



STARFISH NEWS

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OAKHILL COLLEGE – TEAM INDIA HELPING THE LIVES OF THE ‘UNTOUCHABLE’ CHILDREN OF INDIA

A TESTIMONY BY CHRIS GOODMAN – COORDINATOR OF SOLIDARITY, TECHNOLOGY TEACHER AND HEAD OF TEAM INDIA – OAKHILL COLLEGE

In 2008 I was fortunate enough to travel to Sri Lanka and Southern India with Brother Paul and Miranda Chow to experience the work of the Lasallian Foundation. What I discovered had a major impact on my life, my faith, and my work at Oakhill College.

Children born in India are automatically assigned to their position in life by way of the caste system. Just like the upper, middle, and lower class systems of a bygone era. Some children in India are still born into wealth and privilege whilst the majority of young people are born into poverty.

The extreme poverty and hardship that these lower class families endure causes a myriad of babies and young children to be abandoned. This subsequently results in the failure of acceptance into mainstream schools, years of child labour, health directly or indirectly affected by HIV, and a life where they are completely shunned by society.

These young children are cruelly targeted as the lowest of the low, the poorest of the poor and are even given the disturbing title of ‘untouchable’.

Upon finding out about these harsh realities, Oakhill College responded with an annual volunteer program called Team India. Commencing from 2009, self-funded senior students, accompanied by College staff, volunteer their entire September school holidays to live and work with the De La Salle Brothers in the poorest of poor communities in India.

Through the Lasallian Foundation and our College community we have helped to provide real positive change in the lives of these young children. Over the last five years, more than 150 Oakhill students have taken the opportunity to fall in love and embrace hundreds of these, who are children classed in their own country as



Athi & Chris Goodman – Team India 2012

‘untouchable’. Bit by bit, the Oakhill family has worked to help change our Lasallian world.

Team India spends two weeks in the outskirts of the city Madurai in Tamil Nadu, which is statistically, the poorest State in India. The group stays at trade schools and orphanages – programs funded by the Lasallian Foundation and run by the De La Salle Brothers. The trade schools provide a one year course for poor students without formal education enabling the graduates to gain full time employment. So many heart-warming stories come from these trade schools of young people originally abandoned who go on to become educated, employable and contribute to their communities.

At St Josephs Boys Village orphanage we have the honour of living and sharing our lives with the most entertaining and happy young children, despite their own circumstances which led them to this facility. Education, self-reliance, pride, and brotherhood are the cornerstone of this wonderful example of the Lasallian charism.

The response and reaction from the school community over the past five years has been incredible. Rarely a week goes by without a fundraising initiative to support the Lasallian Foundation. Team India utilise the profits from these events to undertake practical activities; to paint cottages, plant trees, repair fences, and build furniture. We act as couriers to bring educational materials, sporting equipment, musical instruments and literally hundreds of kilograms of presents from our College community.



Mrs Kate Thornely - PE Staff Oakhill College

Parents at our school take inspiration from their children and sponsor children in India through the Foundation. The Lasallian Foundation and the Team India movement is now part of the school curriculum with assessments based around the importance of Mission and Social Justice. Staff make regular donations to the Foundation using the charities payroll deduction scheme. Our teachers and students bring back experiences to share with Year groups, peer support lessons and local community events.

The experience of the trip has also had the impact of clarifying vocations for students at Oakhill College. Decisions to join the Share the Mission Program in Balgo Hills or undertake tertiary education as nurses and social workers are examples of the power of the Team India trip. The popularity of the immersion experience has recently seen the expansion of this program with a second trip proposed to assist the Brothers in a new region – Team Philippines 2014.

By far the most significant impact is to see students live out our Oakhill College ethos

and guiding principles. Programs such as Faith into Action, Touching Hearts and being a Brother and Sister are not just words in our school diary or on notice boards in our College. Team India live out these statements with love, compassion and as a truly Christian response.

Our staff and students are committed and reach out to the children of India with hard work, commitment, laughter, games, thumb wars, dancing, secret handshakes, English lessons, and most importantly, simply showing them that they are cared for just by sharing their time. The children and Brothers in India know that they have family and friends at Oakhill College. In our eyes we never saw them or treated them as the lowest of the low and our hope is that now, in their own eyes, they no longer class themselves as 'untouchables'.

In conclusion I have nothing but admiration and respect for the work of the De La Salle Brothers. The love, commitment and compassion from every member of the Team India family gives me inspiration to make

this program more successful every year. Furthermore to the amazing charity that is most definitely creating positive change in the lives of so many young people across South East Asia – I thank God every day for the Lasallian Foundation.

Chris Goodman and the Oakhill College Community have been travelling to India for 5 years and continue to make friendships, build hope and provide positive change to the lives of the poorest of poor children in India.



**Nagendran & Elia Said Year 12
– Team Oakhill 2013**



Miranda Chow – Gokkuwal Pakistan

CEO'S MESSAGE

We can change the world & make it a better place. It is in your hands to make a difference. – Nelson Mandela

We lost Nelson Mandela at the end of 2013 but his words live on. We can change the world. And with your help, we have made the world a better place. 2013 brought many firsts for the Lasallian Foundation.

Here is a snapshot of some of our ground-breaking achievements in 2013:

Rotary Australia Worldwide Community Services (RAWCS) completed an 18 week volunteer work program in PNG which transformed Keaga Haus. It has become an excellent teacher and student training facility and a safe place for future volunteer groups to stay. We sincerely thank all of the Rotarians who took the time to participate, particularly Terry Daley who coordinated this behemoth task. Their time and labour was valued at over \$170,000. I'd also like to thank Br Bede Mackrell and Mick Brosnan for their leadership and input during this program.

La Salle College Faisalabad Pakistan, for 600 senior high school and college students, was inaugurated after a two year build. This is particularly important for senior girls who previously dropped out at the end of high school due to the lack of facilities. We thank Miseen Cara and CEI for their financial support.

Lasallian Community Education Services, Sri Lanka: The new vocational training and preschool building was opened in December 2013. This two-year joint project with Miseen Cara Ireland and Porticus Asia has transformed the educational and employment opportunities for teenage girls and young women of the poor Mutwal area. The new centre which teaches computers, sewing, embroidery, beauty culture and English, has attracted good enrolments, including local unemployed mothers. The new Lasallian Preschool on the ground floor of the building has been beautifully decorated by the team from Southern Cross Catholic College Scarborough QLD. They transformed the plain concrete walls into a beautiful rainbow preschool.

James Sheahan Catholic School Orange had their inaugural volunteer visit to Mannar, in north Sri Lanka. The group did an amazing

job painting and sprucing up La Salle Primary School classrooms – they are now beautifully bright and cheerful spaces.

Diyagala BoysTown Sri Lanka celebrated their Golden Jubilee in December – congratulations to Br Henry Dissanyake and Br Pubudu Rajapaksa. With their guidance and leadership, DBT has flourished and grown, giving thousands of disadvantaged young boys the skills and experiences they need to make a better life for themselves.

I recently met with three outstanding young **Lasallian alumni** – Iliia Roytberg (DLS Malvern) who volunteered in Argentina; and Daniel Tamone and Rhys Jack (Oakhill College) who went to Sri Lanka. They all did an outstanding job working with the local Brothers, schools and disadvantaged communities. What really impressed me about these young men was their openness and willingness to learn about other cultures to gain a true understanding of the local people and their issues. They cared enough to make the effort to go overseas and support their less-fortunate Lasallian brothers and sisters. They have all made connections which have had far-reaching impact.

I'm really proud of the lads and also glad that they had the opportunity to experience what I am privileged to see every year – the wonderful changes that are happening because of the support of all of you – our treasured donors and supporters. Together, we have made a difference in the lives of thousands of children, their families and their communities.

Thank you so much for being part of it.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD

THE HONORABLE PAUL GUEST OAM



Boys Village India

In December 2013, I had the undoubted privilege to travel as a member of the Lasallian Foundation Board to Madurai in southern India for 3 days with Miranda Chow, CEO. Then onto Sri Lanka together with representatives from Fondazione De La Salle Solidarieta Internazionale (De La Salle Foundation International). This journey provided to me, yet again, a survey of the magnificent work undertaken by the Lasallian Foundation (LF).

It is not possible within the space provided to do justice to all that I was privileged to see. Visiting Boys Village, Boys Town and Reaching the Unreached outside Madurai in southern India was an uplifting experience observing the work already undertaken at each venue by the LF in planning and implementing strategies for the future for those forgotten children. Their happiness and safety was apparent.

In February 2012, I also had the advantage of visiting the Lasallian Community

Education Services (LCES) Mutwal just outside Colombo in Sri Lanka and witnessed the laying of the foundations by the workmen for the planned school building for the support and training of young girls from the shanty area of Colombo; and to have visited Mannar, in the war ravaged, wasted North and observe what was then a vacant piece of land but a dream of the Brothers.

This recent visit I represented the LF Board for the opening of the completed LCES vocational training centre and preschool building at Mutwal, and to have visited the almost completed two-storey building at the Lasallian Educational Campus, Mannar.

The itinerary also included attending the Golden Jubilee Celebrations and the opening of the refurbished workshop at Diyagla Boystown. It is the modernisation of the workshops to allow the young men a chance to be better prepared to join the

work force with training in the most up to date equipment.

All these magnificent projects were made possible through support of donors to the LF, The Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation, Misesan Cara Ireland, and The Jani Haenke Foundation.

My overall impressions were augmented by the fact this visually impressive progress and development in Sri Lanka of the work undertaken by the Foundation spanned by a mere 22 months evidenced a number of conclusions none the least of which was the delivery of major projects resulting from detailed and meticulous planning in construction and administration with our Lasallian partners under the hand of Miranda and overseen by the Foundation Board.

What I also observed to be of cardinal consequence was the high regard and respect that the Lasallian Foundation has earned in the valuable support it provides and whose good name and reputation has been underwritten by its exhaustive planning, administration and acquittal. The sincere gratitude of the local people to the Australian donors was heart-warming and I felt privileged to be representing you in this visit.

I was very pleased indeed to make this particular journey and to observe at the coalface the work of the Foundation in assisting the many marginalised children which, in a most significant way, provides hope for a better future through education, and in so doing, effect positive change.

YES! I WOULD LIKE TO HELP CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE TO THE POOREST COMMUNITIES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

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All donations over \$2 receive a Tax Deductible receipt.

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 with your donation details.

Or make your donation online
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THANK YOU HOHOLA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, PNG – COMPUTER REPLACEMENT



We received an overwhelming response to our emergency appeal to help replace all the stolen computers at La Salle Hohola Youth Development Centre (LHYDC) in PNG, this campaign raised over \$58,000!

As a direct result of your support, we have replaced all the computers which enabled the students of HYDC to continue their end of year studies with minimal disruption. This opportunity was only made possible by your generosity.

We are sincerely grateful to receive such an overwhelming response and on behalf of the LHYDC students benefiting from your kindness, we thank you.

BOARD DIRECTORS

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The Lasallian Foundation is a signatory to the Australia Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct.
www.acfid.asn.au

GET INVOLVED

- ★ Donating much needed funds
- ★ Organising your own fundraising event – donating the proceeds to the Lasallian Foundation
- ★ Making a gift in lieu (Birthday, Christmas, In Memoriam etc) to Lasallian Foundation
- ★ Asking your employer to start a Workplace Giving Program, nominating the Lasallian Foundation as a recipient
- ★ Leaving a Bequest in your Will to the Lasallian Foundation



The Lasallian Foundation is registered with the Australian Charities and Not For Profits Commission (ACNC)
www.acnc.gov.au

WE CAN HELP!

Please call our office on (03) 9508 2700
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OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO THE CONSIDINE FAMILY ON THE PASSING OF TERRY CONSIDINE

Terry, Brendon and family have been most gracious in supporting the Lasallian Foundation by supplying and transporting emergency goods to Papua New Guinea.

We are most grateful for this support. Our thoughts are with the Considine family during this sad time.