



A Monthly Newsletter April 2010

Letter from the President

As the school year draws to a close, we look forward to the Summer and the Volunteers arrival.

Page 1-2

News from the Field

The Hendershots bring us up to speed with the happenings at the Rising Star School.

Page 2

School Highlights

The standard seven and eight students put on the first annual science exhibition.

Page 2-3

Sponsorship Corner

The children show us that it's not just the sponsors that understand how important it is to give.

Page 3

Letter from the President

The 2009-2010 School year is rapidly drawing to a close on the Rising Star Campus. It's been a year marked by a lot of progress and big changes. The biggest event of the year was getting our license as a Matriculation School. This completely changed the testing process and much of the teaching focus. Fortunately, our principal, Manjula, was already familiar with the Matriculation format, so the change went smoothly.

Another big change this year was having a summer volunteer stay for the entire school year as a full-time teacher. Radhika, who is actually originally from Tamilnadu, proved to be a valuable addition to the school. About midway through the year, she agreed to spend the remainder of the year as acting principal and began a focused program to train the teachers in more progressive teaching techniques. Together she and Manjula have initiated a lot of positive changes. It's been exciting to see the progress, but realize we still have a long ways to go. Our teachers have originally been trained in traditional Indian teaching methods which focus on rote memorization. Teaching teachers to teach with

more hands' on learning and with classes geared towards teaching problem-solving techniques has been our challenge. We're gratified to see a lot of progress, but also realize we still have a ways to go. Anyone out there having experience in teacher training, and willing to spend a year to carry on the re-training, please contact us!



The children are busy with their preparation for the big final exams of the year. They're studying like crazy. School ends on April 14, when the last exam is over. The parents arrive for the final Parents' Day and the children all get to spend the

next six weeks at home in the colonies with their families.

While all the noise abates on the Rising Star Campus, a new focus takes shape. Beginning in May, the hottest month of the year, our intrepid volunteer coordinators arrive and begin their preparations for what is promising to be the largest summer volunteer season ever! The new

volunteer hostel is completed and is spectacular! It has enabled us to increase our program, so for the first time ever, we will be able to accommodate a much larger volunteer force.

Volunteers provide the heart and soul of Rising Star. They arrive with enthusiasm, new ideas, and a lot of love. They provide critical attention and assistance to both patients and

children. Tutoring, building colony infrastructure, and helping with the mobile medical clinic, they allow us to multiply our effectiveness several times over.

Volunteers often use the phrase, "this has been the most life-changing experience of my life", as they complete their

service. They not only give, but receive in return. Many have become Rising Star addicts, following the progress of the children who stole their hearts while they worked on campus, and recruiting relatives and friends to come experience the magic for themselves. Some volunteers no sooner return home, than they immediately begin to save for their next adventure at Rising Star. We have had one volunteer return six times!

There are a few spots still left in the volunteer program. If your family wants a meaningful, bonding experience that involves rolling up your sleeves, getting dirty, working until exhausted, expanding your horizons, changing people's lives, learning to love society's cast-offs, bringing opportunity and dignity to those who have never known it, struggling with challenges, and laughing in final triumph, this may be the program for you. You may even decide to throw in an exotic trip to the Taj Mahal, one of the wonders of the world. Go to our website, click on Volunteering in India, and start the adventure!

Becky Douglas

News from the Field

Hello Everyone,

Time flies! Only three weeks left of school for the children of Rising Star Outreach. During the last month or so we have had incredibly talented volunteers like Sara McConkie, Charity Eyre, and Dani Shurtliff putting programs and events together like our school carnival and Tal and Anita (aka Anital or Talnita) Eyre creating the "Star Program", which has enhanced our current "Ticket to-play" program by rewarding the children for good behavior and giving them an opportunity to visit the Star Store. At the Star Store, children who earn stars for good behavior can purchase items once a week, unless of course they choose to save their stars for something bigger like a trip into town for ice cream or a delicious Perrotta! Thanks to Janet Bird and Carol Dumas, who brought suitcases full of prizes



from the US and Canada, our Star Store is now full of many useful and enticing prizes!

Just recently Lisa Farr and Emily Rice arrived and have been busy working at the school, reading to the children in the hostel, and assisting Dr. Kumar and our medical staff in the colonies. On top of everything else, Dr. Balu from the US Board has been visiting Chennai and has come to Rising Star's campus many times to do check ups of the children and to collaborate with Dr. Kumar and Padma on ways to improve the mobile medical clinic and the overall health of the children here at Rising Star Outreach.

The progress at the Peery Matriculation School and at the children's hostel has been very exciting! Radhika and Manjula have worked hard to create an environment of stability for both the children and the teachers with a new effective teaching curriculum that has already helped to increase test scores and overall moral.

Sarah has been working diligently with the house mothers and fathers at the children's hostel by encouraging and helping them to

improve and maintain the overall environment and well being of the children. Kristen Goodell has the children sponsor program working perfectly and the children love her. Greg and Rachel Denning have been working with the volunteers and teachers as well as putting together fun videos for the website.

The office has been very supportive and busy trying to keep up with the many programs and construction projects that are taking place on and off the campus.

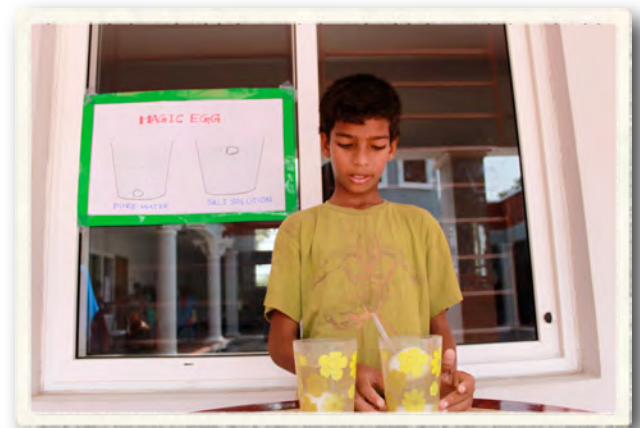
We recently had the opportunity to watch a fun talent show by many of the children, which was organized by Tom Douglas. Rising Star's very talented performing children had everyone laughing, cheering, and dancing along!

All in all, life at Rising Star is very eventful and exciting and full of wonderful children, volunteers, staff, and even a few cobras:)

Love,
The Hendershots

School Highlights

As the sun rose behind the Community Center, children in the seventh and eighth standards anxiously gathered all of their science materials and rushed towards the building. They were excited to present at the first annual Science Exhibition. The vision for Peery Matriculation School for Rising Stars is to prepare children so they are able to successfully integrate into society. In order for these students to succeed, they need to build their confidence and be able to speak comfortably in



English. The Science Exhibition was set up on the beautifully tiled flooring in the new community center. The various grade levels listened intently as the older students explained the science concepts. The seventh and eighth standard students were able to easily communicate in English. The other grade levels moved smoothly through the entire set up. They were able to understand and see many new ideas. Some of them even asked questions. It was a wonderful day full of student participation. Peery Matriculation School for Rising Stars will make this an annual event.

Watch the kids teaching at the Science Exhibition!

www.flickr.com/photos/risingstaroutreach/sets

Donor Diary *Bob Snelling*

A serendipitous event happened to me in May, 2009. My quartet sang a song at a Kiwanis meeting in Georgia to promote an upcoming Barbershop Harmony show. Unbeknownst to us, Becky Douglas was the program speaking about Rising Star Outreach. I was so impressed with the entire presentation of her organization's care for leprosy victims in India that I contacted her that afternoon to find out ways in which I might support the organization. Little did I know of the interesting twist that my enthusiasm for RSO would take about a month later.

Up to fifteen members of my family vacation at the beach once a year. Because we are Christians I have always been troubled that, over the years, we didn't organize ourselves to attend worship celebrating The Lord's Day in that context. So, I decided that we would conduct our own family worship service in our condo unit on Sunday morning. And, because our tradition mandates that we engage culture to "overcome evil with good" I chose to speak about RSO as part of my talk to the family. And, according to our tradition we receive an offering. That day I announced that RSO would be the beneficiary of the Snelling offering.

From parents, children, and grandchildren alike we received \$75.78. The check was in the mail to RSO the following week. I share the story as an encouragement for all who read it to seek other creative ways to support the very worthwhile ministry of Rising Star Outreach.

Sponsorship Corner

Appreciation. Love. Gratitude. Friendship. Adoration. Respect. It is nearly impossible to choose just one word to sum up the feelings the children at Rising Star have for their sponsors, but love seems to encompass much of the emotion. The children love their sponsors! They love hearing from them. They love learning about them. They love writing to them. They love telling their sponsor's names to anyone who will listen. Even though most of the kids have never met their sponsors, they have an instant feeling of love for them. This love bridges the continents and oceans to not only support the kids' education and daily life, but most importantly to support them emotionally.

Anyone who steps onto the Rising Star campus will undoubtedly notice the familial nature of the children's actions and vocabulary. They refer to their elders as "Auntie" or "Uncle" and their classmates as "Anna" or "Akka" (the Tamil words for big brother or sister) and they care for the younger children just as an older sibling would. This family-like love is the beauty of Rising Star and the concept that each sponsor teaches by their example every month. Sponsors care for the children at Rising Star like a member of their own family. They provide for their basic needs. They encourage them to work hard to succeed. They even put the children's drawings and photos on their fridges!

One of the most touching desires the kids have cultivated at Rising Star is their desire to also help others in need. If you ask any child what they would do if they

had lots of money, you will not hear them rattle off lists of material objects. You will hear a quiet answer describing their wish to help the people they encounter in the street—the men, women, and children who need assistance in India and all over the world. It is evident that this aspiration is a result of the model they see from the generosity of their sponsors. The impact of sponsors' contributions not only expand the circle of their family, but also encourage the children of Rising Star to do the same. It is touching. It is love. And it is perfectly illustrated by the sponsors of Rising Star.

Seventh grader, Megala K., has written the following poem, which expresses just how paramount sponsors are in her eyes:



*You can see because you have eye,
You can hear because you have ear,
You can talk because you have mouth,
You can walk because you have leg,
You can work because you have hand,
You can make life bright because you
have sponsor.*

Find out more about how to brighten a child's life by joining the Rising Star family as a sponsor:

www.risingstaroutreach.org/AllAboutSponsorship

Send photos of your family for the child you sponsor:
6241 Indian River Drive
Norcross, GA 30092-1350
kids@risingstaroutreach.org

Child Spotlight

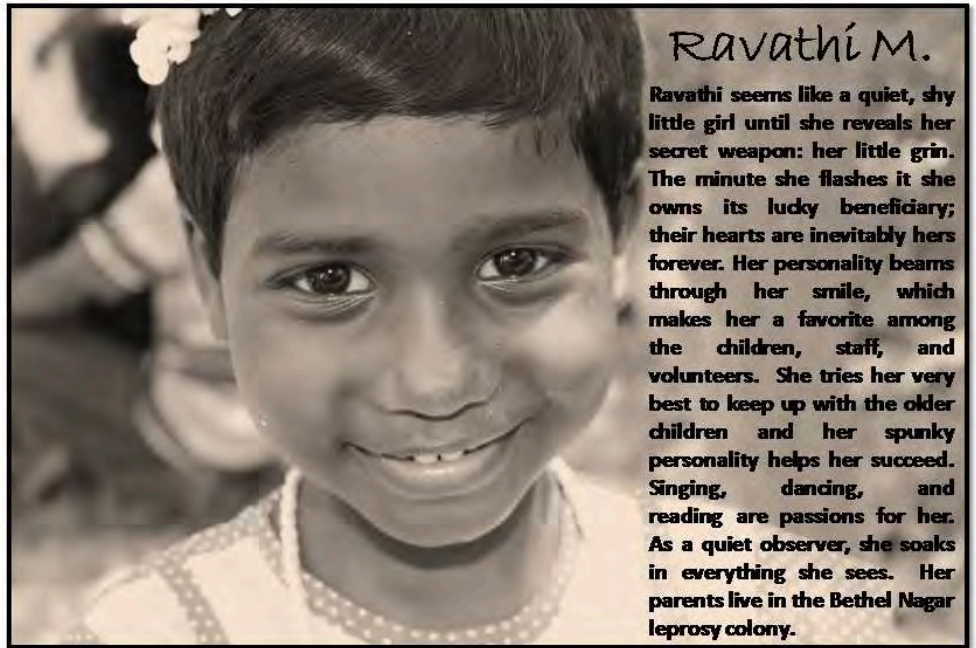
This little girl is in need of a sponsor. Would you consider sponsoring her, or one of the other children still in need? Your love and support mean the world to these kids!

Meet the children who need sponsors at: www.risingstaroutreach.org/sac

NEEDED:

Teachers to teach this coming school year, June 1-April 15, grades 1-4.

We particularly need teachers with Teacher Training and/or ESL experience.



Ravathi M.

Ravathi seems like a quiet, shy little girl until she reveals her secret weapon: her little grin. The minute she flashes it she owns its lucky beneficiary; their hearts are inevitably hers forever. Her personality beams through her smile, which makes her a favorite among the children, staff, and volunteers. She tries her very best to keep up with the older children and her spunky personality helps her succeed. Singing, dancing, and reading are passions for her. As a quiet observer, she soaks in everything she sees. Her parents live in the Bethel Nagar leprosy colony.