



FRIENDS OF KOLKATA'S ELDERLY

NEWSLETTER : JANUARY - JUNE 2019



We are always energised by the thought of caring for a few more elderly members. Hence, a plan for extension is in progress, which is very exciting! For several years we have been contemplating on extending the Bhalobasha home. It so feels that this is the right time to get this work started. This new extension, when built, would be home for 7 to 8 elderly members. The existing toilets & washrooms in Bhalobasha will need to be rebuilt, refurbished, and this would be done along with the extension work. We are aware that building more homes is not the solution to the miseries of the destitute old people. But, as we keep receiving requests from Police Authorities, Government hospitals, NGOs and caring individuals, we feel it might be good to give few more a chance. We would appreciate every support from friends and well-wishers for this new project, and for setting up the building with proper furniture fixtures and interior decorations to make it a loving home.

We were able to complete the Mutation process on 10th of April, 2019; and thus, now the house '**Bhalobasha**' gets the revenue record in the name of Friends of Kolkata's Elderly.

Our last general meeting for the year 2017-18 was held on 17 February 2019, after the staff day celebration, and the first general meeting for the year 2019-20 was held on 25 May 2019. The AGM was scheduled for 24 August 2019.



MADHURI MUKHERJEE

Once again Vidyasagar State General Hospital (VSGH) requested us to provide home support to Madhuri. Madhuri belonged to a middle class family where the husband was in a stable earning position. After his death, things started to change. Her two sons never had a cordial relationship with one another. She worked as a cook and rented a room for herself. But when unable to pay the rent, due to her ill-health and no work, she was asked to vacate the room. She lost the court case and started living with the employer's family where she cooked. When she fell sick she was admitted by her employer to the hospital, and abandoned. Quite co-incidentally, Madhuri's younger son died in the same hospital from where she was taken.



The elder son keeps no contact. We visited the locality where she lived and collected her identity proofs which were kept safely in a shop. The locals were not able to give any information about the elder son and advised us to leave the area soon lest the landowner should charge Madhuri to pay the due rent.

Home visit

Later, on 22 June, we visited Madhuri's elder brother, niece and nephew, who refused to take any responsibility due to their poor financial and living conditions. We also witnessed the space available in the house and saw how, really, difficult it would have been for them to accommodate Madhuri, especially, when they already have an ailing old person to care for. The niece spoke to Madhuri over our phone and clearly explained their inability to care for her. This phone call made Madhuri come to the realization that there was no point in craving to return to them.





WELCOME HOME

GITA HAIT

The Medical Supervisor and Vice Principal of Belegkata I.D. and B.G. Hospital, Dr. Tutul Chattapadhyaya referred Gita to us. Gita was rescued from the streets and was admitted by the Ahmerst Street police on 13.3.18. When Gita recovered she had no one to return to. On 21.01.19 we discharged Gita, who now has a home in Charunibash. Gita is very quiet and is short of hearing. Her story is yet to evolve. Dr. Chattapadhyaya, with her medical team organizes yearly medical camps in both our homes. Hence, her request to provide a home for Gita, who really deserves it, was considered by FOKE.



ANJALI CHAKRABORTY

Anjali was referred to us by a local NGO from Thakurpukur. Anjali is unmarried and has no relative who she can turn to in her time of need. Originally an inhabitant of Bangladesh, Anjali moved to Kolkata at a young age and started door-to-door selling of cosmetics and incense sticks. With age and, consequently, the inability to work, Anjali soon spent all her savings and was on the verge of begging. She was given shelter in a Primary school in Thakurpukur by a local NGO, where her food was arranged from the school's mid-day meal provision, and she was provided with some medical care. However, since a long-term stay in the school's premises was not possible the NGO kept looking for a permanent home for Anjali. We visited Anjali in February but were only able to accomodate her after Kamala passed away in May. Anjali is a dignified lady and has a pleasant personality.





REST IN PEACE

Kamala Khatick

28.04.2019

Kamala was on our food programme and was comparatively young to be in the old-age home. But Kamala was considered for residential care, as she had no mobility; and with considerable orthopaedic treatment in National Institute for Orthopedically Handicapped (NIOH), and elsewhere, she was restricted with limited movement. Both her hands didn't have enough movement as well. Taking all this into consideration we rescued her in 2005 and after several months in NIOH, Kamala came to Charunibash on 1 December 2005, when the house was still in the making. Charunibash was Kamala's home for the next 13 years! She was transferred to Bhalobasha last year as her health deteriorated and she needed to be in a place with close and easy toilet accessibility and medical assistance.



Kamala was admitted to the hospital twice. The second admission was within one week of the first discharge, and within 4 days all her organs rapidly failed to function. Kamala passed away on 28 April in Hope Foundation Hospital. Kamala's passing is the end of an episode for FOKE, as she was witness to a lot of what FOKE and Charunibash home evolved to be. She was fun loving witty and alert. With her unstable hand she was able to sew, knit and do crochet. Her body gave up but her mind was active and enthusiastic till her last breath and she left the world in full consciousness. A prayer service in both homes was performed on 1 May with much love. We will miss you Kamala. Rest in peace.



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A BETTER OPTION SHYMOLI BISWAS

Shyamoli was taken from the Vidya Sagar State General hospital. We found that she was fairly young and would have been more accurately described as middle-aged than elderly, which could have made her seem a little out of place in an old-age home. We discussed this with Dr. Brahma of AVIEW, who willingly took Shymoli into their home for younger female psychiatric patients.

This is our small effort to give Shymoli a chance to enjoy once more a life of a younger person and to earn her dignity by contributing to society. Being a diabetic patient Shymoli needs monitored and restricted diet and this she is not ready to adjust with. Hence, this is still in the process of experiment and also a challenge as Shymoli is a difficult person to deal with.



MEDICAL NEWS

We were able to carry out the cataract operations for Suprobha Mishra, Madhuri Mukherjee and Parul Das in NRS Hospital. Madhuri was admitted twice to the hospital, and is under constant medical supervision. Jaishree, Dasumi and Madhuri were taken to MR Bangur Hospital for various medical and pathological tests. Hashikhusi had her check-up in NRS hospital. We are also taking Ramlati, Gita and Maya Adhikary for their check-ups to the local Diamond Harbour hospital. Kalyani had her cataract operation done in Bharat Seva Ashram Hospital, with her pension money; and her daughter took her for the operation. Over all, the health and care for the members are well monitored by Champa Chowdhury.

STAFF APPRECIATION DAY



This year the staff appreciation day at Joyland Park, on 17 February, was slightly different for two reasons:-

First, Sushila was felicitated for completing 15 years of dedicated service since 4th February 2004. She joined as the personal caregiver in Bhalobasha on a meagre salary and cleaned up any mess without a wrinkle on her face. Sushila came to us from Mother Teresa's Premdaan home where she was a recovered patient. We took her in as a caregiver and slowly over the year last

few years her family which includes a son and a daughter reunited with her. Over the last 15 years our members know who to call on when they need someone the most ! Without her selfless service in Bhalobasha towards the members, FOKE would not be where it is today. Thank you Shusila for the immense contribution you made and still continuing, which enhances the work of FOKE.

Second, we had the honour of the presence of Mr. Dilip Mukherjee and Mr. Swapan Mukherjee, whose generosity till date is allowing us to use their property in Madhubati and Charunibash as a loving home to our elderly members. Both the brothers shared their feelings of appreciation in association with FOKE and we thanked them for their trust and generosity on behalf of the FOKE.



The day was full of fun with activity on team building where each one had to run behind one another with a balloon in between, making sure the balloon didn't fall. This was followed by a few very interesting games to win prizes! Breakfast, lunch and departing tea was, as always, much loved by the staff. A token gift amount for each staff member was not forgotten.



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



FOLLOW UP SCHOOLS:

Bhalobasha : Total - 17 student. 5 students dropped out while 2 new admissions took place. 3 Parents meetings were conducted where parents were encouraged to make their children self-dependent and help them develop their social skills. Taking care of the environment by way of saving water, planting trees and avoiding the use of plastic were discussed.

The students of the follow up school in Bhalobasha participated in the Rajiv Ganguly Tournament organised by FOC in Loreto Entally. They also visited the community based art project, CPT Chalo Painting Tangai, created by Sunny De Wall artist collective and students of NGO Jungle Crows. 10 students from Bhalobasha also participated in the Annual sports in Madhubati.

Members and staff of both homes participated in the Annual Sports, and prizes were given to all winners; like the children, our members were overjoyed to receive prizes as well.

Charunibash: Presently there are 39 children. Internal evaluation by the co-ordinator was carried out and 90% of the children did well and improved. The children painted their own flower pots and planted trees which they collected themselves. The children are being made aware of the importance of trees in our lives. Every day they water their own plants and this exercise ,we feel, will help them to be a good caregiver of plants.



MEDICAL CAMP

Dr. Tutul Chakraborty and Dr. Biva Dutta carried out their annual health check-up through the Indian Public Health Association. On 29 June all the members of Charunibash were checked. Unfortunately, due to rain only 9 children were present. Some of the mothers were checked too. The visit was rescheduled for the following month.





A SMALL INITIATIVE

Tailoring unit

Based on the request we received from the local women of Madhubati, we are contemplating on starting the sewing/ tailoring class for them, in Charunibash . The batch will start with the first 10 ladies, with very practical training, and for maximum period of 6 months. The group was met on 3 June 2019, where the timings and other logistics were discussed. A local Tailor, Md.Saifuddin will teach the participants with practical approach. The first class will begin from 14 July 2019 and each participant will pay a fee of Rs.40 per month, and will bring their own learning material.

SELF HELP GROUP

Total 9 SHG meetings took place. Now most of the members have a job card by which they can get their 100 days of work as promised by the Central Government. They also have their medical card which helps them to avail free medical treatment. The leaders of all 3 groups are now quite trained in maintaining records, attending meetings and facilitating bank works. The loans are being returned duly without being defaulters. All 3 groups have decided to withdraw the interest from their savings account which they will equally share amongst themselves.



SAVINGS AT A GLANCE

Name of SHG	Commenced	Total member	Subscription p/m	As on June 2019	Bank loan
Pronoti	May 2008	14	Rs. 30/-	Rs. 79,480.00	40,000
Jyoti	May 2008	14	Rs. 30/-	Rs. 79,120.00	40,000
Minoti	Jan 2009	14	Rs. 30/-	Rs. 68,700.00	
Total				Rs. 2,27,300.00	



BLANKET DISTRIBUTION



This year's blanket distribution was very special as 150 blankets were received in donation from 'Khanna Blankets' in Burrabazar, from whom we have been purchasing blankets since we started this programme in year 2002. This was a very special gesture as the present owner Mr. Rajesh Khanna wanted to do this in memory of his beloved father who always gave a few blankets free with all our purchases, over the years. This time our team consisted of Sean and Lorraine Garvey, Arundhati and Manas- home help of Raju Buxani. Biplab and Sridam from both homes joined us for the first time.

RESCUE

A very young and beautiful girl was kept under supervision for more than two months before we were able to rescue her from Diamond Park on 6 April. With Dr. Brahma's guidance we monitored the girl, provided her with a meal and medication every day, which Biplab carried out diligently. It was not an easy process to pick her up as she was not cooperative. Finally in the presence of Dr. Brahma and our team we did manage to put her straight into our medical van, and to Jibontala rehabilitation centre, run by AVIEW, where we had placed Barsha and Uma before. She is progressing well and is now much calmer and cooperative.



WORK THERAPY

The paper bag making is in good progress. Maya Adhikary, in Charunibash, is in charge and she also helps in altering the nightdresses and other mendings, using a sewing machine. The members now have a saving of Rs. 5464 as of June 2019.



CHANDREYEE SAHA

Chandreyee who is now only in Class XI can be an example to many youngsters. Her mother Nupur, first came to Bhalobasha with a group called Dishari. Nupur discussed the idea of getting her daughter involved and soon Chandreyee, - a young, highly spirited girl-, made her way to help our students in Bhalobasha, with mainly English. Chandreyee makes sure that the children learn and understand, and evaluates them on a regular basis.



VOLUNTEERS

She also trains them in singing and dancing, and prepares them for cultural programmes. The children are very fond of her. She diligently, takes time out from her very busy schedule in school and other extra-curricular activities. We need more such young people to help make a difference in the lives of those who are not so fortunate.

Thank you Chandreyee !



MEMORY DONATION

Ruma Ganguly , Champa Chowdhury , Partha Pratim Mukherjee, Keya Basu, Dr. Ranu Singh, Swarnalata Das, Ratna Bagchi, Sunistha, Sutopa Dasgupta, Mrs. Subhadra Sen all remembered their loved ones and made it special by sponsoring lunch, donating dry food, household requirements and individual gifts for our members. Vikram Dasgupta donated a stand fan, dry food and household items. We thank each one of you for sharing your special days with us. Your kind gesture is much appreciated.





BIRTHDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

During these 6 months we celebrated birthdays of our members : Jini, Sehjali, Lovely Maya, Parul, Khudiram, Binapani, Kalpana, Suprova and Bhubaneshwar.

In both homes we arranged for Saraswati pujo, Holi, Bengali New year, Netaji's Birthday, Vivekananda's Birthday and Rabindra Jayanti with active participation of the children and teachers.



VISITORS AND THEIR VALUED DONATIONS

Sean and Lorraine, like each year, didn't miss their trip and we, as always, loved their presence. The annual cultural programme was repeated in Charunibash in honour of their presence. Kerry made her annual visit too, and helped in the office and in the homes. Her purchase of sufficient beads and wool is still being used by the members.



Mags, Aine, Norah and Mariam, Fr. Sean and Killian from Ireland took out time to visit the homes. Margariet Jennsen from Holland, volunteers with Missionaries of Charity, kindly visited both homes on a free day. Charlie – Kerry's son, Emily, Sue, Niarri, Anna joined Kerry in Kolkata to witness the work she was involved with; Michael Symons visited the office this time and gave us a donation on behalf of Cobra and Mongoose. Our friends of 'Friends of Calcutta' made time to visit Bhalobasha, which is much appreciated.

Dr. Niraj Jain & his wife celebrated the New Year with gifts for the children and household requirements for Bhalobasha; it was made special with Sean and Lorraine's presence. Gaver Chatterjee from Concern India Foundation (CIF) visited; and there is a possibility that CIF will support FOKE once again. We needed a washing machine for Charunibash for which Gaver Chatterjee made a request to her friends, and Capt. V.H. Anand was very quick to respond and extend his support. Thank you Mr. Anand and thanks Gaver. We thank Mr. and Mrs Mitra for visiting with Ms. Delfina Boila and sponsoring the washing machine in Bhalobasha.





VISITORS & THEIR VALUED DONATIONS

Sevayan - Hands for All and Ms Boila, visited and donated annual household requirements. Sunistha and her family donated each member with a steel water bottle and food items with lots of fruits. 'Help Us to Help You' a group of students, connected with Jogesh Chandra Chowdhury College, came with gifts for members in Bhalobasha and entertained the members with chats and songs.



'Muktodhara' led by Papiya Das every year visits one of the homes and readily donates as per our requirements. This year they visited Bhalobasha on 1st June, sponsored a lovely lunch, donated curtains, adult diapers and food items for the house. Bangali Vaidya Samaj celebrated Bengali New Year in Bhalobasha. They gifted us with food rations, 3 ceiling fans and adult diapers. The special lunch was sponsored and the afternoon was celebrated with dance performance by the students and exchange of ideas and thank yous.

Paul Cesarczyk performed beautifully under unusual circumstances – outdoor in the muggy heat, with an audience consisting of the elderly and the local rural children for whom classical music is not so common. The children also offered a cultural exchange of dances and a game of carom. Paul was accompanied by Tara and Antara - two young interested girls who got much involved and expressed their interest to return. Jennifer and Dan – volunteers of Calcutta Rescue, were happy to spend time in the homes.





Special thanks to Caring Heart India Foundation for sponsoring, once again, the medical cost for Jini who took a fall and needed orthopaedic surgery. Sean Garvey needs special mention as his visit with his daughter Lorraine was as always very enjoyable. Sean and his family play a big role in FOKE and we feel very blessed. Kerry as always spent time in helping with the administration and purchased lots of beads and wool for the homes so that they have enough to keep themselves busy. Thank you Calcutta Calling, Cobra and Mongoose once again for your support. The local support is growing and we will keep encouraging donation in kind with which we as well as the donors feel very comfortable, and we value them greatly. Thank you Raju Buxani, Rajesh Shah for your continuous support. Hope Hospital & Calcutta Rescue supports us with required medicine for members referred by them which is, certainly, very helpful. Thank you Sujata Nandi & her company Greenovation for supporting the development of the vegetable garden.

Thank you Mr. Ashis Dey, for donating good quality, second hand children's clothes, which were distributed to the migrant families, from Bihar and UP before EID, near Moulali Masjid. We thank each one who donated newspapers for making the paper bags, including our Banker – Canara Bank, Sealdah Branch.

The staff are growing in confidence and carry out a lot of responsibility which keeps both the homes safe and happening. Lastly, thanks to the committee members, Veda Aggarwal for designing the Annual Report, Jhinku Banerjee for providing some beautiful photos and arranging for the printing, Sahadeb Some for arranging local donations and Rajeshwari for connecting with helpful agencies. May the divine blessings of the Goddess be with each one of you, during this festive season and always.

Request to support : As we are planning for an extension in Bhalobasha, we need you prayers and blessings; please extend your support and know that every contribution you make will help us to provide a safe and loving home to a few more elderly members.

From all of us in FOKE

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