



# FRIENDS OF KOLKATA'S ELDERLY

NEWSLETTER: JULY - DECEMBER 2018

This phase in FOKE is a reward! We have one new member Dipali, and will provide home to a very deserving elderly lady from the Government Hospital after the proceedings are completed - which means, Charunibash home will be full to its brim! We were able to rescue and rehabilitate 3 younger women who were in dire need of mental wellbeing and medical care.



In November Sanghita was away for 3 weeks, in Sydney to attend the marriage of Kerry's beautiful daughter Georgie with Bails and also to meet the supporters of FOKE in Sydney. The trip was worth making as it was a great opportunity to thank well-wishers and donors on a more personal basis. During Sanghita's physical absence from Kolkata it was wonderful to witness the commitment of the FOKE Committee members and staff as each one took extra initiative to ensure the smooth running of the homes and carry out all the extra activities related to FOKE. .

It is also very heart-warming to see that some of our members got very seriously involved into making paper bags which is a great work therapy. The proceeds from the sale of the paper bags is saved by the members which they use according to their wish.







**WELCOME HOME!**



**NEW MEMBER**

### **DIPALI MUKHERJEE**

Dipali Mukherjee was referred by the local Milan Sangha Club in Dum Dum. She was rescued on 11.10.18, with kind support of the staff of Calcutta Rescue and our President; after the general diary at the local Police Station she was admitted in Dr. Fuad Halim's Nursing Home. On 23.10.18 Dipali came home to join her family in Charunibash. For the last 7- 8 years she was on the street which has affected her mentally and physically. Dipali has a good family background and their house still exists in the locality, but it was found that her relatives sold the property and have settled abroad! There seems to be a family conflict and Dipali must have been disowned for reasons yet unknown. Dipali is a sad case of 'being left alone'! We are glad to give a family to her.

### **HORNS OF A DILEMMA**

Kalyani Das, who is living with us since 2015, was eligible to receive a pension after her husband's death. The son was identified but sadly died in an accident, a year after Kalyani came to us. The daughter, who refused to even recognize her mother when we met her for the first time in 2015, was made to take responsibility of obtaining the due pension, with the threat of a legal notice by our legal advisor Setu Das Roy. After much dialogue and cross words, the daughter finally committed and took necessary action to secure the due pension for her mother. The daughter is living with her in-laws and declines to look after Kalyani. The pension amount is not sufficient to transfer Kalyani into a paid old age home and she pleads us not to shift her anywhere else. Kalyani's physical situation doesn't allow much movement so she is paranoid with the thought of being moved elsewhere. Our homes are free hence we are in a dilemma with Kalyani's situation. However, we had to continue supporting her; her pension amount is solely used on her medical and regular physiotherapy. This has given her the peace she deserves.







## SHAKUNTALA

RIP 29.12.18

Shakuntala amongst all the festivities quietly slipped away on 29th December. She was with us from October 2014, referred by Hive-India and Hope Foundation Hospital. When she first came to us, her name was not known. One evening she sat with the children in Madhubati and wrote 'Shakuntala' in Hindi and that is how we found out her name. May she Rest in Peace.



## FOLLOW UP SCHOOL

### Bhalobasha:

Bhlaobasha presently has 24 children (14 boys and 10 girls). 3 Parents meetings were carried out where Minu Mondal as resource person helped the mothers to understand the role of parents in children's life; child abuse, healthy living and taking care of the environment. Children are evaluated on a regular basis to check their progress. Suprobha Mishra - our elderly member also teaches few children on a regular basis which keeps her busy.

### Charunibash:

In Charunibash, presently we have 44 children ( 21 boys and 23 girls). 2 parents meetings were held and the last one was conducted by Minu on general health, child safety measures, to avoid unnecessary pressure on children and regularity in schools. Home visits are done when children are absent for more than a week. In both centres we encourage the children to be involved with the elderly through various events.







## SELF HELP GROUPS

During this term total 27 meetings were held with the groups. Radharani Chakroborty and Preeti Paul took loans of Rs.10,000/- and 15,000 respectively for cultivation. None of them have their own land but they risked using the loan for cultivating in rented land. They made the profit and paid back their loan within 6 months. Nila Roy took a loan of Rs. 20,000/- for repairing her house. She has returned back all the money with interest. The loan recovery is 100% successful

Each group meets once a month and if needed twice; but sometimes they do miss when there is heavy work in the fields as agriculture is still a major source of income.

Bangio Gramin Bikas Bank has now new rules for those who hold the cash credit accounts; the account holders, in this case our SHG, will need to use 50% of their own savings and the rest the bank will provide. The Bank is willing to help the group with bigger amount under the Government SHG schemes. The groups were little confused about these rules hence for the last three months' deposits were irregular, but are now settled.

NAME OF SHG	FROM YEAR	MEMBERS	MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION	SAVINGS TILL DEC 17	BANK FACILITY
PRONOTI	MAY 2008	14	₹30	₹77,800	₹40,000
JYOTI	MAY 2008	14	₹30	₹77,620	₹40,000
MINOTI	JAN 2009	14	₹30	₹67,200	
				<b>₹2,22,620</b>	

## MEDICAL CAMP

On 1st August we had a dental check-up in Bhalobasha for all our members, staff and 10 locals. On 2nd October a follow-up health check up was carried out by the doctors of Indian Public Health Association in both homes for the children as well as the members and staff. More than 50 people and all the members and staff in both places benefitted from this camp. We supported an eye check-up camp by a non-registered group 'Sevayan', by connecting them under the CSR programme of GKB Opticals, and signed the relevant documents on their behalf.



## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND TRAINING

We initiated the training in Tailoring for 6 young girls in Madhubati by sponsoring their first admission fee and monthly fees. They are all paying their own fees now excepting Sangeeta Bayen. They have completed 6 months in November and will continue for another 6 months.



## NON-RESIDENT MEMBERS

We continue to sponsor the medicine and pay Rs. 500 to our 3 non-resident elderly ladies and daily lunch is provided to 2 elderly male members. Kali Ghosh, was supported with his operation few years back. He needed to replace his old crutch which we were happy to provide.



## MEDICAL NEWS

**Jaishree** since rescued had many tests and treatment prior to the major hysterectomy operation. She was checked in NRS, SNP Hospital and was finally admitted in a nursing home under the supervision of Dr. Fuad Halim for the Vaginal Hysterectomy with Pelvic Floor Repair and was operated on 19.12.18. We thank Caring Hearts Foundation for sponsoring 75% of this cost.

**Shyamoli** is a patient of high blood sugar and was examined in VSGH from where she was taken to our home.

**Maya Adhikary** was treated at the orthopaedic OPD in Diamond Harbour State Hospital.

**Jenny** had a minor stroke and was admitted in VSGH and is recovering well.

For **Hashikhushi** we are continuing the follow up treatment for the deep vein infection in NRS.

During this term we had to admit **Kamala, Tara, Shakuntala, Lovely** and **Khudiram** in HOPE hospital for check-up and follow up treatment.

All our members are on continues medical supervision, thanks to our medical co-ordinator Champa, who closely monitors this critical area.







## VOLUNTEERS

Rama Ghotoskar only 19 years old, came from Pune to volunteer at FOKE, and amazed us all! Rama has no inhibition, hence the moment she entered Charunibash, she gelled in with all the members and staff. She found jobs to do and made herself useful; the 5 days of her stay in Charunibash and later 3 days in Bhalobasha was spread between the members and the children with art/craft, serving lunch, playing indoor games and helping the staff. On her return she shared her thoughts with us.



When I first got to Madhubati, I was in awe. It was very beautiful. I walked in and the elderly were sitting in the veranda basking in the sun. They were so cute! Before I said anything, just smiled and nodded, two of the grandmothers spontaneously hugged me: the warmest hugs I have received!

I got to spend five whole days there and over that time I understood how things functioned. In the mornings, the elderly were bathed by the loving staff, and I helped serve them tea and breakfast. After tea and breakfast, they would have a lot of free time till lunch. Maya Dida would spend time making paper bags, and she would pray in the mornings and evenings in the worshipping room. Lovline Dida would knit the most beautiful sweaters. Tara Dida always burst the silence with her rhymes, and she really enjoyed singing and dancing!

I can't speak Bengali (and would make do with some Hindi), but by the last day, I was able to understand some. Hashikhushi who can't talk at all, and communicates with actions, was the most expressive. She is childlike, full of pranks, and always had me smiling.

Dadu and Hashikhushi made drawings when I handed them paper and crayons. I would sit with the grandmothers sometimes, and help peel the vegetables. Dadu would also join. I taught Maya dida how to make stars with quilling paper, and when I sat with Lovline dida, and watched her knit, I showed her how to weave a bracelet

The kids here, were very tiny and cute, and very eager to learn! They were excited to participate in every activity, and they conversed with me in Hindi, as much as they could. We made New Year's Greeting cards, the elder kids learned how to make paper stars out of quilling paper, and we made a decoration chain out of quilling paper. They



were so excited about it, that we hung it up on the veranda immediately!

Over my time there I realized that the old people liked having someone to talk to, or sit in silence with. I learnt that this was not just an organization to the abandoned elderly, but it was a proper home. They were all each others family, and they took care of each other, and they were showered with great love and care every day. And I realized that they did not treat me like an outsider, but like I was one of them.

I like how birthdays are celebrated here too, as they don't remember their real birthdays, the day they came to the Old age home is celebrated as their birthday. The elderly get to cut their cake and blow the candles, and everybody sings the birthday song, and gives out warm hugs. I really haven't seen any old person till now celebrate their birthdays like this. Not even my own grandparents.



The Bhalobasha home was very different from the one in Madhubati. The old grandmothers were much more delicate and frail. Many used sticks and walkers, and slept a lot more. Since the hospital is closer to the city, the weaker old grandmothers stay in the city old age home. They didn't engage in activities much, but I still encouraged two grandmothers to make necklaces with me.



Beenapani Dida, read out a newspaper to me and Jaishree Dida in Bengali one morning. She explained the news to me in Hindi. It felt nice to hear her read out loud. It was like she was telling me a story. I got to hear about their past too. All the grandmothers are really emotionally strong to be able to go through such trauma, and still have a smile on their face, and take the little joy of life. Their strength inspired me.

I had gone there with a purpose to engage myself with the elderly and the kids, and share ideas and whatever little amount of knowledge I have, but I think I came back learning much more from them, and I am happy about that. It has contributed to my self growth as a person, and my perspective of this world.

This has been one of the eye-opening, emotional, experiences for me, which I know I will never forget in my life.

I look forward to seeing everyone again next year, because I am definitely coming back!

**RAMA GOTHOSKAR**



Last year **Adrienne** and her son **Aaron** had spent quality time in both homes. This year too they stayed in Charunibash from 15th till 22nd July and organized English lesson for children, and craft with the members. In the evenings indoor games with members were arranged; the staff were also helped with various household chores. The last day was fulfilled with special magic show and lunch for all; we celebrated Khudiram's Birthday and a teary farewell to Adrienne and Aaron.

In Bhalobasha there were similar activities and a party for the children and members with snacks, sweets and gifts. Everyone looks forward to their return even before they leave the country which only shows how much their presence is loved and enjoyed in the homes. Adrienne and Aaron, thanks for your time and commitment.







2018-12-1 1



## VOLUNTEERS

**Suchismita Das** – daughter of Surajit Das ( Co-ordinator - Outreach) only 12 years old travelled with her mother on weekends in December to prepare the students in Charunibash for the Christmas programme. This is so beautiful as it gives the feel of a bond which we experience in families.



## TEACHERS' DAY



## CELEBRATIONS

World Elderly day was celebrated in both homes where the children served them evening tea, snacks and performed songs, dance and skits. Independence Day, Teachers Day, Children's Day, Raksha Bandhan were celebrated during this term.







**PUJO PARIKRAMA**



2018-10-15 18:00



## CELEBRATIONS



**DIWALI**



**CHRISTMAS WITH ABOHOBIKAR**



**CHRISTMAS WITH MELBANDHAN TRUST**

Pujo Parikrama with all the members from each home was on Sasthi and Saptomi. Our members of Bhalobasha were driven in two batches to one big pandal, as autos are no more allowed in the city during the puja days. However, it was perfect because the members are not able for much movements or walks. The puja committee treated us with sweets and cold drinks and the next day special lunch was delivered to Bhalobasha. We were glad that Helen and David, from Calcutta Calling – Ireland were with us to experience the day. Like all years the members in Charunibash moved around in the autos to see several pandals and everyone had ice-cream and puchka. There was special dinner too.

Diwali was celebrated with the same zeal and there was fire- works, crackers and lights donated by Prakash and Jeet like all years.

On 21st and 22nd December we celebrated the Annual Programme in both the homes.

Christmas was made very special this year. There was musical performance by Sunny's group 'Abohobikar' in Charunibash, which was greatly loved by all. Special food packets were sponsored by Punit Agarwal and his friends along with fresh cooked Dosas in Bhalobasha, like last year. Christmas gifts of blankets and chocolates for children in Bhalobasha were donated by 'Melbandhan Trust', headed by Rina Deb. We are very thankful to all of you for coming together and spreading the joy of Christmas in its true sense.

The year ended with the arrival of Sean & Lorraine; the festivities continued & New Year was celebrated with lunch & gifts for everyone in Bhalobasha.



**NEW YEAR WITH SEAN & LORRAINE**

2019-11-1 14:06





2018-7-26 16:51

**SAUS** with a new group of Irish students visited Charunibash and Bhalobasha on 25th and 26th July. Songs, music and activities made the few hours very entertaining and enjoyable.

**Michael Symons** and his daughter **Sophie** spent the day at Madhubati in August.



2018-8-31



2018-10-13 13:00



**VISITORS**

**Calcutta Calling** c/o Fr. Pat Hogan visited Charunibash on 13th October. They had some enjoyable moments with the staff and the members. Calcutta Calling's support is huge in the making of Charunibash home: a derelict building is now a beautiful home to the aged abandoned, because of their support and kindness.

Thanks to the Calcutta Classical Guitar Society, we had classical guitarists visit both the homes. **R2T2** is a young duo (**Tizoc Romero & Raphael Bureau**) from France who visited and performed in Bhalobasha and Madhubati this August.

**Raphaella Smits** is a celebrated guitarist from Belgium who was invited to the Calcutta International Classical Guitar Festival this December. She kindly volunteered to pay us a visit in Madhubati. Raphaella performed beautifully on her 8-string guitar for the children and the members. It was a special day for all of us.







**BANGALI VAIDYA SAMAJ**



**DISHARI**



**RAJU GYNE & HIS FRIENDS**



## **FRIENDS, WELL-WISHERS & THEIR GIFTS TO THE HOMES**

**Bengali Vaidya Samaj** visited Charunibashon 9th October. The lunch for the home was sponsored along with grocery items, phenyl, detergent and adult diapers. **'Dhansiri' C/o Paheli** and her friends visited Bhalobasha and donated diapers, food stuff and other requirements. **'Chollish theke Ashi'** – a group of ladies visited Bhalobasha and donated rice, lintels and fruits. On 29th September a group of ladies visited Charunibash to perform Kirtan (devotional songs) which was much loved by all and everyone joined in to sing and dance. They came with gifts for children and dry food and fruits too. **Soumili** our friend came with saris as gifts for the members and had a great day of music with all in Charunibash. Some of the members played the harmonium too with ease. **Raju Gyne** and his friends with two more groups came in with gifts of stationary and toiletries for the children and members before puja. **DISHARI** – the local women's group – hired a cook and organised a very lavish lunch for their own group of 40 as well as for the members and staff in Bhalobasha. Gifts of sarees and night dresses were made to the members. Mahalaya-The onset of Durgapuja was made very special by this group. **Batlala Joyrampur Puja Committee** gifted the children school bags, pencil boxes and slippers. **Basundhara Flat Owners Association** for donating 10,000 rupees as part of their CSR activity, toward the purchase of 2 fowler beds for the home. **The Institute of International Teachers Training** and **Unish Kuri Magazine from ABP group** for sponsoring household items and lunches as part of their CSR activity during Christmas.

Thank you **Nitin Abhisek**, **Dr.Koushik Pan** who visited individually and contributed. We thank **Suprokash** from **AVIEW** for visiting and advising us on the mental wellbeing of our members



**BATLALA JOYRAMPUR PUJA COMMITTEE**





## MEMORY DONATION

On 26th September, **Dr Ketoki Sharma** like previous years remembered her father by gifting the members with night dresses and sweets.

On 30th September **Priyanka Dey** remembered her mother by arranging lunch and sweets for all in Bhalobasha.

On 7th October **Arundhati Chaudhary**, our committee member treated all the members and staff in both homes in memory of her mother's third death anniversary. The members decorated her mother's photo with flowers from the garden, prayed and made it very special.

22nd October like each year was dedicated remembering **Mrs. Ratna Bagchi's** mother with lunch in both homes.

On 16th November, **Champa Chowdhury** (Medical-co-ordinator) celebrated her mother's first death anniversary where lunch was sponsored in both our homes.

On 25th November **Shila Mitra** a local lady celebrated her father-in-laws death anniversary.

**Mrs. Subhadra Sen** a retired teacher of Loreto School Sealdah celebrated the first death anniversary of her husband in both the homes on 10th December. Her son spoke about his beloved father and everyone became part of the loss. Thank you Mrs. Sen for the special lunch, oranges, sweets and the soft drinks for all of us.

We are grateful to **Mrs. Deepa Dholakia** for donating wheel chairs, walkers and several other medical appliances belonging to her father-in-law Mr. Madhusudan Dholakia.

**Mr. Rajesh Khanna** donated 150 blankets in memory of his father Mr. Khanna, who since 2002 is supplying us blankets for distribution on the streets; he always supported us with extra blankets every time we made a purchase. We are very thankful to Rajesh for his kind gesture.

A special prayer service was arranged in Bhalobasha for the departed souls of Kalyani's husband and son. Kalyani was eager to perform this prayer as she felt that their souls were not in peace. May their soul rest in peace.



**Mrs. Subhadra Sen organised special lunch at both homes on her husband's first death anniversary**



**Champa Chowdhury (medical coordinator) sponsored lunch in both homes on her mother's first death anniversary.**

**Arundhati Chaudhary (committee member) treated all the members and staff in both homes on her mother's third death anniversary.**



**A special prayer service in Bhalobasha for the departed souls of Kalyani's husband and son.**





## SHARING THE JOY OF SPECIAL DAYS

On 3rd August, **Suparna** celebrated her birthday in Charunibash. Special lunch was sponsored and small gifts were given to the staff by their family.

**Dipsikha Chowdhury** celebrated her birthday with high tea in Bhalobasha.

On 30th October **Swarnalata Das**, a long loved friend of FOKE celebrated her birthday in Bhalobasha.



Sunny Mukherjee – our friend and FOKE member organised a lavish lunch to celebrate the birthday of his beautiful daughter **Subhomita** on 23rd september. It was a real family occasion.



## BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

### BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF OUR BELOVED MEMBERS

During this term we celebrated the birthdays of Kalyani, Nimai, Maya, Kamala, Lovely, Khudiram and Ramlati.



## RESCUE AND REHABILITATION

**Barsha**, a young and beautiful girl was spotted. Her dialect was incomprehensible and it was clear as to how vulnerable she was. She readily agreed to join us without any question which meant that she could have been picked up by anyone! We immediately co-ordinated with AVIEW – a NGO which has shelter homes for such young mentally ill women, and they agreed to take Barsha. Veda drove her to the home and within a couple of hours Barsha had a safe place to reside. Barsha has improved and is slowly sharing her story.

**Purnima** about 18 with her child Rekha only 9 months, were fending for themselves. Purnima's mother somehow managed to take care of them by working in people's houses. Purnima and Rekha both had TB and due to their poor condition and being ignorant about the government facilities available they didn't succeed in continuing their treatment. When it was brought to our notice we networked with Hope Hospital and admitted them on 30th October. For more than one and half months Hope Hospital cared for them and now they are under the Mother and Child Care Unit supported by Hope Foundation. FOKE intervened and we thank Samiran Mullick in Hope hospital for the much needed support.



2018-10-30 17:36



**Uma (name given):** On 31st October, with the help of Calcutta Rescue staff, we were able to rescue a very sick and frail women from Baguihati after the message was received from a local. She was totally lost and was not able to speak or say her name. There was not much cooperation from the Police and councillor but few kind hearted locals were determined to get her out of the misery. Because of good networking we were able to rescue her and admit her in Dr. Fuad Halim's nursing home. On 10th November she was discharged and taken to AVIEW –home where she is settling in.

Another very frail elderly woman, name unknown was rescued from the FOKE office area with the help of the local Police and was admitted to the MC Home.

We are very grateful to Calcutta Rescue for providing us with the staff for rescue and they also paid for the pathology cost and medicines for Uma and Dipali as they were also part of these rescue operation. Thank you Suproakash for providing the residential support to Barsha and Uma. Networking with similar organization is a great way to help more people in need.



## RESCUE AND REHABILITATION



## OUTREACH



Our Committee members are extending further support by visiting both ladies in **AVIEW** home whenever possible. Barsha has improved already and is able to talk about her home. Uma is still settling.

We have visited them twice in the last two months and supported them with rations, cooking vessels, bed sheets shawls and blankets. We have introduced our friend Rina Deb and her group Melbandhan Trust for further support.



## ADMINISTRATION

**Sridam Bawlia** – Manager of Charunibash home resigned last September but requested to re-join as his family matters settled. His request was discussed and approved by the Committee and because we were unable to find a suitable person as his replacement, this was a perfect solution. Sridam rejoined from 3rd September and everyone in Charunibash is happy and the house once again has a good team leader.

We had several **maintenance** jobs done in both homes. The drainage pipelines of the ladies bathroom and terrace were re done in Bhalobasha and in Charunibash the ground was dug with rings around, to collect the waste from the house.







## SECRETARY'S NOTE

I was cordially invited by Kerry and Ron to experience the wonderful wedding celebration of their daughter Georgie with Bailey. Their home was so warm and welcoming and both were extremely kind to provide me all the comfort and cares. I made the trip also with the intension to present myself in person and to thank all those who have supported our cause through Kerry and others. Kerry arranged in her own home, for me to meet and speak to friends who support her fundraising activities. This I felt was very effective as it was a personal interaction.

I was invited to the gathering for the Melbourne Cup (Famous annual horse racing event in Melbourne) at Denny's, Kerry's very good friend, who organised lovely food and drinks for more than 20 guests. The race was watched on a big television and the winning money and charity sweeps from this enjoyable event was donated to FOKE; few generous ladies made personal donations too.

I thank Geraldine Cullen for inviting me to Waverly College and School where I spoke to the students of Class Vs and they made a donation from their class collection. Later there was sharing with the senior students too.

Thanks to Steve Ghattas and Gabby Smith for organizing and permitting me within their busy school schedule. Waverly college over the past many years had been supporting FOKE and it was a great opportunity for me to thank them for their kindness.

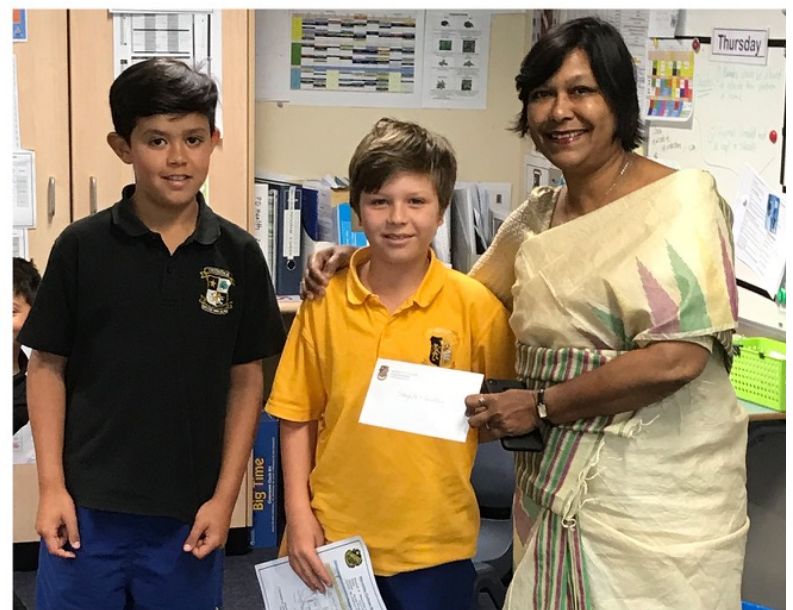
Michael Symons and the members of his group 'Cobra and Mongoose' were very kind to invite me. It is several years, now that we receive support from them and it was so good to see old friends and thank them personally.

I was happy to meet Helen Bird - from Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) - PA to the Director Wayne Tinsey, who promised to keep us in their itinery in September 2019 when in Kolkata. Sadly I missed meeting the Wayne, but he assured to stay connected with the promise to visit the homes.

Kerry arranged to meet the ladies of the "Wrapped with Love" group who donates the beautiful woollen blankets to our members. We also met and spoke about FOKE to the ladies of the 'Avondale Golf Club'.

The 3 weeks were quite full and after so many years I am glad I allowed myself to make it happen. Thank you Kerry and Ron for sponsoring the trip and for making my stay so fruitful and happy.

**In appreciation, Sanghita.**







2018-9-17 11:39



2018-7-25 17:40



We remember all our friends and well-wishers and ask for God's very special blessings on each one of you! We have not been able to mention everyone here, but please do know that each one of you have made a difference in the daily activity of FOKE and we hope you will keep blessing and associating with FOKE. Our loving members, associates and committee members wish each one of you a meaningful New Year. Stay Blessed. From All of us in FOKE.

