

Kindness, Health, Education & Laughter for Leprosy Families and the Poor (KHEL)

Founded by Dr. U. and Mrs. L. Arya (1984) Dehradun, India.

Kindness

Leprosy Colony News: KHEL has been providing food rations to leprosy patients at 3 leprosy colonies for 25 years. Leprosy patients are dependent mainly on begging because leprosy often makes them lose their extremities and impairs their vision. In addition, there are many social stigmas that make it difficult for them to find jobs. They need help with basic necessities such as food, shelter and clothes. Currently we are very happy that Mr. Kamat and EAPL Foundation (Electronic Automation Pvt. Ltd.) are helping us to provide these rations. When we provide food rations, we directly reduce the amount of days the leprosy patients have to beg. The leprosy patients are very grateful to KHEL since begging in the heavy traffic of central Dehradun is dangerous (Rs.45,000/US \$9,890).



Monthly Food Ration distribution to Leprosy patients



I am very grateful to Mataji and KHEL. The people of Dehradun very rarely hear about our colony and very few people come here so we do not have people who come and donate to us. We were totally dependent on begging. Mataji and KHEL have helped us for 25 years with food ration, medical care, clothes and other things. Mataji helped me with the treatment and operation of my leg which was damaged by an ulcer. Ghanshyam, President of Indresh Leprosy Colony.

We've had some turnover of staff this past year, partially because we cannot afford to pay them what other schools can pay them. Mrs. Bindra, who has worked for LDA for 18 years, accepted a position as a Principal in another charitable school. We're very sorry to see her go and wish her all the best in her new position. Ms Manju Maurya, who has been with us for 19 years was promoted as Interim Head mistress. She is well qualified and experienced.

Beni worked hard to acquire 80G registration for KHEL. This allows KHEL donors in India to receive a tax deduction when they file their taxes. It's a laborious process with plenty of government paperwork involved; Congratulations, Beni!

We're still in the process of putting together a junior high school; one requirement that we fulfilled this year was to have at least 45 students in the junior high section of LDA. The next step is applying for government recognition, which will take about a year. We wish Beni good luck with this!

Many thanks to two Indian donors - Sudesh A, a local businessman and good friend to KHEL, and Prabjot S, a long time KHEL friend. Also, many thanks to Mr. Kamat for supporting our work at the leprosy colonies. All of our donors are important to us; large amounts help us plan for the future and keep our work going through lean times, and smaller donations help in our overall projects.

We also provided warm clothes and blankets to the leprosy patients. Mrs. Shubha Rani and Mrs. Rajashree Kamat from EAPL Bangalore visited Lakshmi Devi Academy (LDA) and the leprosy

colonies we serve. After their visit, Mr. Kamat of EAPL helped to provide clothes to 110 leprosy patients through KHEL (Rs.27,500/US \$612).



Cloths distribution to Leprosy patients



KHEL also helped Ram Mandir Leprosy Colony repair their community building, where they gather for social events and hold panchayat meetings. A Panchayat is a team of 5 elected officials, one of whom makes the decisions after taking advice from the other four. These officials are respected in their community and form the backbone of local governance. The panchayat is responsible for day to day decisions and also helps the Colony's residents solve problems in the community (Rs.5,000/US \$112).

As KHEL provided cement homes to Indresh Leprosy Colony, now the Indian government is building cement houses for the residents of other leprosy colonies. We're really happy to see the government taking an active role in making the lives of the leprosy colony residents happier and healthier!

KHEL SCHOOL LDA: Three classrooms were renovated and one room was added. Although we have been donated computers and some science equipment we still need a lab and 2 more classrooms in order to be a fully functioning middle school.

Ms. Ree Willison a Yoga teacher from Australia heard about KHEL through our website www.khelcharities.org. She collected contributions from her yoga students in Australia. In November, she visited our school and donated a microscope, test tubes, scales a plastic skeleton and storage cabinet. Thanks, Ree! (Rs.25,000/US \$550. *Ree's contribution significantly lowers how much we need to complete this project*)

In order to have a middle school, there are many government rules and regulations KHEL must follow, and it is taking time to acquire the necessary approval. Meanwhile, LDA is being greatly affected by the lack of up-to-date paperwork, as we are unable to grant transfer certificates to students who leave LDA for higher education. Beni, KHEL's General Manager, and Manmati, LDA's Headmistress are working hard to gain this recognition. (Rs.1,35,000/US \$3,000).

Books etc for the school library, current news, papers, etc. (Rs, 19,000.00 = US \$ 423/)

For the teachers we need teaching aids like registers, stationary, for office, classrooms, printed test papers for exams, liaison with Govt offices. (Rs, 96,000.00/ US\$ 2,134)

Financial Aid was given to teacher Manohar to continue his higher studies, Medical help given to our Sweeper Muni for heart problems. (Rs, 30,000/ = US \$ 667/)

We have special pension, social security programs and emergency medical programs for our staff. (Rs. 1, 78,700.00 = US \$ 3,970)

Health



KHEL is doing great help for us. A few years ago I went through a major surgery and I could not have survived without the help of KHEL. My husband passed away last year and I am mainly dependent on the food ration and medical facilities of KHEL. Dhani Devi, resident of Indresh Leprosy colony.

KHEL has built medical clinics at Ram Mandir and Indresh Leprosy Colonies. We provide medical help to leprosy patients of these colonies. Ghanshyam had a leg infection, Sandeep has allergy problems, Heema Devi is having problems with her leg and Khadak Bahadur has an ongoing leprosy-related coughing problem. There are a lot of people who need medical help for complications caused from leprosy and general poor health. We recently approached the Uttarakhand government and asked them to provide a volunteer doctor for the two clinics. Happily, they have agreed to help and now there is a weekly doctor's visit! KHEL continues to help with medication costs (Rs.62500/ US\$1390).

There are occasionally medical emergencies among the faculty, staff and students at KHEL. Shanti, who used to head our Sewing Project, was hit by a car while riding her scooter which resulted in a serious leg injury, and Salman Khan, who has a hole in his heart, must continue to take regular medications (Rs.19,800/ US\$435).

KHEL is also participating with KHEL's staff medical emergency fund made by KHEL staff. KHEL staff members sometimes have emergency medical needs and often KHEL, with its limited funds, is not able to help. Beni felt helpless when some of the staff turned to him for additional aid. The staff then put together a savings plan to generate funds for medical emergencies. (Rs.3,500/ US \$78).

KHEL works with the Uttarakhand government to provide free medical camps for the community. There is no cost involved, but the grounds at LDA are the largest gathering area in Shiv Puri Colony. KHEL's staff volunteer their time to assist the doctors who provide this service. All our students are examined, medicines are recommended and free vitamins are supplied. Vaccinations and 'well baby' care is provided, as well. Pregnant women are given basic care and then appointments are arranged for them at the city's government hospital. Families are also given advice on general health care and if necessary over the counter medications such as aspirin or cough syrup are also given.

Education

KHEL provides free and subsidized education to 220 impoverished students from kindergarten to 7th grade. Although there are free government schools, they provide education only up to the primary level. The other option for education is English medium private public schools, but these are very expensive. KHEL aims to fill the gap by providing a high quality education at a very low price or free for those who cannot afford to pay. We teach not only the school syllabus but we try to develop the total personality of the children by offering English, Hindi, Sanskrit, music, yoga, and art. We also have computer education and a science lab. LDA is KHEL's largest project (Rs.1,142,000/US \$21,113/).



Children of KHEL School at Yoga display and morning prayer

In March our students took their final exams. This is especially important to 5th class students because they take a State administered Board exam. All the students passed with good marks and 17 students out of 28 passed with first division above 60%. The minimum passing grade in the state of Uttarakhand is 33%. Our students are doing much better than that!

KHEL provides scholarship funds to the children of single parents. These children have lost a parent and are often expected to find jobs at a very young age to help support their families. KHEL helps them to stay in school (Rs.57,600/US \$1280/).

KHEL is providing scholarship to more than 149 students who have passed from our school and now they are studying in high schools. This scholarship is especially beneficial to the girls. One of the girls made this comment: “The scholarship from KHEL is very important for us as well as for our parents. Without it, our parents would arrange our marriages when we are very young”. For the boys, the scholarship is important because without it, the parents would send the boys to do manual labor instead of gaining an education. KHEL motivates these young men and women to do whatever they want with their lives and keep studying with KHEL’s scholarship fund. There are about 24 students studying in college. Earlier we were giving scholarship aid twice a year but this year we were only able to give once. Because we have had to limit who can receive a KHEL scholarship, we are helping some students to obtain scholarships from other sources such as the local government. (Rs.180,000/US \$4,000)

We are also providing job training help for some students. One student recently completed nursing school and is serving in a very good private hospital in Dehradun. Other students are doing Pharmacy and Nursing training. Amrita and Archana are in Nursing and Tanveer is doing Pharmacy training. The full Nursing course costs Rs.75-80,000 per year and for Pharmacy the cost is about Rs.45,000 for a government course. If pharmacy training is in a private institute the cost is about Rs 80,000. We are happy to report that Sarita who is now employed as a Nurse has started paying back some of her loan. (Rs 10,000/ US\$ 225).



Sarita Shekhar serving as Nurse

Due to lack of funding, we closed our after school teen music program that was popular with our older students. In the past year, the music group performed for the Rotary Club, KHEL guests and Swami Rama Sadhaka Grama (SRSG), Swami Veda’s ashram in Rishikesh. We also took the music group on field trips to watch music shows, which they really enjoyed. It is unfortunate that we had to discontinue this program, as it was a wonderful way for our Scholarship students to spend time together while learning a new skill.

The School music program continues to be a success among the younger students at our school. (Rs.45,000/US \$1000).

The sewing classes for women had to be closed, as well, due to lack of funds. Although we have officially closed this program, we occasionally provide the former students with sewing work, such as making yoga suits for yoga programs, and some transportation costs for their training.

Fund raising course for KHEL’s General Manager: Beni attended a training seminar on how to write project proposals. He spent time formulating concepts about KHEL such as Who is KHEL? What does it do? What are the aims of our projects? How do we budget for a project? Beni will work toward grant writing in India. (Rs.8,000/US \$178).

Laughter



I am a person handicapped by leprosy, but I had never begged in my life. I worked for some non profits such as Leprosy Mission. I have also taught children and adults. Now I am very old and became totally handicapped and unable to work. So in this condition I wondered where to go, where to live and how will I survive with my wife. I came in Indresh colony 20 years ago. At that time there were only mud huts and no toilets. But when I came back here 4 years ago I saw it had become wonderful - all the houses were cemented, there were bathrooms and even a community hall!. I was surprised to see all this. Then I found out that all these facilities were because of KHEL. I knew that we are getting ration and medicines also from KHEL. So I decided to live here with my wife. Now it is my permanent address. Master Gulab Singh.

LDA’s kids have the opportunity to take part in many non-academic events throughout the school year. Here are some highlights:

Our local government appealed to the people of Shiv Puri Colony through the Area Counselor Mrs. Kamli Bhatt, a former KHEL employee, to clean up the plastic bags from the street and to help keep the community clean. Our students worked with other school children carrying signs promoting a clean environment. Later Kamli distributed fruits to the children. Plastic bag pollution is a huge problem in India; when the government began allowing the production of plastic bags several years ago, they didn’t take into account the lack of infrastructure needed to deal with non-biodegradable waste. Plastic bags block drainage, and choke the local wandering cows which in the past have taken care of the major biodegradable waste. (Rs.2,300/US \$50).



KHEL scholarship children are doing social service as shram daan by cleaning local areas.

Children’s Day: The LDA kids love this holiday and have a great time taking part in all the sports competitions we arrange for them. And of course, they love it that there are prizes and other treats! The teachers also play some games and enjoy being with the kids outside of the academic setting (Rs.8,100/US \$180).



Children participating in sports activities.

Scout Guide Camp: The trained staff of Scout Guide Camp taught our children how to respond to emergencies and disasters such as earthquakes, floods, snake or dog bites, and several other emergency situations including social disasters such as riots. The children enjoyed the day off from classes while learning how to help themselves and others in times of disaster (Rs.13,500/US \$300).



Students making a pyramid

Taking part in art program

Art Competition: LDA's Art students ages 6-10 took part in an Art competition organized by Arena Animation. There were more than 600 students from different schools in Dehradun. One of LDA's 6th class students, Souib, won second prize! Good job, Souib! And a big thanks to our Art teacher, Mukesh, for working so hard to prepare the kids for this competition (Rs.1,200/US \$17).

Writing Competition: To develop good writing skills among the students. LDA organised a writing competition. Shazadi of class 6th won the first prize in writing.

Geeta Chanting: Some students took part in the Geeta Chanting program organized by the Chinmaya Mission in Dehradun. Many schools participated. Two LDA students received certificates. Many thanks to our Sanskrit teacher, Acharya Bhagat Shastri, for training them so well! Ammaji presented the certificates to Bharat Kumar and Amit Thapa. Well done!

Rakhi Competition: Rakhi is a festival that honors the bond between brothers and sisters. On this special occasion, LDA had a Rakhi card competition. In the 10-13 years age group, the prize was won by Shazad, and Sahima won in the 5 to 9 years age group. (Rs.450/US \$10)

Teachers' Day: Teachers' Day is celebrated in India in the memory of our 2nd President Dr. S. Radhkrishnan who was a teacher before becoming the president of India. Ammaji and LDA's faculty had a party together and Ammaji presented the teachers and other staff with gifts.

KHEL always distributes sweets and fruits to leprosy patients, Ammaji and other KHEL staff spent time with them and participated in celebrations, like Independence Day of India, Republic Day, Holi, Diwali, Eid and Christmas (Rs.12,000/ US \$268).



Ammaji (Mrs. Lalita Arya) with Leprosy patients and their children distributing fruits



I am from Nepal. When I got leprosy my family abandoned me in Dehradun. Somehow I arrived in Indresh Leprosy colony. I was alone and I needed some support so I got married. This colony was in very bad condition. I was very fortunate that around the same time as my arrival, Mataji and KHEL started helping the colony with food ration, milk, medicine and other help. I had a baby here and KHEL helped with that. I remember there was not any toilets or bathrooms. It was very difficult especially for the ladies. When we would go out people threw stones at us. I am very gratefully to Mataji and KHEL, who has given us not only food and medical facilities but also good cemented houses, bathrooms and other facilities. Mrs. Paro Devi

USA PROJECTS:

There is poverty even here in the US. KHEL is doing its part to help alleviate some of the burdens placed on those most affected by the downturn in the economy. We have for this year donated to the MS Walkathon, the Opportunity Camp for disadvantaged children. This program involves caring, kind people who want to change the world for kids less fortunate. The campers are amazed how much difference just a week made in both their lives and the lives of the poor children. This summer program is sponsored through the Blake School, Minneapolis.

KHEL also supports interfaith and intergroup facilitation as it relates to the rebuilding in inner-city New Orleans. The Spiritual and Interfaith program at the New Orleans Healing Center brings diverse Faith leaders together to share perspectives and discuss common concerns. This program also works with local, national and international organizations, including the Pluralism Project at Harvard University. It is part of a unique revitalization project which honors local culture and will "provide a holistic, safe, sustainable center that heals, fulfills and empowers the individual and the community,

by providing services and programs promoting physical, nutritional, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well-being.”

<http://www.neworleanshealingcenter.org>

Some words from staff, teachers and students.



Mrs. MM Subba, Administrator: KHEL is the light of education with morality. It is like bread to the hungry, shelter to the shelterless and teaches karmayoga for the weaker sections of society.



Mrs. A. Stephens, Teacher: The success of this school is that the children are aware of the importance of education and they teach their parents as well. We see the result in our Parents-Teachers meetings when parents ask about their children’s progress and sign the progress reports instead of putting up thumbprints.



Ayesha Parveen Class 1st says: My school is very good. Teachers teach me well and they do not beat me.



Gaurav Rawat Class 3rd says: I learn a lot and there are many activities. I love my school.



Nazia, Class 7th says: I am studying here from the Nursery class. I feel at home here at school, where we learn studies and also do yoga, music, dance and art. We have camps and go on tours. I am lucky to be studying here.

THANKS - As the year draws to a close we would like to remind our generous donors of the past years, who have helped in keeping alive, healthy and educated many children of Dehradun and environs that we thank them and hope for continued support. It takes only \$10.00 per month to educate one child in our school. We pay our teachers as little as about \$80-\$100 per month. Our leprosy patients each receive about \$12.00 per month in nutrition and medicines and survive by begging in the marketplace. In order for our school to continue we need to raise at least another \$20,000.00 for 2010. KHEL has been serving the poor for 25 years and we hope to continue with the grace of the Inspirer of this project, and with blessed guidance from our Patron, Swami Veda. We wish to thank our regular donors in Italy, in the US (one of whom is 7 year old Kai who sold a clove covered orange for \$10 at the Meditation Center party and promptly donated it for the KHEL kids) our new Indian donors, Sudesh A of Dehradun, and Prabhjot S of New Delhi, AHYSIM, Mr. M. Kamat, Dan P, Marcia, Stomy, Saumy, Our KHEL boards in India and the US, and all other volunteers. Thank you so much.

We wish all friends, donors and well wishers Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, Happy Hanukah, Kwanzaa and Good Holidays.

Prepared by Lalita Arya, Beni Bhatt & Stomya Persaud.

December 2009