



A Monthly Newsletter November 2009

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Letter from the President

An Emmy Award for Rising Star!



Those of you who follow the Emmy Awards Ceremony were probably surprised to see that the Profiles in Caring segment that was done on Rising Star Outreach by Doug Jardine won! The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences presented the award in the category of Education/ Schools-Feature /Segment/ Program/Special. Yes, we will actually get an Emmy Statue. We were completely stunned by the news that our segment had won the award. As a result of the award, the Profiles in Caring segment was shown again the following week. What an unbelievable honor! We'd like to send a huge public thanks to

Doug Jardine for his masterful telling of our story. He personally came to India, interviewed a slew of people, and saw our work firsthand. He took some amazing video footage of our daily work and became a part of the story himself.

It's pretty crazy to think that documentaries about the Rising Star Outreach Story have now won both an Emmy Award and the Gracie Award. (The PBS Documentary won the Gracie Award for "Best Full-length Documentary" in 2007). It all goes to show how remarkable our story really is. What has made our story possible, of course, is all the support and dedication of the many, many people who have sponsored children, volunteered with our office work, or come to Rising Star in India as volunteers.

Thank you to all of you for continuing to support and follow the miracle of Rising Star.

Rhadika Kannan

One of the stars of our volunteer program is Rhadika Kannan. An American of Tamilnadu descent, she is spending the year volunteering as a teacher in our school in Thottanaval. Rhadika is our first long-term volunteer to speak fluent Tamil. What an advantage! She's teaching our first grade class. She's also teaching 7th grade Science and 8th standard history. She brings a lot of fun to the classroom. In a recent lesson on virus's, she made up a story of a gang of Viruses named Vincent, Vijay, Victor, and Vikram. (All names of Rising Star staff). Just then, Vikram happened to walk past the classroom door. The children all burst out laughing at "Vikram Virus!" They'll never



think of a virus again without thinking of Vikram!

Another great gift is that Rhadika is a beautiful Bharathanatyam dancer. Bharathanatyam is the traditional classical Indian dance. It's beautifully performed with great precision. Even the eye movements are choreographed! Rhadika has been teaching our children to dance and we now have all sorts of budding little Bharathanatyam dancers now at the Peery School for Rising Stars!

Becky Douglas

Letter from Padma

Anxiety was written all over the faces of Becky Douglas and Kristin Harding as I was almost the last to come out of arrival at Logan International Airport thanks to one of my luggage (carrying the tag of "priority") coming at the end. I was overwhelmed by the love and care showered on me by the board members of Rising Star Outreach, their family members, and all the Rising Star friends. I would love to



mention each and every one of them here; but the list is so long that I restrain myself from doing so. Becky and Amy had worked so hard to put up such a well planned schedule, and it was exhilarating to brush shoulders with students and professors of several of the most prestigious universities in America. I was so honored by the kind receptions we received wherever we went.

It was truly wonderful to share my experience of socio economic rehabilitation work of leprosy affected people over a period of two decades and to observe the excitement with which people came to understand our cause. A critical study on micro credit says that micro credit is inappropriate for certain groups: people affected by HIV/ AIDS, people living in remote areas, migrant labors, and people with leprosy. However, by adopting an innovative methodology and after prolonged interaction with the beneficiaries, it has now been proven that hundreds and hundreds of leprosy beggars have become thriving, productive members of society.

Some highlights of my trip included:

- A rest weekend at the Hanson's breathtakingly beautiful home in Laguna Beach, California.
- The week spent with the Harding family in Boston and the wonderful love I felt in their home.
- Seeing true concern for the welfare of humanity by each and every member of the Marriott family.
- The photographs of Ms. JaLynn Prince, which speak volume on developmental activities in developing countries.
- The involvement of the young Ms. Lauren Prince in social issues and women's issues gives hopes for a bright future for humanity.
- All the nights that Becky, Amy and I stayed up late sharing ideas and talking about the activities of Rising star Outreach, India
- All the enchanting gatherings across the country at the beautiful homes of the Hardings, Nilsens, Princes, Patels and Keenans.
- Visiting with so many other delightful friends of Rising Star Outreach in every city. It was gratifying to see how much support we have!

- From the time we arrived at Salt Lake City, Ron Gunnell took charge of our visit to various Utah universities. His meticulous planning helped us to cover all our activities with so much ease.
- The hospitality of Kaye and Ron Gunnell at their beautiful home reflect their warm and beautiful hearts.
- Attending the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performance was a particular highlight of my visit.
- I was thrilled to see so many familiar friends at the 5K run in Timpanogoes Park: several of the volunteers who had spent time with children at the Peery School and visited leprosy colonies and rubbed shoulders with our beneficiaries.

It was an unexpected and pleasant surprise when I also received "The Heart of Humanitarian 2009" award from the Trivani Foundation. Trivani Foundation is doing Yemen service in several parts of the world to alleviate poverty.

It was a special honor for me to receive the Enterprise Mentor International Humanitarian Service Award for 2009. Working for the rehabilitation of leprosy affected people is a noble cause and in the course of working for this cause I received this honor. I dedicate it now to the leprosy affected people of the world.

Some parts of the world have forgotten leprosy; but still some of our brothers and sisters in some other parts of the world are suffering from this dreaded disease. I appreciate Enterprise Mentors for choosing this cause to be honored and hope that the entire world will take up the challenge. After three weeks of a hectic schedule I returned to India rejuvenated and revitalized because the purpose in life gives you energy to carry on God's work, and because of the gratification I received from seeing such love and concern in so many of you for those we serve. Thank you with all of my heart for your constant support and prayers on behalf of the leprosy affected people. Together we can and eliminate the suffering of leprosy from the face of the world.

With Love,
Padma Venkataraman

Notes From The Field

The rains have come to Southern India and Rising Star Outreach!! Everything is always kind of an understatement here in India, and it is hard to describe monsoon. We have been back in India for one week after having spent four weeks in the US, and it has rained steadily (and at times very hard!) since we returned. The average rainfall in this part of the country is about 55", and most of that total

comes in the months of monsoon (middle of October until middle of December--give or take.) So, a lot comes down at once.

This past week the annual Sports Day had to be cancelled as well as Parents Day. This is sad news for the children since both are highly anticipated days of the year. Our sports field is a sea of mud and water, as are the groves where the little families gather. There was a sadness, but the children are so stoic--it almost makes it harder than if they complained loudly about the inconvenience. Some days we have had to drive them across campus to school, because with the grading of the roads that began just before the rains, we have made many of their normal routes impassable.



School is within about 1000 yards of the hostels, so it seems funny to have to drive! All the Indians are cold, but we think it's perfect as the temperature is probably in the low 70s.

It's a bad time of the year for lots of colds and coughs, but so far we have not had any flu yet.

Construction has been at a halt most of this week, which is driving us a bit crazy. It is just not a good season to be painting, plastering, and bricking. However, the Harrison Guest house is looking great and we are dying to tie up the last few details, clean, and get some furniture in place. Our first big test as to its efficiency will come in December when we have a family gathering of 39 members coming for a week!

Another thing that occurs during monsoon is that every frog in the world suddenly appears--and they make the loudest noises imaginable. It's a symphony, but not a very tuneful one. The other day, the boys got a snake (nothing deadly) and it had swallowed 5 frogs, still whole and almost alive! We suggested to the boys they not kill the good snakes, as they are our only defense against the frog invasion. The boys don't like frogs any more than they like snakes, but we doubt they can refrain from getting a snake when an opportunity presents itself! Cheers from the soggy part of the world...

Ron and Joyce Hanson



Volunteer Moment: Nicole Pryzbola

I am now entering my fourth month at Rising Star and I can't believe how fast time has flown by. The ability the children have to not only touch but change our lives is amazing. Previous to Rising Star I received counsel from a good friend that in order to obtain true happiness I needed to be like a child. I never understood fully what he meant until I moved in with 162 of the most adorable bundles of joy I've ever met. I've learned that becoming like a child is more than water fights and coloring (which we totally do). More importantly, it's mimicking the internal nature of a child. On a daily basis I experience the tender mercies that the children naturally exude through their ability to love. I remember after a challenging day of teaching third standard I couldn't help but feel discouraged. I felt that what I had taught was not absorbed by the students and that I had failed them. Immediately after class one of my students, Vijaya, approached me and told me she loved me and thank you for the lesson. As little as this act of kindness was it made the hugest difference in my day. Those small words make the biggest impact. In fact, those words are not only shared verbally but they are constantly portrayed visually. All the children know how to sign "I love you". I'm surprised some of their hands aren't permanently stuck in this position because they do it so often. It never gets old because each time they do it you know it comes straight from their heart. Each day provides a new adventure where lessons are learned and unforgettable experiences are had. I came to Rising Star with every intention to serve and make a difference. The irony is that there has been a far greater difference made in my life than I could ever make in the children's. As Mother

Teresa once said, "there are many people who can do the big things, but there are few who will do the small things". It is the small tender mercies that have made the most influential difference in my experience here at Rising Star. As the children teach us the capacity we all have to unconditionally love and accept everyone, we are united, rising stars, shooting for the heavens!

Sponsorship Corner

Sponsors make a big difference in the lives of these children. One of the most obvious examples of this is Kanmani Devan and his sponsor Judith. Judith began to sponsor Kanmani a little over a year ago after becoming aware of Rising Star Outreach due to an article posted on www.archuletafanscene.com (a fan site for singer David Archuleta). The people behind this site also spearheaded the charity website www.angelsforacause.ning.com of which Judith is a part of a broader fan community that has worked on past and current projects in



is a sad time for you and that you miss your father. But I also know you are a strong boy and you will do your best in school every day. Every day there will be a prayer in my heart for you. Be good and have fun with your friends too!" The support that Judith offered was extremely beneficial to Kanmani during that trying time in his young life. It's times like these, when sponsors really reach out in such beautiful ways, that we see the importance of the sponsorship program.



support of Rising Star.) Of her sponsorship, Judith said, "It is impossible to express what I felt when I saw him hold a photo of me that I sent in an e-mail. The miles between us melted and he knows there is someone in California who cares about him and his family. Every picture and note we exchange is a thrill. It is a real honor to have a place in this child's life."

In July, Kanmani's father unexpectedly passed away. Kanmani was heartbroken. When Judith received this news, she wrote Kanmani multiple times offering support and encouragement. In an immensely thoughtful gesture, Judith purchased a plant in memory of Kanmani's father and planted it in her garden. In her letter to Kanmani, Judith said, "I wanted the plant to be big and have some flowers... a plant that will grow no matter if it rains or not. I think I found just the plant and I hope you like it. Everyday I will see it and think of you and also your father... I know this

Special Fundraiser: Marielle Young

Marielle Young gave her senior recital as a benefit for Rising Star Outreach. Speaking of outreach, she invited all of her friends and family to come and join in supporting our cause. The recital was held at the new concert hall at Strathmore in Bethesda, Maryland. The hall is beautiful. It holds about 200 people. With a good deal of optimism and faith, 200 chairs were set up. The walls were decorated with Rising Star pictures, and a table of information was set up in the lobby. 10 minutes before the recital was to start, only about 20 people were there. Our hearts sank. Then the floodgates opened! In the next ten minutes every seat in the hall filled up!

The recital itself was phenomenal. Marielle is an incredibly gifted vocalist. She was joined in several numbers by her equally talented

sister, Collette, and her brother, Justin. She looked gorgeous and mesmerized the audience with her renditions of opera, classical, Broadway, and pop. The response was beyond enthusiastic! In the middle of the recital, she personally gave a beautiful presentation about Rising Star. Afterwards, a lovely reception was hosted at her home. She raised more than \$4,000 for Rising Star and got many sponsors for our children. All this by a high school girl! (With a huge amount of support from her entire family). If any of you are interested in help in doing a similar thing, she'd be happy to give suggestions or pointers. She can be reached through bdouglas@risingstaroutreach.org. We send a heartfelt thanks to the entire Young/Lum family.

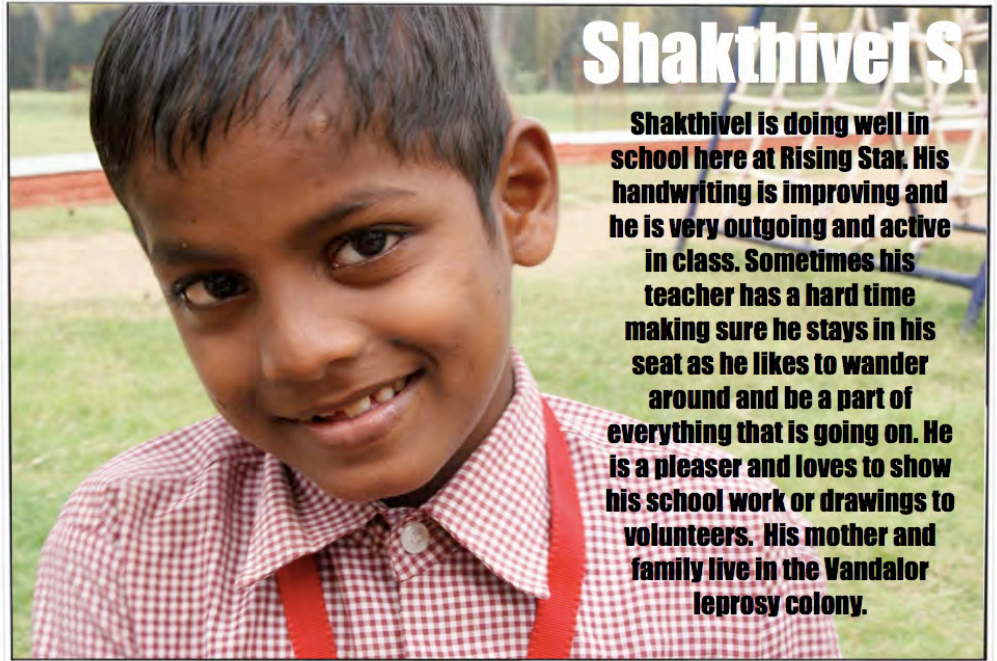
Rising Star is on Twitter!

Rising Star Outreach is on Twitter! Join our more than 200 followers to hear about the latest events and happenings from India and the USA. Follow us by searching our user name **RisingStarOut**. Happy Tweeting!

In Need of a Sponsor

This little boy still has no sponsors. Would you consider sponsoring him, or one of the

other children still in need, as a gift to your family this Christmas? Your love and support means the world to these kids!



Shakhivel S.

Shakhivel is doing well in school here at Rising Star. His handwriting is improving and he is very outgoing and active in class. Sometimes his teacher has a hard time making sure he stays in his seat as he likes to wander around and be a part of everything that is going on. He is a pleaser and loves to show his school work or drawings to volunteers. His mother and family live in the Vandalor leprosy colony.