

Jenny's Experience



'I'm in India, and as usual, India has provided me with exactly what I need.

On the plane from London I met a young man who was part of a medical camp going to a school for disabled children (mostly with polio) just outside of Jodhpur to donate lightweight crutches, wheelchairs, and calipers (devices that attach to the legs and enable the child to walk), to give eye exams and glasses, general check-ups, set up a vitamin and pharmaceutical dispensary, and begin the process to educate a few boys to make prosthetics for the school, and set up a workshop at the school.

I joined the team and was on a bus for sixteen hours arriving at the school at daybreak (about 30 hours of travel total).

In the dusty desert of Manaklao, Rajasthan, live 450 boys and 30 girls with disabilities. In India, these children are often looked at as outcasts or signs of bad luck to their families. But fortunately founder Narayan Singh and his son, Dr. Bhati thought differently. Just nine years ago these pioneers began the school with just a few boys, having their lessons under a tree. Now, about 500 of these children have a chance at a successful life with self-respect.

The girls joined the school just two years ago, which was a major breakthrough. They have added new energy and a new dimension to the school. Hopefully the funds for a girls hostel are soon forthcoming.

Last year ten students competed in the Para Olympics in London. Five received Gold Medals! And they learned the sport just five days before the competition. I

saw many students doing fantastic stunts on ropes, bars, and a big wooden pole – true gymnasts. Now the girls want to compete as well. This is really pushing the envelope in Indian society. Their spirits are unstoppable.

And as fate would have it, the first school trip ever (for grades 8-12) was heading to Haridwar and Rishikesh, the same place I was going. For 150 students, this was the first time on a train, to see a river, to see abundant greenery, to ride in a boat, to ride a cable car (they thought they were flying), and to go out in the world with some confidence. How lucky was I to be with them? To see their excitement. To see them bathe in the holiest river in India, the Ganges. The Taj Mahal may be a fantastic building, but the Sucheta School is a monument to the living.

So, just let me tell you about my experience of these children....their eyes sparkle with warmth and love. They are bright and work incredibly hard. They appreciate absolutely everything they have. They love and respect their school and their teachers. They get up at 5am for prayers, exercise and study, and go until 10pm. With only one drum and a harmonium, they put on some of the best singing and dancing performances I've ever seen. If not for this school, more than half of these kids would be begging on the streets. Coming from poor villages where their families live, the school is like a 5 star resort -running water, blankets and two meals a day. The school is free for the poor, funded partially by the government, and dependent on outside donations.

Have you ever wanted to help those less fortunate, but weren't sure where the money went? Did you ever wonder why some organizations wasted so much money on mass mailings and advertising? Well, I can guarantee that if you want to help these children, your donation, no matter how small, would go directly to the care of the children, and with love. For example, it costs about \$150 to completely support one child for a whole year. Another project in the works is to plant grass in the central courtyard. This would help to keep the dust levels down and would especially help those students who have to scoot along the ground. Or how about a music program? Twenty-five local instruments could be purchased for about \$850. Also, money is needed to set up the prosthetic workshop. The students with two damaged legs that have had to view the world from the ground will finally be able to stand and see the world from that vantage point. Amazing.

Enough said. I feel so lucky and privileged to have met these children. If you would like to help the children, donations can be sent to: Love and peace to you all.

Jennie