

Empower the Children



FALL 2013



“Learning should be a joy and full of excitement. It is life’s greatest adventure; it is an illustrated excursion into the minds of the noble and the learned.”

TAYLOR CALDWELL



“Like” us on FaceBook
Empower The Children

Rosalie’s Message

As the wheels lift off the runway on the long flight from New Jersey back home to *my kids* in Kolkata, I find that it is the perfect time to reflect on this *ongoing journey*. A strong desire to educate illiterate, poverty-stricken children was my first motivation, but little did I know that I would also fall in love with the “heart” of Kolkata’s children.

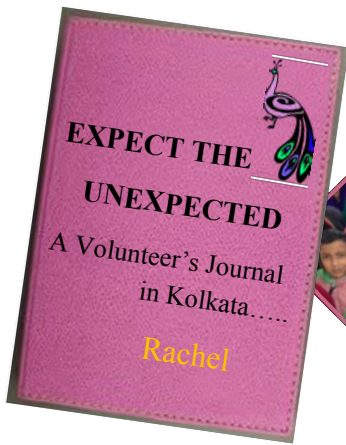
Most children come to **ETC** programs with few prospects yet are soon transformed into curious and disciplined students. Eager to learn, they rarely miss a day of school and often attend tutorial centers to complete homework assignments and prepare for exams. For the first time in their lives, they are able to entertain the thought of becoming teachers and nurses to help others in their community. Through their determination and desire to succeed, they are fulfilling my dream—to overcome poverty, generational illiteracy, and motivate their siblings to do the same.

I would like to introduce you to some of our **ETC** kids. Each one is special... each one, through courage, spirit and love, has reached a seemingly impossible goal, but not without your help. With you, our **ETC** dedicated supporters, worldwide volunteers and teaching staff, these students have been able to realize their potential. So *it is not my journey alone*; we have been taking this flight together. For this I am very grateful!

And this is why I look forward to returning each year--because your unflagging support allows me to witness the fresh young faces, the happy smiles and sweet dispositions that personify the “heart” of Kolkata’s children. Thank you for your continued generosity.

Love,

Rosalie Giffoniello



Day 1:

Upon my arrival in Kolkata, I admit that I was in complete shock for at least two days. Although I had prepared myself for a potentially sympathetic response to substandard living conditions, I still find it quite unbelievable that people could survive *even one day* amidst the abject poverty of the Dakhindari slum.



Rooftop Teaching—A Memorable Experience

Day 3:

My initial meeting with the children in ETC's Preyrona 2 School has caught me by surprise. As I faced my first daunting experience as a volunteer teacher, their open faces and beautiful smiles immediately put me at ease. I was amazed at their level of patience and ability to share (which is not always the case with children in the UK). I soon found that, although there is clearly a lot of material need in the slums, they were much richer than many of their counterparts in western societies. This is demonstrated by their sense of community, strong relationships and appreciation for even the smallest things.



Day 5:

I soon realized that in spite of all the daily hardships, there are a lot more smiling faces here than I see back home. Today I was really touched when a friendly homeless man gave me a banana without expecting any money in return. I expected to meet other young volunteers but unexpectedly found middle-aged professionals on career break, retired couples, doctors and nurses. I love the fact that, regardless of one's expertise and background, nothing is required except for a loving heart and the ability to "roll up one's sleeves."



Day 10:

Looking back on my stay in Kolkata, I have many wonderful memories of Preyrona 2 School's unique rooftop setting. These days have been filled with many unexpected surprises, but one of the highlights of my life will always be the warm, fond memories I have of ETC's children of Kolkata.



Rachel Sharpe, a Marketing Specialist from Farnham, UK, is studying for a degree in Sustainable Development. Her trip to Kolkata was a break from work and her studies.

Glimpses

All dressed up for Saraswati Puja



A fun way to learn shapes and colors



Dancers at Khamargachi School

She is a role model.....she is supportive.....she is an inspiration.....her name is **Sarina Khatun**



Courage

What could Sarina have been thinking when, at age 14, she was diagnosed with *chronic osteomyelitis with a severe deformity of the left leg*? This news meant multiple surgeries over a period of 19 months, without the presence of her family who lives hours away from the hospital.



Strength

Yet, Sarina surprised everyone, perhaps even herself. She was admitted into Rehabilitation Centres for Children (RCFC) and immediately felt at home. While at the hospital, she conducted music therapy classes for the other children and was always a source of encouragement and inspiration. The entire staff marveled at her endurance during her long road to recovery.

Inspiration

Sarina's crowning achievement was her participation in dance programs despite her physical limitations. She has performed at the Governor House in Kolkata and other venues. After discharge, Sarina expressed her gratitude by traveling hours to participate in RCFC's ongoing programs.

Project Manager Nandita Das Gupta said, "We can't think of music and dance without Sarina. She has proven beyond a doubt what mind over matter can do. RCFC will always be there for her."



Rehabilitation Centres for Children, Kolkata



Sarina planting a sapling on World Disability Day

Nothing is impossible because impossible means "I Am Possible." Mohammad Irshad

Gifted and Talented

ARJUN ROY



Abandoned, and classified as a *mentally challenged boy* at age seven, Arjun Roy was shuffled from place to place for years. When he finally found a safe haven at Prabartak Home, he was evaluated as *severely retarded with behavioral problems*.

However, with the love and support of staff and other residents, Arjun blossomed miraculously into a renowned artist and musician. His depictions of village life have won him prizes every year and his performance on the tabla (drums) at festivals throughout the city has earned him further acclaim. His helpful and loving nature coupled with his socially upbeat personality captivates the hearts of everyone who knows him.



Preyrona 2 School.....

and the walls came tumbling down...one brick at a time!

Demolition Day! Finally, after three long years, the old dilapidated Preyrona 2 School was to be knocked down into a pile of bricks. Anticipating lots of dust and noise, the excitement among students and teachers was palpable, as they waited for the *old to make way for the new.*

However, when no wrecking ball or heavy duty equipment arrived to tear down the walls, a sense of disappointment filled the air. And then one young man appeared, *fully armed* with hammer and chisel, to begin the arduous job of demolishing the little building, one brick at a time.

Slowly the roof tiles were disassembled, cleaned and stacked—not to be discarded, but inventory for another day.



And so it is the way the world turns in India... a sense of timelessness, giving careful thought to the tradition of recycling the much-needed materials that are necessary for survival in the slums.

Raising Hopes

First a footprint... then the framing... the pouring of concrete with steps rising upward to the sky.

As Preyrona 2 School nears completion, ETC students anticipate cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremony.



Determined

Grateful



Pensive

Happy



Teaching "Al Fresco"



Smiling at a job well done!
Ashit, Rosalie, Reena, Madhushree, and Mita



High above the rooftops, kids sat on concrete slabs....their only classroom for months.

Welcome to the new Preyrona 2 School....

where students enjoy spacious sunlit classrooms with brightly colored walls in a child-friendly environment.



Morning and afternoon sessions serve 104 children from the Dakhindari slum, with classes in English, Mathematics, Geography, Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Art and Drama.

Vocational training for teenage students includes painting on glass and painting on fabric.

A nutritious lunch is served six days a week.



More shoes are welcome....
HELP US TO EXPAND!



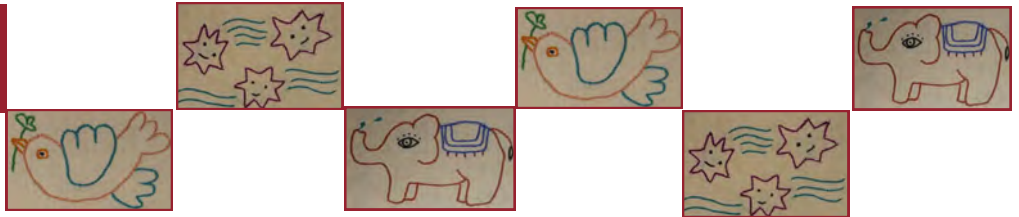
The children of Kolkata have learned about empowerment through the efforts of **Willeke Van Nieuwenhuijze**, Holland's *Help2Help*, and **Michael Yamaguchi**, *Kolkata Seeds-Japan*, whose donations and constant support have made it possible for **Empower The Children's** new Preyrona 2 School to become a reality—a true inspiration for all of us.



Going Global....



Nilam Shaw and Puja Paswan



They say that a *journey of a thousand miles* begins with the first step. For women in Preyrone's tailoring program, it was more like a giant leap forward when they passed the tailoring test and received certification from the Usha Sewing Machine Company. Recognizing that business training was also necessary for these fledgling entrepreneurs, **Empower The Children** sponsored a business training course, after which the women were ready to take their first order. Another leap forward!

Smriti Karmakar



You can imagine the excitement when *Chautary*, a Japanese boutique shop, placed an order for 50 bags emblazoned with their logo—ETC graduates' first global order! And when *The Indian Peptide Society* held a conference in Kolkata, a specialty order was placed for bags which were designed, embroidered and sewn by the tailoring group. Much to their delight, the bags carrying conference materials became a big hit and a great marketing tool!

"I'm proud that my work was seen here in Kolkata and has also gone abroad," said Purnasri. "We are happy that we are being recognized and our futures are now brighter." Given the fact that Japan is 3,700 miles from India, we must all agree that ETC's women have completed their first *journey of a thousand miles* and are well on their way to another. **Bravo and Congratulations!**

and Making Us Proud

A Heart Of Gold.....remembering Ria Huigens

Distance didn't matter for **Ria Huigens** – she always carried pictures of *her* Kolkata kids in her wallet, even though she lived in faraway Holland. Innovative, enterprising and hard-working, Ria became one of ETC's most valued contributors, working tirelessly alongside her daughter, Willeke. Together, through their non-profit organization, *Help2Help*, they helped to raise money to build a new school for ETC's Preyrone 2 students.



Ria and her son, Wilbert

Ria first came up with the idea to design and sell cards and embroidery items at local markets. When the demand became too great, her 80+ mother *came on board*, and working at Help2Help's little market shop became like a family outing. Ria always enjoyed talking affectionately about *her* kids. Her presence at many fundraisers and presentations was always punctuated with stories about Willeke's travels to Kolkata and her enthusiasm to help.

"Although we miss her terribly," says Willeke, "we will always remember her support and encouragement—she was ETC's greatest fan!"

Many Thanks

At home and abroad, extraordinary individuals work to make a difference to empower our children. Whether it's volunteering in India, fundraising in New York City or providing special meals, Empower The Children acknowledges their efforts.....

When **Professor Jim Hagan's** students enroll in his Indian Sacred Art and Indian Philosophy classes, through Vermont's Castleton State College, they have a treat in store for them. Their studies abroad include exotic places like Kolkata, Darjeeling and Sikkim.



However, it is in Kolkata where his group always has its most rewarding experience. Jim calls "**Compassion in Action**" an opportunity for his students to meet, enjoy and work with India's neediest people—the children.

Carrying educational materials, lessons, art supplies and toiletries, Jim's students make a big hit with the kids. And because the feedback from this volunteer experience is ever so positive, Jim returns each year with yet another new class that can count on Kolkata's **ETC** kids being the *highlight* of their trip.



Nisa's Annual Chinese New Year Banquet



Nisa Ojalvo chose, for the second year in a row, to donate the proceeds from her annual Chinese New Year fundraiser to **ETC**. Nisa and her friends raised \$4,185 at a Peking Duck dinner. Nisa is a NYC-based attorney for Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton and a gifted photographer. In 2011, she visited Rosalie and the children in Kolkata and documented **ETC's** programs through her captivating photographs.



A Father's Tribute Aids Empower The Children



Mun Mun Shah and her brother **Amit Seksaria** are very special to **Empower The Children**. As owners of A4 Printers in Kolkata, they have watched **ETC** programs grow through the design, printing and updating of colorful **ETC** brochures. And now, in spite of busy schedules, Mun Mun and Amit were able to fulfill their desire to "participate in **ETC's** social work". To mark the anniversary of their father's passing, they sponsored a special non-veg luncheon, complete with a delicious dessert, for 100 happy pre-schoolers from Nehru Colony, Nevedita and Atmaraksha.



“Like” us on Facebook—Empower The Children

P. O. Box 1412
Jackson, NJ 08527
USA

Empower the Children

Empower the Children

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

Giving

*"If you have much,
give of your wealth;
if you have little,
give of your heart."*

Arab Proverb



Empower The Children's

Lunch Program

is a strong incentive for parents to send their children to school. Teachers have found that children who are well-fed are happier and make enthusiastic students who look forward to coming to school each day.

Your annual support provides the funds that are needed to continue this important and necessary program.

Feeding

The

Children.....



Each year our goal is to include more children in our ETC food programs. The spiraling food prices in Kolkata have increased by more than ten percent. In spite of this increase, 350 students continue to receive hot meals six days a week. Thanks to your generous support, the children of Kolkata are growing in health and love.

Receiving

*"For it is
in giving that
we receive."*

St. Francis of Assisi



Feed one child for one month	___ \$ 8.50	___ € 6.50	___ £ 5.50
Feed one child for six months	___ \$50.00	___ € 38	___ £ 32
Feed one child for one year	___ \$100.00	___ € 76	___ £ 64

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

Donate online at www.empower-children.org

Please print:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address: _____

We invite you to visit our website at:

www.empower-children.org

Enclosed is my donation in the amount of \$_____.

Please make check payable to:

Empower The Children

Mail to:

P.O. Box 1412
Jackson, NJ 08527 USA

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