



NEWS FROM HOINA HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

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Where Miracles Happen

[Editor's Note: In this season when we expect miracles and unexpected joys, one of the Penn State University students, who visited HOINA this past August, shares her thoughts about the trip. Look forward to more news from their adventures overseas in coming newsletter issues. May you each enjoy some special blessing this holiday season. With many thanks from the HOINA Board, Staff, and children.]

By Meryn Oswald
PSU Schreyer Honors College

People who speak of “miracles” rarely actually mean something truly miraculous. Real miracles enhance or preserve life in inexplicable ways. When, at the beginning of my 25 days in India, Mr. Anand told me, “This is where miracles happen,” I didn’t take it literally. While I believed that HOINA was certainly a blessing to all of the children who lived there, I did not expect to witness any miracles. Soon, however, my expectations changed—drastically.

I’ve always considered myself an adaptable person. Living in a residence hall and working as a Scholar Assistant, who creates programs specifically to enhance diversity, led me to believe that I was fully equipped to deal with any culturally different situation I would encounter. But nothing could prepare me for India. When I was accepted into a service-learning program that would take me to HOINA for 25 days to serve in an orphanage, I knew I was taking a risk. Some people love risk-taking, and they get a thrill from it. I am not one of those people. In fact, I felt uncomfortable with my decision to go. But I know that most of the best experiences in life come from situations that at first feel terrifyingly risky, because it is often in these situations that our personal boundaries and



Meryn with three of the HOINA girls

comforts are stretched and expanded.

Serving at HOINA was like nothing I had ever experienced. I woke up at 6:00 in the morning, and worked

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Miracle

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for the home until 10:00 at night. I worked, along with the other students, at tasks such as replacing windows, tiling walls, and tutoring the 300 students living on campus, alongside of Indian staff people and members of the team of students participating in the program. I was forced to work as a team with people I barely knew, and in some cases, with whom I could barely communicate. It was also the height of monsoon season in rural southern India, so the climate and living conditions were foreign to me, and admittedly, uncomfortable.

After the first day of being uncomfortable and regretting my decision to go to India, I realized that my attitude would have to change, and quickly. We cannot serve or learn from an experience if we are afraid to be fully present in it. I found that acknowledging my discomfort, embracing it, and then moving on enabled me to fully invest in my experience. I soon learned to feel comfortable in my new surroundings, and within a week, I felt at home. It was at this point that I began to understand what Anand was talking about when he told me that miracles happen at HOINA.

I realized that at HOINA, I was

witnessing true miracles—the kind that inexplicably enhance life—every day. I saw children playing and engaging in life. Only later did I learn about some of the children's backgrounds. One girl, Nikki, had watched her mother burn alive at the hands of her father. Another boy, Karthik, was brought to HOINA to be protected from his alcoholic and abusive father. Mom and the HOINA staff—people dedicated to loving and helping children escape the bonds of extreme poverty—were enabling these same children to find emotional and academic success. Miracles—inexplicable, wonderful miracles—happen at HOINA. 🧘

A World of Possibilities Awaits

By Dana Ray

PSU Schreyer Honors College

I was helping another student with their biology when Meena sidled up to my side, took my hand, and made me look. She was perched on her knees in her new yellow nightgown and opened up her new backpack with a prim and sweet pride. She showed me her pencils and pens, her grade book, her work book, her first attempts at the English alphabet, and the way the buckles fastened the entire pack shut and how it fit over her shoulder. She smiled as if she knew she had a treasure and simply couldn't wait to share it with me.

Meenakshi (Meena) had arrived at HOINA the same day our group from Penn State did. She and her older sister arrived from a home where their mother was growing too ill to take care of them and were as bewildered as we were about how things at HOINA were supposed to go. I was



blessed to be able to meet and learn to love these two girls who experienced some of the same things I was and be able to see them adjust so beautifully. They both found their feet so quickly, making friends, finding new interests

(like teaching us to count in Telegu) and attending school for the first time. There are new possibilities for them, just as our interactions with them opened new opportunities for us to see and know the world better. 🧘

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Dec/2010

York College Students Abroad: Follow Their Blog!

HOINA Board Member, David Fyfe, is taking students from his geography class called International Service Learning: HOINA overseas for a visit from December 26th to January 15th this year. Please remember them in your prayers for health and safety. The group is excited to visit HOINA


and is looking forward to serving in whatever capacity needed.

One of the students, Matt Peterson (2011, Public Relations) is planning to blog throughout the upcoming trip to India, assuming his internet connection works. The blog will allow viewers to follow everyone

and also be a way for friends and family to experience our journey with us. The blog will have a "comments" section for people to ask us questions and share their thoughts with us while we are in India. Use this link to follow us: <http://yorkcollegeindia.weebly.com>. 

HOINA Toy Drive at York College

The York College students visiting HOINA will host a new or gently-used toy drive at the college in an attempt to collect donations to bring to HOINA. Sarah Conrad (2010, History) is the contact person (sconrad1@ycp.edu). If anyone would like to donate small toys, please send them to:

Sarah Conrad, History and Political Science Department, York College of Pennsylvania, 441 Country Club Rd, York, PA 17403, no later than December 15th. Anything that comes in after that date will be delivered to HOINA on one of David's subsequent trips to India. Thank you! 



Christmas Giving to HOINA

It is not too late to make a gift contribution to our HOINA Christmas Fund by completing the coupon on page three. All donations are a blessing and greatly appreciated. Our staff and children thank you for making their holidays bright!

Many thanks to everyone who made cards for the HOINA children. They will love getting them!

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

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Wedding Bells Ringing

With great joy we announce the first marriage between a HOINA boy and girl! Ch. DharmaRao and J. Meenakshi will wed on December 8, 2010. DharmaRao has been working in Malaysia since leaving HOINA. He will take his new bride there after the wedding. Please join us in praying that the Lord would bless this new couple. Below is a letter he wrote to HOINA to tell his story to you:

My name is Ch. DharmaRao. I joined hostel in 1994 in Bapatla. I stay in HOINA hostel on til 2003. I am study in fourth to tenth class. After 10th standard, I stay in hostel one year. After that year, I went out of the hostel and then I worked in out side four years and then I went to Malaysia on 2006. I came to India in 2009. I saw our hostel. I saw the Kamakshi. I like her and love her. When I went back to Malaysia I nearly happy because I like to marry her. She told me all the problems. I told her it's ok, don't worry about that. I never leave her. She is my life. 🙏



Christmas Baby Needs a Sponsor

Chintala Ravi Teja was born December 25, 2004! He was admitted to HOINA in March of this year. Ravi Teja is one of four children in his family. His father was a herdsman. He suffered from jaundice, and died in September 2008. His mother went to live with his grandmother, but could not care for four children. A local pastor suggested she bring Ravi Teja and his brother Lokesh to HOINA.

Ravi Teja likes tigers. His favorite color is green. He likes playing cricket. He is studying first standard in the local school in Darivadi Kothapalem, and would like to be a policeman when he is grown.

The children love getting pictures and letters from their sponsors: If you would like to sponsor Ravi Teja or any of the other HOINA Children, please fill out the form on page 3. 🙏

