



NEWS FROM HOINA HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

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Coming Home

By Richard Curry, HOINA Board Member

During the past year I have spent many hours musing on my first experience at HOINA. Probably my friends are tired of hearing about the children, the staff, and the activities that I came to know and to appreciate. When I returned there last January, it was as though I were returning home. The children were waiting to greet me with their shouts of “uncle” and my heart was at peace—I had come home.

Robert Frost said in one of his poems, “Home is where when you go there they have to take you in.” HOINA has “taken me in” three times now, and hopefully I will be “taken in” many times more because HOINA has become a home to me as much as it is to the children and staff who live there.

HOINA is not an orphanage like other orphanages in India and unfortunately like many orphanages in other parts of the world. I have twice spoken to a Mr. Roberts who is the Director of Women’s and Children’s Services for the State. On both occasions he said to me that HOINA is the finest in the state; he brings his social workers there to see what an orphanage should be. I have seen other orphanages in India; places where chil-



Timmy’s new baby boy named Joy (Timmy is the head of maintenance).

dren sleep on mats on the floor, are housed in sub-standard buildings and live on a diet of rice. Such places are just orphanages. HOINA is not that; HOINA is a HOME.

The poet Edgar Guest says: *“It takes a heap o’ livin’ in a house t’ make it home,*

A heap o’ sun an’ shadder, an’ ye sometimes have to’ roam

Afore ye really ‘preciate the things ye lef’ behind,

An’ hunger fer ‘em somehow, with ‘em allus

on yer mind.”

Guest has captured in his poem what stirs in my heart. When I returned to HOINA last January and again recently in November, I was embraced by the children and staff as if I were family. My joy at being there was mirrored by their joy at having me there. Where can one go in this world where he or she is accepted so completely, so lovingly? Where but at home, and sometimes that loving acceptance does not exist even there. But it does exist at HOINA where a “heap o’ livin’” does indeed create a home: the children at their chores, or studying in the evening for next day’s school work, or playing cricket, or singing when the song-master comes, or romping on

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the playground, or eating dinner after an exhausting day, exhausting because they all are in constant motion as children should be! It is all so exhilarating. It is a home where much joyous living occurs day after day after day. It is a home for which I am homesick when I am not there.

As with most homecomings there are surprises, changes. So it was with my return in November. The children had grown and matured. A number of them are now in college or university; they are young adults seriously preparing themselves for a career. I look at these beautiful people and think, "Where but for HOINA might you be now?" I know from where many of them came; the slums and streets of the cities, the garbage dumps by the side of roads, the tribals in the mountains. I'm sure that many people have seen *Slumdog Millionaire*. The sociological commentary on India's slum children in that movie still remains. Abandoned children, physically abused children and orphaned children exist because of disease or suicide. They are brought here by police or social service organizations or by non-governmental humanitarians who simply respond to a child's desperation by bringing him or her to HOINA.

And when they come, they are quickly assimilated into the HOINA experience. Each visit has allowed me to observe new students at the orphanage. And each time I was amazed at how they were accepted by the children who were already here. They were nearly smothered in joyful acceptance. Babies are hugged and kissed and carried about. We have a new toddler at the girl's home whom I have only seen walk when the older children are at school. When they return home that child is carried, given rides on the bicycle, talked to, sung to and kissed. I'm sure she is bewildered by all of the attention. The boys are just as affectionate with the little ones and just as accepting with older children. They want the new child to sit at their dining table, to play cricket with them, to explain the rules and to help them with their school work. I taught for forty years, and I never observed this kind of spontaneous acceptance of "the new kid."



Boys' home kitchen staff serving dinner

Most of our students attend the Jindal School, a privately run academy. Since all of the classes are taught in English, older students who join HOINA who have not learned English must attend the public school which is taught in Telugu, the state language. In both schools our children are the top performers. They are competing against children who have never been subjected to the horrors that most of our students have suffered. They come from homes comfortable enough that their parents can afford to send them to a private school. Our children certainly have not come from such an environment, but they outperform many who have. This is not the case in the United States. Children coming from the lower economic class in the U.S. are usually the lowest performers in academics. In Pennsylvania, and probably in other states, part of school ranking is determined by how many students are eligible for free or reduced lunches. Not



Devi's wedding celebration. Devi is head cook at the Girls' Home.

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Off to the Jindal School

much is expected from that element. What is the difference between the U.S. and our Indian children who certainly come from familial/social situations far worse than children in the U.S. experience? I wish I could answer that. All I know from my observations is that something wonderful happens at this orphanage that provides our children with confidence, security and a desire to learn.

Academics is not the only area where our children perform well; they also shine in athletics. Anand, the Indian manager of HOINA, pointed to a picture that appeared in the newspaper that day. He said, "Look at this, uncle". There were eight children pictured in a photo. Five of the eight were HOINA children. They were being recognized for having won district level competitions in the sport of "throwball." They will now compete on a state level. We also have students competing in high jump, along with 100 meter, 400 meter and 800 meter racing also on a state level.

One afternoon I was sitting on the bench outside the main office of the girls' home when Alak (one of our college students) came and sat next to me. She said, "Uncle, why do you come to HOINA?" I thought for just a moment and said, "I come here because it is such a happy

place. Sometimes in America life is not so happy. People are driven to work too much and to desire money and material possessions. When I was teaching, I was so busy with my students and the subjects that I taught that I was able to close my eyes at all of that, but since I retired I can't turn away from it because it is too glaring. And so I come to HOINA to see your happy smile." And Alak did smile for me and said, "Thank you, Uncle."

I said, "No, thank you." And I thank all of them, children and staff, for the joy that they possess so abundantly and share so unselfishly in this my second home where there is certainly "a heap o' livin' " going on and on and on!



Article from a Telegu newspaper with a picture of five of the HOINA children.

Annual Statements

You should receive your annual giving statement from our HOINA office in Brownstown, PA, by the end of January. If yours does not arrive or if you spot an error, please alert Amy in our office at 1.877.994.6462 (toll-free) or 717.355.9494 immediately so she can take care of it for you. Thank you for your generous support of our work. We couldn't do it without you!

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



Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Account Number (on your mailing label): _____

Mail coupon to: **HOINA**
PO Box 636
Brownstown, PA 17508-0636



January 2014

All donations are tax deductible.

- I want to Sponsor a HOINA boy / girl (circle one). Here is my first monthly gift of \$30.
- Please use this gift of \$ _____ toward the HOINA General Fund.
- This gift of \$ _____ is in honor/memory of
(circle one)
(please give name and address of person): _____
(please print clearly) _____



HOINA
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Divya Sri Joins HOINA Family

This little sweetheart turns five on the 10th of next month. Divya Sri's parents were married in 2006; however, her father was an alcoholic who committed suicide. Her widowed mother worked as a housemaid but could not take manage on the low daily wage she earned, so she approached HOINA and asked us to care for her daughter, who is now in kindergarten in Kothavalasa. Do you or someone you know want to change her life? If so, please send your first gift to our office with the coupon above.

Your monthly donation of \$30 will care for Divya Sri and provide a better life for her. HOINA does not merely house children, we raise them in "the fear and admoni-

tion of the Lord." They live under the care of their HOINA "family" with housemothers and fathers who truly care about them and with sisters (or brothers) to encourage them as they grow up. Your sponsorship provides our children with food, clothing, a bed to sleep in, a roof over their heads, education fees, medical care, and training in the arts. Meanwhile, the gifts our donors make to our scholarship fund make higher education possible for all who are able to gain acceptance into college or technical training. We are grateful for each gift.

