

Empower the Children

Fall 2010



Rosalie's Message

Dear Friends,

When **Empower The Children (ETC)** took its first 'baby' step in 2002, we could not have foreseen the progress that has been realized in the last eight years. I can never fully express my gratitude to *you*, our supporters, who have witnessed **ETC** grow from one little seed into a beautiful garden. Worldwide volunteers continue to travel to Kolkata to *water* our garden, bringing their enthusiasm and creative skills to our programs. Special thanks to our international partners who have added libraries as well as computers and music programs to our schools.

One of our biggest achievements this past year was to create a cultural exchange between Scottish and Indian children. This interaction was made possible through the joint efforts of educators in Scotland and India who realize there is no better way to promote peace and goodwill than through awareness and understanding between people.

In 2009 **ETC** initiated a sewing program for women. We have discovered that the children delight in seeing their mothers 'going to school'. While serving as excellent role models, these women now feel *empowered* with new marketable skills in the workplace. From these humble beginnings future generations will benefit as children become educated and women realize their potential - another *flower* in our garden.

We are especially pleased to announce that **ETC** now has its own theme song written by California songwriter Victoria Hazlett which can be heard on **ETC's** website: www.empower-children.org or by visiting www.youtube.com.

Your generous efforts and contributions have enabled **ETC** to achieve our goals - lifting children out of poverty while giving women the opportunity to realize their dreams. Thank you, one and all, for making our garden *flourish*.

With love,

Rosalie Giffoniello
Co-Founder
Empower the Children

"If you think in terms of a year,
plant a seed;
if in terms of 10 years,
plant trees;
if in terms of 100 years,
teach the people."

Source Unknown



Empowering Young Women...one stitch at a time

Mamata, Tara, Sangita, Babita and Rajini must walk long distances to reach Preyrona 1 School. That isn't easy, particularly during Kolkata's monsoon season when rains flood the roads and temperatures soar to over 100 (F) degrees. Yet these students never miss their classes.

ETC's newest vocational program has introduced twenty-four girls, ages 14 years+ to embroidery, needlepoint, crocheting, and knitting under the tutelage of a specialized teacher. They are proud of their beautiful needlework which includes tablecloths, napkins, wall hangings, purses, bed sheets and pillowcases.



There is an additional benefit for Asha who lost her leg in an accident. "I am an amputee and wear a wooden leg. It is difficult for me to travel long distances by bus because I get physical discomfort. After I finish this course, I can work from my own house."

All these students want to become independent. Punam says, "Before I felt I was very poor. But now I don't consider myself poor because I am participating in the vocational training program and I can become self-sufficient."

The girls are surprised that they have received such extensive support from their families, even from those parents who never before sent their children to school. Tara's mother encouraged her to attend Preyrona School. "She told me to do something with my life. She wants me to participate in an exhibition and win first prize. She never felt this way before." Tara is no longer dreaming - she has now found the means to fulfill her ambition.



*"If you educate a boy,
you educate an individual;
but if you educate a girl,
you educate a community."*

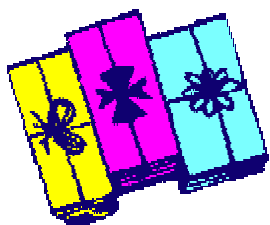
African Proverb

ETC Supports an Educational Center in Mexico

Hundreds of Mexican refugees have lost their farms to big corporations. For this reason they have flocked to Ciudad Juarez and other 'colonias' seeking employment in multinational factories bordering El Paso, Texas. Yet even these jobs do not provide sustainable living incomes. And to make matters worse, drug cartels have infiltrated Ciudad Juarez which has unleashed violence of unprecedented proportions - thus making it one of the most dangerous places to live.

Amidst this utter desolation lies an oasis. Built on a former garbage dump in Juarez is an educational center for women and children known as *Centro Santa Catalina*, an unlikely springboard for three very determined young women. Not only have they managed to complete their high school education but are now looking forward to entering the university. **Empower The Children** is proud of its affiliation with this remarkable school and provides books, uniforms and school supplies for its K through 12 classes, as well as tutorials.

Centro Santa Catalina is vital to the women and children who live, work and study there. **ETC** believes that only through education - together with **your** continuing support - will the children of Juarez ever discover a more promising way to live.



Gift-giving takes many forms - one of ETC's board members chose to make a donation to the lunch programs in lieu of buying Christmas presents....

"A donation to Empower The Children was made in your name this Christmas in order to share our abundance with children who are less fortunate than us."

With love and gratitude....Nancy



Custom-tailoring a new life...

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

Eleanor Roosevelt

From a pattern sketched onto a piece of newspaper to the finished product, women in the tailoring class at Preyrona 3 School are learning new skills. It is a long process but completion of this course has become highly motivational for these fledgling entrepreneurs. They look forward to becoming independent, with the ability to contribute financially to their families' earnings - a goal worth pursuing.



This innovative vocational program was established by Director Rina Das in response to requests by the mothers of Preyrona students. Housed in a three-story building, Preyrona 3 is able to accommodate sewing machines and other equipment. A tailoring instructor was hired and before long 43 women were attending classes three days a week. Starting with simple patterns, they have progressed to making petticoats, salwaar pants, undergarments, baby sets, men's shorts and sari blouses. Their sense of personal accomplishment is second only to their heart-felt gratitude. Sibani says, "I can't believe I am getting this training for *free*." Her sentiment is echoed by many, including Mahua: "Because the school has faith in me, I have faith in myself." All the women agree that they have earned new-found recognition. As beautifully expressed by Moumita, "Encouragement and even a feeling of pride from our husbands, in-laws and our children have given us a new sense of self-recognition."

The positive energy in ETC's tailoring class enables each participant to find a new meaning in her life - as clearly expressed by Joyti, "When you have no means of earning money, you are dependent upon others and you feel useless. Through this training I will become a skilled woman capable of contributing to my family - a perfect woman."

Outreach in Africa....

For over five years **Empower The Children** has partnered with a primary school on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya which offers education and hope to more than 500 refugee children from 5 to 16 years of age. These children not only attend the Mary Immaculate Primary School but live there year-round, receive all their meals and are educated at no cost to their families.



Because this rapidly urbanized region has been ravaged by the AIDS pandemic, social disintegration has resulted at all levels, including joblessness and the breakdown of families. Single parents and grandparents find it increasingly difficult to raise children in this troubled environment. Thus, the school is both home and haven for these needy children. **ETC** proudly contributes to this school by providing funds that help cover the cost of three daily meals for each child.

Cead mile failte *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes* Namashkar

A Story of Happenstance . . . A cross-cultural program brings an understanding of diverse cultures and new friendships to children in India and Scotland.

Fiona Clark, Volunteer Fundraiser from Scotland...

"A partnership between Perth & Kinross and Kolkata developed when I showed a flyer of a recent ETC Bollywood fundraiser to one of my colleagues. He informed me that his wife, Liz, would be very interested as she had grown up in Kolkata."

Rosalie Giffoniello, Co-Founder of ETC...

"I received a series of e-mail correspondence from Liz Grant and Jan Caldwell inviting me to Scotland in May 2009. Their vision of a cultural exchange program that promised to be beneficial to both ETC and Perth & Kinross students was an exciting prospect."

Liz Grant, Councillor, Perth and Kinross Council, Scotland...

"Our children are taught to be more than good pupils; they must be good citizens and rights-respecting individuals. We are proud that our schools have received the Rights-Respecting Award from UNICEF. I envision the world to be a better place with each person doing his/her share to make that happen."

Introduction...

Rosalie took the first step by introducing the Scottish Cultural Exchange Project to students in seven Perth and Kinross schools. They reacted very favorably with many questions, suggestions and a real desire to make new friends in Kolkata.

Greetings from afar...

Through the exchange of photos and handmade friendship cards depicting the national bird of India (*Peacock*) and the national flower of Scotland (*Thistle*), children from across the seas were able to cement their first relationships.

Fiona Clark...Introducing Scotland to Kolkata

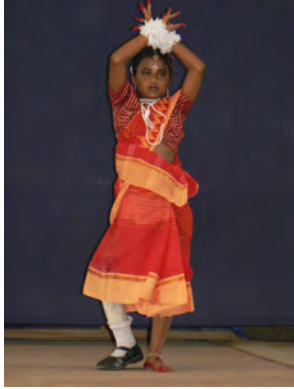
"In October 2009 I traveled to Kolkata with a group of friends to present a composite of Scottish life to children at Preyrona schools, RCFC, Prabartak Home, Atmaraksha, Nehru Colony, BBD, and Nivedita schools. Singing Scottish songs, learning a jig, and wearing a kilt were some of the highlights.

Rosalie...Watching the Excitement Grow

"The project has taken on a life of its own. In a few short months, both ETC kids and the Scottish pupils were able to learn and enjoy so much about each other and their diverse cultures."



From India with Love.....



"Beauty, grace and poise"...
 Preti made it look easy as she danced with her 'new' leg. The other physically-challenged children from RCFC videotaped a pantomime exclusively for the specially-abled children in Fairview School in Scotland.

Dances



"A to Z in India and Scotland"...
 Children exchanged interesting Alphabet Books depicting Indian and Scottish traditions and objects in their everyday lives.



"A Hundred Thousand Welcomes"...
 ETC children were delighted to make huge banners with *Namashkar* and *Cead mile failte*.



"Bollywood to Scotland"....Future 'movie stars' from Preyrona Schools and Prabartak Home filmed an Indian folktale for their new Scottish audience.



From Scotland with Love.....



"It's fun"...to try on a sari if you live in Scotland and a kilt if you live in Kolkata.



"A world apart"...Differences in architecture, religion, lifestyles and art stimulated students' imaginations and helped them to appreciate cultures on both sides of the globe.



Teddy Bears @20p = Lots of Love...
 A raffle event at Fairview School was one way pupils were able to raise money for ETC lunch programs.



"A generous gift"...The pupils at Rattray Primary presented Rosalie with a giant check for their newfound friends across the sea.

As the traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own.

Margaret Mead

Where there's a will....there's Willeke!

A jigsaw puzzle is one of the first challenging and stimulating activities for young children. This early-learning experience for students at Preyrona 3 School arrived in a *most ingenious way* thanks to Willeke van Nieuwenhuijze and her fellow compatriots from The Netherlands.

When a local supermarket offered a six-week promotion, Willeke decided to capitalize on the idea. Six pieces of a puzzle contained in a small book came with a 10 Euro purchase. Each book was different and 24 books were needed to complete one puzzle.

As people started to trade books, Willeke and friends decided to start a search on the city's website and Holland's E-Bay. Soon people countrywide were generously contributing their little books of puzzle pieces for **Empower The Children** kids.



With over 10,000 puzzle pieces, 76 complete puzzles were assembled and brought to Kolkata in time for the Christmas holiday. Each puzzle was placed in a pizza box from a local Indian pizzeria, and children at Preyrona 3 pieced together their very first jigsaw puzzle.

Hugs and kisses and a great big "Dank je wel" to Willeke and all of her friends in The Netherlands!



Aspirations, Hopes and Dreams...

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Nelson Mandela



Puja, Minati and Shanu

"Learning is the hope of my life," says 12 year-old Puja. "Not only do I love to study but also enjoy art, drama and pre-vocational training. Before I only dreamed - now I can fulfill those dreams."

Twelve year old Minati agrees with her friend, "Before I just stayed at home and did housework. Now I can't imagine my life without going to school. Although I had never been to a theatre, I participated in the school drama. I wasn't nervous because I know that my teachers support and love me. Studying is now my life."

"Under the guidance of good teachers, we are learning a more difficult curriculum. At first I was scared but now I am happy and promise to perform everything well," says Shanu, age 13. "My classmates and I must be obedient, disciplined and attend school daily because this supports the school, and the school is giving us a chance to do something with our lives."

A new upgraded curriculum has been introduced into ETC schools that is consistent with the curriculum in other schools in Kolkata. This makes the transition from one school to another easier. The curriculum is quite challenging, requiring strong academic skills even at the kindergarten level.

Empower The Children Now

By Victoria Hazlett

*A child's world should have wonder
Where their spirits flourish
With happiness, not hunger
A place where souls are nourished*



*In a child's eyes is the reflection
Of what they feel inside
Show them a new direction
Let our conscience be their guide.*



*A child's home should be free
Where they can peacefully live
A life that's filled with harmony
Is the best gift we can give*



*A child's heart should be dancing
With hope that is alive
Children should be singing
Not struggling to survive.*

*Empower the Children Now
Reach out to them with open arms
Teach them to rise beyond the highest star
Empower the Children Now!*

*Children need encouraging
A chance for their own light to beam
Believing there is no such thing
As an impossible dream.*



Victoria Hazlett

Composer/songwriter Victoria Hazlett and video producer Celestine Star have combined their creative efforts to produce an inspirational work of art, "**EMPOWER THE CHILDREN NOW**". This song/video is dedicated to the children of Kolkata and around the world. It can be viewed by typing in **Empower The Children Now** at www.youtube.com or visiting ETC's website www.empower-children.org.



Celestine Star



Notes of Appreciation for.....

...Alok Chatterjee who for the past eight years has unselfishly devoted his Saturday afternoons translating language development lessons for Rosalie at Prabartak Home for Disabled Children.

...Lisa Johnston and her students at Eisenhower and Barkalow Schools, Freehold Township, NJ for tirelessly re-creating ETC's interactive curriculum for the children of Kolkata.

...Omar Abdul-Rahim who performed a classical piano concert on August 28, 2009 at the Chapel of the Chimes in Oakland, CA. The sum of **\$2,080 was raised** which will **provide lunches for 400 children for one month.**

...Champa Sarkar who continues to monitor the educational programs at BBD, Atmaraksha, Nehru Colony and Nivedita Schools with unflagging love and devotion.

...Chuck and Cathy Moscarello - "**Pizza Partners**" - who for the past 10 years have opened their home and hearts to ETC supporters every Friday night in Hamilton Square, NJ. Homemade delectable pizza, camaraderie and good will are always in abundance. All donations collected are generously donated to **Empower The Children.**



MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rosalie Giffoniello, Co-Founder
Janet Grosshandler, Co-Founder
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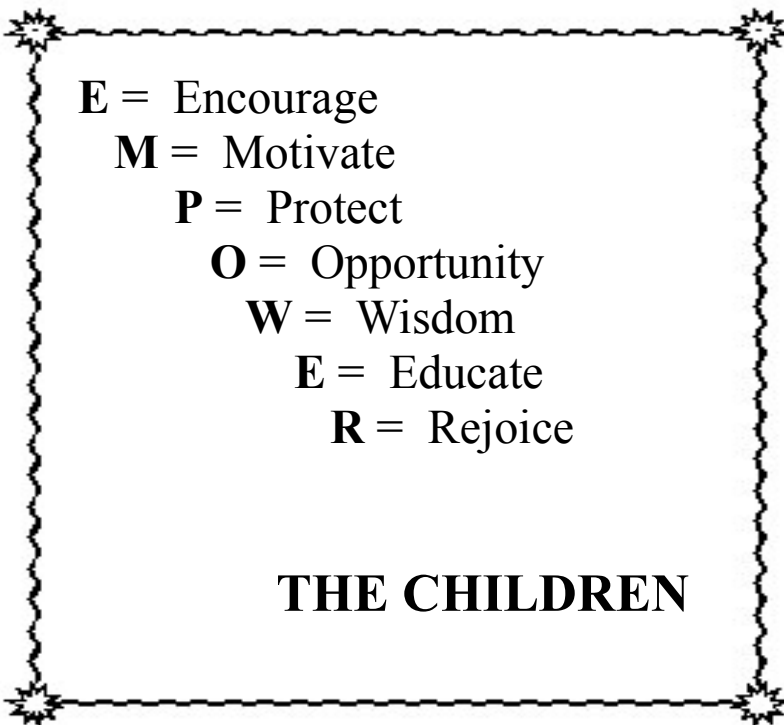
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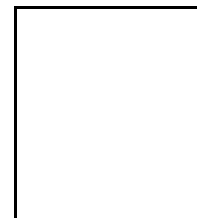
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Lunch Programs

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.
If you want to be happy, practice compassion."
His Holiness The Dalai Lama

Why do people go hungry?
Is it lack of food or lack of money to buy the food?

In the slums of Kolkata - where living on a \$1.00 a day is the norm - **FOOD**, not school, is a **PRIORITY**. Although **ETC** programs are *free of charge*, it is often the promise of one nutritious meal a day that motivates a parent to relinquish the supplemental income a child might earn by begging or working. Skepticism about the value of an education soon dissolves as parents realize that nourishment for their child's body, mind and soul is *the* key to a better life. The benefits are quickly realized as **ETC** children respond with healthy appetites, inquisitive minds and lots of sunny smiles!



Please help us to
plant more seeds,
nourish them
and watch our
children grow
stronger,
healthier,
happier!



Only \$7.50 feeds 30 children for a day
or
Only \$7.50 feeds 1 child for a complete month

Help us make a difference. Thank you for your generous support.

a) Donate online at www.empower-children.org b) Enclosed is my donation in the amount of \$_____.

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Empower The Children

Mail to:
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Please share this newsletter with a friend.

We invite you to visit our website at:

www.empower-children.org

All donations to **Empower The Children** are tax-deductible,
as it is a USA 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Empower The Children's

Youngest Goodwill Ambassador

ARJUN AYYANGAR

Born in 1998, Arjun Ayyangar began his music studies in Fall 2001 with Mr. Antonio Gandia (B.A., Berkeley College of Music). On Mr. Gandia's recommendation, Dr. Ray Landers (D.M. Indiana University), a world renowned educator in the Suzuki method, accepted Arjun as his student in the spring of 2002.

Arjun was among the very few and the youngest at age 4 selected to perform in *NBC's* premiere prime time talent show "*America's Most Talented Kid*" after going through a nationwide audition process. On his third appearance in the show at age 6, Arjun performed "Happy Song" - his original composition at age 3. Arjun has been performing with the festival orchestra at the International Music Festival, Ohio since 2003. He had master classes with Leon Bates at the festival in 2005. He received a standing ovation initiated by the legendary opera diva, *Licia Albanese*, age 92, during a charity benefit concert in 2005.

Arjun performed in the famed *Kimmel Center*, PA and in *The War Memorial Auditorium*, NJ during a fundraiser for UNICEF sponsored by Steinway and Sons. Other venues at which he performed are *Merkin Hall*, NYC; *German Cultural Center*, NYC; *James Armstrong Theater*, Torrance, CA; *Curtis Institute of Music*, Philadelphia; *Weill Recital Hall* at *Carnegie Hall*, NYC; *Dicapo Opera Theater*, NYC; *Bösendorfer Hall*, Austria and *Bechstein Hall*, NYC. He appeared on *PAX TV's* "*America's Most Talented Kid*" and in *Animal Planet's The Most Extreme: Tough Babies* episode at age 6. He performed during halftime basketball games at *Madison Square Gardens*, NYC (age 6) and at *Continental Airlines Arena*, NJ (age 8). He volunteers his performances frequently for Creative Arts & Healing Program at *AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center*, Pomona, NJ. In 2009 Arjun won an international piano composition competition from Golden Key of Vienna.

Arjun is also studying *Organ* from *Dr. Ray Landers*, *Harp* from *Jo Anne Kulick*, *Veena* from *Dr. Gopal Kumar*, *Persian Santur* and *Tombak* from *Maestro Ahmad Borhani* and *violin* from *Catherine Boyd*. His harp performance won him a competition award from Music Fest (2010) and veena performance won him a competition award from CMANA (2008). He has performed publicly in Santur with PMNE (2009). He was featured in Ripley's Believe It or Not (Comic Strip 2008) and holds a certificate from Limca Book of Records, 2008, 2009 and 2010 for playing national anthems from memory. *Arjun can play anthems of ALL countries on the piano from memory.*

Young protege **Arjun Ayyangar** has graciously pledged to donate \$2 to ETC programs for every subscriber to his youtube videos.

View and subscribe at:
www.youtube.com/ayyngar



Co-founders Rosalie Giffoniello and Janet Grosshandler wish to express their gratitude to Arjun and his family for their support of Empower The Children's programs around the world. "Arjun is an inspiration to everyone who desires to plant a seed of good will. Through his efforts many of our ETC children will have an opportunity to grow, learn and find their place in the world."