation

We wish you all a very happy and promising New Year and thank each one of you for your support, kindness and love.

With warmest regards and prayers

FOKE team