

KHEL Charities Update 2002-2002

Since February 2002, Ammaji had been in the US. Stomya Arya Persaud, Assistant Director, has spent this year in India, managing KHEL. Stomy and the KHEL staff have spent the year studying how KHEL is structured, finding the weak links, planning methods of working that will strengthen the chain and discovering that there is common ground somewhere between Western efficiency and Eastern flexibility. Stomy brings many years of being Ammaji's USA assistant to the job of running KHEL on a fulltime basis. She can be reached at stomy@khelcharities.org.

Through a generous donation from Horst Rechelbacher, the building of homes for the leprosy patients at Indresh colony is continuing. We have built eight homes, with the final two in the process of being constructed. There is still much work to do in order for the poor people of Indresh to have a safe, clean environment. We will be installing water tanks this year as well as a solar water heater. Over the course of the next year, we will build a community hall and footpaths. In addition, there is a park area planned as well as drainage for the entire property to facilitate cleanliness. We hope in the future to be able to build a new block of restrooms and shower areas. This monsoon was their first wet season in the cemented homes and they were thrilled not to be in mud huts that fall apart and have to be rebuilt after every rainy season.

Thanks to Atem Ramsundersingh and KHEL-NL for their ongoing contributions that allow us to vaccinate our children against measles, mumps, rubella, Hepatitis B, typhoid and polio. Due to communal disharmony in India this year, the administration of the pulse polio vaccine was difficult, but thanks to the additional time volunteered by KHEL's staff and the trusting environment that has been nurtured by the Shiv Puri colony residents, we were able to vaccinate our children and many other children of the area. This programme is government administered and we participate by allowing them to use the school grounds as well as going door to door to remind parents to vaccinate their kids. The typhoid vaccine was very helpful and most of the children were able to remain in school throughout the monsoon season, when they are typically very sick with illnesses such as typhoid.

The KHEL-NL group also supplied funds for us to purchase textbooks and copybooks for our school kids as well as for all the other children we support who are too old to attend LDA. The children were very happy to receive the copybooks since the parents often have money for textbooks but no money for copybooks. The children in this situation become quite frustrated because they can do the work but have no books to write down their answers! In response to this ongoing problem, we are implementing a programme from next year that allows parents to save money throughout the school year and buy most of the textbooks at bulk rates. It will ease the pressure of them having to come up with all the money for books in the space of one month. We hope this will allow them to have funds to supply copybooks to the children as well as teach them the concept of saving. The very poor children will still receive all the necessary help. This is a purely voluntary programme but we expect that parents will be interested as it allows them a lower cost on the textbooks.

The Sewing Project, which is also funded by KHEL-NL, has evolved into a multi-layered teaching and outreach programme. Shanti Subramanyam and Kamli Bhatt have done a wonderful job with curriculum planning and product development. Over the summer, Hame Persaud was able to visit with them and offered his time to train them and KHEL's Manager, Beni Bhatt, in product sourcing and development, including ideas such as quality control and delivering products on time. The new curriculum teaches these concepts so that the women who attend our classes are equipped to work for others or start their own businesses after attending our advanced training programme. In addition, we supply them with a diploma and photos of any products they have sewn.

KHEL-NL has supported several college students this year. Some of them have now finished college while others are working on their MA's. One woman has been married and we are pleased that she is planning to finish college even though domestic responsibilities for a newly married Indian woman can be very time consuming. It is encouraging that a young newlywed woman is able to continue her studies. It seems that the college students were little kids at LDA only a few years ago and now some of them are our teachers!

Atem and the KHEL-NL group also supplied funds for the children to receive awards and prizes for best students and best attendance. The children really enjoy being acknowledged for their hard work and they greatly appreciate the academic prizes such as colouring books and crayons.

Thanks to Katy Guard for her continued help with feeding our children and providing them with milk. The Indian government has recently started a meal programme in the public schools and although this will take a while to implement, it is gratifying to know that what we have been trying to do all along for the poor kids is now part of government policy! This leads to the question, when will we be able to provide a hot lunch every day for our children?

There has been an increase this year in medical assistance given to the LDA children. TB and worms in the brain have become prevalent and we are instituting a yearly medical check-up for the children in order to catch life threatening and chronic illnesses sooner. This year we had a young boy who needed heart surgery. Many 'heartfelt' thanks to Juli Wolyniec and Urban Technology for their financial assistance with his medical care. Salman is healthy once again and has returned to school!

Two new projects have been initiated at LDA. In order to assist our high school students we have started a tutorial programme that utilises the talents of some of our college students. By volunteering their time to tutor the high school students, the college students are learning that they are able to help others as others have helped them. There is a very high failure rate for the 10th grade final exams in Uttaranchal and we are pleased to be able to report that the passing rate for LDA students is higher than the state average! This tutorial programme has been so well received by the high school students that we will be giving tutorials throughout the week rather than just on weekends.

Also new this year is a monthly testing programme for our 5th class students to ensure that they are ready to leave us and join 6th class at a school in Dehradun. There has been a general increase in the level of academics in the Dehradun area and we are working hard to keep our kids up to standard.

A fun and educational project in block printing was conducted for some of the 4th and 5th class students by Stomy. Their designs have been made into beautiful cards, printed on wood-free, recycled paper and suitable for holiday giving as well as year round. They are available for purchase and all proceeds benefit the children. The students who participated will be taken on a field trip to the printers as well as to the paper supplier, to show them what happened to their designs after they created them. They are very proud of the work they did on the card project and enjoyed it so much that they insisted on coming back for another day of block printing after the project was completed!

KHEL now has a Management Team. This group consists of KHEL's employees who are in a managerial position or handle any of KHEL's finances. Included in this team are representatives of KHEL's main projects, including LDA, the sewing project, the teaching staff and other administrative staff. We are currently meeting twice a month to study and solve issues such as staffing, meals for the children, academic issues and medical issues. The meetings are also a time for staff training in areas such as goal setting, deadlines, working with a team, writing skills and management and leadership training.

KHEL has not issued a full newsletter this year because we have used the funds earmarked for the newsletter to develop a website. We should have our own website fully functional in 2003! We are all very excited and can't wait to have it up and running. We will have a downloadable, printable newsletter as well as an e-mailing list to let our friends know when new information is available for viewing and you will be able to reach us via email at any time. Everything you need to know about KHEL will be online. Thanks goes to Saumya Arya Haas, Assistant Director, for the website. Her husband, Urban Haas, will be hosting KHEL's website on his company's server. Check us out after December at www.khelcharities.org! Any questions regarding the website can be directed to Saumya at saum@khelcharities.org. Please contact her if you would like to have your email address added to our e-mailing list or if you have any questions or comments regarding the website.

KHEL has finally joined the 21st century and acquired a business level computer! It has made us realise how many of our projects need upgrading and we expect to change how we go about the business of charity

over the next few years. Some of the systems that will help us to change and grow, such as the website, are already in place and are about to start functioning. Other systems like the Management Team will be utilised to keep us up to date.

Amidst all the management, administration, financial constraints and other challenges of running a charitable organisation, we never forget that everything we do is for the children. With Ammaji's advice and guidance, we will continue to implement her vision of educating the poorest and most helpless children of Indian society.

In Service,

Stomya Arya Persaud