

An update from Executive Director Jan Swensen

June 2014

## THE CHILDREN GET A MUSIC TEACHER

Sarah Burnell from Montreal, Canada accompanied Hedi Devine and Jan and Leslie Swensen on their recent trip to Angels' Place. Sarah is a music teacher who also conducts choral groups, teaches voice and plays and teaches violin. The children at Angels' Place responded to her and learned to love her in just a short time. She accomplished amazing results very quickly. She arrived with her tools and curriculum well planned and wasted no time in teaching the children songs in languages foreign to them



Sarah Burnell directs the youngest Angels in "I've Got Peace Like a River" with harmony and all the gestures.

including English and Swahili along with many gestures. She organized the kids in groups by age, juniors, intermediates and seniors, and within a week they put on a delightful concert. It is important to understand how much progress Sarah achieved, for the children had never before seen sheet music and did not know of harmony, rhythm, counterpoint and the basic elements of music. Something great came out of Sarah's teaching; the children learned how well they sing and what beautiful music they can make.

Here are Sarah's impressions of her visit:

*In late January, one of my choir members asked me if I'd be interested in travelling to India to teach music classes at an orphanage. I felt like a small child again, with my hand shooting up in the air, crying "PICK ME! PICK ME!" She put me in touch with the organizers of the James Connection, and the ball was rolling.*

*Over the course of my 6 days at Angels' Place, I taught music classes to three groups of children. The youngest ones enjoyed some silly songs (which happen to be favourites of my students here in Montreal, too!), and sang a particularly lovely version of "I've Got Peace Like a River". They were heartfelt and completely engaged in the music! The middle group had a*  
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*lot of fun learning an African freedom song called "Tshosholoza", and they dipped their toes into harmony singing for the first time. The oldest group (also the largest) took to choral music like fish to water! They performed two songs "Down to the River to Pray" and another African piece, "Siyahamba". Their harmony singing was amazingly solid after such a short time and their talent for vocal music was obvious. What a pleasure!*

*This has truly been a life-changing experience for me. These children have nothing and yet they have everything that matters. Their worldly possessions amount to the clothes on their backs and a few small trinkets, but they are content. What seemed like absolute necessity to me: hot running water, constant electricity, internet connection, suddenly seems like extreme opulence. These children are fed, clothed, educated and housed in a caring environment. For all that my Canadian students enjoy the wealth and privilege of the first world, I don't believe they are any happier than the children I met that week.*

*What I have truly gained on this trip is a greater sense of purpose. I could feel a higher being's hand in what I was doing and in what is being done on a daily basis at the home. These children have taught me much more than I have taught them, and I am eternally grateful.*

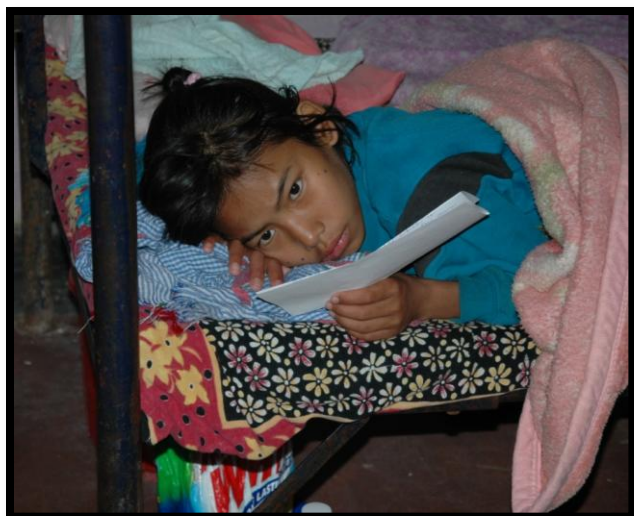


Pau Son Lal teaches four smaller children how to play the keyboard. These kids had never seen a keyboard or sheet music before. They have made beautiful music just by ear. Now they will receive voice and music education. Pau showed so much interest, talent and progress with the keyboard that he earned the right to act as custodian of the instrument.

From left to right, Raveena Kom, Ching Lian Mawi and Rejoice Vung Hoi Kim. This the Angels' Place trio that performs so well at talent functions and has recorded CDs.







## Chin Lian Ching, Then and Now

Remember our last newsletter with a lead story about Chin Lian Ching who had just arrived at Angels' Place so malnourished that she could hardly walk. The picture on the left shows her last year, having to lie in bed while she read a letter from her sponsor. Now look at the picture on the right taken this year. What a difference a year of good food, exercise and school have made. She runs and plays just as a young girl should. She feels great.

## EDUCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR OLDER CHILDREN

As the older kids approach adulthood, the James Connection, the children's sponsors and the staff at Angels' Place, as well as the children themselves, all have concern for future employment opportunities after the children leave their home at Angels' Place. The James Connection has initiated plans for this eventuality. These plans include these actions:

1. The staff surveyed the kids about their aims in life and their responses guide the steps being taken to establish relationships that lead to opportunities.
2. 20 kids from grades ten and eleven take typing classes every day at \$10 per month per child. Typing skill is a very important criterion in government recruiting.
3. The staff has established a relationship with the Bethesda School of Nursing for approximately 20 interested girls after class twelve to obtain a degree in general nursing and midwifery. The price for this is comparable to what is now paid for high school tuition, and James Connection will agree to pay the nursing school tuition.
4. The older children have been given responsibilities for caring for younger children and caring for the campus.
5. Space in the new construction will be set aside for computer training and other vocational training. Steps will be taken to connect Angels' Place with the internet.
6. Six senior boys already help to operate the lemongrass oil distilleries.
7. The boys' supervisor and others have begun training boys in mechanics, carpentry and electricity.
8. Three boys and two girls have learned to take over the kitchen to provide meals for all the children when the cook is off duty or unavailable.
9. Tailoring and hair dressing are taught.

# SUCCESSFUL FUND DRIVE ENABLES NEW CONSTRUCTION



The 2013 fund drive was highlighted by a challenge from an anonymous foundation to raise \$50,000 to match a \$25,000 grant. James Connection met this challenge in a month, and the grant was claimed and paid. In addition, the drive won grants from two other foundations. The James Connection does not have all the money needed to pay for the new construction, but this has never caused the committee to stop progress. The committee has continuously charged ahead on faith. The funds have always arrived on time. The committee has decided to

act now, for material costs continue to rise, the best builder is available and the weather is optimum after monsoon season ends in July. Also, the builder has strongly advised that the sand in Manipur is of poor quality which causes concrete to spall and chip. To avoid early deterioration of mortar and cement, the builder must use higher quality sand imported from neighboring states at a higher cost. An additional \$100,000 will complete the fund drive. The planners start now to meet this goal.

## INDIA GRANTS IMPORT-EXPORT LICENSE



For years R. Sanga has tried to acquire a license to market the James Connection lemongrass oil internationally. Finally, on May 5, 2014 the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Office of Joint Director General of Foreign Trade for India granted its Certificate of Importer-Exporter Code (IEC). Now James Connection can go to any market in the world. Potential buyers from Australia, Netherlands and the USA have inquired about the availability of the James Connection oil, but it was impossible to sell it to international buyers without the necessary certificate. The price of the oil is much higher on the international market. This opportunity is expected to bring a better profit margin than anything previously possible. This can turn out to be a major step toward self reliance and production of funds by the Indian brethren.



# MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING WILL RISE, PROTRUDING RE-BAR WILL SHOW NO MORE



Here are girls hanging their wash amid re-bar which will support the new floors that will go up starting in July.

For several years the multi-purpose building has had rebar sticking up in the air symbolizing the vision that the James Connection planners have of its vertical expansion. At last, beginning in July, Angels' Place will build the final two floors. A large building will become larger. The first floor houses the girls' dormitory, the dining hall, the infirmary and the kitchen. Till now the roof has only served as a place for the girls to hang their wash to dry. Counselors have worried for the children's safety on a roof that has no guard rails. Not only that, but the roof is really a floor which will soon develop leaks if that

temporary roof is not covered with second and third floors and a permanent roof.

The new second floor will house a large study hall, library, recreation room and bathroom facilities. The children urgently need these rooms. Currently they study in their beds, in crowded small rooms or outside. The present library is too small to accommodate more than ten to twelve. In monsoon season when it rains buckets all day long, the children have very little indoor space for any activities.

The third floor will house a large, open meeting hall and lavatories. The children have many assemblies for announcements, devotionals, church services, musical performances and meetings. When visitors come the children always perform in rooms that can barely hold everyone. Sunday worship services frequently attract so many people that some of the children must sit or stand outside and look in the windows. Angels' Place will be able to hold vocational training workshops to prepare the children for future employment beyond school.

## WHAT INTERESTS YOU MOST?

For the first time ever, the James Connection sponsor support is meeting the monthly operational expenses thanks to a very successful campaign to add new sponsors last fall. Although sponsors come and go and we always seek more, now we must raise money for other important needs.

If you have read this newsletter you know that there is much success to celebrate and there are several giving options for your consideration. Please reward this progress with an extra donation that reflects your approval of the work we have done together in India.

Mail your gift of any size to James Connection, PO Box 751, Monroeville, PA 15146 or give safely on line at [www.jamesconnection.org](http://www.jamesconnection.org). Please indicate the purpose that means the most to you.

- ☐ Capital drive for expansion of the multi-purpose building
- ☐ Tuition for further education like typing classes, nurse/midwife training, college
- ☐ Installation of broadband internet access for use by staff and children at Angels' Place
- ☐ Support for on-going music instruction by Sarah Burnell
- ☐ On-going operational expenses for daily needs

As always, thank you for helping us help the kids in India.



PO Box 751  
Monroeville, PA 15146

## WE HAVE CHANGED OUR ADDRESS!!

To simplify and strengthen communications between our American supporters and the India work, we have changed our address. Please note that all sponsorship payments (checks payable to HPCoC-India Fund), all donations and all correspondence should be sent to:

**James Connection**  
**PO Box 751**  
**Monroeville, PA 15146**

With your support through the years, we have made great progress. We thank you!



**Lal Biak Muan gives a thumbs up for the mail he received from his sponsor. The kids love this mail.**



## Let's Get Green

Help us reduce costs of printing and postage by electing to receive our newsletter by email. Being on our email list also allows you to receive more frequent updates about breaking news at Angels' Place. Please email us at [info@jamesconnection.org](mailto:info@jamesconnection.org), put "ADD ME" in the subject line and specify in your message your name so we can add you to our growing email list. Thanks so much for recognizing that every few cents we save means more money for the kids!

## On the Web

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