

THE EAST • WEST OVERSEAS AID FOUNDATION

Newsletter

Issue 25, June 2018

www.tewoaf.org.au

LETTER FROM ULURU

Dear friends,

It has been a busy few weeks at Uluru leaving me in a constant state of amazement at how much happens in this very beautiful, seemingly languid place! Here is my brief recap of the highlights...

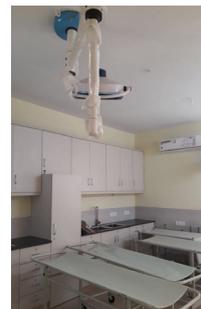
(See pages 2-5 for Aditi Chandran's recent letter to TEWOAF supporters)



TEWFI's New Treatment Centre Opens

"A major achievement through your kind support is the recent completion of a treatment facility where surgical procedures can be performed, road trauma victims can be treated, emergency snake bite situations can be dealt with and fishing trauma accidents and other emergencies can be treated. I had the pleasure of opening this facility in January 2018 and having previously worked in India and been aware of treatment options for the community there, I can assure you our facility is second to none as far as rural and village India is concerned and better than many facilities that can be offered in some of the cities of India."

Dr Roy Karna



For more news on the Medical Centre and activities please see page 6

International Women's Day

How wonderfully fitting that the UN chose 2018 to "draw attention to the rights and activism of rural women, who make up over a quarter of the world population, and are being left behind in every measure of development."

Hats off to our social workers for putting together a truly inspiring Women's Day celebration and how grateful I am that I was able to attend.

As a proud member of the group being celebrated and having worked in the very male dominated environments of corporate Australia and Wall Street, I am ashamed to admit that this was the very first International Women's Day celebration I had actually attended. It exceeded all my expectations..

It was truly gratifying to see and hear from the women of our community, many of whom have come together through our Women's Centre, the work of our social workers and Mrs Muthamil to support each other and to build: build skills, build networks, build livelihoods and build self respect.

Our social workers welcomed the attendees and opened the day and we kicked off the celebrations with inspiring words from some very accomplished women: Mrs. Lalitha Moorthy (social worker), Mrs Devi (Nurse), Mrs. Geetha (Unit head and house mother) and Mrs. Muthamil who has been running the program at our Women's Centre teaching the women tailoring and handicrafts. Our elder statesman Mr S. Krishnamoorthy also gave an inspirational speech and I threw in my two cents worth, which was kindly translated by Devi and the panel.

Our social workers then invited the attendees to take the microphone and, after a little encouragement, the first brave woman came up and gave a rousing speech. It made me very proud to see many of them follow. They spoke with passion about their experiences and what the Women's Centre and the community they have built there has meant to them - the impact on their lives and the lives of their families.

Particularly moving for me was their gratitude for the world of opportunities and possibilities the Women's Centre and social workers have opened up to them and they all voiced their commitment to the education and empowerment of their daughters.

Although they spoke in Tamil and I needed a translator (thanks again Devi!) their words were genuine and heartfelt - a language even I can understand.



Yoga

Lots of exciting things have been happening at UNPS including my personal favourite - yoga!. When Christine Nathan (accomplished Yogi) was visiting Uluru she generously devoted her time to teach daily morning yoga classes for the teachers on the roof of our school (aka "the boat") in addition to teaching the UNPS children yoga. I was lucky enough to attend a couple of Christine's classes with the teachers and they were truly a great way to start the day.

By some amazing act of serendipity, the day Christine left, Annemaree Rowley arrived. Annemaree, who is also a strong and long-time supporter of the Foundation, left corporate Australia to devote herself to yoga, beginning her own amazing yoga school and taking yoga tours and retreats around the world. As it turns out, after numerous requests from her clients, Annemaree also takes children's yoga classes in Melbourne and so for the few days she was here she took classes for the UNPS kids. I also managed to get in on the action there too with some sessions with Annemaree and her friend Anita Devos who was travelling with her.



UNPS Parent Teacher Day

The parents of UNPS joined us on a Friday afternoon for an informative and open discussion and Q&A regarding the school and the children. In addition to Mrs. Amudha and her team of teachers, all of the units that contribute to the UNPS children's education were represented along with Mrs. Geetha as parent to the largest family of children at the school (our nine UCH kids) and Mr. Satyamoorthi whose son attends UNPS. We all met at VSeEC along with our School Correspondent and Trustee Mr R. Krishnamurthy, Mrs. Devi (who as you know is heavily involved in education here), Mr. S.Krishnamoorthy, Dad and myself.

In addition to being informational, the afternoon was designed to be a forum for the parents to ask questions and share ideas. Overall the day provided a collaborative platform for open communication between the Foundation and the parents and it was very well received. It was nice to see parents who are enthusiastic about their children's education and the school and who are proud of the achievements their children are making. We hope it's contagious and inspires other local schools to raise their standards. The future of our children and our school is a bright one!



Child Welfare Committee Meeting - UCH

It was a real pleasure to meet with the Deputy Head of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Mr Zakiruddin, along with a fellow committee member and the Child Protection Officer for our district. Prior to the meeting commencing, Dad and I were lucky enough to be able to sit down with Mr. Zakiruddin for some time to discuss the home and impress upon him how keen we are to offer a loving home to more children in need. It was gratifying and encouraging to learn that the CWC continues to hold our Children's Home in the highest regard and to hear them commend the work TEWFI is doing for children in this regard. He then backed up his statements with a promise to send us 20 more children!

Mrs Geetha and the social workers did a great job putting together the agenda and leading the meeting that followed. Four girls and four boys were there from UCH and they were encouraged to raise questions and concerns to the CWC and the Child Protection Officer who each also spoke to them. The concerns of the children included issues with teacher attendance at their schools. The CWC, who works closely with the Education Department, will be looking into those things.

The CWC reiterated their approval of the work we are doing at UCH and promise to send us more children, which we are looking forward to!



New Badminton Court

At the request of our kids, UCH will now have a Badminton court in addition to a volleyball court!



Resolution of Disputed Land and Physical Demarcation

After years of back and forth, Dad and I met with Arun and his team along with Joss and his team to discuss and agree on the resolution of the disputed land so that we both have contiguous property and, most importantly, TEWFI will have access through the Southern land for the UCH children to ride through to go to school, along with a gate and fence for safety purposes. A subsequent meeting with all teams on site along with the surveyor enabled the actual physical division of the land.

Thanks to Ron Merkel and David Parsons for their win/win proposal to resolve this and a true credit to the legal profession in successfully avoiding the courts on this one.



Southern Access Through Vembanur

As a corollary to the resolution of the disputed land and the resulting access for the children to the South, we met with the Vembanur village representatives to agree on the fencing of the relevant land. Another big step forward for providing our UCH kids with a safer, easier riding route to school



And speaking of which....

New Bikes for UCH

Thanks to the incredibly generous donation of eight new bikes by Anita Devos (who I mentioned visited us with Annemaree) along with two new bikes donated by Nadine Feinstein (long time supporter, volunteer and champion of the bike program) we now have a full complement of bikes for our children.

Not surprisingly, the children love them.



PMP2 Fencing

More good news on the land front! In conjunction with the Forest Department, VAO and surveyor, the PMP2 project land has been fenced off along with a sign for the villagers explaining that the fencing is per the Forest Department to grow trees and encourage reforestation - hopefully this will avoid any issues with our villagers!



Staff appreciation day

With everything happening at Uluru on any given day it's important not to forget who makes it happen here on the ground, which was the impetus for starting our TEWFI Staff Appreciation Day 10 years ago. This year was truly a great one. We began the afternoon with words of thanks and appreciation on behalf of the Foundation to our staff for all their hard work, dedication and commitment. We then asked each staff member who has been with us 10 years or more to come up and speak. Surprisingly, they all did!! There were even a few additional staff members with less than ten years who stood up to say a few words.

What I personally found most touching and profound were the heartfelt expressions by our staff of their pride and gratitude in being part of an organization that gives so much to the community. A really lovely afternoon was had by all. Mr Sudhakar did a fantastic job as Master of Ceremonies and the feeling of family and community was overwhelming - I was truly moved.



Help for VSeEC & UNPS

We are also excited to welcome Sangesh Sambath who has come on board to help us bring VSeEC and our UNPS digital learning programs to technology's cutting edge and is also helping us with other critical items like internet connectivity, skills training and helping redo the TEWFI website.



(I know, I can't read it either but I trust my translator!)

Visitors and Volunteers

Before I sign off I cannot possibly end without a HUGE vote of thanks to our visitors and volunteers who make being here truly joy filled.

Also a big thanks to Naga who came and stayed in the volunteer quarters and taught at the school every day in addition to being invaluable in innumerable other ways with the UCH children and the foundation generally, Nadine who has been coming here every year for the past 12 years and dedicating months of her time to UCH and teaching, Devi who is back for her annual six month stint helping the children through exams and applications amongst many other things and Mr & Mrs Krishnamoorthy who dedicate months of their time every year to come here and pour themselves into the Foundation and every aspect of work that needs to be done (including teaching and all our significant legal work). All are completely invaluable.

Note of apology before the photos- I appear in almost all of them but hopefully you can forgive the photographer as I am one of his three favourite subjects!



Breaking News!!

I helped VSeEC put in two proposals to the Cognizant Foundation which included a request for a complete update of the Cognizant eCoW bus including new laptops, fans and LCD TV, as well as the full equipping of VSeEC with 38 desktops and a new server. Per our proposal our goal is to make VSeEC a real hub of information and opportunity for the community including enabling people to undertake employment (such as IT work outsourced from overseas or elsewhere in the country) from VSeEC itself.

Mr. Madhavan from the Cognizant Foundation personally called this evening to let us know that our proposals have been approved with immediate effect to the tune of Rs. 16.98 lakhs which is approximately AUD \$34,000 !!

On that wonderful note we come to the end of this update and time for me to sign off. Believe it or not, I haven't covered everything but I hope I have managed to hit some of the highlights for you.

With lots of love from Uluru

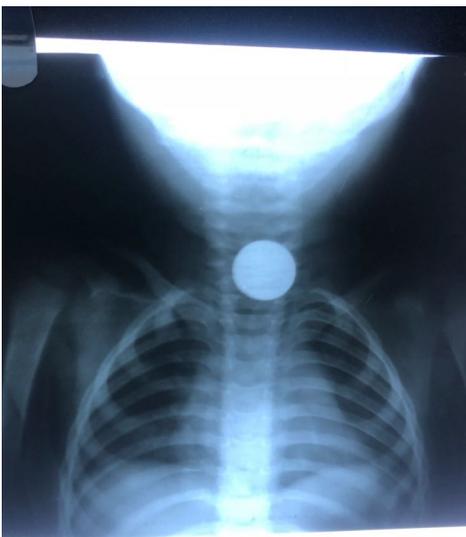
Aditi

Uluru Health at Work

"A young 2 year old boy for 2 days couldn't eat, was vomiting and coughing and then became distressed acutely with noisy shortness of breath. He was brought to Uluru Health and Dr Premnath, whilst not immediately aware of the diagnosis, showed the hallmark of a good doctor "he recognised this child was very sick and needed immediate attention". He suspected he had a foreign body obstructing breathing and swallowing and as is protocol he WhatsApp called Dr Karna who also could hear the stridorous breathing. Dr Karna managed to contact an ENT colleague and arranged an urgent Xray which clearly showed a coin had been swallowed and was in the child's throat.

There was little time to waste, and under rudimentary sedation with the distraught parents holding the child down, Dr Premnath, under guidance and instruction, removed the coin endoscopically in our new treatment facility.

The child survived and was given antibiotics and now is fine. Many other urgent cases have been treated at our new Centre, including middle of the night emergencies when our dedicated staff come on call to help remove fishing hooks from a leg, to sew up a gushing bleed in a child over the eye and to splint and give analgesia for a compound fracture. Bear in mind the staff are not paid overtime. They just do it.



Community Appreciation of Dr Premnath

The community clearly recognises the important health services provided to them. The local school in appreciation has honoured Dr Premnath in a recent ceremony.

"Please do consider donating to keep and adequately support our tireless staff, to allow us to purchase necessary equipment (heart and oxygen monitors, blood count machines etc) and to also have our nurses trained to deal with the emergencies presenting."

Dr Roy Karna



Women's Health Specialist

The Uluru Health Care Clinic is thrilled to welcome Dr Romano Larousse as our Women's Health Specialist. Having graduated in 2015, Dr Larousse has worked in a number of South Indian medical centres and has concentrated on Gynaecology and Ante-natal Obstetric care. Dr Larousse will complement the general medical skills of our Chief Medical Officer Dr Premnath.

Already appreciated by the local female community, Dr Larousse will be increasing her sessions at UHCC and is looking forward to the learning experience from overseas doctors visiting for volunteering stints in the future.



TEWFI News

Kanniamal

"I will complete my BA Tamil Degree in the middle of 2019. I'd like to teach after doing a Teaching degree. I'd like to continue Bharatanatayan dance but my family is very poor and my grandmother wants me to marry. I enjoy returning to Uluru and seeing the other children and I tell them to study well and listen to Geetha ma. I tell them not to fall in love because when love comes we won't be able to study. Our families make us marry."

Kanniamal January 2018



A very young Kanniamal



Kanniamal dancing with Yogaraj

Saranraj and Yogaraj

"I am studying third year engineering and will finish the middle of next year. My favourite interest is the production of engine parts to make them more efficient. I enjoy returning to Uluru during my university breaks to see everyone and to help out with some work. I tell the children at Uluru to be successful and to obey and follow Geetha ma's rules. My brother Saranraj will finish Year 12 this year. He wants to study arts and science in Chennai. After that he wants to become a policeman. He will because he is definitely smart and strong enough.

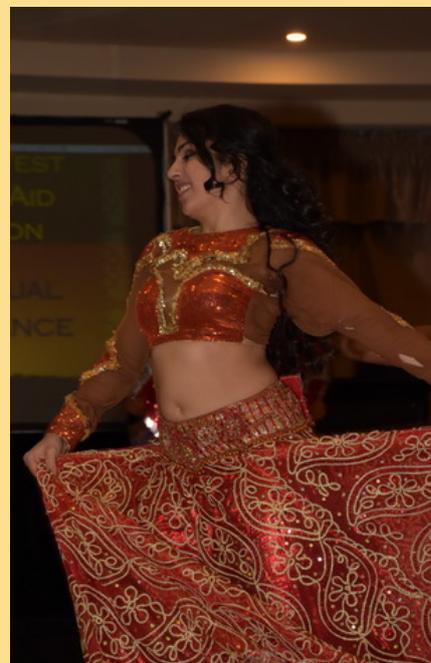
When I begin work I want to give 5% of my salary to Uluru."

Yogaraj January 2018



Yogaraj and Saranraj

TEWOAF 2018 ANNUAL DINNER



The East West Overseas Aid Foundation invites you to join us at our 26th Annual Gala Dinner

Manningham Civic Centre
699 Doncaster Road
Doncaster

Saturday 13th October 2018 at 7 pm.

Come dressed in your brightest and best and enjoy great Indian cuisine, Auctions and Raffle.

Tickets \$150 per person (\$85 concession for students under 25)

Funds raised will help our development programmes that cover health care, relief for children at risk, education, community development and environmental sustainability.

What A Difference A Golf Day Makes

We are pleased to report that the 10th Annual Golf Day held on March 2nd was a fantastic success, raising approximately \$48,000.

This money contributes significantly to provide healthcare, education, relief and refuge for destitute children and the overall development of vibrant, sustainable communities in Southern India.

As our event is mainly organised and staffed by volunteers, TEWOAF's overheads are kept to an absolute minimum. We can therefore direct these funds to those most in need and in fact have already done so.



Come and join us again in March 2019 to enjoy a game at Southern Golf Club's magnificent course

If you are not a golfer there are other ways you could help out, for example by becoming a Golf Day supporter through a tax deductible donation which will be recognised at the event. Sponsorship packages are also available, with benefits including your Company Logo to appear on the Golf Day entry form, and prominent signage at the golf course on the day.

Please contact Sue at The East West Overseas Aid Foundation office on 03 9650 0514

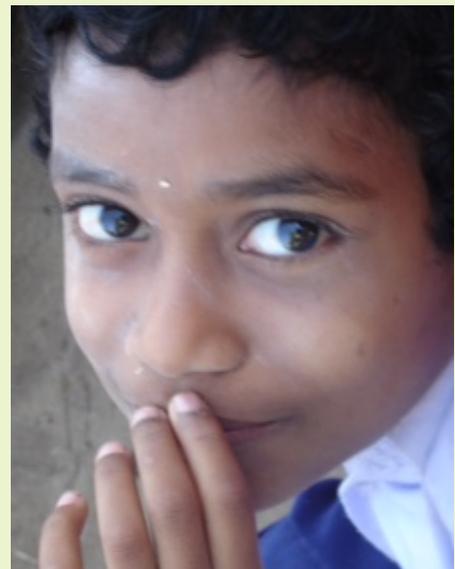
The East West Overseas Aid Foundation Day Sponsorship Program *We continue to need your help!*

The generous support from those who have taken up the Day Sponsorship Program ensures that TEWOAF can continue to offer the range of programs supporting our children and the local community.

We still have days on the calendar to fill. There are two options: full day \$400 or half day \$200.

You can nominate the day and/or the loved one you wish to honour. The children in turn honour you and are made aware of your kindness.

We thank Seasol once again for generously continuing to cover the administration costs for this program.



A sincere thank you to Lisa Boyd and Seasol International once again for the support with the cost of printing this newsletter.

Seasol's ongoing generosity to TEWOAF and TEWFI continues to be critical to our capacity to provide support for and assistance to the UCH children, the local community and the wonderful and extremely important local natural environment.

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