

Friends of Kolkata's Elderly

January - June 2014

We are glad to celebrate the 10th anniversary of FOKE this year! The journey till date has been both rewarding and challenging. Twenty four hours care for the elderly is not an easy task, especially when they are sick and dying. Sometimes their swinging moods, dementia and mental imbalance are hard to cope with, but still it is worth all the effort to see them all settled and secured at end of the day! Without the dedication of the staff, our two homes would not exist! At this end we have the 'doers,' and on the other side we have the 'givers' and 'supporters' without whom these last 10 years would not be a reality! Your continued support all these years have made the journey possible. Your faith in us and the willingness to serve the cause is much appreciated. This newsletter is dedicated to all those without whom care for the 'deprived elderly' would not be a reality! Thanks to all!

Arrival of new members: Kalpana Ghosh: was referred to us by a rescue team via

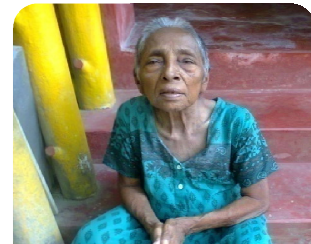


Hope Foundation Hospital for residential care. The first few days were difficult, but she is settling in slowly with the family. Kalpana is unmarried and all her life she has worked as a home help for different families till the time she had to stop. She has some relations but they didn't take her responsibility. She started to live on the premises of a high-rise building where the local police identified her and referred her for residential care.



Srimoti, helpless on the street.

Srimoti was identified near Loreto Sealdah School. After some conversation it was clear that Srimoti needed help. We took her immediately for medical checkups in Dr. Fuad Halim's Nursing home and then on 2nd May 2014, both Kalpana and Srimoti joined our Madhubati family.



Srimoti at home in Madhubati

Bharati Chakraborty: She was with us for about 2 months. From day one she was under medical care as she had neurological problems and high blood pressure. On 10th July, a massive attack took away every chance we had of helping her. Her death was instant. Bharati was educated till class X, which enabled her to earn all her life. In the last one year her nerves and mind were not in her control. She was unmarried and her brother and few friends did not want to take the



responsibility for her, hence a parent of Loreto Sealdah School requested us to consider her for residential care.

In search of freedom: **Shefali** preferred to return to her rented house where she feels she will have more freedom. She is educated and also has some money in the bank; hence she felt she can look after herself. We respect her decision and referred her back to Hope hospital (as she came through Hope) who then handed her to the police so that they can help her to settle in her own place.



Busy at work: All our members (sometimes the staff) in



Madhubati are enjoying assembling the pen covers in bulk as received from a local factory. This has given all a great sense of togetherness and they receive a token amount for the job from the factory. Till date they have saved Rs.1430/-which they will spend as they desire. The work therapy has reduced fights in the house and let peace prevail!

Fighting for Rights: Mrs Kalyani Lahiri, whom we have been sponsoring in a paid old-age home for over a year, ultimately applied to fight

a case against her son! We contacted the NGO-'Kritika', which deals with legal issues, last year while Mr. Lahiri was still alive. It took some time to materialize but the ball has started rolling. We assisted Mrs Lahiri to Alipore court where she submitted her first written complaint against her son for avoiding his responsibility. (Case No. ACM 391/2014). After the first notice, the son has to appear in court. The son may file a written objection and written statement, which will be followed by an interim hearing and an interim order. Mrs Lahiri will be asked to appear in court one more day to give evidence and the son also will be given a chance to give evidence after which there will be argument and judgement. The next date is 26th August 2014 and we will appear on behalf of Mrs. Lahiri as she is too frail to travel. The process is long but as an organization we want justice for Mrs. Lahiri. Please pray!



On the non residential care we are still catering to the 4 elderly with Rs. 500 per month and with necessary medical support. We also provide medical support to those needy elderly who we identify throughout the year.

Medical Intervention: Champa continues to follow up all medical needs of each member. Savitri is one of the frailest members now in Bhalobasha. She is suffering from acute dementia. Mamota, Parveen, Lovlina, Ganga, Savitri, Khudiram & Mahadev were hospitalized at different times for treatment.



Blanket distribution: This year we did the distribution on 2nd January 2014. 200 blankets were distributed on different streets of Calcutta from our medical van. We distributed blankets to some of our poor parents in Madhubati and to some rickshaw pullers near Bhalobasha. We are very grateful to Raju Buxani for paying for the blankets as well as assisting us in the distribution throughout the night.



Giving someone a chance: A few yards away from Loreto Sealdah a lady who was in an awful condition could not be ignored by us! We requested the Missionaries of Charity, made provisions to collect her and after reporting to the local police, handed her over to the Sisters.



Maintenance in the homes: We were faced with a major problem this term with the submersible pump in the Madhubati home. We are very grateful to Mr. Sahadev Som, our team-member, who helped with the repair within a few days so that we now have a regular supply. However, in extreme heat the water level goes down and the water supply is not regular. Thank god we have the pond!!



We have replaced most old fans with new ones in both homes and also have new water pumps in the houses.

This year we had our own sunflower garden in Madhubati. Along with vegetables we were able to grow these beautiful sunflowers to produce cooking oil. In both homes we try to grow our own vegetables as much as possible

Staff Appreciation Day: On 5th April 2014 we organized the staff appreciation day after a gap of two years. Kerry Luxton, who was in Calcutta for more than 2 months, helped to organize and purchase all gifts etc along with Champa. We booked Palm Village (a resort situated between our two homes) and started the day with a yummy breakfast followed by a staff meeting. We all enjoyed several games



before we had a buffet lunch. Later we had a singing competition sitting cosily in an air conditioned room as the temperature outside was above 36 degrees celsius. We ended with a game of musical chair. The bonus was having Kerry



with us. We took the opportunity to surprise her by celebrating her forthcoming birthday (which was the following day) with cake and gifts. Kerry was very touched by this gesture. We also took the opportunity to congratulate Champa Choudhury on her new married life and presented her with a wedding gift from all of us in FOKE. Every staff member received gifts in addition to the first, second and third prizes for the different sports / activities.

News from the Follow-up School in Madhubati : In this session we have 41 boys and 42 girls (total 83) with 4 teachers. This year Concern India Foundation, Kolkata, again funded the running costs of the follow - up school. In the budget we have made provisions for teachers' training, life skill training and external evaluation of the students.



- ❖ For the first time this year on 18th January, 20 students from Madhubati follow-up school were invited by Concern India - Kolkata to participate in their sports programme held in Modern High School. It was a great experience for the children and 3 medals were won. The children were given T-shirts, caps, white sports shoes and nice food packets.



- ❖ Sports programme in Loreto Entally was organised by Friends of Calcutta : Ireland. For the last 3 years the children from our follow-up school in Madhubati have been participating in this very exciting sports and cultural programme. Our children made us proud yet again by winning the Champions cup consecutively for the second year.

- ❖ On 25th January we had our own Annual Sports Day with the children and members. We were glad that Fr. Pat Hogan and his group from Calcutta Calling - Ireland were also present to enjoy the day with us!

- ❖ Like every year we celebrated Netaji's Birthday, Republic day, Saraswati Puja and Holi.



- ❖ For the first time, we celebrated International Women's Day this year - honouring our teachers/ female staff and residents! The children organised a special cultural programme for everybody to enjoy.

- ❖ A general health camp was organised for the villagers, students and members in Madhubati. Every child also received de-worming tablets. The

members in Bhalobasha were also given checkups. Thanks to Champa and the staff for taking the initiative.

- ❖ In March one of our teachers, Rupa Mukherjee, resigned to get married. We interviewed 10 local women for the post through written, oral and class demonstrations. Madhumita Mondal was selected, and joined from 1st April 2014.
- ❖ 5 days training by Mrs. Anita Deb is already over with the teachers. The teachers are now able to prepare their own teaching learning materials for more effective teaching.



Self Help Group: Savings at a glance:

Name of SHG	Forming year	Monthly subs	No of mothers	Savings
PRNOTI	May 2008	30/-	14	36,080/-
JOYTI	MAY 2008	30/-	14	36,500/-
MINOTI	JAN 2009	30/-	14	32,140/-
BONOPHOL	JULY 2012	30/-	12	12,600/-
TOTAL			54 women	1,17,320 (approx Euro 1465)

A member in Pronoti SHG has taken up a loan to buy a small piece of land for cultivation while another lady in Jyoti SHG has partnership in a construction business. Some are using their loan for cultivation purposes. Previously, they have spent their loans on purchasing agricultural machinery, so they can increase the production and make more profit from their fields.



Visit from friends:

We were happy to welcome **Maura Allen** from Ireland this year. Like every other year in the past, she has stored both our homes with the necessary toiletries, kitchen and household goods! Her commitment is amazing and inspiring.

Fr. Pat Hogan and his group 'Calcutta Calling' enjoyed the Annual Sports Day with us. Again, they have very generously donated the running costs of the medical van and the salary of Raghavendra (our driver) for this year. Thanks to all in Calcutta Calling!

Kerry Luxton: Like last year she has raised funds for FOKE through unique story telling sessions, where each story teller has an interesting and inspiring story to share! Kerry was delighted to spend quality time with the staff and members in both homes. All week Kerry helped Sr. Cyril with her many administrative works in Loreto Entally, while most weekends were spent with us. Thanks Kerry for your time and love for our work. Jenni and a few friends of Kerry knitted beautiful blankets for our ladies and they were delighted with them. Thanks for your beautiful gifts.



Michael Symonds from Australia, after his extensive travel for helping a cause in Bangladesh, took time out to visit all our members. Thanks Michael for your strong support.

Michael Brydon, Gai & friends c/o Geraldine Cullen from Australia, Liam Ashely, Brian, Allen and Michael O'Reilly from Ireland also visited our homes during their trip to Kolkata. Thanks to all for taking out time from their busy schedules and other important commitments. Thank you Fr. Sean for visiting Sanghita at Loreto School.



Two visits were made by Ms. Sudakshina Aich from Concern India as part of their monitoring visit.

FOKE is thankful to each and every donor, friend and well-wisher for their continuous support, encouragement and generosity. We are planning for an extension in Bhalobasha and as we have walked hand in hand for the last ten years, we pray to God to bless us all with good health and willingness so that we may walk many more miles ahead, spreading the joy of giving and receiving.

God bless.

From all in FOKE

