

FRIENDS OF HIMALAYAN CHILDREN



From the President...

I don't know where to start, the past couple of months have been so busy for FHC, I'm very excited and happy about all of our achievements. There will be more about this in the update section of the newsletter.

Last week was Dasain festival, this is the closest equivalent to Christmas here. Everybody in Nepal looks forward to this festival all year long. In my village families get together, there is traditional blessings and prayers. We eat special food such as meat, this is the only meat that's eaten all year! A satellite telephone was brought into the village and I spoke to nearly every villager! I was a little bit homesick but very happy to hear everybody's voices. The next festival is Dipawali, this is a brother/sister festival where sisters offer blessings to brothers and brothers give their sisters special gifts and money.

My Grandmother passed away last May and her funeral will be held in January. The funeral will be a 3 day event. All of the villagers and relatives light special candles and burn incense, we pray for a good reincarnation for Grandmother. Lama's come to the village to do special readings and play singing bowls, bells and other special instruments. I am glad that I will be able to attend my Grandmothers funeral.

We have three new orphans in the hostel, they are three Sherpa girls who are being sponsored by our Austrian friends Christian and Margit. They have settled very well into the hostel and are doing very well at school.

Som with this little brother Sanu



Letter from the Secretary.....

Hi Everybody,

The past couple of months have been incredible for FHC, Som's hardwork, dedication and determination is really starting to pay off. Over the past couple of months we have met the most incredible people who want to support FHC and believe in the mission and aims of the charity. It has also been a very stressful and emotional time! We are being faced with the harsh reality of the administrative side of the charity, our greatest challenge is to get an ABN, this is going to be a difficult and possibly very expensive process. It is vital to the growth of the charity that we get an ABN, once we have this we can then become a tax deductible charity which will definitely mean bigger donations from individuals and businesses. The tax deductibility is a huge incentive to people as the tax refund from a donation can be as high as 40%. We are hoping that somebody might volunteer their time to fill in this very difficult paperwork, if you know anybody who might be able to do this for us please contact Som.

I hope that everybody had the chance to read the this weeks Cairns Sun, if not please go to the Cairns Post office on Abbott Street for a copy. We are very grateful to Roz Pulley who wrote a great story and put it on the front page. Many people have been contacting FHC since then and offering support, lots of people want to visit the village and teach there, this will be discussed at our next membership meeting.

When I talk about Nepal, I do so with happiness but I feel that its important to inform everybody about the harsh realities, it really was the most challenging time of my life but also the most memorable and special time of my life. I encourage anybody who wants to go to Nepal in particular to Som's village to go as you will truly have a life changing experience.

I'm not trying to put anybody off but I want you to be prepared for what you will face. Som's village is a two day difficult trek from Kathmandu, it is either steep uphill walking or steep down hill walking, very little flat surface! In the village life is different to anything you have known, there is no access to shops or cafes, you are very isolated from everything. Village food takes a while to get used to, it is mainly rice, potatoes or corn meal, food that is not easy to digest! There are very few vegetables available and the only fruit will be berries on the trees (which is always fun to pick). There are no toilets and no designated toilet area so can take a while to adjust to! Even though you are in a remote part of Nepal, I was very shocked by how little privacy you get. In our culture we are individualistic ,Nepal is a collective culture and wherever you go people will want to be close by! This is because of their friendliness and curiosity. In the village people do not live by clocks, the day starts and soon as the sun rises and everyone stops work when the sun goes down. Everybody works incredibly hard all day long.

Both myself and Som agree that it is much better that you know this information so that your decision to go is an informed one. We truly hope that you visit one day. (Dinner time in Som's family home)



What has been happening?

Talk at the Library

Som's talk at the library went very well, we were amazed by how many people attended and showed their support. 12 new members were signed up as a result of the talk.

ABC Radio Talk

Som spoke about FHC on Fiona Sewell's program on the ABC radio. Many people have come to talk to Som at Rusty's after hearing him talk on the radio. We have met some incredible people as a result of this talk. ABC radio are also committed to continuing supporting FHC through making public announcements about fundraisers.

Rusty's

This is continuing every weekend, things have slowed down a little bit but it is a great opportunity to talk to people about FHC. We are hoping that sales will pick up with Christmas just around the corner!



Selling singing bowls at Rusty's



Scott, Som and little Joseph

Carnival on Collins

It was a very busy day and we make lots of great connections on this day

Charity Run

Scott Fraser from the Westpac Bank organized a run from Trinity Beach to Cairns and then back again to Trinity Beach in the evening. Som joined Scott on this run and over \$500 was raised for FHC, mainly from the staff of the Westpac Banks. Many thanks to Scott, Westpac Bank and everyone who donated money.

Membership meeting

Thank you so much to everybody who attended the last meeting, it was very encouraging to see so many people turn up. We have a very strong team now and this is going to make a huge difference to the children in Nepal.

Talk on Cairns Community Radio

Som spoke for one hour last week on Col Johnson's program on the Cairns Community Radio. The talk was on FHC, Som's background as a child labourer and also on the projects that are currently being undertaken in Nepal. Som also spoke at length about singing bowls and bells and gave demonstrations in the studio!

Website

Julius is still working hard on the website and hopefully it will be operating within the next month. This is the project that we are most excited about as it is going to open up so many doors for the charity. The designs that we have seen so far look incredible, we are still finding it hard to believe that this is really happening! Helpchildren.com will make an enormous difference to FHC.



The Village (Batase)



Scott and Som after morning run

Lioness Club Talk

We were invited to be guest speakers at the Lionesses Meeting in September. They were very interested and supportive of the projects FHC are undertaking and have offered their support with future fundraising activities. The Lionesses have also pledged to provide a toothbrush for everybody in the village, this is of great importance as dental hygiene is a big issue in the villages. Thank you very much to Gail Dudeck and all the Lionesses for their support.

Whats coming up?

Membership Meeting

The next meeting is on Tuesday the 13th of October at 5.30pm at Migrant Settlement Services Meeting Room, Level 1, Virginia House, Abbott Street (opp library). We hope to see all members there and anybody else who is interested in becoming a member

Child Sponsorship Program

Work is being undertaken to have a structured child sponsorship program. We already have sponsors for 4 children in the hostel and we hope that within the few months all hostel children will have a sponsor.

Website

Work will be continuing on the website. We are sharing ideas with Julius in Spain through the use of Google documents

Fundraisers

This will be discussed at the members meeting next week. We are very keen to start planning and organizing more fundraisers

Peace Lutheran School and Probus Club Talk

After reading the article in the Cairns Sun, the Peace Lutheran College and Probus Club have invited Som to speak to them.

Thank you....

Thanks again to Julius who is going to take Friends of Himalayan Children to a different level. Julius is really helping to make Som's goals and vision for the charity become a reality.



Julius in Batase village

Thanks to Scott, Laura and little Joseph Fraser, we really appreciate you undertaking the run to raise money for FHC, we look forward to next years run!



Som, Laura, Joseph and Scott after the run from Cairns to Trinity Beach

Thank you Roz Pulley for the fantastic story in the Cairns Sun, it has resulted in FHC receiving a lot more support from the Cairns Community.

Thank you Linda and Nevon Alexander for your ongoing support and commitment to FHC. In particular a big thank you for helping with Carnival on Collins.

Thanks to the beautiful Pradan family who worked so hard with us at the Autobarn Carwash fundraiser. The Pradan family are the only other Nepalese family in Cairns and kind and helpful at all times. We appreciate your friendship.



Pradan Family at Autobarn Carwash

Thank you to all our members who gave up their valuable time on a Saturday to help with the carwash. A huge thank you to Dianne and Garry Swan, Janelle Hamlyn, Sue Taylor and Julie Hendry.



Pictures taken at the Autobarn carwash (3rd October)

Finally, a big thank you to the fabulous young people in the hostel, you are all doing so well and everybody is extremely proud of your achievements

Some of the hostel students

