

## Friends of Himalayan Children Inc. 19th March 2024

### AGM 2022-2023

**Meeting opened:** 6.30pm

**Attendance:** Som Tamang, Susan Devitt, Tim Trehearn, Mary Frances de Jourdan, Peter

Gaudron, Steve Johnson, Jonathan Clayton, Rosalind Pulley, Ivan Whittle, Debbie Whittle, Kurt and Christiana, Gwynn McCarrick.

**Apologies:** Sue Lowth, Ian Lowth, Fiona Sewell, Kay Smith, Georgia Smith.

- 1 Welcome and Presidents Report (Som)
2. Acceptance of Previous Minutes
3. Secretary's Report (attached) read by Mary Frances
4. Election of Office Bearers
5. Treasurers Report
6. Other Business

#### **1. Welcome and Presidents Report**

Acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land -the Gimuy people.  
Thank everyone for being there and for supporting FHC. Remind everyone that they truly are making a difference. 2022-2023 was a good year for FHC.

As President of FHC here are my highlights from the year 2022-2023.

- For the first time an FHC hostel student Gyanu Maya was awarded a scholarship to study at a University in New Mexico, USA. You could never have imagined that happening before.
- Innocent relief project which was water project and completion of the new building- new toilets.
- Rotary club support- Rita making connection for FHC to gain tax deductibility. This required a huge amount of work with Peter and Rita. Now people can donate to FHC projects and get a tax deduction.
- Solar Power for school- a collaboration with the school and with a professor from a University in Texas, Morgan.
- I returned to Nepal after 3 years. Great to see hostel kids happy and thriving. Big change at the school due to the support from Innocent Relief. I was happy to be there.
- Acknowledge changes to the committee for this year. I'm very sad that Tim is stepping down from his role on the Executive Committee.
- Appreciate everyone's support.

#### **2. Acceptance of Previous Minutes**

The minutes were read out. Moved: Peter Gaudron, Seconded: Tim Trehearn

#### **3. Secretary's Report (attached) read by Mary Frances**

#### **4. Election of Office Bearers**

All positions were declared vacant before the committee was elected.

Office bearers are as follows:

President: Som Tamang

Vice-President: Peter Gaudron

Secretary: Fiona Sewell

Treasurer: Sue Lowth

Executive Committee members are:

Susan Devitt

Rosalind Pulley

Jonathan Clayton

Angus McColl

Kay Smith

Gwynn McCarrick

Mary Frances De Jourdan

#### **5. Treasurer's Report (Peter, for Sue)**

It was moved by Mary Frances and seconded by Som that the Treasurer's report be accepted.

#### **6. Other business**

-It was agreed we need to return to our regular monthly meeting, the Spinal Life meeting room costs \$45. We will look into other locations.

-A fundraiser at Goomboora Park was discussed. Another idea was a trivia night at the German Club, Som to follow up with Chris Zilm.

Meeting Closed at 8.25pm

Minutes taken by Susan Devitt

## **2022 – 2023 Secretaries Report 19 March 2024**

Hello, my name is Mary Frances de Jourdan and it is my privilege to report on Friends of Himalayan Children for the financial year of 2021 – 2022. Thankfully, the year limped out of the Covid pandemic and travel, work and projects increased.

*The FHC Support* in this financial year included the following:

- Caring for 45 children in the Hostel. This includes providing a home, food, clothing and covering all educational costs. More importantly the hostel is a safe and supportive family for uncared for children
- We also supported 40 Scholarship students. These children live at home but come from families that cannot cover educational costs (books, uniforms and other school costs)
- Batase School provides education up to and including Year 10. The next level of education is called +2 or College where students leave Batase and attend school in Kathmandu or Melamchi Village. We had 10 +2 students who were receiving our support for this level.

While the Friends of Himalayan Children Charity is totally separate to the Schree Batase School, the inextricable link exists. Much of the help FHC provides, also helps the school and the community at large.

### *Key Contributors to the Friends of Himalayan Charity*

The first line of support comes from our wonderful *Sponsors*. There are 3 levels of support that exist:

- Scholarship Students - \$30/month
- Hostel Students - \$50/month
- +2/College Students - \$150/month

Our job on the committee is to cover all children/students on a needs basis. There are times when certain hostel or school projects arise and we call out for extra help. Thus, there are also one off donations that occur and help to cover these costs. Some of these one off donations are significant and donors want to remain anonymous.

*Innocents Relief* continues to commit their support to Batase School as one of their 'Centres'. Clare Carter – Centre Manager has given FHC/Battase School a glowing report to Innocents Relief supporters which cannot be underestimated. This Brisbane based charity was formed in 1962 aims to break the cycle of poverty by supporting education.

Support from Innocence Relief this year included the following:

- Paying the wages of 2 teachers able to teach High School Maths and Science (\$10,000/yr)

- Assistance with the Cultural Exchange (\$3,400). 60 students and 6 teachers had the cultural exchange of a lifetime with a trip that included Kathmandu (Aviation Museum), Chitwan, Janakpur, a visit to 2 schools, Lumbini (known as the birth of man) and Pokhara.

### *Ubuntu*

Generosity abounds with the Ubuntu Life Foundation and Innocents Relief (IR) with a AUD\$25,000 donation.

We are very pleased to share with you the news that Batase School has completed their Building Upgrade Project. The project grew as a result of a 'limited' gift from the Nepalese Government. In 2019 Sujan Tamang won a AUD\$50,000 grant for the addition of this building at Batase School. The grant money was very controlled and building specifications had to be followed exactly as set out by the government. While the money was gratefully received, the building could not be completed as required, with provided funds.

Help came from the Ubuntu Foundation. Their donation to Innocents Relief (who wonderfully passed it on to Batase School) allowed the school building to be completed. The new building is home to new classrooms, a computer lab, a science lab and a new Headmaster's Office. Once again, the project provided employment for community members, much needed space at the school, and community pride.

The Ubuntu donation also included development of a Waste Management System at the school. Colour coded bins have been installed to encourage recycling and rubbish disposal. The final project was tree planting and creating a green space for the school area.

We would like to thank Ubuntu Foundation for their generous donation as well as Innocents Relief for choosing Batase School for this wonderful gift.

### *Solar Project*

An innocent visit to Himalayan Dreams, Som and Susan's shop in Cairns has resulted in a donation of a \$35,000US solar installation at the school in Batase. This chance meeting between Susan Devitt and Dr. Morgan Kiani, a Professor at the Texas Christian University has resulted in a secure source of power to the Batase school. Dr. Kiani paired with IEEE (The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) in Nepal to install the panels on the school roof! A very big thank you to Dr Kiani and team....and thank you Susan Devitt for that winning smile and warm personality!

### *Containers for Change*

The Containers for Change Scheme has been a \$31,000 asset this year. The effort involved cannot be underestimated...do the maths...at 10 cents per can....that's 310,000 tin cans!

Jonathon Clayton started the ball rolling with this practice 3 short years ago and now we have many contributors. He is by far the biggest asset on the Containers for Change team...Thanks heaps JP. Other key contributors include Dianne Andrews, Howard Smith, Tim and MF, Kurt and Christiane, and Peter Trehearn in Boonah. There are several other individuals that donate their personal Container for Change collections as well.

### *Charity Registration and Tax Deductibility*

The FHC Chairty has been listed as a not for profit organization since it started. Many members have asked about their donations and tax deductibility. Charity members Steve Johnson and Ashliegh Lawrence have put considerable effort into moving our charity in the direction of tax deductibility. The first step will be to Register the Charity. Many thanks to both Steve and Ashleigh for the time spent working on this.

### *Paul Harris Fellowship Award to Som Tamang*

Congratulations Som for this recognition! This award through the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International is not only a wonderful achievement but an international force as well. Rotary International strives to bring people together to solve world problems and promote peace and goodwill. The link to Rotary Cairns and Rotary International will also be a helpful link to Registering FHC and providing Tax Deductibility.

While the above mentioned spits out what the year brought, I think our success most aptly lies in some of the following bits of news found in the FHC Newsletter so professionally created by committee member Angus McColl. A huge thank you for all the work you do to show the heart of what this charity is really about.

- Listen to these Student Achievements of kids who are living in our hostel for Secondary Education Examination Results.
  - Gyanmaya Tamang – highest achievement in the school with a score of 87.5%
  - Akriti Tamang close behind with a score of 83.75%
  - Som Tamang – 78.75%
  - Sunil Tamang – 77.5%
  - Plus 6 others from the hostel who have successfully achieved A or B grades in their Secondary School Achievement exams. These are children who either do not have parents, or have lost a parent and the surviving parent cannot look after them. I am in awe of this resilience.
- The hostel welcomed Karsang Tamang, the younger sister of hostel resident Dolma Tamang whose mother tragically died in the 2015 earthquake. When the father of these 2 girls could not provide for them, he left Batase to work elsewhere. This is just one example of many where FHC opened doors and provided life changing opportunities
- The School Captain of Batase School, Bir Bahadur Tamang has been living at the FHC Hostel for several years!
- 50% of school attenders are female. We have dramatically changed the playing field for females growing up in Batase Village.

- And...in 2022 60 students from Batase village graduated from Year 10! The influence of the FHC Charity reaches more than just those in our hostel!

So – where are we going from here?

One of our largest challenges is providing suitable accommodation for good teachers. It is difficult to attract good teachers to come and stay in Batase Village because of this gap. FHC has identified this as a need and are working towards building teachers quarters. Thank you Ivan Whillte, one of our FHC members who has assisted with initial drawings. I hope we can put them into action.

Another goal is to provide the +2 or College years in Batase Village. This will require considerable work but would provide many more students opportunities for Batase children.

The success of The Friends of Himalayan Charity is the work of a dedicated committee of volunteers and members. I would like to thank the following:

- Som Tamang and Susan Devitt – you have an unbending commitment and passion for Batase Village. Your lives are full with 3 growing children and you still have the charity firmly fixed in your world.
- Tim Trehearn – Tim has been actively involved with FHC for over 5 years. As Vice President, he has been the official ‘bum kicker’ and really kept the flow of the charity going with meetings, emails, donations as well as assistance in getting newsletters out. He has been a central to keeping the charity moving along and is connected with the Village of Batase. With moving to the Tablelands, Tim will be stepping down from the position of Vice President. He will always have a connection and soft spot for this charity. We thank Tim for all he has done in his position and look forward to his continued love and support from afar.
- Sue Lowth – Sue has been our treasured treasurer and worked consistently to keep our finances organized. We are so lucky to have you Sue and know we have total transparency with any matters. Peter Gaudron, although not a committee member assists with finances and connecting with those in the village.
- Angus McColl – As mentioned previously, Angus puts such a professional polish on the charity with a newsletter and website that connects our sponsors and donors to what is happening in Nepal. We love your work Angus and think you are very clever!
- Jonathan Clayton – works quietly in the background keeping the donations through Containers for Change coming in. We are feeding and educating kids with your efforts JP.
- Kay Smith, Roz Pulley and Fiona Sewell are committee members that support the charity on an ongoing basis. We have become a family within this charity and I dare say we will be forever linked.

I have worked in the position of Secretary for three years, with the help of committee member, Kay Smith. It has been a privilege to be involved with such good people and see results that make such a difference in this small village. I will be stepping out of this position and handing this task onto a

new person. I am keen to stay involved with FHC and will be happy to return as a committee member. Thank you again to our Committee and we wish the new committee all the best for the next financial year.

Mary Frances de Jourdan