



NEWS FROM HOINA HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

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Shoestring to Heartstring

By Nishant Pandya
PSU Schreyers Honor Student

One of the first things I did when I returned to Penn State was tie a shoelace through the hole of my dorm key. Many people have already asked me why I don't use a lanyard instead. I use the shoestring because it was the beginning of the most special relationship I have ever been a part of.

On our first day at the HOINA Campus, I found myself with some free time before the boys returned from school. I decided to see what the boys who were too young to attend school were up to. For almost two hours, I desperately tried to play with the boys, but they were immersed in their own world, pushing toy trucks all around the Boys' Home. Their world simply fascinated me as I watched them communicate, share, and find such happiness from three plastic trucks. As an outsider to their world, I observed until Pavan, the youngest of the three, had an idea. He realized that if he sat on his toy dump truck and shouted Ana [Brother], I would grab the shoelace that was tied to the dump truck and pull him around the boy's home. I jumped on my opportunity to interact with Pavan and spent the next half an hour racing around the courtyard. As we zoomed between pillars and through doors,

I could hear him giggling and clapping his hands behind me. This continued until we had to return the truck and go to dinner. When we were walking to playroom, Pavan extended his hand and placed the shoelace that had been attached to the truck in my palm. He then ran away smiling.

I immediately fell in love with his smile. He doesn't just smile with his lips; he smiles with his body. He has a large



Pavan's infectious and energetic smile.

toothy smile, and his eyes twinkle with the joy of a young child mixed with just a twinge of mischief. His head tilts slightly to one side, and he waves and claps his hands in excitement. His happiness is energetic and infectious, leaving me with no option but to smile right back at him. As I watched him running away, I held the shoelace between my fingers sensing that this was the start of something special.

I became fonder of Pavan with each passing day. I always visited him at the boy's home between tasks and chores. He quickly began expecting these visits and would find me, rather than waiting for me to find him. I tried to take time out of each day in order to build a relationship with him, and I could feel him letting me into his world little by little each day. It began with his simple requests of me to carry him or follow him somewhere. He would run up to me and grab onto my shorts. If he wanted me to follow him, he would tug on my

Shoestring to Heartstring

continued from page 1

shorts and start walking. If he wanted to be carried however, he would lift his hands up and look up at me with a smile spread across his face. Within a few days, he even began to communicate with me. Pavan would excitedly speak to me in Telegu, leaving me clueless as to what he was trying to say. Despite the language barrier, I felt as though we were able to communicate. I rarely understood what he was saying, but I always nodded reassuringly and smiled after anything he said. I wanted to encourage him and make him feel comfortable speaking to me. I would then respond in English, and he too reciprocated my actions, remaining focused and attentive on me, despite not understanding my words.

The moment I knew Pavan had let me into his world occurred right before bedtime. After an hour of running, playing, and monkeying around following dinner, his energy level would suddenly plummet. I could always tell when this happened just by his face, so I would go over to him. Pavan would half-heartedly grab onto my legs, because he knew I was about to pick him up momentarily. Once I picked him up, he would immediately cling onto my neck and rest his head on my shoulders. We would take a lap or two around the boy's inner courtyard until I could feel him asleep on my shoulder, inhaling and exhaling deeply. I would then bring him into Room 5, and place him under his sheets. He usually woke up when I did this and would smile at me, as I sat beside him stroking his forehead until he was asleep.

This wasn't a nightly ritual since I was usually helping boys with their homework well past Pavan's bedtime. When I did

have the opportunity to tuck Pavan into bed though, I never passed on the opportunity. One night near the end of our stay I remember particularly clearly. I was walking up to the Boy's Home late that night, and I heard tiny footsteps running towards me. I could barely see Pavan in the dark, but I felt him grasp my legs tightly. As always, I picked him up and rushed to the Boy's Home so we could play. About thirty minutes later, I could tell it was approaching Pavan's bedtime. Like clockwork, he stumbled towards me and asked to be picked up. As I was rocking him back and forth while walking around the courtyard, I noticed Pavan softly mumbling, "Nish Ana [Nish Brother]," as he was falling asleep. I soon put him in his bed and sat next to his bed stroking his forehead until I was sure he fell asleep.

I immediately gravitated towards and connected with Pavan because I fell in love with his joy for life. Even though he is too young to understand the situation he is in, or how life has unfolded for him so far, he has unknowingly taught me valuable life lessons just through the way he approaches his own. His heart is always open to love, as I saw him develop relationships with many other Penn State students. He is determined and persistent. He gave his full attention to whatever task he had set forth and never gave up on whatever project he had embarked on. My favorite of Pavan's qualities however is that he is always smiling. No matter whom he talked to, whom he played with, or where he was, it was only a matter of time until Pavan would unleash one of his classic smiles. He helped me learn just how happy smiling could make you feel. More importantly though, I learned how much joy smiling can bring to those around you.



Just one of the countless times Pavan made me smile .



Pavan (right) hard at work and determined to prepare a meal.

see **Shoestring to Heartstring** page 3

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Account Number (on your mailing label): _____

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



Nov. 2011



I want to sponsor a HOINA boy / girl (*circle one*).

Here is my first monthly gift of \$30.

Gift sponsorship for (name & address) _____

(please print clearly)

I would like to order _____ sets of notecards.

Here's my check for \$ _____ made out to HOINA.

Please use this \$ _____ toward the Christmas Fund.

All donations are tax deductible.

Shoestring to Heartstring

continued from page 2

In just three weeks, Pavan had helped me implement changes into my outlook at life. I love what he has helped me realize and have promised myself I will not forget the lessons Pavan taught. When I returned to Penn State, I dug through my bag looking for the shoelace Pavan had given me. I immediately tied it around my key, because it would be something I would see every day. It would help me remember my time at HOINA, my time with Pavan, and the joy that boy had brought to my life. When I finished tying the knot in the shoelace, I could do nothing but smile and thank Pavan. 🧘

Deadline Looming...

For the last several years we have sent Christmas/Holiday cards to all the HOINA children.

With the help of church groups, school groups, friends, and relatives we have made 200 cards to send to ensure that each child gets one with their Christmas present.

If you would like to make or buy a card specifically for the child that you sponsor, please print your name on the card, and your child's name and number if you know it. If you would like to make one or several cards for the children who do not have sponsors still put your name on the card.

Please mail them to the HOINA office at:

HOINA, PO Box 636, Brownstown, PA 17508

Please do not include an envelope, as it just doubles the weight and postage required.

To ensure that the cards are to India by Christmas, they need to arrive in our office by Nov. 23, 2011. 🧘

Notecards for Sale

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 below (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 gifts or thank you notes. To place an order, use the coupon above. Thanks for your support. 🧘



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.



HOINA
PO Box 636
Brownstown, PA 17508-0636

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #242
New Holland, PA

Christmas Fund Needs Restocked

Those of you who sponsor HOINA children would probably love to send them a gift during the holidays. But for the sake of our children who haven't yet been blessed with sponsors (and because overseas shipping is so expensive and unreliable), we ask that you consider making a gift to HOINA's Christmas Fund instead.

HOINA's Christmas Fund allows us to buy gifts for all of our children—making sure each boy and girl receives something special—and, when funds allow, to give bonuses to our Indian staff members who do so much to run our homes with dignity and love.

Consider sending a gift—any amount would be a blessing—to HOINA's Christmas Fund with the coupon on this page. Feel free to send a photo of yourself or family to your sponsor child. If you follow the directions in the article at right, we'll make sure your card gets to your child.

As always, your generosity is such a blessing. You make HOINA's important work in India possible, and we are so deeply grateful.



Sponsorships Make Great Gifts



Pediredla Teja Ram

HOINA sponsorships make great Christmas gifts for those folks who are hard to buy for! You can request a sponsorship in someone else's name, and our office personnel will send a photo and history of a HOINA child whom you have paid to sponsor. Please be sure to include the family's name and address so we can have that in our records with your name and address.

This month we feature Pediredla Teja Ram who was born on June 6, 2007. His mother, Ms. Nageswari, married Mr. Nageswara Rao in 2003 after which they had two children. Mr. Nageswara Rao was a lorry driver before he died from a viral fever on 15 August 2007. As a widow, Teja Ram's mother could not provide for her children. She had been acquainted with HOINA and asked for our assistance. Teja Ram came to HOINA with his brother in October of 2010. Won't you consider sponsoring him?