

Newsletter 7 2003

Hi to all of you!!

Here are some beautiful words of thanks and appreciation and a little impression of the first school Iyear of Sikkim Himalayan Academy written by Jamyang Bhutia, principal of the school.

Besides that, some additional words from Peter a volunteer from Australia who was in the school at the beginning as well as at the end of the school year. As always he gave as much as possible from himself to the school and the children. His selfless service and great love for the children is heartwarming and touching!

Sikkim Himalayan Academy

Bariahkop Sikkim India

Dear Sponsors and Parents

The 2003 session has come to a close. We are confident that we've brought a positive change to the lives of the children and benefited many families.

For this we owe a huge thank you to the Kinderen Van Holland.

K.V.H. is a non charitable organization with headquarters in Amsterdam, Nederlands. Friends from the UK, Canada and Australia are also connected through this organization.

The founders of this N.G.O. are people who are in some way connected to Sikkim. They in turn have brought about an awareness amongst friends regarding this small Indian state which lies in the lap of the worlds 3rd highest peak Mt Kanchenjunga.

As we are unable to thank the sponsors individually I on behalf of the many families would like to thank them through the Dutch Trust with a prayer that the support continues.

We have had the pleasure of Mr Peter Mclennan services again. might I say just at the right time. We were short on teachers and he graciously was himself - helpful and always happy to oblige.

The kids were pleased with the gifts he had brought all the way from Thailand, it added to the celebrations we had for 'Childrens Day' and 'Christmas.' This is the first festivity that these kids had a chance to experiance. Nothing fancy but one good meal and presents satisfied there simple souls.

Miss Hedwig Bakkar one of our co-founders was here towards mid September. As always her deep attachment to the children of Sikkim becomes obvious. Much of her time is spent in plans for the betterment of our children. Her advise and motivation only pushes us harder towards improvement. It is our wish that this link in the chain stays intact.

At the moment she is busy with Dharma practices in Kathmandu and our good wishes are with her.

Mr M K Gurang one of the other co-founders has resigned to take part in the field of Sikkimese politics. Who Knows ? maybe one day he will hold a ministerial berth. We miss his hard work and attachment to the children.

I would like to thank Miss Pemkit Lepcha and Mr G S Gurang who have taught and been with the children. Caring for them and being their parents and we would also like to thank Mr Tashi and Mr Dawa who have kept vigil in the kitchen. I remember those children coming for the first time, they were dirty had lice and ticks on their heads and only one set of clothes. Each would hide away in shyness when spoken to even in their own language.

Now they are confident and also conscious about their health and hygiene. They are very polite and the bigger ones help the smaller ones. I,ve not had occasion to deal with cases of bullying.

They all share the view that this is a God send opportunity and are making the most of it.

We have just completed the 3rd term exams, there were no failures for class 1 & 2. In the Ukg, Lkg and Nursery there were negligible failures. It was because some were too young for the classes. I hope the adjustment will benefit them in the long run.

By the time you receive this letter the children would have gone home for a 3 month winter vacation.

For the future I would like to inform you that our sponsors have given us the nod to recruit 2 new teachers. Miss Hedwig Bakkar and I held the interview of the candidates and zeroed in on two who are very well qualified with additional degrees in education. Further we are going to add class 3 and have decided to take in 10 new students.

Once again I take this opportunity to thank you all for the very generous support and wish you a Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year

For the benefit of our friends I am enclosing some words left by people who have taught and been with the children and hope this enlightens you on how your help is reaching out.

Louise Broeksma & Michel Coppoolse: Holland

It was only ten days we stayed here, but we got a good view of the work here. The welcome on arrival was very warm and everything we had hoped for (even a room with a view) We enjoyed our stay here, no pollution, no hassle, no ...India as we know it. But beautiful mountains and the purest children we have ever seen.

Janneke Meulenkamp : Holland

I remember my first days of teaching, not easy, talking with not just my mouth, but with my whole body. The children so willing to learn. The teachers listening to my ideas. This place touched me somewhere deep in my heart and I'll never forget it. I just had one of the most beautiful goodbyes I've ever had just like my experience staying here. Simple, happy and full of love.

Rachel Imankhun : Holland

I had a great time here where the neighbours and the local people aren't screaming. I hope the children will get a better future than the country will give them.

Francois Pieneman : Holland

In my search for life, looking for the things that truly matter in life, during a remarkable journey I found a place that touched my heart. I was able to stay at SHA for almost two months. At first I only thought to contribute by education. As time past I found out this was just one of the different tasks. I never expected to receive and to give so much love to my surrounding. The experience was magical. Motivated teachers with a clear vision for the future, showed me the culture, traditions and poverty of the real Sikkim.

David Parsons & Jennifer Preston : Canada

Spending time with the students and staff here has been a peaceful experience. Beautiful views wherever you walk, good food, three meals a day with excellent company. We are lucky to have spent time here, no matter how short. The life and beauty of the children is like a breath of fresh air. Thank you all for this chance to visit and see something wonderful as it grows.

Jamayang Bhutia Principal

Being here when the children first arrived and seeing their shy and dirty little faces. Now returning 7 months later, what a difference. They are not shy or dirty any more only the opposite. The children are very polite and respectful not only to their teachers and visitors but to each other.

A huge difference is seen from their learning especially their English.

It is a big credit to Jamayang, the staff and the volunteers that have had influence in these wonderful souls.

I would like to say what a wonderful job Jamayang is doing not only as Principal but nurse, father and friend to all.

Looking forward to my next visit to SHA to be of assistance and to see all the smiling faces.

A happy festive season to all and a very big thank you.

kindest Regards & Smiles

Peter Mclennan

Christmas 2002, it is exactly one year ago that we moved into the place in Bhuriakop with a few bits and pieces. There was no furniture, there were no beds, no schoolbooks and no children!!

So many things have happened in 1 year time!!

At this moment the children are at home with their families. From the 15th of February the school will start again.

I have been staying in a Buddhist monastery just outside of Kathmandu for a month and a half. And to be honest....I would have liked to stay for years!!

I can hardly give it words....how big the impact, how intense all the lessons and insights and how much I am caught by the Buddhist philosophy.

This is what I want to be, this is how I want to live....

Right now I am back in Northern India in the place Bodhgaya. Buddhist people regard this is the most holy place in the world. 2500 year ago it was Shakyamuni Buddha who attained Enlightenment under the bodhi tree after meditating for 6 years...And as a result he started to spread his insights and teachings amongst followers.

The tree is still there a beautiful temple too and thousands of pilgrims, Buddhist monks and nuns from all over the world, Tibetan people and westerns. All paying homage to the Buddha in their specific way.

And I am amongst them, happily and joyfully practicing the dhamma and doing hundreds of prostrations everyday as part of a purification practice.

Christmas is not an issue here....only the thousands of lights and candles that are lit every evening around the temple remind me of Christmas

Silent Night, Holy Night.....around here every night is silent and holy....not only Christmas Eve.....

I wish you all a beautiful, warm, special and loving Christmas celebration.

MAY PEACE PREVAIL ON EARTH

Much love Hedwig