



## An Unforgettable Birthday

By Theresa Dark  
York College Student

Before departing for India, I thought I would be able to make a positive impact on the children in HOINA. However, in hindsight I learned that it was the children who had a much greater impact on me than I expected. When we first arrived at HOINA, the children were eagerly waiting for us—standing outside of the bus with flowers and smiling faces. Tired from the days of travel, I was overwhelmed, but it was not a bad sort of “overwhelmed.” I was overwhelmed by love. This became a reoccurring theme throughout the trip.

It was not just love that surrounded me the entire time I was at HOINA but joy, peace, and happiness. This fact boggled my mind: how could there be such joy, love, peace and happiness in a place where most of these kids had little or nothing? They were orphaned, but it didn't seem that way. I pondered this for some time, and then I remembered a Bible verse. John 14:18 says, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” This chapter in the Bible is talking about the Holy Spirit living in us and always being by our sides, and God as our father. I saw that in the children at HOINA. I think Jesus is the reason they have such joy, peace, and love.



Theresa with the Happy Birthday sign made by the HOINA children.

While I was in India, not only did we celebrate Christmas and New Year's, but it also happened to be my birthday. When I woke up on my birthday, I was a little homesick; I missed my family and celebrating the way I did back home. But all that changed when I saw children that morning. They all screamed, “Happy birthday, Akka!” (which means sister). After this, my day only got better. Before heading to one of her exams, Teja had something special for me. As I sat down to help her study she said, “Wait right here,” and ran off. A

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few moments later she returned with a card in hand and something dangling from her arm. She was giving me a necklace for my birthday. That is love. I don't know where she got this jewelry, but it was hers and she gave it to me. It was not fine diamond jewelry or a pearl necklace, but it was beautiful. I wear that necklace every day as a reminder of the love she showed me. That is the kind of impact India has had on me. I have not taken it off since, and every time I look at it I am reminded of the love shown to me in India.

Not only did I encounter this kind of love in the girls' home, the same was true for the boys. That same day, my birthday, we headed over to the boys' home for prayer time. While this was not part of our usual day, I was learning to be prepared for anything. As we walked in, the boys were lined up for prayer, waiting patiently for our arrival.

I was the first to walk in and hanging from the wall was a sign which read "Wish You a Happy Birthday Theresa." I died from excitement and could not help but grin from ear to ear. They began to sing me a verrrrrry long birthday song, and I enjoyed every minute of it. Everyone says you will remember your 21st birthday for maybe not-the-best reasons, but I will always remember my 21st as one filled with joy and love.

These are just two of the many examples of love I encountered at HOINA. Although these children may not have mothers or fathers and have been rejected by society, they will never be rejected at HOINA and are always welcomed with open arms and loving hearts. HOINA will always be a part of my life's journey, and I will never forget the impact the children had on my life. Hopefully, I will return to HOINA some day, but for now I will take the lessons



Tejaswini and her silly friend share a playful moment with the photographer.

they have taught me and begin to show others love every day here in the United States. ♿

## The Enchantment of HOINA

By *Tim DeYoung*  
*York College Student*

I remember driving through Visak our first day off the plane, and immediately I began thinking about what I had gotten myself into. The streets were full of chaos, cars were constantly beeping, traffic was gridlocked, and people were watching us, almost as if we were celebrities. The living conditions were questionable; dogs, chickens, cows were roaming the streets along with children, who seemed to be without parental guidance. Some of the buildings had foundation faults and the faces of them were completely torn off leaving the insides totally exposed. A picture from National Geographic could not have captured the experience we encountered within the first hours of our arrival in India.

As we continued our drive, the urban part of Visak began to fade into the distance and the rural parts began to show

some new light. Although many of the living conditions changed from constructed buildings to thatched huts, the landscape became extremely scenic. The rice paddies were all intricately designed, and with the palm trees in the backdrop it was like something from a storybook. Soon the driver stopped, and he allowed some HOINA girls to get on the bus. We had been traveling for almost two days and were exhausted and, to be honest, maybe a little delusional. However the smiles on the girls' faces when they got on the van were unmistakable. Amidst all of what I had portrayed as poverty and destitution, these girls were ecstatic with what they had.

To be welcomed with such enthusiasm was incredible, and we had only just met a small portion of the loving HOINA family. As the drive continued, we neared the campus. When I saw it, I could tell right away how special that place was. Although it was getting dark, I could see the beautiful

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June 2012



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campus filled with colors and tile work. That night was a bit overwhelming, for the sheer fact of meeting close to 80 girls, let alone being in a brand new environment. However, it was an experience I will never forget. The girls were very persistent when it came to learning their names. I can't even begin to explain how many times I was asked, "Brother, what is my name?" Soon it was time for bed, and the girls had to go to sleep. In a way I was thankful that the night had come to an end, and to be sure I prayed to God asking him to help me through this overwhelming experience. Meeting the boys the next day was another whole experience. They were just as persistent as the girls when it came to learning their names. However, they always understood if we didn't get their name right. I remember one child in particular. His name was Santos. Every day he would come up to me and ask, "Tim-anna [a title for brother], what is my name?" For the first couple of days, I was so overwhelmed I couldn't for the life of me remember one name. The children would keep reminding me day and night of their names, and eventually they would stick. These children and young adults are incredible individuals, and the warmth that fills their hearts is stronger than almost anything I have ever known.

Another dynamic of HOINA is their staff, who guide those loving, kind children in the right direction. Caring for them as much as any parent would, they make such an impact every day on the kids. They have their hands full with over 180 children, but they excel at doing their jobs. They went out of their way to accommodate us. For instance, the kitchen staff prepared our meals specifically for us and brought us cold drinks when we were working. Anand Babu will always

hold a special place in my heart. He is the general manager and overseer of the program at HOINA, and he made the trip that much more memorable. When we traveled to Visak to see a dance performance, he allowed me to ride with him on his motorcycle. That ride was probably the most exhilarating and scariest thing I have ever done. The experience was unforgettable. If Anand hadn't gone out of his way and taken me on his motorcycle, I never would have experienced true Indian traffic. In every single way they tried making us feel right at home even though we were there to help them. As you can tell, the people at HOINA are incredible, and their kindness and love is never-ending.

Throughout our time in India, sports were played, songs were sung, many danced, but most importantly the children smiled (trust me that one smile makes all the difference). These children are extremely happy and considering what many have gone through I'd say that something very special is at work here. I strongly believe HOINA has been graced by the hand of God. 

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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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## Full Orphan Full of Love

In April, we featured Jetty Trinadh. This month, we offer his little brother for sponsorship. Jetty Santosh Kumar's parents were married in 1996. Mr. Jetty Naidu worked as an auto driver. He and his wife had two sons. Santosh Kumar's mother contracted tetanus. In 2008 his father was in a train accident and fractured his leg. His mother died from abdominal cancer in May 2009. His father moved the family to his native place of Gotham Village. In March 2011 he became sick with stomach pains and a month later died. The grandparents were very old and lived in a thatched roof hut. They could not care for the boys, so they approached HOINA and asked us to care for their grandsons.

Santosh Kumar is studying 5th standard in the MPUP School at Gotham. His favorite color is red, and his favorite animal is a deer. He likes to play kabaddi and would like to be a policeman when he is grown.

If you would like to sponsor Santosh Kumar, please send your first monthly gift of \$30 to our office with the coupon on page 3. The children love getting pictures and letters from HOINA friends. If you would like to send a note, write to:

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Balighattam B.O.  
Kothavalasa Mandal  
Vizianagaram- 535183  
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