



NEWS FROM HOINA HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

PO Box 87, St. Charles, Missouri 63302 • www.hoina.org • March 2018

Their Journey Begins

by David Fyfe
HOINA Vice President

[Editor's Note: In December, you read an article by Alexis and Aaron, a married couple who have come to serve at HOINA. We would like to tell you a little more about their backgrounds and how they came to work with our children in India.]

Alexis and Aaron officially joined our HOINA family in January this year. Alexis, originally from North Carolina, first came to India in 2013 for just three weeks. Although she experienced extreme culture shock at the beginning of her trip, by the end of the trip, she was ready to cancel her ticket home and stay forever. Something about the villages of Andhra Pradesh (A.P.) gave her a feeling of being "home."

She cancelled all plans back in the States and returned to India to volunteer at a children's home. Two years later, her path and Aaron's would cross, and their mutual love for children and India would unite them for the rest of their lives.

Aaron, originally from a small village in A.P., finished a bachelors in Theology from COTR, and a bachelors in secular studies from Andhra University. He worked at a children's home in Araku Valley for six years, and then went on to work with a local NGO (non-government



The newlyweds, Aaron and Alexis, will celebrate their first anniversary this month. We wish them much happiness in the future.

organization) as a translator and leader for development projects in and around Vizag.

In February 2016, mutual friends introduced Aaron and Alexis on a whim, remarking how good for each other they would be. Sure enough, a year later, on March 18, 2017, they got married in Rajahmundry, A.P.

As they began to settle into their new life together, they searched for new opportunities to work with children in underdeveloped areas of A.P. A good friend of theirs, Abraham Thomas, who runs an NGO that provides clean drinking water to remote villages, told them about HOINA and Mom Darlene.

They went to meet Mom in August 2017 and were in awe of her and what she has done for the children of India. Aaron and Alexis saw the way she loves the kids,



Their Journey continued

the way the HOINA staff work with integrity and joy, and the way the kids are growing and developing emotionally, mentally, and spiritually with excellence.

Alexis and Aaron will be working primarily with the children of HOINA. Aaron has a knack for photography, and he loves to run around playing sports with the boys. Alexis loves art and running around with the toddlers. Aaron is the cook of the family, and being a big meat eater, loves to joke about marrying a vegetarian. The two are thrilled to be serving the children of HOINA and look forward to the memories to come.

While they serve at HOINA, Aaron will be working as a housefather for our boys' home, and Alexis will be volunteering as a housemother for the girls' home. The two will be helping out wherever needed. Aaron will be leading the morning and evening devotional times, and both will help with nightly school tutoring. Alexis will spend time each day helping the smaller kids get ready for school and making sure all of the girls have their needs met.

Counting Our Blessings

From Our President

I greet you and thank the several hundred of you who sent me cards, letters, and emails over the past year after I suffered loss after loss. When I was a little girl, my grandmother taught me a hymn called "Count Your Blessings." Since 2017 was the worst year of my life, I found myself singing that hymn and thinking of ways to get through all the sadness. Your loving notes certainly lifted my spirits.

I could not help but remember the many people I had met over my lifetime as I visited other countries. Everywhere I go I meet people whose stories impact me. One such story happened about three years ago. While I was in Chennai, I visited a northern section called Washermamet. I went there often to buy shirts for our HOINA boys. The prices were unbeatable, and the shirts, long-lasting. My HOINA driver waited while I shopped, and then we made our way along the narrow streets, passing shop after shop of women's and men's clothing, as well as toy shops and shoe stores, weaving around water buffaloes, goats, and cows that were part of the normal traffic pattern. As we went around one traffic circle, we picked up speed and passed lines of people moving down the sidewalk. Except one wasn't moving.

He sat at the curb smiling, but WAIT! What was that? No, I thought, couldn't be. I asked my driver to stop the car, and I ran back the two blocks. He was still there. I had not imagined what I saw: from his shoulders were fingers where arms should have been. How did he feed himself? I wondered. How could he toilet without arms or hands? I approached him and said, "Hi, what is your name?"

He smiled back. "My name is Babu." As we spoke he talked to me in very clear English, smiling the entire time. It was as if God had put him in front of me to encourage and cheer me. It should have been the opposite, and I could not stop the tears.

I reached into my bag for a colored envelope marked "Jesus." I always bring one or two of them with me to help those I meet who have nothing. I put the money in his cup and said goodbye to Babu. "I will pray for you," I told him as I was leaving. He smiled again as he thanked me. I walked the two blocks back to our HOINA car. I would not trade my life with anyone else, I thought. I prayed as I sat alone in the back seat. I thanked Jesus for all the times He spared my life, for His healings and His blessings.

As I grieved the loss of my son this past year, I relived all of the wonderful memories I have stored inside. I remembered Grandma's hymn and started counting my blessings: I am grateful Dirk has no more pain from his cancer and that my son is with his Dad in his heavenly home. Now they can both smile in a place where there are no tears.

Counting Our Blessings continued

I looked back on memories of Mother's Days past, when HOINA boys and girls called to wish me a happy day. I thought of all the times they told me, "I love you, Mom." I thought of my daughters, Letti and Raja (pictured below), and the happy memories they built together as sisters and how they welcomed different "family" into our home, some for a lifetime (like Letti's future husband Todd), some for a year like our German exchange student Karen, and some only briefly (HOINA kids who came for surgeries).



face. White stuff fell from the sky!

The more I remembered these happy memories, the more the sadness of loss faded. What did the hymn say? Count your blessings, name them one by one. My blessings do have names—the names of my children and grandchildren; and of friends far and wide; HOINA's U.S. Board and the Indian Board, both run by volunteers who have busy lives but make time to help; host families when HOINA kids needed operations; the HOINA staff; and HOINA children like Ruth Mary, Anil, Yasoda, Anusha, R. Swathi, Esther Joy, Yuriewon, Ramash, Upendra, Krishna, Chandra Sekhar, K.V.N., David, Immanuel, Suraj, Sunil Kumar, P. Chanakya, Madhu, Poornachandrarao; and of course, the names of each of you. Thousands of people who have left imprints on my heart and loving memories to cheer me when I have had to walk life's valleys.

To all of you who have become family to a HOINA boy or girl, thank you. May God bless you in 2018. Together, we have saved well over 4000 children. With our four medical clinics and schools, we have educated and helped so many thousands more. I think you could agree that this is a worthwhile way to spend our time on earth.

Darlene



HOINA President Darlene Large celebrates her 83rd birthday at the end of this month. Her hope is to return to India in July. Feel free to send her greetings at:
HOINA
PO Box 87
Saint Charles, MO 63302-0087

HOINA is a 501(c)3, tax-exempt organization with international headquarters located at:

HOINA
PO Box 87
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HOINA
PO Box 636,
Brownstown, PA 17508-0636 U.S.A.
717.355.9494
Toll-free: 877.99.HOINA (4.6462)
Email address: hoina@frontiernet.net
Website: www.hoina.org

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March 2018

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Dreams of a Future in Civil Engineering

If you have read our newsletter for any length of time, you know how often alcoholism plays into the demise of a family unit. Unfortunately, this month is no different. Mr. and Mrs. Gorle married in July, 2001. Their son, Gorle Jayavardhan, was born five years later. When Jayavardhan was just two, his father died, leaving the widow to move in with her own parents. Unable to provide for her son, who is now in sixth grade, Mrs. Gorle asked for his admission into HOINA.

Someday, Jayavardhan wants to become a civil engineer. While he studies, he awaits sponsorship. Would you contribute \$35 each month to cover our costs of feeding and clothing him and giving him a home to live in full of brothers? His medical care and schooling fees, books, and uniforms are always paid by HOINA. You can make a difference in this boys' life!

