



"While we do our good works let us not forget that the real solution lies in a world in which charity will have become unnecessary." - Chinua Achebe, Anthills of the Savannah

Editor: Jen Kim

March 2016

NEWSLETTER

Hope Update!



We are so very grateful for the wonderful care that Hope received at Shriners Hospital in Boston. Her surgery was a success and she is recuperating with smiles and patience. What a brave and cheerful trouper this girl is!

The next step in her treatment will be fittings for prostheses before her return to Nepal. In the meantime she is enjoying new adventures in the U.S, including a tour of Harvard University by recent volunteer Sarah Rodriguez (pictured below), who is a second year student in economics there. It was a delightful afternoon and Hope was given a first impression which we hope may manifest itself into a future enrollment.





A Very Nepali Valentine's Day



By Eileen Witham

My favorite aspect of Valentine's Day in Nepal is the celebration of all kinds of love. This year the romance of the day was clearly on display with nervous teenagers carrying red roses through the neighborhood and well dressed couples on scooters heading off on dates -- their scarves trailing behind them like Bollywood film stars.

Alongside those smitten couples, children were dressed in their best clothes to visit their friends and families to celebrate with loved ones. The women in the Chelsea Education and Community Center conversation group prepared special meals and spent the day dancing and playing with their children.

Once again, thanks to the generosity of Canadian charity Possible Worlds our Valentine's Day festivities have been filled with fun, dancing and laughter. As it did last year, our volunteer department staff joined forces with Skylark School to plan a holiday program and party for the children of NOH and Skylark Hostel. The highlight was gifting the children individual snack boxes filled with treats such as samosas and sweet jeri (If you have never tried jeri it's time to start planning a visit!). The singing and dancing performances were dedicated to the absent, but very loved Papa, Anita and Hope.



The Powerful Impact of Chelsea Education and Community Center

By Michael Triozzi

Do you prefer Hindi films or Nepali films? Why don't westerners put sugar in their tea? Are all cats bad luck or just black cats? Do Americans really have a holiday where they eat pumpkins? Would you be more afraid of a snake or of a tiger?

In the past few weeks, each of these questions have come up – completely organically – in our Chelsea Center English conversation groups.

If you spend a day at the Chelsea Education and Community Center, you will see women who are learning to read and write in their native language for the first time, our NOH children honing their math skills and learning hands-on computer lessons, and a team of dedicated teachers helping make it all possible.

The highlight of the center is the volunteer-led conversation practice, which started in January and have since become one of the most popular activities. Twice daily, small groups of our adult women learners practice their English skills by talking to English-speaking volunteers.

The conversations are often quirky and spontaneous. We rarely have a conversation topic picked out, and most often prefer to talk about whatever is on our minds or ask new volunteers questions about their home countries.

In one recent discussion, the group got into a heated debate for nearly half an hour on whether Nick, a volunteer from Cleveland, should shave his beard. The results? A tie.

During another session, the women discreetly locked the male volunteers out of the room, so they could show off their dancing skills for Mrs. Witham, a volunteer from New Zealand in private.

While there is much fun and silliness, the participants are still committed to improving their English conversational skills. The women have made incredible leaps in confidence with learning the language and are comfortable discussing a wide variety of new topics. Their quiz scores have also markedly increased since the sessions begin.

Our conversation groups and the friendships they have forged (among people of many different cultures, ages, and backgrounds) are a valuable part of what makes the Chelsea Center a true center of the community.



Volunteer Spotlight: Blake Matich and Ryan Noble

A rambunctious bus ride out of Pokhara and into Nepal's rural valleys found us in the beautiful town of Bhurjungkhola in the district of Kaski. We arrived to a city covered in clouds. It was only later during the clear, bright morning that we met the massive Mt. Machhapuchhre, the commander of the northern skyline. Because the morning sun tinges its face in a rosy hue, a casual observer may mistake its soft complexion for an invitation. The reality, however, is its 7000M peak is insurmountable.



Once we arrive at the school, we receive a warm welcome. We are gifted with scarves and red *tika* on our foreheads. The headmaster, a wonderful and passionately curious man named Santosh takes us on a tour and gives us a personalized class schedule, suited to our strengths. We are assigned to teach six to seven classes a day -- which is quite a load -- but there is still flexibility, which we appreciate. Our work is contingent on the students' schedule. Some begin their classes at 5 AM and go until 4 PM. The older students in the senior grades go from 6 AM to 10 PM and stay at school-provided accommodations.



The students' strenuous workload is intensified by the Nepali one-day weekend (Saturday). While we feel this schedule is severe and could be counter-productive, the students say they prefer to be at school. The Sunday morning question: "How was your day off?" is often met with a terse reply: "Home is boring."

Once they overcome their initial shyness, the students are often caught between a curious excitement and ingrained politeness. Never before has my beard received such voracious interest. Before breaking into giggles, kindergarten students would regularly ask: "Whaaat iss this?" "Thiis iis lamo dari" (long beard). I was known as *Lamo Dari* (affectionately I

hope) throughout our stay.

We taught Social Studies which could sometimes be just a glorified English lesson. However Principal Santosh would say that that the major benefit of the volunteer presence was just hearing native English speakers. Therefore we were granted much freedom in making our lesson plans.



For the younger students, textbooks are the best way to keep their attention. Whereas, for the older students, we found they enjoyed discussing a range of topics not usually taught in Nepali schools, such as World War II, Colonization and Ancient Greece.

Volunteering at the school was a wonderful experience. The curiosity of the students combined with the dedication of the teaching staff is producing positive results in national testing. The students impressed us everyday with their language proficiency and their intellectual strength -- due in large part to the their teachers and the school itself.

We strongly recommend other volunteers to devote their time and resources to this delightful school. Having volunteered in several different countries across several different continents, it is no exaggeration to say that the Shree Machhapuchhre School is the most determined institution of its kind. All resources, whether it be financial, material, or simply time, is utilized and greatly appreciated.

We are thankful to the school and our host family for their generosity and hospitality during our stay and we look forward to returning in the near future.



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Nepal Orphans Home receives no government support and relies on the contributions of individuals sharing our mission to provide for the welfare of children in Nepal who are rescued from slavery, orphaned, abandoned, or otherwise not supported by their parents.

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