

Empower the Children



Fall 2012



*"Stay the Course,
Light a Star
Change the World
Where'er you are."*

*Richard LeGalliene
English Poet*



Rosalie's Message

The much-loved story, *The Little Engine That Could*, teaches children the importance of optimism and determination. It is also a good metaphor for **Empower The Children's** efforts to bring educational opportunities, good nutrition and vocational training to hundreds of children who live in the slums of Kolkata.

ETC's little engine *sputtered into life* in 2001 with the opening of a no frills one-room school that accommodated only 35 students. As our vision grew, faithful patrons and volunteers jumped on board enabling **ETC** to acquire new buildings and much-needed equipment. Today 400 pre-school and elementary students attend **ETC's** educational and lunch programs, while teenagers and women avail themselves of vocational training. So, as in the story's famous mantra, "*I Think I Can, I Think I Can*", **ETC** continues to merrily chug along.

As the train whistle blows, **ETC's** little engine pulls increasingly heavier carloads of academics, vocational training, music, art and dance for our growing student body. *Local tracks* lead us to three pre-schools, three elementary schools, one hospital, three vocational centers and a residents' home within the city. The faster *galloping local* winds its way to Dankuni Tutorial Centers and Khamargachi School, in villages outside of Kolkata. The *express* travels afar—to Kenya, Mexico and the USA.

As our little engine picks up momentum, Preyrona 2 School is being rebuilt and **ETC's** college fund has been expanded for deserving students. Is it any wonder that we can say, "*We Thought We Could, We Thought We Could!*"

During this incredible ten-year journey, your generous support and perseverance have been the heart of **ETC's** little engine. We are so happy that you have been along for the ride. As we face the future, we know the climb will never be too steep—because we have you aboard! Thank you.

Love,

Rosalie Giffoniello



Aman Kumar Singh

“If you want to get somewhere, you have to know where you want to go and how to get there. Then never, never, never give up.”
Norman Vincent Peale

Let your life speak!

Nineteen year old **Aman Kumar Singh** is fluent in Hindi, English and Bengali. He is majoring in Mechanical Engineering at Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri College and hopes to continue on to graduate studies.

Aman loves nature, music and appreciates the literature and culture of the U.S.A. Aman is a pure vegetarian due to the religious influence of the *Bhagavad Gita*. He loves to sing and won a local competition singing regional Bengali folk songs. All of this intimates that this young man has enjoyed a privileged background, but that cannot be further from the truth.

Aman was born into the Tullygange slum. He, his parents and younger sister still live in one small room made of concrete. His parents made great sacrifices so that he and his sister could attend school but, when the factory in which his father worked closed down, everything changed. When his father was unable to find work, he became disheartened and disabled. He could no longer support his family or afford school tuition. “My future was in darkness,” said Aman, “but the sun shone again when my mother met **ETC** Director Champa Sarkar. It was she who arranged a sponsorship so I could continue with my studies. We will always be grateful that **ETC** intervened as many children in my slum must leave school to support their families.”

Aman looks forward to his chosen profession and added, “When the job markets fluctuates, mechanical engineering retains its peak position. Eventually, I plan to join **ETC** to fulfill my goals in social work to help other slum children who long for an education. But most of all, I want to take care of my family, to meet their expectations and to make a man out of myself.” Aman is a rising star in **ETC**’s firmament, the *fuel* that keeps our little engine running.

ETC has a college fund that serves underprivileged students who, like Aman, have serious aspirations to succeed. By *laying new tracks* for their hopes and dreams, **ETC** continuously pushes uphill to forever break the social barriers that have pervaded Indian culture for centuries.

Worldwide inflationary prices hit Kolkata!

See how costs in food staples and transportation have risen between 2010 and the present. Consequently, feeding 300 children a day, six days a week, has resulted in a 65% increase.

The equivalent of 100 rupees = \$2.00



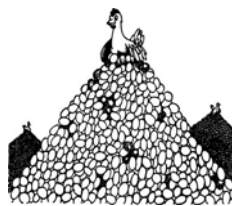
Petrol (1 liter)
42 rps to 70 rps
Diesel (1 liter)
26 rps to 40 rps



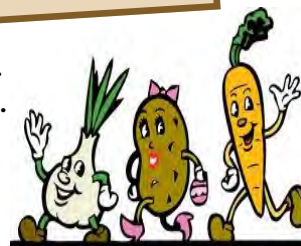
Dal (Lentils) (1 kg)
52 rps to 76 rps



Oil (1 liter)
75 rps to 96 rps

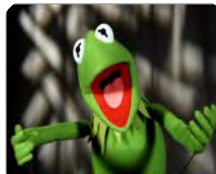


Eggs (each)
1.5 rps to 3.5 rps



Onions (1 kg)
12 rps to 15 rps
Potatoes (50 kg)
250 rps to 350 rps
Soybeans (1 kg)
38 rps to 70 rps

SABUJ



*No more dreaming about tomorrow,
Forget the loneliness and sorrow,
I've got to say, "It's all because of you!"*

Most of us have heard Kermit the Frog sing, *"It's not easy bein' green"* and so it hasn't been easy for a young Indian boy whose story is one of hardship, survival and ultimately, LOVE. He had no name or birth certificate but his approximate age was nine years old at the beginning of our story.

Born in Howrah, a city across the Hooghly River from Kolkata, this child was abandoned by his parents as they were unable to cope with his autism, severe epileptic seizures and inability to speak. He lived on the street until he was picked up by the police and brought to an overburdened government facility where he was classified and shuttered in a small room under lock and key, presumably for his protection from more aggressive children. After four months, he was brought to Mr. Ganguly, Director of Prabartak, a home for mentally challenged adults.

Because of his young age and lack of experience, he was named Sabuj, which means *"Green"* in Bengali, the local language. Several attempts to introduce him to his peers at day care centers proved unsuccessful—years of isolation, fear and lack of communication skills had made socialization impossible.

The ultimate decision to make Sabuj the youngest resident of Prabartak Home turned out to be a perfect match! Proper medication, good nutrition and, most of all, the unconditional love from Prabartak's caring residents have changed Sabuj's life forever. Now, with sparkling eyes and huge smiles, he displays boundless energy, playing and dancing to music. His response to the nurturing of forty 'surrogate parents' is both heartwarming and heartfelt.



More recently, there has been a real breakthrough in Sabuj's speech as he has begun to pick up new Bengali words from the other residents as well as mimic Rosalie's English during her Saturday afternoon classes. As Kermit sings, *"I can't get along without you...,"* we know that with continued tender loving care—the best possible medicine of all—Sabuj will continue to grow and be happy! Lots of love to **Little Green!**

Best Wishes,



Suma & Ashit



"We should be able to live a graceful life that is full of mutual love and warmth. Our sentiments should be auspicious. We should be able to see for a hundred years, live a healthy life of a hundred years and listen to the music of spring for a hundred years."

Hindu Marriage Prayer

Ashit Sur, Coordinator of Preyona Schools, and **Suma Paul** were married on November 30, 2011. Suma is now teaching Hindi and needlework at P3 School. We are so happy to have Ashit and Suma as part of our ETC team.



All Aboard with **Rosalie Giffoniello** and **Janet Grosshandler**, Co-Founders of **Empower The Children** for a 10-year ride through ETC's scenic history from its 2001 inception to the present. Let us introduce you to the people who met us at each station along the way. Meet the children who inspire us to stay on track. *The whistle is blowing!* Enjoy the trip and let's see what new vistas are on the horizon!

2002 Prabartak Home

Twenty-five years ago **Mr. T. Ganguly** opened an orphanage for mentally challenged children. ETC brightened classrooms with fresh paint, blackboards and maps. Rosalie introduced an interactive language curriculum that has greatly enhanced communication skills, enabling 25 residents to participate in ETC's annual *Celebration of Diversity* theatrical event.



2003 Dankuni Tutorial Centers



Ride the *local train* to Dankuni, 30 minutes from Kolkata, where **Shelley Chatterjee** oversees children who prepare for their exams and complete daily homework. It became so well attended that a second center was opened in 2007—a testament to the children who take their studies very seriously.

2004



Atmaraksha, Nevidita and Nehru Colony Pre-Schools

ETC strongly supports pre-school programs for slum-dwelling children who otherwise have no access to books or educational opportunities. When **Champa Sarkar** introduced Rosalie to these three pre-schools, ETC *jumped on board*, subsidizing teachers' salaries and providing hot lunches and holiday clothes.



Rehabilitation Centres For Children

After Rosalie started teaching an interactive program at this orthopedic hospital, she elicited the invaluable help of ETC's partners. Long term surgical patients now enjoy a new library, computers, a music therapy program and a renovated playground. An ambulance was donated by **Dutch Volunteer Jannie Derijki**.

2004

2005

Preyrona 1 School

Preyrona 1 was opened by ETC Director **Reena Das** on Republic Day, January 26th. This first endeavor provided not only a literacy program but also nutritious lunches and ancillary services which later served as the model for Preyrona 2 and 3 schools.



2006

Preyrona 2

When **Dutch Volunteer Willeke Van Nieuwenhuijze** saw the abysmal condition of P2 School, she was determined to take ETC's little train to the highest peak. Through the combined fundraising efforts of **Willeke** and **Kolkata Seeds: Japan**, plus **Coordinator Ashit Sur's** unflagging determination, a three-story building will soon replace the tired P2 School.

Preyrona 1 and 2 Schools Vocational Training Programs

No one likes to be *left behind at the station!* So it was no surprise when teenage girls and mothers of ETC students signed on for stitching and tailoring classes, providing them with marketable skills and financial independence. They have become wonderful role models for their siblings and children.

2007



2008



Sultana Khanam

ETC's First College Graduate

The journey started with an *improbable* dream of a college education. However, fate intervened when generous benefactor, **Art Giffoniello**, purchased a 'college' ticket to make Sultana's dream a reality. After completing her studies, she graciously decided to bring hope and financial aid to her siblings who *stand on the platform* of their own dreams.

Preyrona 3 School

When it seemed that **ETC's** little engine was *running out of steam* while searching for a new school site, **Mr. Himangshu Gupta** generously donated a three-story building located in the quiet village of Keshtopur. Just a few local stops from Kolkata, this multi-level complex accommodates a school, tutorial center and vocational training programs.



2009

Cultural Exchange Program

To jump start a cultural exchange program between **ETC** children and students from seven Perth/Kinross schools in Scotland, **Volunteer Fiona Clark** and her colleagues traveled to Kolkata to share *all things Scottish*. Rosalie, likewise, went to Scotland to introduce India's cornucopia of Indian traditions. This ongoing enrichment program brings an understanding of diverse cultures to both Indian and Scottish children—the ultimate way to bring peace and love to the world.

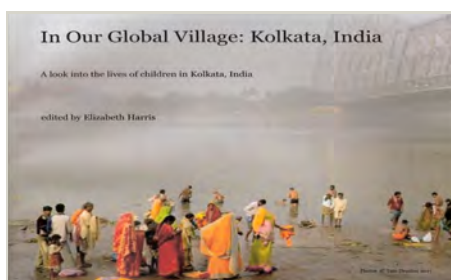


2011 Special Educational Class

Thanks to the sponsorship of **Ash Mukherjee** and the addition of a new speech therapist at Preyrona 3 School, **ETC** now welcomes deaf and mentally challenged children into its classrooms. Integration of these students with their P3 classmates requires much patience and skill but the rewards are many. Newly acquired friendships, communication skills, and curiosity have replaced years of isolation.

2011 In Our Global Village: Kolkata, India

When college student **Liz Harris** volunteered for a two-month stay in Kolkata, she was given the task of creating a book depicting the unique environment of children living in the slums. Overcoming



language and cultural barriers, **Liz** worked closely with **ETC** students, allowing them to create a lens into their world through photographs, text and drawings. This colorful portrayal, illustrating the lives and hearts of the children, makes a lasting impression on all who read it.

2009



Khamargachi School

The *Galloping Local* brings **ETC** to a tribal area located two hours outside of Kolkata. **Director Shelley Chatterjee's** work was cut out for her because hesitant parents had refused to enroll their children in the local school. **ETC's** willingness to include traditional Santali singing, dancing and drumming as part of the curriculum made the difference. Now classes are well attended and growing.

2010



U pward Mobility
S pecial Ability
H igh Achievement
A bout Self-Worth

Bravo! to ETC vocational trainees from Preyrna Schools who recently completed all phases of their tailoring program. What sets these fifteen women apart from hundreds of other trainees is their determination to pass a comprehensive test given by USHA, India's foremost sewing machine company.

The exam was administered over a two-day period and focused on both practical and theoretical applications. Each woman was required to create an album that included fifteen articles of clothing and a written explanation for each garment. With USHA documentation, graduates from ages 17 to 41 will enter the workplace armed with the confidence and skills that will allow them to achieve financial independence.



Elaborately decorated with candles and intricate flower patterns, the rooftop of Preyrna 1 School never looked more festive. As new graduates assembled for the Awards Ceremony, twenty teenage girls from ETC's embroidery class joined the celebration. It was a joy to realize that these USHA women, who had to overcome both social and family opposition, were now an inspiration to the next generation. Together women and girls chanted "We Shall Overcome" in three languages—Hindi, Bengali and English. As each woman came forward to receive her certificate and a rose, all the women cried together, in sisterhood, for the achievements of one another.



These Preyrna women, with high aspirations, are now standing on a threshold, ready to turn their goals into social and economic realities. *Once again, our little train is moving in the right direction.*

SPORTING DAY
 for ETC Pre-Schoolers



Pre-race jitters!



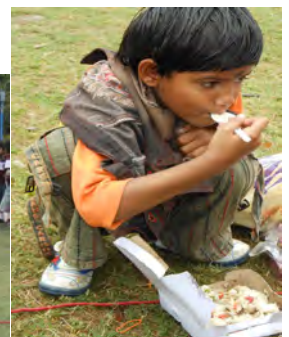
Banana Eating Contest



Marble & Spoon Race



SMILES at the finish line



Sports build up the appetite

Special Thanks.....

Creativity Classes with Maura Hurley



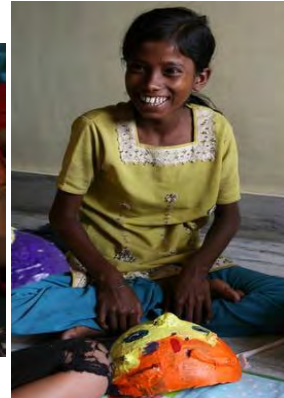
M
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Painting with Scissors is Fun!



Imagine



Design



Experience

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English

Instead of playing soccer, table tennis or visiting friends on Saturday afternoons, two upper middle class 11th graders, **Ronik Sinha** and **Apuruv Agarwal**, have volunteered to teach *English and Computer* skills to young ETC students.

Computers

Apuruv Agarwal



This foray into the world of social work has given them much satisfaction. "Every day when I pass the slum in front of my house," says Apuruv, "I realize children who live in this environment don't have opportunity. I have been lucky in my life so I contacted ETC and, together with Ronik, we decided to make a difference. I find that the students are enthusiastic, regularly attend classes and complete extra activities." Both Apuruv and Ronik agree that teaching is rewarding. "We could be spending Saturday afternoons at the mall, but this feels better than the mall."

Ronik Sinha



Thank You



SPECIAL LOVE
AND THANKS TO
OUR VERY
GENEROUS
ANGELS WHO
WOULD LIKE TO
REMAIN
UNNAMED.



Nita Das, Prabartak Home

Nita's English is self-taught. For the past two years she has served as translator for Rosalie's Saturday classes. Nita, a Prabartak resident, is patient and caring when assisting other disabled students. She is a tremendous asset to ETC's program.

Robert Weir, MI
writer, author, speaker and
communications consultant



Bob's plans to visit Rosalie from September through January 2012 to help author her upcoming book were upended when, due to family obligations, she had to rush back to the U.S. Bob graciously picked up the slack by posting hundreds of holiday cards, writing a proposal, and greeting volunteers until Rosalie's return in January.

Many Thanks!

P. O. Box 1412
Jackson, NJ 08527
USA

Empower the Children

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MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rosalie Giffoniello, Co-Founder
Janet Grosshandler, Co-Founder
Rumu DasGupta
Rupa DasGupta
Lois Kiely
Rosalind Ressner
Margaret Wallace

Newsletter:

Editor: Rosalind Ressner

Address:

Empower The Children
P.O. Box 1412
Jackson, NJ 08527 USA

E-mail: Rosalie: giffoniello@gmail.com
Janet: janetgrosshandler@gmail.com

Website: www.empower-children.org

E = Encourage

M = Motivate

P = Protect

O = Opportunity

W = Wisdom

E = Educate

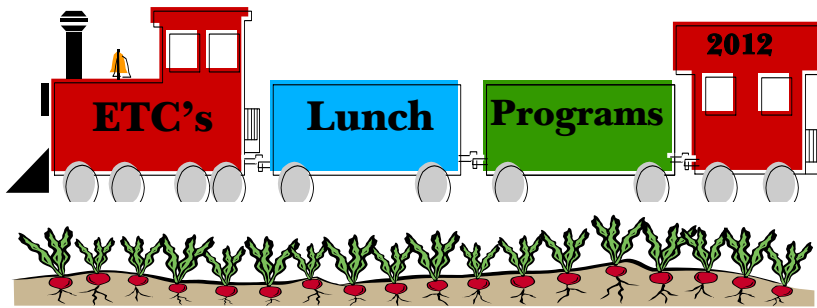
R = Rejoice

THE CHILDREN

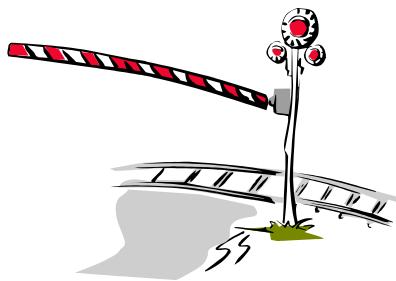
First Lady Michelle Obama has addressed childhood obesity by promoting healthier meals and expansion of free and reduced lunches for low income families. Children are also encouraged to grow their own vegetables by becoming involved in *garden-to-plate* projects.



Preyona 2 students share a hot lunch at the end of each school day.



Alas...there are no governmental agencies in Kolkata that promote lunch programs for slum-dwelling children and little space to grow gardens. That is why **Empower The Children** provides nutritious meals that are so important to the well-being of our students. Instead of obesity, we fight hunger and malnutrition. Each year we strive to *grow* our lunch programs as more children come aboard. Parents soon realize that having at least one nutritious meal a day is the *recipe* for a stronger, healthier and happier child...one that will be able to go the distance. Whether you are a long-time supporter of **ETC** or a newcomer, *hop on board* — the ticket is *only a few cents per day* to feed a child.



- Local Train:** \$ 7.50 - Feed one child for a month
- Galloping Local:** \$45.00 - Feed a child for six months
- Express Train:** \$90.00 - Feed a child for one year
- High Speed Rail:** \$ _____

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

Donate online at www.empower-children.org

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