

# FRIENDS OF KOLKATAS' ELDERLY

## NEWSLETTER JULY TO AUGUST 2016

*One of the real joys of this festive season is the opportunity to say thank you and to wish you all the very best for the New Year.*

The eleventh year of FOKE was challenging with deep learning and experience of death! Farewells were not easy to say nor easy to handle with changes in the Human Rights laws for death of people while in our custody! The hurdles were crossed with courage, patience and tears and here we are at the end of yet another fruitful year and humbled to share with you the news of the last 6 months ....

**Administration:** The new FOKE office was officially inaugurated on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2016 with our 11<sup>th</sup> AGM. It was the perfect occasion to celebrate in the most simple and humble of ways by lighting candles and praying to Saint Teresa, who had visited this premises several times in her lifetime. Each of us used Saint Teresa's words and prayed that we may "do small things with great love."



**New recruitment:** **Madhumita Mondal** joined on 1<sup>st</sup> August as the nurse in CharuNivash (Madhubati). Within few months Madhumita has become very popular amongst the staff and she cares for all with love and responsibility.



**Saira Bibi** also joined in August as the office assistant, to help with office work and general jobs related to the FOKE office.



We are delighted to announce that the FOKE associates have started to receive ESI (medical insurance) and Provident Fund (PF) from this term which now will continue until their retirement.

The Panchayat Building and land tax for Charunivash Home in Madhubati were cleared and the Mutation (property tax for ownership) of Bhalobasha home is in progress. These jobs took a while to settle but we are glad to get it all settled.

As always we want to give you the good news of HOME coming and filling the FOKE homes to the brim!

**New members:** Ramlati Devi is our newest member in Madhubati (Charunivas) home. She was identified by HIVE – India and with assurance from us of a bed they rescued her, registered her with the local Police station and completed all other legal procedures. Ramlati Devi comes from Uttarakhand though she is not able to give us the exact location or the village name. She also spoke of two sons.



**Dearly departed:** We lost Ranu who was mentioned in the last newsletter.



She died in Charunivash and because of the necessity of a post-mortem and other legal procedures we were not able to perform the last rites. As a natural process the police wait for two weeks for someone to claim the deceased and if not claimed they perform the last rites as per the law. The (Panchayat) village local political group is not yet fully aware of the law, hence it will take some time for us to get authorization for the handover of our members for their last rites.



**Akbar** who was on our non-residential food programme only for a couple of months passed away suddenly. May his soul rest in peace.

**With sad news comes good news too...**



**Happy Birthday;** The staff of the homes organised birthday celebrations for our beloved members. We mark their home coming day as their birthday as none of our members know their date of birth. Athai, Hashikhusi, Nimai, Tara Dutta, Kamala and Lovely have already celebrated their birthdays with cake-cutting and special snacks.



**Celebrations:** World Elderly Day, Teachers Day and Children's Day were celebrated in both the houses and it was a good way to say thank you to all concerned

**Follow up schools in Charunivas and Bhalobasha**

In general the students' attendance has been good. Two parents' meetings were held in both schools. Annual exams are over and now children are more involved in cultural programmes.



**Medical News:** Tara Singh, Tara Dutta had their cataract operation; Ganesh dadu who is on our non-resident programme had a successful yet major femur bone replacement but unfortunately he fell again at home and is in pain.

Khudiram was admitted in Hope Hospital for medical checkups.





**Medical Camp :** A general Health check up plan was organised in Charunivash for the children and members. The doctors were organised by Champa from Indian Public Health Association. Thank you.



**Self Help Group:**

Name of SHG	Started	Total members	Monthly sub p/m	As of Dec 2016	Bank loan
Pronoti	May 2008	14	Rs30/-	Rs. 58,680/-	Rs40,000/-
Jyoti	May2008	14	Rs30/-	Rs. 58,880/-	Rs40,000/-
Minoti	Jan2009	14	Rs30/-	Rs. 53,320/-	
In total				Rs.1,70,880/-	

**Some success stories:**

- Putul Bayen from Minoti SHG took a loan of Rs. 20,000/- to build her new house.
- Jamuna Bayen from Pronoti SHG took a loan of Rs. 20,000/- to build a new grocery shop beside her home.
- Mamata Bayen from Jyoti SHG took a loan of Rs. 10,000/-to pay for her mother in-law’s funeral.



There were 30 group meetings held during this term for the 3 groups. Members of SHG meet regularly for their group meetings, but sometime they are irregular when they work in the fields during the seasonal crops. The loan recovery is 100% successful hence others can get loans without any wait. We are in the process of forming the fourth new group at the moment.

**Repair and Maintenance:** An iron net fencing was put around the pond for security reasons. Cleaning of the existing toilet chambers were carried out along with building a new chamber for the two toilets used by staff and children. Painting and all electrical repairing jobs were done in Charunivash.

In Bhalobasha the roof of the ladies’ ensuite toilet had to be replaced with steel sheets. The marble floors in the other two toilets were polished to make them fresh. A cabinet was built under the members’ wash basin to house the water pump and walls were tiled around the wash basins too. Painting of toilets and corridors was also carried out. Michael carried out painting the room on the terrace in Charunivash and later the staff carried out painting other rooms and corridors in both homes.



**Festivals:** Independence Day, Raksha Bandhan were celebrated in both homes with children, staff and members





This year for the first time our members from Bhalobasha were invited to inaugurate the Ganesh Puja organized by a local club. It was great honour for the our ladies and staff..

**Durga Puja** : For the first time this year Michael was with us to take part in this very enjoyable festival. This is the only



time in the whole year that we bring all the members of both homes out in tuk tuks to see the amazing decorations.



We thank '**With You Foundation**' a local organisation, who generously sponsored the cost of the autos, treated all in Bhalobasha to a special lunch and ice cream. It was a collaborative effort which was very enjoyable.



**Diwali** was made special with the presence of Sue Buckle for whom it was a once-in-a-life time experience too.

**Volunteers:** Message from Stacia Beiniks : 'Volunteers from Suas, an Irish charity, visited both the Bhalobasha and Madhubhati homes this summer. At both homes the Suas volunteers learned more about the work that FOKE does while also spending time with both the residents and the local children that attend education sessions at these homes. We had a great time doing arts and crafts and chatting with the residents and hope that they all had an equally nice time - we wish our Bengali was better though! The devotion of the staff to making both Bhalobasha and Madhubati real homes for the members living there was evident. They truly treat the members as their own family. For us, it was beneficial to see that it is possible to create and sustain a home environment for the care of the elderly. Last but not least, we want to thank Sanghita - she was amazing in organising both trips and making sure that we got to each house with no problem'.



Amy O Neill, Sr. Cyril's grand niece and her friend Ciara Doran from Ireland, visited both homes and returned to Bhalobasha twice. They enjoyed making bead necklaces with the ladies. Sue Buckle visited during the Diwali and Kali puja, hence she was able to enjoy the fireworks in both homes. Sue is a potter and she enjoyed making clay models with the children in both homes. This entire exercise was enjoyed by all the members and staff too. The following are Sue Buckle's own words about her experience: 'Visiting Bhalobasha and CharuNivash was a real highlight of my stay in Kolkata. To meet the wonderful staff who look after the ladies





and men with such respect, love and care was very special. Spending time sitting or chatting with everyone and sharing delicious meals was a treat.

I am a ceramic artist and art teacher in Australia so working with children from the local schools



making clay pieces was a particular joy. They made little oil bowls for Diwali and were so proud of their creations. An experience I will never forget, and then to finish the day at dusk with all the excitement of fireworks - a great memory. The smiles on the ladies faces and the clapping and cheering of the children blended with the lights and sounds of exploding fireworks to make a great celebration. The work FOKE



does clearly changes the lives of everyone associated with the organisation. I hope to come back again and be a small part of that'.

### Visitors:

- On 20<sup>th</sup> August 2016 "Melbandhan" the cultural group headed by Mrs. Rina Deb visited CharuNivas and sponsored the lunch & gifted the children with stationery goods and exercise books.
- Raju Gyne with his family & friends visited and gifted the ladies and staff with lovely night dresses and saris for puja.
- Students known to Champa sponsored the lunch in Bhalobasha.
- Sanghita's family visited and helped in the distribution of the puja garments.
- Our President with his friends, visited twice: once to give gifts for puja in both homes and later with Mr. Joshi and his family to celebrate the birthday of their child in Charunivash. It was celebrated with lunch and gifts of stationary for the follow-up students and fireworks in celebration of Diwali.
- The associates of Canara Bank, Ms. Nibedita, Mr. Asim Mondal and Mr. Tapan Ghosh sponsored the lunches in both homes when they visited and also contributed towards the expenses for the puja garments.
- Swarnalata Das and her friends visited both homes and had special gifts for the staff.
- Rita McDermott and Mags from Ireland and Anuradha visited both homes. Thanks to their donation and warm woollen caps kindly delivered by Rita to all which were knitted very lovingly by a senior ladies knitting group in Ireland.
- Samiran and Arpita from Hope hospital also visited with Christmas gifts for all.





**Christmas:** Sean with his daughters Una and Lorraine visited and like all other years initiated the Christmas celebration with their arrival! We all enjoyed wonderful Christmas programmes in each house and celebrated with songs, recitation, dancing, food and gifts. All of us in FOKE and few



other local organizations were showered with their gifts, donations and love.

Michael organised a fun play about the effects of demonetization in running the homes. The play was starring the staff and the members as actors. We had great fun.



**Blanket Distribution:** Christmas for FOKE is incomplete without the blanket distribution. On 20<sup>th</sup> December we were glad to carry out a blanket run for the street dwellers with Sean, Lorraine, Michael, Sahadeb, Subhas and Raghavendra and again on 26<sup>th</sup> night with Raju, Punit and Arundhuti.



Thanks to Sean Garvey's family & friends, Calcutta Calling c/o Fr. Pat Hogan, Belvedere College, Waverly College, Maura Allen, Liam Ash, Fr. Sean Sexton, Vincent Jones, Eleanor Gallagher, Adrienne Miller, Kerry Luxton, Michael Symons, Raju Buxani, for their generous donations.

Thanks to Swarnalata Das for contributing the cost of the laptop for the FOKE office. We thank Dr. Fuad Halim and his staff, Hope Hospital associates- specially Samiran Mullick for their medical support; Thank you to the Kolkata Corporation for donating the yearly garments; Our gratitude to all those who sponsored the special puja lunches, visited and gifted our members during the pujas and for taking out time to be part of the FOKE family. Thank you to each and everyone for your contribution to our work by way of visiting, donating, helping or volunteering. Without thanking the FOKE staff this newsletter will not be complete. Each one of them have excelled and dedicated themselves to the cause of looking after the elderly in our care. God bless them with good health and keep their families safe.



*Faith makes all things possible.... Hope makes all things work.... Love makes all things beautiful....May each one of you have all the three for this Christmas and throughout the New Year!*

God Bless

With much love and prayers from all in FOKE.

