

# Newsletter A Biannual Report

January 2017



**BRIGHT LIFE**  
**FOUNDATION** shelter the light

## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN: UPDATES

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### Updates

#### Agriculture

Farming in the land around the school, is able to provide food to all our kids currently.



#### Dairy farm

This year we have heavily invested on dairy, including purchasing new cows, mechanization for milking, feeding, shredding the feed etc. Milk from dairy farm is not only providing the milk needed for all the students, but also generating an income that is meeting the salaries of about 40% of the current staff.



#### Solar Panels

Total energy costs for the school annually is about \$30,000. Three solar panels are installed so far. Goal is 5 more to attain self sufficiency.



## New Admissions

This year we had 40 new admissions, of which 11 came from tribal areas with loss of one or both parents and from overcrowded families. Seven out of these 11 kids are older than 10 years in age and have no prior education. All these kids have never been exposed to a book, leave alone the alphabets. They speak tribal language. These children with special needs are placed in a separate class, where dedicated teaching faculty to teach these kids in small groups of 4 or 5 students in an accelerated and intense curriculum to help them catch up and eventually integrate with their age appropriate peers.



## Stats

Current strength 270

First 12<sup>th</sup> grade class 8 students

Current 11<sup>th</sup> grade MPC 23, BPC 9

Non teaching staff 25

Teaching staff 35

## Academic Report

KUDOS!!!! To all the 10th grade kids and staff at Sarada Nikethan Public School for their hard work and diligence leading to awesome achievements on their final exams. Of the 37 students that took the CBSE exam, all 37 passed achieving a 100% pass. Two students B. Venkatesh and R. Laxman got perfect score of 10. Sixteen students achieved 9 and above (90% and above) Seventeen students scored between 8 and 9 (80-89%) 33 out of the 37 students scored above 80%. What an excellent performance, outperforming even private schools. CONGRATULATIONS AND KEEP IT UP!!!

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For the First time this Academic year 2015-2016, Sarada Nikethan students participated in the international Mathematics Olympiad conducted by SFO and won 5 medals.

## Recent Donor Highlights

Sattaluri Chakravarthy. \$15,000

Asha for education \$3,600

Colleagues from St Charles practice \$27,000 ( Chuck, MCDonald \$2000, Dr Shawburg \$5000, Dr Bernie \$10,000 Dr Bantrop \$10,000)

Chris Cordis \$5000

Baton Rouge Indian Community \$17,000

Connecticut Indian Community \$7,500

Houston Indian Community \$

## Volunteer Profiles

### Youth Ambassador

Amber Leekey went to India to serve the kids in our school and Spent 3 months with them. Here is what she had to say about her experience at the school.

It's 5:30 am. I can hear the clanking of buckets and splashes of faucets down the hall. The girls at Sri Sarada Nikethan are getting ready for their day. I join, making my way to the washroom. Through the flutter of curtains, I can see the girls in their rooms preparing. The older ones are helping the young girls do their hair in the signature braided pigtail style. They fold and pin their scarves (chunni) neatly to their uniforms just so.

After washing up, a light shuffle of feet makes its way down to my door. "Excuse me, Madame." It's Bhavani. She sweeps my room every morning. I always say I can sweep myself, she doesn't have to, but she insists. Besides, she always takes the broom with her when she leaves so that I can't do it myself. I invite her in. We have a conversation about her classes and what she is learning with a huge smile plastered on her face. The students are all so eager to practice their English.

Soon the bell for breakfast is sounded, and we all make our way to the mess hall. I'm serenaded with a smiling chorus of "Good morning, Madame's and "Hi, Akka!"s as we all walk down the hostel wing. They call me Akka, which means older sister in Telugu, and I call them Chelli, younger sister. Meal

time truly is a sight to behold here. Giant heaps of rice and curry are loaded onto the children's plates as they file past the serving pots. The most amazing part is that it's all grown on site, right here including rice, vegetables, even milk.

Now it's time for classes to begin. The children make their way across the grounds to the school building. As I walk down the length of the school surveying it in the light morning breeze, a head pokes out of one of the classes, "Come to my class, akka!" I try to make my way quietly to the back to watch, but when I enter, the class stands and chimes in unison, "Good morning, madame!" Returning the greeting, I slide into a seat with the girls. Throughout the class, it's plain to see how much these kids want to learn. They are all paying attention, and when asked a question, they stand straight up, beaming with the answer.

Around noon I eat with the teachers. The principal, Madame Victoria, wants to bring me lunch every day. Of course, when I arrive, I find that three other teachers have also brought me food. They load my plate and I eat, each bite more delicious than the last. Once my plate is empty, they insist that I take more, but I can't, there simply isn't room in my stomach.

During the afternoon classes I decide to visit the library. I browse the huge collection of books. They have everything from children's stories, to a college level Molecular Biology textbook. One of the classes enters. The boys want me to play chess, but I decide to just watch, which turns out to be good, because watching, I soon realize just how out of my league they are. Their moves are swift and they think 10 steps ahead. I'm thoroughly impressed.

Once classes are over the children return to the dorms and do their washing and chores before having some free time for playing in the yard. The girls teach me a game called "Seven Stones", and another called "Salt" where they draw lines in the dirt and run from one end of the yard to the other trying not to get tagged. Then they have a study time where they bring their books into the hallway and complete their homework.

After dinner, they grab their mats from their rooms and lead me outside to sit under the stars in the gentle nighttime wind. If I happen to be bringing anything at all, like a water bottle, the girls eagerly take it off my hands and carry it for me. One of them scurries ahead and retrieves a chair for me. At night we talk and I usually read a story. They ask

me questions, and I them. Tonight I am curious about something.

"Do you ever get to make arts and crafts?"

"Oh yes, every Saturday and Sunday! Wait here." A few of the girls scamper off and return a moment later with some of their work. They show me a couple of figurines and doll dresses that they have sown with leftover bits of material from a tailor.

Then they gently reveal a painted piece of cardboard in the shape of a heart. I can tell this one is their most prized artwork as all the girls lean in. "This is the Bright Life symbol." Under the moonlight, I see the hands that surround the delicate flame of a candle, just as the girls gently hold this precious symbol painted on scrap. "That's the foundation that provides for our whole school." The young girls marvel at it, a soft fragility in their eyes. Each of their faces wears a faint look of awe and wonder mixed with unfathomable gratitude. **"They have given us everything."**

