

**KHEL Charities Annual Report 2003**  
**Kindness Health Education Laughter**

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**KHEL**  
**CHARITIES**

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In Hindi, the language of North India, *khel* means *play*.



KHEL Charities is a non-profit, secular, equal opportunity employer and educator based in North India. Through education, KHEL promotes the ideals of non-violence, tolerance and respect. Because we believe that it is only through one's own efforts that success is possible, our focus is to support local business ventures in impoverished communities and to educate indigent children. KHEL gives future generations the necessary tools to improve their own lives.

## **KINDNESS**

### **Provident Fund**

Some of our staff members have been with KHEL for many years and it occurred to us last year that someday they may want to retire! We now invest in the Provident Fund, a government sponsored savings/investment/retirement program. In this Fund, a percentage of salary is deducted from each staff member and KHEL matches those funds. Contributing staff members can borrow against their fund by applying at the local Provident Fund office. In this way, we are encouraging KHEL employees to save for their future needs and making it possible for them to continue having a decent quality of life even after they have retired. This Fund is accessible to anyone who works for KHEL on a permanent basis and every qualifying staff member is taking part.

It is a legal requirement that KHEL takes part in this Fund. In order to fulfill this legal obligation, KHEL has had to cut back on charitable contributions to its staff, as we do not have funding to provide both charity and professional level investments to the staff. We would like to continue to assist our employees in their journey to become further integrated into the society around them, not as charitable cases but as qualified professionals working in the specialized fields of educational, social and development work.

Last year, one of our long time employees, Mrs. Chatterjee, decided she needed to spend more time with her family. Although we're sad to lose her at Lakshmi Devi Academy (LDA), our school for impoverished children, we're happy that we have helped her family to the point where retirement is an option. It was because of the Chatterjees that KHEL started helping kids with education! Mr. Chatterjee works full time as the Manager of Swami Veda's ashram in Rishikesh. Thanks to the hard work and financial support of Ammaji, Swami Veda and KHEL over many years as well as the commitment

on the part of the Chatterjees to improve their lives, both the Chatterjee children, Vidyut and Devashish, have college degrees and are able to help with family expenses.

## **HEALTH**

The World Health Organization extended their date for leprosy eradication from 2003 to 2005. In India, there are 500,000 new cases of leprosy every year. On the brighter side, leprosy hospitals in north India are closing down due to lack of patients! This doesn't mean there's less leprosy but it could mean that the hard work the Indian government has done to educate people about leprosy is starting to pay off. Leprosy can be arrested if the right medications are taken, but due to social stigma many persons who contract leprosy don't want anyone to know about it. They often wait until the disease is advanced before dealing with it, at which point they are often ostracized from their communities. Leprosy patients have a better chance of continuing a normal life if they remain at home and receive treatment there.

### **Indresh Colony Construction Project**



The construction of semi-permanent concrete houses to replace the mud hovels at Indresh Leprosy Colony is now complete! During 2003, the rest of the homes were finished and drainage was added around the buildings to direct monsoon water away from the homes and the walkways. Saumya's visits to Indresh during October and November were helpful in putting the construction back on track after a delay due to the reconstruction of the road outside the Colony; for several months we were unable to bring any construction materials into Indresh. Since the beginning of this project in 2001, almost US\$50,000 has been spent in planning, cleaning and building. Many thanks to Horst Rechelbacher for this kind and generous donation, without which the leprosy patients of Indresh Colony would still be living in mud hovels, at the mercy of the elements.

### **Shoe Project**



It is often difficult for leprosy patients to access assistance that is available from the Indian government, and in many cases this aid is inadequate or the information on which the aid is based is outdated. According to the Indian government's current statistics, only twelve pairs of orthopaedically designed shoes are required for the leprosy patients of the Dehradun district every year. Working with two other nongovernmental development organizations, KHEL helped to provide 600 pairs of shoes for the leprosy patients of Dehradun. Round Table, a group of young executives who raise funds for charitable causes, The Leprosy Mission Trust, a 128 year old organization dedicated to improving the lives of leprosy afflicted persons, and KHEL Charities pooled resources to find a way to provide these much needed shoes. Because of nerve damage due to the disease, a leprosy patient often isn't aware of cuts and bruises that can cause secondary infections. These shoes help to stimulate blood flow to keep the feet as healthy as possible, with the long-term aim of reducing the need for amputations.

### **Polio Drive**

In September, LDA once again hosted the Indian government's polio drive in the Shiv Puri Colony. Several KHEL staff members assisted the doctors and nurses who volunteer their time to administer the vaccine. A total of 634 children received vaccinations! KHEL provided snacks and other refreshments to the health workers and a small gift of appreciation was given to each KHEL staff member who had chosen to help.

### **Health Camp**

In November, a local government hospital sent a team of doctors to conduct a health camp for the LDA kids. Most of the children are in fair health, with some minor problems that are easily treatable, such as stomach parasites. One child was found to be infected with leprosy; KHEL is following up on this case with the child's parents and Dr. Leela Bist, to make certain that the illness is arrested immediately. The child is being treated at the government hospital, with only a small cost for transportation being the responsibility of KHEL. Nevertheless, the staff at LDA will monitor this child closely and be in contact with his parents and the doctors to make certain that he adheres to the lengthy treatment of medication.

The health camps occur once every few months. We also offer checkups, vitamin supplements and health advice for pregnant women and mothers, and immunizations for children. In addition, KHEL continues to support the medical needs of several children

who have chronic illnesses due to poor nutrition and unsanitary living conditions. Without our continued aid, these children will die.

### **Milk and Meals**



Mrs. Chatterjee's many years running the LDA kitchen facilitated KHEL's ability to provide hot meals and milk for children. Partly due to her retirement, the milk and meals program has now progressed to a dry rations distribution twice a month of powdered milk, legumes and cereals to share with their families. Also prompting this change are the additional duties that come with being a government recognized school. The teaching staff no longer has spare time during the school day to assist in the kitchen so KHEL would need to hire several fulltime workers to deal with meals and milk; this is not financially viable. With the urbanization of the Dehradun area, the quality of bulk purchased milk had become quite poor and the costs for food and cooking equipment such as gas are rising so KHEL is able to provide a better quality of milk and other dry rations to the children by eliminating the overheads of maintaining a kitchen and additional staff. Finally, many religious holidays include fasting that can extend to as much as 40 days (yes, the little children take part in this). By distributing dry rations that can be used any time during the month, KHEL is able to take part in the life of the colony in a more direct and egalitarian manner. Mrs. Chatterjee's strict rules regarding cleanliness kept the KHEL kitchen hygienic and efficient and her dedication to the health of the children will be remembered by everyone at KHEL.

In addition to KHEL losing Mrs. Chatterjee to a well-deserved retirement, distributing fresh milk to poor children was the first service that KHEL provided and it is with mixed feelings and an understanding that needs change that we have let this program evolve to better serve the community.

## **EDUCATION**

### **School Recognition**

In 2003, KHEL and Lakshmi Devi Academy received formal recognition from the state of Uttaranchal. The recognition of LDA comes at a crucial time; beginning with the 2003 school year, there is a state board exam that must be completed at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Without school recognition, it is difficult for the children to take the exam. In the past there was only one school in the Dehradun area that had been willing to accept our children when they left LDA after fifth grade. Now that LDA is officially recognized, our

children can no longer be discriminated against because of their impoverished background. On the road to integrating our kids into the society around them, one very important step has been accomplished. In addition to KHEL's charitable contributions to the communities we serve, we are very proud to be a part of a global movement that breaks down oppressive beliefs and works for social transformation. Now, our kids are able to attend any school in Uttaranchal.

School recognition has led to much more work for the LDA teachers, as they are required to administer monthly tests to all the 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders and to keep up-to-date and accurate records of the test results which can be checked at any time by the UA State Recognition Board. The teachers have worked hard this year to understand what is required of them and to meet the various requirements necessary to keep LDA in good standing with the Uttaranchal government.

In anticipation of the recognized status, an administrator was hired earlier this year to take care of the required paperwork and other administrative duties associated with recognition, finances and general management of LDA. Mr. Roy is a retired government worker who brings many years of experience to this new position. He and Mrs. Manmati Subba, the Acting Headmistress, work closely to ensure the smooth operation of LDA.

### **Workshop**

As KHEL Management, we believe in adapting our organization and methods of doing business to suit the changing times in India. One of the many changes that has slowly been occurring is the need of the teachers and other staff at LDA to become more professional and confident in their work and in their lives. As they grow into their new roles, a certain amount of independence is becoming necessary. In order to help facilitate this process, KHEL approached Atem Ramsundersingh and the Holland group. With the assistance of Manish Dixit, Professor Prakash Dixit and Dr. Kulwant Singh, a planning workshop took place at Sadhaka Grama in which the teachers and other LDA staff expressed their needs in a constructive manner and began to formulate plans to achieve their desires. KHEL wholeheartedly supports this endeavour and will continue to monitor the situation while working with the teachers to build a plan that fulfills the needs of the staff without compromising our primary mission of educating impoverished children. This is an ongoing project and KHEL appreciates the time and effort taken by Manish, Prakash, Kulwant and Atem, as well as their expertise and advice.

### **Further Education**

The future plans for LDA are currently being restructured. Part of this plan will be a comprehensive analysis of which teachers need to have their academic degrees and skills upgraded over the next 3-5 years.

Bhagwat Prasad, Assistant to the Manager, upgraded his computer skills last year so that he could further assist Beni Bhatt, Manager.

KHEL partially supports four college students who are currently studying in their second year of BA and one student in first year MA; all of them are women.

## LAUGHTER

### Saraswati



Is marriage an education? If it is, then Saraswati Bhadri has embarked on the education of a lifetime! Saraswati is a long time member of the KHEL community through her familial ties with KHEL's Manager and the assistance that KHEL has given her over many years for her education. She was also a KHEL teacher while studying for her MA. In a cross-cultural moment that is slated to last at least a lifetime, Saraswati met Aaron, one of Swami Veda's students who is frequently in India. When we say at KHEL that we educate people in order to let them make their own decisions, we really mean it! With the cooperation of Saraswati's family and the blessings and guidance of Swami Veda, Saraswati and Aaron were married with much jubilation at Sadhana Mandir, on the banks of the river Ganga. They are currently living in Minneapolis. Saraswati is adjusting to life in America and is attending university. When she is more settled, she has expressed an interest in working with KHEL. This is a unique opportunity for KHEL since it is the first time that someone with experience of KHEL in both India and the US (other than an Arya family member) will be volunteering for KHEL!

### Visit to Italy

Since taking over the running of KHEL two years ago, Stomy has been very busy in India. On her way back to the US in December, she and her elder daughter, Shalini, stopped over in Florence, Italy, to visit the Italian donor group. It was a wonderful trip and seemed more like a vacation than 'work', thanks to the kind and generous hospitality of Christina, Ruth, Danilo and Francesca and last but not least, Debora and Chris, who were especially kind in giving us a place to stay, bus passes and sight seeing tours (as well as rescuing us when we got hopelessly lost on the public transit system)! Many congratulations to them both on the recent birth of a baby girl. Stomy met with many members of the group at their Center. A brief meditation was conducted as well as some prayers. It was an interesting meeting of cultures; an Indian-American sitting with Italians, and all of us praying in Sanskrit! Products made by the Sewing Project were well received and many of the pictures drawn by the LDA kids during the Art Competition were given to the group as a thank you for their continued support of KHEL's work.

After spending two years volunteering for KHEL in India, the responsibilities of family life have made it necessary for Stomy to spend more time in the US. She can be reached at [stomy@khelcharities.org](mailto:stomy@khelcharities.org).

### **Friends and Guests**

There were many visitors to KHEL in 2003. The Stutt family from Wisconsin, Linda, Mary, Steve and Ameeta from Minneapolis, Maya and Miles from Tel Aviv, Professor Prakash Dixit and Dr. Anne Glazier from Sadhaka Grama, Dr. Rekha Aggarwal of Dehradun, the Nasrullah family of Holland, Savitr and Usas of Seattle, the Ramsundersingh family, Manish and Hame. The presence of visitors at LDA is a powerful message to the teachers that there is a global community that supports their continued efforts to uplift and educate marginalized children.

### **Sports Day**



Sports Day is always fun for the children and takes place yearly on Children's Day. The children took part in running races and prizes were given to the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners in each grade. The children especially enjoy competing in the Fruit Race, where they are required to pause half way through the race to eat!

### **Art Competition**

An inter-school Art Competition was conducted last year for 74 local school children in grades 3 to 5. The art was excellent and varied and the children thoroughly enjoyed taking part, especially since they were given the opportunity to compete with six other schools. Prizes ranged from rs300 for Overall Best to rs50 Consolation prizes. All children were awarded a Certificate of Participation.

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

What are the three rules for running a successful non-governmental development organization? Sustainability, sustainability, sustainability! Through your donations over the years, KHEL has educated two generations of children. Now, we want to help those same children, their families and the larger community learn the necessary skills to become self-supporting. By purchasing products made by the Sewing Project and other artisans of the area, you become directly linked to the 'global food chain' in a positive, healthy and nurturing way and, in purchasing gift items from KHEL, we know you will receive the best gift of all: the satisfaction that comes from helping others to help themselves. Please support a future of Kindness, Health, Education and Laughter not only by donating but also by purchasing our handcrafted, lovingly made products.

### **Fund Raising**

Apart from our regular fund raising efforts, we have recently been able to obtain 80G status in India, which allows a donor in India to receive a tax deduction when making a donation to KHEL. With this status, we will be able to pursue the burgeoning Indian middle class and will hopefully be able to develop a wider Indian donor base over the next few years. It has taken over four years of sustained effort to obtain this status, so we are very pleased that we will finally be able to look for local funding.

Thanks to Hame Persaud's company, Himalayan Wisdoms, for committing to donate a percentage of net profits to KHEL! Please visit his website at [www.himalayanwisdoms.com](http://www.himalayanwisdoms.com) to check out the all-natural, ayurvedic products and remember that every purchase helps KHEL.

### **Sewing Project and Other Items for Sale**



Our Sewing Project enables poor women to exercise their right to a fairly earned income, improve their standard of living and gain a sense of self-confidence in an environment where impoverished women are often at the bottom of the social ladder. The Sewing Project provides a community support network for women and their families. We are currently working on a plan to support the revival and preservation of traditional handicrafts that are struggling to compete with huge multi-national ventures that utilize sweatshop labor. Beautiful textile goods from India are now a familiar sight in many shops around the USA and Europe. Unfortunately, they often come with the hidden costs of overseas sweatshop or child labor.

The Sewing Project designed and created wonderful holiday products that sold very well at the Meditation Center in October 2003, where Saumy, Stomy and Dharani (Stomy's 8 year old daughter who lived with her for a year in India while Stomy was volunteering for KHEL) made a joint presentation. Christmas stockings, tree skirts, mantle runners and holiday ornaments were well made and there was much enthusiasm from the shoppers! Over \$1,000 was raised in one day. If you or someone you know is interested in having a KHEL Sale in their community, please email Stomy. This is a simple and effective way to volunteer a small amount of time to KHEL's fund raising efforts; by selling these items, you will be promoting KHEL while sending your friends home with some wonderful gift items! If you'd like to know more about our products, please email Stomy.

In addition, many purchasers were interested in the holiday cards designed by the LDA school kids, as well as the tree-free paper products made by The Living Tree in

Dehradun, a community based company that specializes in utilizing remnants of the cotton and silk industries to create beautiful, handmade stationery, wrapping paper, journals and other products. Thanks to Urban Haas and Hame Persaud for their contributions that made it possible to print the cards.

We were honored to supply Sadhaka Grama with new curtains for the Gurukulum building; thanks to Dr. Anne Glazier for thinking of us and being patient while we figured out how to measure and make curtains!

### **THANK YOU**

Without volunteers, KHEL wouldn't exist! There are many people who help in different ways. Marcia takes care of all those thank you notes and offers her help during lectures and sales. Jyoti makes sure that Marcia receives the necessary information so that Marcia can say thank you to all our donors! Mayanne takes care of our banking. Sandra let us borrow her drying rack so that we could display our handmade paper. Aaron arranged our lecture. Saraswati took time out of her brother's wedding to attend the workshop with the teachers. Katy gives her time to a charitable organization that raises funds so KHEL can feed kids. Atem and Manish raise funds for our projects and, along with Prakash and Kulwant, organized the workshop for the teachers. Ananta and all the other Meditation Center Board members volunteer their time to guide the Center, which helps KHEL to continue receiving donations. Dan has kept up-to-date information for KHEL on Swami Veda's website while we continue to work on our own site. Sharada and Shanta collect funds in Canada. Bhai Harry and his music group raised funds. Shalini helped source textiles for many of the Sewing Project items and scanned and emailed numerous photos. The staff at Sadhaka Grama arranged the workshop. Swami Veda gave us his loving guidance and yummy, sugary Indian sweets!

Thanks to all our donors especially Katy, Horst, Barb and Bob, Atem and other donors from Holland, Danilo and our friends in Italy, Tori, Carolyn and David, Suman, Anne, Helen, Savitri, Steve, Gail, Lila, Marvin and also all of our friends who regularly donate so that we can continue the work we are doing.

Although they aren't volunteers, the commitment of the KHEL staff in India needs to be recognized. Beni, KHEL's Manager, works with diligence and tenacity even when our strange American ways confuse him! Without his hard work and commitment, KHEL wouldn't be able to help anyone. The teaching staff at LDA has worked harder than usual this past year to understand what is expected of them and to implement all the new rules that now apply due to the school recognition. Year after year they show their commitment to helping the children of their community.

The extended families of Arya, Bhajan, Haas, Persaud and Mohan Ram also deserve a thank you! Without the support of our family, those of us who volunteer our time for KHEL would not be able to do so; Saumy's husband, Urban, who let her dash off to India with ten days notice and has provided, among other things, technical support; Stomy's family, Hem, Shalini and Dharani, who sacrificed two years of family life so that Stomy could be a fulltime, hands-on volunteer for KHEL in India and to both Hem and Urban

for being our sounding boards and our financial backbones; Kani and Angi who have given their time to assist Ammaji and Maji's siblings who provide financial, professional and moral support.

And what of Ammaji? Can there be a way to thank her for what she has done for an entire community of people? She has changed the course of lives, of generations of lives, she has dedicated her own life to teach, guide, raise funds, feed, nurture and love the staff and children of KHEL. Ammaji tells us every few months that she is retired, but then we ask her advice again, still looking for her guidance not only as her children but also as the next generation of KHEL management/volunteers. Our lives are changed, too, from her work; we have seen what one person can achieve, what good one person can do and what strength and determination it takes to do it.



“After two decades of selfless service and a having endured a leprosy related illness that stole the vision in her right eye, she is still motivated to help others, expecting naught in return.”

From an essay about Ammaji written by her granddaughter, Shalini  
Thank you, Ammaji, for everything.

As the world is changing, so is India. To continue to be effective in development work, KHEL is rethinking itself, looking for alliances and avenues of influence, and actively promoting sustainable self-reliance among its staff and the people it serves.

“The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches, but reveal to them their own.”

Thank you for your continued support and contributions as we work toward this goal!

In Service,

Saumya Arya Haas  
Assistant Director



Stomya Arya Persaud  
Director