

Bridge Foundation

Newsletter

Spring 2009

13th edition

Namasker, Namaste, Fáilte. Hello to all our friends and well-wishers. Once again our team takes time to reflect on all our activities. Economic times are difficult at the moment. Every news item makes us feel gloomy and we seem to be losing our hope. But I was back again in Calcutta in January and was delighted to see that our people have not lost hope. They are still joyful and happy. Perhaps the recession does not hit them as they have always worked hard and go through seemingly hopeless situations all the time. But what keeps them moving on, without giving up is the hope that "Yes, We Can", and "Jai Ho". Both Barack Obama and Slumdog Millionaire have become the struggling people's cry of hope. So I returned to Ireland positive and optimistic that Bridge Foundation too can go forward with the co-operation of our friends, both in Calcutta and Ireland.

Laeticia



Joykrishnapur Village School Group

Education

The teachers and the children of the four centres are all working very hard. Our Senior School students are now getting special attention and attending Coaching Centres to get professional help for the subjects in which they are having difficulty. A number of the children were given medals and certificates in their schools for attendance, responsibility and progress in their studies.



The Fatima Centre Group

Food and Medical Programme

We try to make sure that the children in all the centres and their families are taken care of on time of need. Besides their regular food, the children get food packets on several occasions throughout the year and medical care when necessary. We are grateful to all our friends for their generosity which enables us to do this work.

The Village Programme in Joykrishnapur

I was delighted to visit our village school with Mr & Mrs Buckley, Finbarr, Melanie and Lydia. It was a long journey by road. We were greeted by Nandu, the local co-ordinator in Raidighi, the nearest town to the school. He then took us to the school, where we spent quite a bit of time with the children, teachers and parents. Each class recited Bengali rhymes, did drill and performed the local dance for us. We saw a lot of improvement in the school since our previous visit. My Irish family was overwhelmed to experience the hospitality of the people and the friendliness of the children. The school parents' committee prepared a lovely traditional lunch, not forgetting to add the boiled potatoes for the Irish people.

I conducted a meeting with the teachers and committee members where we talked about how best we can improve the school and help the children to progress. Everyone expressed gratefulness for the help we are giving. The teachers requested games items for the children. We agreed and all the materials were bought and given to the school. The school committee also proposed the building of two new rooms for the school, one to make a room for the Pre-Primary Class and the other to make a school office. The existing Pre-Primary Classroom is made of mud and the room is leaking in several places, making it difficult to take class during the monsoon time.

We would like to thank John Joyce and Deirdre O Callaghan for their ongoing support for this programme.

The New Centre

The New Flat is almost complete and we will take possession of it in the Summer and work will begin there straight away. The final touches are being put to it at the moment

Teachers Day & Childrens Day

All of the centres celebrated teachers day in the Autumn. The children decorated the rooms, they performed for the teachers and gave small gifts to the teachers. They cooked food and brought it to the centre. Childrens Day was also celebrated. The children were all dressed up. They sang and danced and had their snacks. In Moulali Centre the bengali teacher had taken spelling, essay and sentence making competition earlier so they were given there prizes. They were in three categories with classes 4 and 5 in one group

Picnic

On 22nd February everyone from Blackburn Lane Centre went to Bandel Church for the picnic. Mr. Sandeep Jain and Regina accompanied them. Sandeep arranged the transport for us. Tulsi's mother prepared lunch. She too joined the trip because I wanted her to go also. They left at 8.30am and returned by 6.00pm. Some children attended the Mass along with Regina. Everybody lit the candles. Before leaving they did boating too. The children enjoyed a lot and all had a fun-filled day

Christmas Party

the Christmas celebration took place in Fatima church on 21st December. We booked the hall there and all the centres had the celebration together. Each centre had to put on a performance. There were lots of games played. The children were given snacks and cakes. They were given umbrellas as Christmas gifts. All the children were given rations like sugar, rice and oil. We are grateful to Seán and Marie Garvey for being present and for their kindness and generosity to the programme.

My Visit to the Bridge Foundation Centres

I visited all of the Bridge Foundation centres in January and I was extremely impressed with the wonderful work being done. The children in the city centres are getting a wonderful opportunity by Bridge Foundation to progress in their studies and improve their situation in life.

I visited The Bridge Foundation School in a remote village called Joykrishnapur, quite a long distance from Calcutta where conditions are very basic. 100 children are being educated by dedicated teachers. The parents are living in quite poor conditions but they gave us a wonderful welcome when we visited them. It is clear that are very appreciative of what is being done for them. The children gave a wonderful display of singing and dancing for us and the local people gave us a lovely traditional meal.

Maureen Buckley

Condolences

A number of staff and our friends lost close family members recently and we would like to assure them that they are very much in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

Thanks

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the work of Bridge Foundation by visiting us or donating money to help with the work. Without the help of these people the work of Bridge Foundation would not be possible. Special thanks to St. Patrick's Classical School, Navan for the constant support and to Fr. Donal Neary for his ongoing support and for all his help with our accounts in Ireland.

Retreat

We are grateful to Katie Foley for organising a Day Retreat in Burton Park, Churchtown. Laetia gave a talk during the retreat about Bridge Foundation and the participants gave a very generous contribution towards the work. We are also grateful to Mrs. Rosemary Ryan Purcell for giving the use of her house for the retreat.

Art Classes,

The art sessions continue to progress. In the last 6 months some of the children took part in local and regional level art competitions. They are doing very well in fabric painting. They have done fabric painting on a number of T-Shirts. We were happy to welcome Melanie and Lydia to be part of our art sessions in January. They conducted a class along with the Art Teacher. The theme was Child Labour and the children prepared a collage on this topic.

Celebration with St. Pauls School

St. Paul's Mission School celebrated their silver jubilee year recently and as part of the celebration they wanted their students to interact with underprivileged children. A programme was held on the 4th of September 2008 at Fatima Centre between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Children from all the centres prepared a Cultural Programme. The school kicked off the celebrations of their jubilee year with this interaction. 10 children from St. Paul's Mission School came along with 4 teachers and Mrs. Raha, the principal. Each child in Bridge Foundation was given a food packet, and clothes. We appreciate Regina, Mrs Lee and Mrs Raha's thoughtfulness in organising this programme.

Visitors

This year also there were many visitors in our centres. Sean and Marie Garvey visited all the centres in December. They were our guest at the Christmas celebration also. Denis and Maureen Buckley visited all the centres in January including the Village Programme. Of course Mags O Donnell from Dublin is a frequent visitor to all the centres and is a very generous supporter of Bridge Foundation.



Laetia with the Committee and Teachers of Joykrishnapur Village School