

DECEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

There are very few regrets in my life. One of them is that I never had the chance to thank all the friends who supported Father Abraham in his mission to help the poor help themselves. If those hundreds of ordinary Canadian families, some of whom were struggling themselves to take care of their own families, had not sacrificed a part of their lives and supported Father Abraham, I would not be alive today. I would have fallen a victim of hunger and starvation. Even if I had been spared by the scourge of hunger and starvation, I would have been a different person – eaten away by disease, illiterate, soaked in alcohol and unemployed in Subedar Busty, what used to be one of the biggest slums in Kurseong. Because these ‘unknown’ brothers and sisters supported Father Abraham, who in turn fed me and educated me, I am what I am today and able to do what I feel is my duty to do – help the poor help themselves. I am consoled by the thought that there are still a few in my mailing list who are among some of the first generation supporters of Father Abraham and some who supported him (me) for ten, twenty or thirty years. Please accept my ‘thank you’ and my deepest gratitude for your love and sacrifice. Thank you for giving me a second chance in life. And if you are in touch with anyone who has been a long time supporter of Father Abraham, please let them know that I am very grateful to them all.

Having said that, I feel it is my duty to give our children the opportunity to thank you for all you do for them. Without your love and generosity, we would never be able to take care of them. I have asked the children to help me write this newsletter by writing little thank you notes to you all in English. (Good way to have them brush up their English for the exams which is just round the corner!) I have tried to keep their original text as much as possible but have edited out the repetitions. I will have to give you a short course in Nepali though before you start reading their letters any further. Reading the letters you will frequently come across words ‘maju’ and ‘mama’. Maju means aunty and mama means uncle – that is what the children call us.



1 Apeksha, Anushree & Andrew

*Thank you. My school's name is William Memorial School. I have a big house. I have many brothers and sisters. They all love me. My best friend is Wangchu. I go to school every day. I learn English, math, Nepali and rhymes. I am 6 years old. I passed in my annual exams. Now I will go to Class 1. I will study well.
(Andrew – 6 yrs)*

Hello. My name is Anushree. I want to thank you for all. I go to school in St. Joseph's. I am in Class 5. I have no mother. My father works in tea garden. I came to Chris Niwas one year ago. I like to dance. My friends and I do a dance when friends come to Chris Niwas.

*Sudhir mama helps me very much when I study. I help Sashi Maju in the kitchen after I finish study because she works very hard. My friends and I take turns doing the dishes and peeling vegetables. I am very happy because I can go to school and I am growing well. Thank you for giving us help. We think of you all when we pray at night.
(Anushree – 12 years)*

My name is Apeksha. I am in Class IV in Mount Carmel English School. I want to thank you for sending me to school. I am trying to do well in school. I want to thank



2 Apeksha's tiny hands are perfect for peeling garlic

you for bringing me to Chris Niwas. I was in the village working. My mother left me and went to Delhi. She came back to Kurseong three months ago and she died because she was sick. My father is drinking. I am so happy to be in Chris Niwas. Everyone loves me and Sudhir mama and Sashi Maiju loves me also. I pray every day and also for you. When I complete school, I will become a good sister (nurse). Sashi Maiju makes good food for us. I sweep the kitchen and our room always. I hope you are fine. My exams start soon. I will go to Class 5 next year. Thank you for sending us many English movies. My best movie is Wizard of Oz. (Apeksha – 12 years)



3 Punam, Abhinoy & Subani

My name is Punam. Sudhir Mama tells us about you always. Thank you for helping us to live in Chris Niwas. I am in Class IV in St. Joseph's School. I study well. I came second out of thirty nine students in our class in the mid-term exams. I came to Chris Niwas four years back. When I finish studies, I want to become a teacher. I have three sisters in the village. I want to bring them to Chris Niwas next year so that they can also go to school like me. My father makes bamboo baskets. I was very afraid when there was an earthquake last month.

My mother told me our house was damaged. I do my studies quickly and help Sashi Maiju in the kitchen. I am also in charge of our dormitory. We keep our room neat and tidy. Thank you for sending me beautiful night gown. I enjoy learning computers. When I go home in winter holidays, I take care of my sisters and also help my mother to cook, carry fire wood. I will try hard to become a good person. Thank you and we always pray for you and your family. (Punam – 12 years)

I am in Class III in St. Joseph's School. My name is Subani. I am working hard in school. I have one brother and one sister at home. My father sells firewood. I came to Chris Niwas four years back. I am very happy here. There are many friends and Rita miss comes to teach us here. She is very good. She helps me with my homework and also teaches me knitting and stitching. I am learning to cook. Sashi Maiju is teaching me. I make tea and cut vegetables. I also learn to make chapatti. But they are not as round. When I go home in winter, I teach my brother and sister. Sudhir Mama tells me some day he will open a small school in our village. When I grow up, I will become a teacher. Thank you for helping me go to school and have food. Every day we pray for you and also for our family and sick people. (Subani – 12 years)



4 Punam & Subani's favourite past time is helping Sashi in the kitchen

My name is Abhinoy Biswakarma. I am in Class III in St. Alphonsus School. I have one brother and one sister in the village. My mother takes care of them. She works in people's homse cleaning dishes and clothes. Our father left us many years ago. I am living in Chris Niwas with many friends. Some time I clean our dormitory, other days I sweep the stairs and clean the bathroom. I like going to school. When it is not raining, we walk to school. It takes us one hour to reach school. I water the flowers when I come back from school. Every day we pray and thank you for sending us to school and giving us good food. We keep our dormitory neat and tidy. Thank you for sending tooth paste . tooth brushes and the pyjamas. I also planted a tree two years ago. It is growing well. When I grow big, I will become a police and help people. Thank you for good food and school. Sudhir Mama tells us about you every day to pray for you. I hope you are well. Thank you. (Abhinoy – 12)



5 Kiran, Sujan & Karan

My name is Kiran. I am in Class VII in St. Alphonsus School. I am very happy to be going to school. And also to get a chance to live in Chris Niwas with other brothers and sisters. I want to thank you for helping me to go to school and also for bringing me to Chris Niwas. I also want to thank Sashi Maiju and Sudhir Mama for taking care of us and giving us everything we need. I try to help Sashi Maiju and Sudhir Mama as much as possible. I sweep the stairs, clean our dormitory and our toilet. Every night before we go to bed, Karan and I clean the kitchen floor. I also help Sujan and Abhinoy with their studies. I like to make everyone laugh. I also like to sing. I wrote a funny

poem for my teacher. I try to study well. Our exams start in December. I will try to do well. After Christmas, I will go home and help my grandmother. I cut grass for her goats and collect firewood for her. Thank you for sending me to school, providing good food every day. Every evening we pray for you and your family. Please pray for us also. I also want to wish you Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. (Kiran – 14 years)

My name is Sujan. I read in class II. I like my school. We have forty five boys in our class. I study hard. I came first in my class. I like flowers. I planted tree. It is growing well. My best subject is EVS (Environmental studies). I pick up garbage from here and there and burn it. I keep my house clean. I get up at 5 a.m. I clean our dormitory and study room. I am happy in Chris Niwas. My mother came to see me six months back. I love my mother and my brother and my father. One man took (stole) our goat. We have only one pig. I pray every day. I go to bed in the night at 8.30. Thank you for my school and my food. I will go home to my family after some time. I help my mother and father. I take my old books for my brother. I will teach him reading and writing. I also thank Sudhir Mama and Sashi Maiju for all. (Sujan – 10 years)



6 Sujan, the environmentalist



7 Monday is Karan's day to clean the toilet

My name is Karan. I am in Class IV in St. Alphonsus School. I have no mother and father. I have a sister. My sister and I were begging in Kurseong. We also use to collect garbage like pop bottles and other items to sell it to buy our food. My sister is living with Sr. Anne Francesca. Sudhir Mama brought me to Chris Niwas. I am very happy here. I am very happy to go to school. I try to study well because when I grow up I want to be a big man and help many poor people. I will also build a big house and keep all the boys and girls

who are begging in that house and help them go to school. Thank you so much for helping us. Sudhir mama and Sashi Maiju help us a lot. Early morning they get up to make food for us. Mama help us with our studies in the morning and evening. I thank you all for helping me to go to school. I am studying well because we have exams next week. If I do well, I will go to Class V. We are always praying for you. Please pray for us also. Happy Christmas and Happy New Year. (Karan – 13 years)

My name is Wangchuk. I am studying in St. Alphonsus School in Class 8. I am very happy to write this letter and also to thank you for helping me to go to school. I have a younger brother and a sister at home. My father is sick. He is suffering from throat cancer. My mother takes care of them. She sells vegetables and milk. I am happy to be at Chris Niwas. I am in charge of the boys' dormitory and the bathroom. All of us try to keep our room and bathroom clean. I also go to buy vegetables for the kitchen. I also make sure our water tank is always full. I go to the villages with Sudhir Mama when he trains the villagers in Square Meter Gardening and also go to Tumling to plant trees and take care of them. I like going to school. I like to help Mama and Maiju as much as possible. I paint the house, I cut the hair of other children, take care of flowers and trees. I want to thank you for giving me opportunity to go to school. We pray for you all everyday and also for other children like us. We pray all the poor children of this world get a chance to go to school and also get food every day. Please pray for us and our family. Thank you.

(Wangchuk – 15 years)



8 Patrick & Wangchuk



9 Patrick is always ready to help with anything that needs done

I am Patrick. I am in Class 5 in St. Alphonsus School. I am very happy to have so many brothers and sisters in Chris Niwas. I like going to school. When I grow up I want to be a doctor and help many sick people and very old people. I want to thank you for sending me to school. I also want to thank you for helping my mother and father. When I get big I will help my father to teach the people of the villages to grow vegetables and also to plant many trees. I am so happy to see our trees growing tall. Thank you for everything. We pray every day for you and we also pray for all the sick people and also for children who are hungry. We pray for all the countries where they are fighting. We pray that they will all live in peace. Please pray of us. Merry Christmas.

(Patrick – 11 years)

Thank you my friends for making it possible for us to raise such a beautiful group of children. We do our best to raise them in such a way that they are appreciative of what they have and also grow up to be caring and loving human beings. We could not do this without your love and sacrifice. Sashi and I have great hopes that some day some of these children will start their own little 'Chris Niwas' in their villages and help many poor children like themselves. Sashi and I and all our children wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

May Baby Jesus bring floods of peace, joy, love and happiness in your life.

Sudhir, Sashi and all our children



10 Happy and healthy family

Update on Tumling reforestation program

Last month Wangchuk and I made the trip up to Tumling to see how the 40,000 saplings we planted six months back were doing. They're doing really well. We walked right around the area where the trees are planted, we noticed very few saplings had died, thanks to the fence which kept the cows and goats out who would have made a feast out of the tender saplings. What we also noticed in the plantation area was the number different species of birds which had made their nesting grounds there. Earlier the cows and goats would trample on their nests and the eggs had no chance of hatching. Besides the increase in bird population, we also noticed many varieties of butterflies and bugs which surely will help in regenerating the forest. There are some activities we have to perform immediately to ensure we do not lose the sapling like weeding around the saplings, getting a couple of water tanks installed and watering system put in place because the place does get dry during four months of winter. We also need to get 10 beds of nursery going (10,000 young saplings) to replace the ones which may not survive the dry winter months.



You may think this hillside is empty but this is part of our plantation area where 40,000 healthy saplings like the rhododendron on the right are growing protected by a strong fence from the grazing cows and goats and the grass cutters.



(L) Pemba, a poor village farmer, who has volunteered to look after the tree saplings. We have to find a way to pay him to add to his income so that he can look after his family better. (R) Nila, Sudhir and Pemba – a team determined to get the forest back in Tumling and safeguarding the local ecology.

Goethals Himalayan Hope & Welfare Society, PO St. Mary's Hill, Kurseong, Darjeeling, W Bengal, 734203, INDIA

Website: www.himalayanhope.org

Email: sushsaso@gmail.com