

LARGEST CHALLENGE GRANTS GRACE JAMES CONNECTION

Two anonymous and generous donors have offered a combined \$45,000 in dollar-for-dollar challenge grants to help the James Connection raise the funds necessary to move to solar powered electricity in the two main buildings at Angels' Place. These two donors understand that in the remote, hill country of Churachandpur where power fails nearly every day, solar capability will save significant money and dramatically alter the life of students and staff at Angels' Place.

While we have often had a challenge grant to stimulate support of our year-end campaigns and while we have always been successful in meeting that challenge, this year is different. We have never had an opportunity to leverage so much money at one time and we don't want to fall short of the full \$45,000 match.

- If you are a sponsor or already support the James Connection on a regular basis, please consider an extra gift of any size on this special occasion if it fits your budget.
- If you've never given to the James Connection please let this opportunity to double your gift be the impetus you need to become a first-time donor.
- If you have not given to the James Connection recently, please consider putting us at or near the top of your list this special year and make the most generous gift you can afford.

Reaching the goal of raising \$45,000 to unlock the challenge grant of another \$45,000 will take gifts from all of you and we fully respect that they will come in all sizes. We can't meet this challenge without you.

Please consider the progress we have made and understand that our success is only because of your support and God's blessing. Then *please make the best gift you can give* and mail it before the end of December to James Connection, PO Box 751, Monroeville, PA 15146.

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3. By providing for grades 11 and 12, we are already favoring the qualifying students. Out of fairness, our next effort needs to be towards developing apprenticeships and vocational training for the kids who have only completed class 10.
4. After children leave Angels' Place, they are no longer in our custody or control. We have no way of supervising their behavior and decisions.
5. Likewise, we cannot supervise the use of money that may be made available for their further education. While we hope that the values we have instilled will serve the children well, we are unable to ensure that the money will be used for the intended purposes.

We have reached the decision that we cannot begin supporting children after they have left Angels' Place. We still hope that our kids can go to college, but we cannot be their source for financial support, and experience shows that there are alternatives. For example, two young men recently graduated from Angels' Place. One is at the Imphal School of Preaching on full scholarship and the other is at Churachandpur College in his fifth semester having worked and saved his money to pay expenses.



look after orphans ...
in their distress ... James 1:27

PO Box 751
Pittsburgh, PA 15146
Email: info@jamesconnection.org
Online: www.jamesconnection.org

An update from Executive Director Jan Swensen

November 2016

AFTER 11 YEARS, ANGELS' PLACE KIDS ARE AGING-OUT

When doors opened at Angels' Place in 2005, we worried about how to build a big enough cistern to provide water for a home with 50+ kids. We didn't even consider then, what we would do or feel when the day came to say good-bye to kids who turned 18 or finished school. But here we are in 2016 bidding farewell to kids, some of whom have made Angels' Place their home for the last 11 years.

This is an emotional time for kids, staff, and sponsors, but it is important to remember that their departure is testimony to our success. Readyng them for life as young adults is what we are in business for and their departure makes room for younger, needier kids – kids just like they used to be.

When young men or women leave Angels' Place they return to their extended family and their tribe. They are well prepared to become contributing members of their community and they soon will start a family of their own. With a 10th grade or higher education, our kids are better positioned for the good jobs in the marketplace. Some of the girls will marry, but some will find work first.

The opportunities ahead are far greater than they would have been without time at Angels' Place and the young people have personal strengths they would not possess had they grown up on the streets where we found them. We should all rejoice and say, "Well done!"



Suresh Singh was among the first children admitted to Angels' Place in 2005. He did well in school, excelled in soccer and gymnastics, and rose to a squad leader mentoring to younger kids. He passed the grade 10 state exam and graduated with honors from grades 11 and 12 at Rayburn College. Suresh studied the Bible on his own, became a Christian and decided to enroll in the Imphal School of Preaching in Imphal, where he has been given a full scholarship

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT BEYOND GRADE 12 IS BEYOND REACH

To our surprise, to our joy, and to our credit, some of our young people are ready for college! The Board has thought long about supporting Angels' Place graduates through four years of college. With input from our partners in India and mindful of our mission, we have reached several decisions. They are:

1. Our children all need training to help them cope with adulthood and earn their way in life; for some this may mean ongoing formal education, but for many others this means vocational training for a trade.
2. We work with our kids to help them pass the state exam that allows them to go to classes 11 and 12 and then qualify for college. Most of our kids pass this test and go on to finish class 12, some qualify for college, but a large portion do not pass this test and must leave Angels' Place when they complete class 10 and reach age 18. We are wrestling with whether or not we have done the best we can for those no longer interested in or qualified for further schooling. We recognize that they are far better off than when they came to us, but they are still at risk.

(Continued on back cover.)

CIVIL UNREST IS A WAY OF LIFE IN MANIPUR

When you realize that the state of Manipur in rural northeast India has been under martial law since 1947, you understand that civil unrest is something Indians are very, very accustomed to. The clash between mountain and valley people is very real, but it is also historic. The valley people hold the majority in the state legislature and the tribal people from the mountains are underrepresented. Frequently the legislature passes laws that infringe on the tribal people's traditional self-government.

Last year the legislature passed a law that allows non-tribal people to buy tribal land. This the mountain people object to strenuously. They demonstrate their objection by calling strikes that interrupt all travel and commerce. Occasionally, violence erupts causing authorities to institute curfews, and schools and businesses must close.

Our children are safe at Angels' Place, but the civil unrest makes food and supplies scarce and expensive, so our operating budget is significantly impacted each time there is a strike. Because civil unrest is a way of life in this region of India, we know we must expect and plan for budget hardships. It's just the way it is in Manipur.



Sporting his famous welcome lei, doTerra representative Jared Moon visited Angles' Place in July to meet the children and staff, to inspect the lemongrass crops and distilleries, and to discuss his company's interest in forming a long-term partnership for mutual benefit.

WORD OF MOUTH OPENS DOORS

We have been growing lemongrass and extracting its' oil for years in the hills of Manipur in hopes that our Indian brethren can sell it to make a profit that we can apply to the support of Angels' Place. We have done a good job of clearing the fields, planting and growing the lemongrass and distilling the oil; however, we have been unable to access the western markets. Instead we have sold only to Indian buyers who pay about 45% of what American buyers are paying leaving little or no profit margin. So we began to stockpile the

product while we seek a means to access the better market.

Stateside, Jan Swensen added the lemongrass lament to all James Connection presentations he makes telling the story of Angels' Place.

He never stopped asking, "Does anyone here have experience in export and import of essential oils? Can you help us?" Finally, last spring at the Jupiter-Tequesta Church of Christ, a member responded, "Yes, I worked for an American company named doTerra and they buy lemongrass oil" and she promptly put us in touch with the right person.

DoTerra not only buys and sells lemongrass oil, it also engages in the communities where they do business and they seek long-term partnerships for mutual benefit. In July their representative, Jared Moon, visited Angels' Place and was thoroughly impressed with our orphanage and our lemongrass operation. A contract for a long-term partnership is underway.

Sadly, we have another hurdle to clear. We cannot ship the oil until the insurgents call off the strike that is blocking commerce in Manipur. We have accumulated over 1000 liters of oil and we will ship them to the USA as soon as the strike is lifted. From experience, we know that will happen soon. Then our project will generate the profits we have hoped and planned for all these years.

TWO AMERICANS VISIT ANGELS' PLACE TO TEACH ... AND LEARN

Christine Selby and Charity Miller first met as volunteers at Touch Miami With Love, a program for kids. Christine taught art. Charity taught drama. They bonded as friends and talked often about someday doing something internationally for kids, so when Charity told Christine she was going to Delhi to teach Applied Theater at a private girl's school, it was a no brainer that they should team up and go on to Angels' Place.

When Christine caught up with her friend in Delhi, Charity she was exhausted having spent 5 weeks in the hottest city on the planet trying to engage 25 girls in 100+ degree weather without air conditioning. Charity was skeptical about extending her trip to work with 162 kids under supervision by only 4 staff members; how could this possibly be anything but chaos?

Soon Delhi was a memory and the majestic Himalayas renewed their spirits as they flew to Imphal. The two young women were nervous facing many unknowns, but as soon as they saw Assistant Superintendent Siam at the airport holding a sign with their names, they knew they were in good hands. The drive to Angels' Place through

rural towns in beautiful hill country was captivating, but the welcome they received on arrival was "unlike anything either of us had ever experienced. There was a big banner with our names, and the road was lined with all the children and each one wanted to shake our hands and they presented us with leis."

Christine and Charity spent a week teaching the children art, drama and dance capped off with a talent show that the kids organized themselves. But the real lessons learned were those that the kids taught the teachers.

The women recall, "There is a remarkable spirit of hospitality at Angels' Place. We felt at home, loved, appreciated, and cared for." They also agreed that Angels' Place is the "best example of leadership development" they have ever observed. "Although there are only four staff members, there are at least 20 high school age kids who function as staff, and the leadership they demonstrate is totally impressive," said Christine. "It was not unusual to see 17 year-old boys with 4 year-old girls helping them follow directions, encouraging them and laughing heartily. Because the kids are so engaged and because the kids want to respond to you, Charity and I were positively inspired."

MEET OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

James Connection is thrilled to welcome to our Board of Directors, Andrea Fields, CPA. Andi is the first woman to join our Board and she brings amazing talents. As a CPA, she has taken a keen interest in our finances, refining and streamlining our bookkeeping processes and offering fresh insights on best practices to strengthen our system of checks and balances.

Andi and her husband Doug have been sponsors of a child at Angels' Place for five years. Andi also was a key organizer of our 10th anniversary celebration in April 2015. Andi and Doug are the busy parents of Samantha (8) and Ethan (5).

When asked about this new role, she replied, "I am honored to be able to use my God-given talents to help the children at Angels' Place. It is humbling and uplifting to know that my contribution of time can directly impact children on the other side of the world. You realize just how blessed our own children are when you consider the life-experiences that have brought all of the 162 children to Angels' Place. James Connection is doing wonderful work for these kids but we depend solely on volunteers. I ask that we all look to see how God may be calling us to support this ministry in our own way."

Thanks, Andi.....and all our Directors: Brian Albright, Jim Ice, Earl Wilkerson and Jan Swensen.



Charity Miller and Christine Selby from Miami, Florida taught art, dance and drama to all our kids, but their best take-away was lessons they learned about hospitality and leadership.

