



NEWS FROM HOINA HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

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8151 miles + 21 days = An Extended Family

By Manpreet Parmar
Guest from Schreyer Honors College

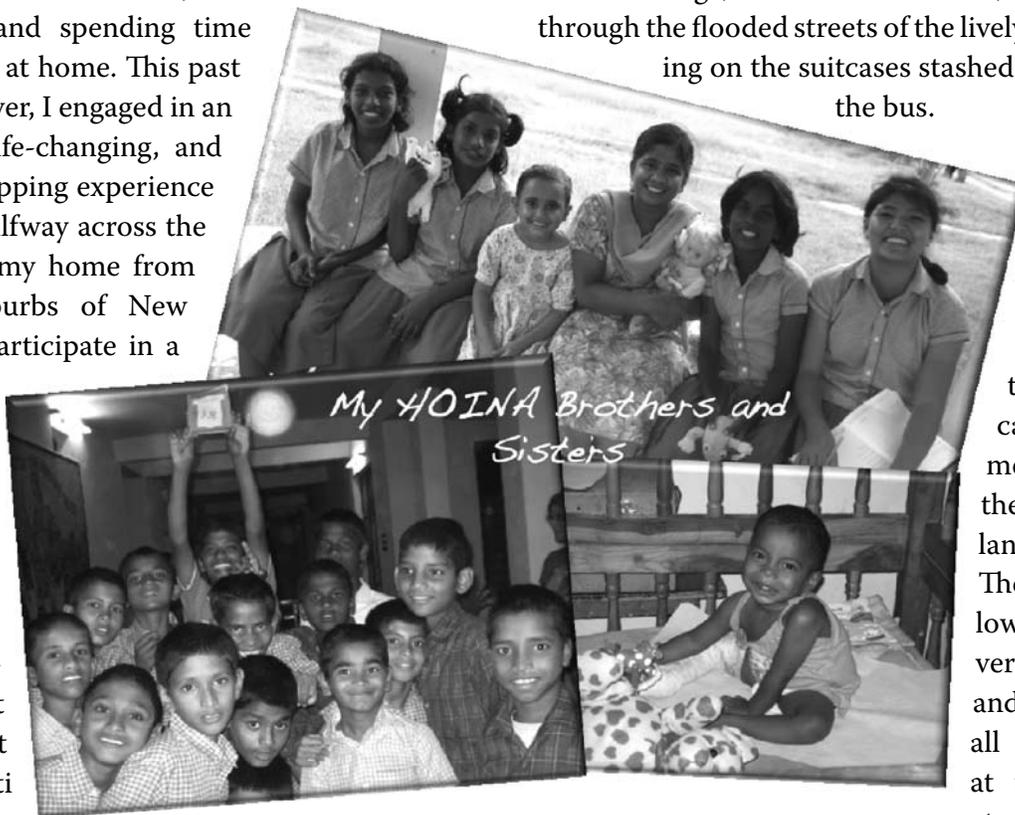
Typically, my summer would consist of an interesting college course or two, lab research, and spending time with my family at home. This past summer, however, I engaged in an eye-opening, life-changing, and simply jaw-dropping experience as I traveled halfway across the globe, leaving my home from the small suburbs of New York City to participate in a HOINA's service-learning in Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh in South India. As I sat on the cold, gray platform in front of Gate 4 at the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport waiting for my next flight, I smelled the sizzling, mouth-watering dish of spicy rice the cook was frying at the "Idli Corner" on my right, the same distinct aroma that snuggles into the dupattas of my shalwar kameez suits whenever I travel to my grandmother's home in Mumbai. Like a broken cassette player, my mind kept repeating the same phrase in my

ears: *I hope the children like me.* Time to board the last plane of my journey already; my nerves began dancing to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

Day 1: I survived. I was sitting across from Mrs. Darlene Large, founder of HOINA, while we weaved through the flooded streets of the lively city, rain pounding on the suitcases stashed on the rooftop of the bus.

The children warmly and whole-heartedly welcomed me from the moment I crossed the front gate, calling me "Aka," meaning sister in their South Indian language, Telegu. They treated my fellow Penn State University classmates and me, along with all the other elders at the Home, with utmost respect, but

with a tinge of informality as though we were already part of their family. As the days passed by, I saw that every child had his or her own blend of confidence and aspirations, sprinkled with a unique talent. Each child was not just a number; each was special and loved in his own way. Mom has tried to nurture their talents through a plethora of activities, from singing and dance



An Extended Family

Continued from page 1

lessons to tutoring in the evenings, trips to church on Sundays, and my favorite: arts and crafts activities.

One Monday, Mom asked me to organize an art lesson in which the children would draw self-portraits. I laid out paint palettes and two long mirrors on the wooden tables in the dining room. As the girls gazed at their glassy reflections, they concentrated on etchings their hand made. The younger girls drew beautiful, long braided pigtails flowing down their shoulders and wide smiles the size of a deeply sliced watermelon in round, pumpkin-shaped heads. I remember one of the girls, Shanti, intently working on her portrait, completely absorbed in her efforts. She tried focusing on every minute detail of her image, from the shape of her eyebrows to the three holes of each button on her school uniform. Some of the older girls had more involved drawings, with full body portraits, open hair, and blue jeans, as if they were painting their ideal self. I was especially touched when I saw that all the girls proudly wrote "I love Mom" on their art pieces. Indeed, every individual painting was important and special in its own way, with a personal touch of love in each.

Final Day: I cried. All morning. My mind could not process the fact that it was time to go back to the United States. My body simply worked like a robot, packing my suitcase and securing the lock on the guesthouse door as I headed for the van leaving for the airport. Throughout my stay, I tried to contribute as much as possible. I conducted English



The boys enjoy a Carrom Board game.

lessons for the staff, teaching them numbers, colors, and days of the week along with basic conversation that was relevant to their job. In addition, I volunteered my time in the kitchen to slice tomatoes and onions, peel radish and carrots, chop beetroot and okra, and split green peppers. Furthermore, I tutored the children in math, English, and Hindi and played "Dog-and-bone" (tag), monkey-in-the-middle, and Carrom Board with them to bring a smile to their faces.

Nonetheless, all this was nothing compared to the value of what I gained from this unique experience. Aside from the satisfaction of engaging in this service opportunity, I became part of a new, larger family whom I truly loved and cared for. The precious memories from this trip will remain embedded in my mind and heart forever. I hope to return to HOINA soon and continue to make a difference. Thank-you for making me part of your family, my HOINA brothers and sisters. ♿

HOINA is a 501(c)3, tax-exempt organization with international headquarters located at:

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The official registration and financial information of Homes of the Indian Nation (HOINA) may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, toll-free in PA, 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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Mail coupon to: **HOINA**

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DEC/2009



Please use this \$ _____ toward the Christmas Fund.

I would like to order _____ sets of notecards.
Here's my check for \$ _____ made out to
HOINA.

I want to sponsor a HOINA boy / girl (*circle one*).
Here is my first monthly gift of \$30.

This gift of \$ _____ is in honor of (please give name
and address of person): _____

(please print clearly)

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE

HOINA Visit Molds My Mission

By Kristina Krecko

Guest from Schreyer Honors College

My recent stay at the HOINA home as a Penn State undergrad is an experience I still think about every day. The trip not only has influenced how I approach my future, but also has deepened my sense of compassion towards others.

Many children at HOINA had come from unfortunate life circumstances, and not a day went by when I didn't hear the heartbreaking story of one of the children—there was the girl, whose intoxicated father had doused her mother in kerosene and lit her on fire, which then burned little Nikki as she ran up to hold onto her mother; a boy who was crippled from polio, whose parents had abandoned him on a train platform; and another girl who was rescued from a train station just one day before a local gang kidnapped nine other children to turn them into beggars. While these sad stories are the realities of many children in India, it is quite a miracle that an organization such as HOINA exists to help give them a safe home and a bright future.

My time at HOINA has definitely changed my life perspective. The kindness, spirituality, and companionship that was shown to us and that existed among all members of the HOINA family instilled a greater sense of compassion in me. Also, as part of our trip, we were able to visit surrounding hospitals, including a leprosy colony and an HIV/AIDS hospital. As I wish to pursue a career in medicine, these experiences



Penn State Student Kristina Krecko with the HOINA children.

profoundly impacted me and opened my eyes to the medicine in a different part of the world. I now hope to be able to return to India to give more of my time to some of the people who need help the most.

The HOINA organization receives no government funding. All of the financial support for this organization stems from churches, service groups, and individual donors. If you would like to help contribute to this worthy cause, you may find more information by visiting www.hoina.org. Please consider making a donation or sponsoring a child—you may not be aware of how meaningful your gift will be. 

CORRECTION

Last month's cover article was written by Tony Arnold. It was attributed to Matthew Branch. We regret the error.



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Sponsorships Make Sweet Surprises



Eluru Mounika

Eluru Mounika was born Jan. 11, 2003. Her father worked as a scooter mechanic until he fell ill with T.B. He died last year. His widow found it difficult to support herself and her two children while working as a day laborer, so she asked that both her daughter and son be admitted to HOINA in June of this year.

Mounika is attending school. She hopes to become a policewoman when she is grown. Blue is her favorite color, and she likes tigers. She enjoys skipping. The HOINA staff describe her as calm, with chubby, smiling cheeks.

To sponsor Mounika or another HOINA child, please complete the coupon on page three and send it to our office with your first monthly gift of \$30. You may sponsor a child in someone else's name, and we have a number of payment methods available. 

Notecards Make Great Gifts



Christmas Giving to HOINA

In an effort to promote HOINA and educate people on the work we do, we are selling batik note cards created by boys at HOINA. One of the batik prints is pictured to the right (the notecards are in color). The front features an original batik, and the back provides a short description of HOINA and the work we do. We are selling them in sets of 8 for \$10 (includes shipping).

These cards make wonderful Christmas cards or thank you notes. To place an order, use the coupon on page three. Thanks for your support.

Our HOINA family has tightened their belts, as we say in the USA, and they are working as a united team. For those who would like to send them or your sponsor child a Christmas card, the address is: The HOINA Campus, Kothasunkarampalem Village, Kothavalesa Mandal, Vizianagaram District 535183, A.P., INDIA.

Or, you may make a gift contribution to our HOINA Christmas Fund by completing the coupon on page three. All donations are a blessing and greatly appreciated.