



NEWS FROM HOINA HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

PO Box 87, St. Charles, Missouri 63302 • www.hoina.org • May 2011

An Honor Bestowed

*By Hannah Ilgenfritz
York College of Pennsylvania Student*

Salutations!

I am a senior nursing student at York College of Pennsylvania. I recently had my life forever touched very dearly by the wonderful children and staff at HOINA.

I have always been interested in India, and over my Christmas break in January I had the amazing opportunity to spend about two and a half weeks working and playing at HOINA. I love doing physical labor and spending time with children. My stay at HOINA was the perfect combination of both. I experienced and learned so many things while in India, at HOINA, that I could write a book, but instead, I would like to share one particular story that will always touch my heart.

Everyone at HOINA was warm and welcoming from the moment we arrived hot, dusty, and tired at the girls' home. We were greeted with flowers, smiles, and songs. The love from the children, even though they did not know us was enough to make my heart hurt. After the first evening I discovered that each of us from our team had developed our own band of followers. The girls included us in their games, tried to teach us Telegu, and made desperate attempts to remind us what their names were.

I loved spending time with the girls and within a day or two I even remembered some names! Ashwini is a name I



Ashwini with her "mother" Hannah and Swathi

will not forget, the name of my first friend at the HOINA girls' home. She is a small framed girl of about eleven years with soulful brown eyes and a beautiful smile.

From the beginning of the trip I noticed the henna that the girls wore on the palms of their hands. The small girls would proudly show us the patterns that the older girls had drawn on for them.

I went to India to share love with the children of HOINA and felt blessed by all the love they showered on me. I did not realize how blessed and how loved I was until about the third or fourth evening when I was playing with my dedicated band of girls when Ashwini showed me the henna she had put on her hand the night before. It read, "My mother name is haina."

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Love Makes Its Mark

By Julia Kennedy

York College of Pennsylvania Student

For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to work with children. As an elementary/special education major, I am on the way to making that dream a reality. My other love is traveling. Therefore, when I heard that York College was offering an international service course in which I could spend time benefiting children in India, I jumped at the opportunity. For four months, we prepared for our visit to HOINA through weekly class meetings. Though I was excited for the trip, I would be lying if I said that I did not also have my reservations about going.

India is undeniably very different from the United States, so I had absolutely no idea what to expect. Upon arrival in Visakhapatnam, I was in complete sensory overload. After 36 hours of travel and very little sleep, the vibrant city was a lot to take in. An hour-long bumpy bus ride later, we finally arrived at HOINA.

It is natural to fear not being accepted, but it was clear at once that those fears were completely unwarranted. While as a class we had spent months anticipating our trip, somehow I overlooked the fact that those at the hostel were just as anxious for us to arrive. We pulled up to the front entrance to find children lined up waiting to greet us. Before we were even off of the bus, babies were lifted inside to hand us flowers, welcoming us to their home. Feelings of relief to finally have arrived, excitement to see what would come, and gratitude for our warm welcome were my immediate impressions upon arrival at HOINA.

During the first day or two, we all were accepted with open arms. We would simply walk into a room and hear a chorus of, "Sister!! Good morning, sister!" It was impossible to walk around without a child running up to you with an infectious

smile on his face, and it was just as impossible to resist the urge to smile and follow him wherever he wanted to take you.

In spending an extended amount of time as we did at the hostel, it is impossible not to become especially drawn and attached to certain children, much as they became attached



Julia holding Pavan and another HOINA friend enjoy their day.

to certain members of our groups. Though we all had children clinging to us from the very beginning, I enjoyed the challenge of bonding with kids who were more shy when it came to being around our group. Our second night at HOINA, some of us stayed behind at the boys' home after dinner to watch a movie with the boys. Sitting next to me on the bench was an adorable little toddler, Pavan. Although

I whipped out all my tricks to get kids to like me, Pavan was not having any of it. The best I could get from him was a blank stare, but I didn't care! I was determined to win him over before I left. The next morning at breakfast I went right over to him and scooped him up, but I still couldn't coax a smile out of him. Ignoring the teasing from my classmates, I kept up with it and soon my hard work paid off. Once he started smiling, I don't think I saw him without that big contagious grin on his face. Before long, we were inseparable. All I would have to do would be to walk into the boys' home, and one of the other boys would exclaim, "Sister! Pavan!" and point him out to me, or take his hand and lead him to me. Though I enjoyed spending time with all the children, and bonded with many of the boys, nothing compared to my attachment with Pavan. We threw footballs, read books, played on the swing set, played with my camera, and lots more in the course of the following two weeks. Pavan was continuously a bright spot in my day, and as the two weeks went by, I dreaded the thought of having to say goodbye to him.

On our last day at the hostel, we finished breakfast and I went as usual to find Pavan, knowing this time that I would

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May2011



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

Here is my first monthly gift of \$30.

Use this gift to finance HOINA's ongoing projects through the General Fund.

This gift of \$ _____ is in honor/memory of
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ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE

Love Makes Its Mark

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have to say goodbye to him. As normally happened, the other boys pointed him out to me before I could find him on my own. I quickly said goodbye, and then left him to play with his friends before I got too sad. As I was walking away, one of the boys called out to me and I turned around to see Pavan running to me with his famous smile on his face. I could not help but smile to think about how far we'd come. Just two weeks before he was a scared little boy giving me a blank stare,

and now I could not even walk away. As I was on kneeling on the floor giving him one last hug, two other boys came up to join in on the hug and say goodbye. As I held the three of them, I could not help but tear up while thinking about how these children had forever affected me for the better.

My time at HOINA changed my life. I started out scared and hesitant and came out of it more confident and proud of our group. We had done a lot of good for HOINA, but more importantly, I knew that we all were

taking with us unforgettable experiences and relationships. We bonded with each other, the children, and the staff. Just as we left our mark on the fence that we painted surrounding the perimeter of the home, we all came home with marks that the children had left with us simply by loving us and allowing us to love them back.

[Editor's Note: Julia and her family now sponsor Pavan]

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Our volunteer Imtiaz teaches HOINA girls how to crochet



Won't You Sponsor this Brother and Sister?




Cheveti Chandru Charan Teja and Ch. Revathi

This month we would like to feature a brother and sister for you to consider sponsoring. Do you have a Sunday School class or school group or group of friends who would like to contribute to this sponsorship? Your gift of \$30 per month will feed, clothe, educate, and provide housing and medical care for a HOINA child.

Cheveti Chandru Charan Teja & his sister, Ch. Revathi have been with HOINA almost a year now with no sponsors. Chandru Charan Teja was nine on December 24th; his big sister turned ten on November 20th. The two siblings were admitted to HOINA because their parents have been found to be HIV-positive.

Mr. Arjun Raju married Ms. Demudamma on April 28, 1998. Mr. Arjun Raju was working in the field of construction as a metal worker. Ms. Demudamma is a house wife. They had these two children, but Mr. Arjun Raju suffered with a lung infection for a long time without knowing he

was an HIV patient. In 2009 both parents came to know that they were suffering with HIV. After word got out about their disease, nobody would associate with them. In the meantime Mr. Arjun became very sick and could not work. They approached HOINA to ask us to take their children into our hostel. Seeing that their family was in a difficult situation, our staff admitted the two children last year.

Feel free to return the coupon on page three with your first gift if you would like to sponsor one or both of these children. We thank you for your generosity. 

Honor

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I smiled at Ashwini, thinking that she was showing me a little about her past. Then she told me in her Indian accent what her hand said, "My mother's name is Hannah." My mouth dropped open a little as the full realization of what she had written sunk in. She was telling me

that she had claimed me as her mother.

I just wanted to swallow her in a hug. I was so touched I wanted to cry. Here I was, a random American girl, invading her home for two and half weeks and there she was, claiming me as her own family. Inside my heart broke, outside I smiled and hugged Ashwini tightly. I do not know what I did to deserve such an

honor, but honored I was.

By the time I was leaving HOINA I had a small family of girls who had claimed me as their family. I may forget how tired and dirty I felt at the end of each day, but I will never forget how loved I was during my stay at HOINA – how I went to give love and got more than I ever gave. 