



NEWS FROM

HOINA

HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

PO Box 87, St. Charles, Missouri 63302 • www.hoina.org • April 2020

The Happiness Project



by *Lauren Nicou*
York College Student

Proving the saying “When it rains, it pours” true, my fall semester was a record-breaking monsoon that crashed down on me. I was struggling in school and living far from my family and friends. I felt so alone. While everyone around me was happy, I was just not. People kept telling me to be positive, but I couldn’t create feelings that weren’t there. Little did I know that happiness was there, but I was just unable to see it. When winter break rolled around and it was time for me to head to India, I knew that it would be a nice trip and I would enjoy it. What I did not know was how life changing HOINA would be nor that I would be taught by the kids what happiness really is.

“Hi, Akka!” was what I heard immediately when I met the children of HOINA. No matter what was going on during the day, they always had time to greet me with a “Hi, Sister” and a smile and ask how I was doing. The children radiated sunshine. They were all so passionate, happy, and loving. My brothers and sisters at HOINA were not granted the happiest beginnings, which for a lot of people would be enough to be angry and sad for the rest of their lives but not the HOINA children. They carried such resilience and carried on their daily lives with happiness every day.

When I witnessed such happiness even after everything they have been through, I was shocked. How could they be so happy when they have encountered such hard things? In the first three days I was there, I felt light and joyful—a feeling that I didn’t

Happiness

continued from page one

encounter that often during my fall semester back home. I felt so moved by the happiness at HOINA that I decided that while I was living there I would make it my mission to ask the kids what makes them happy in hopes to find what real happiness is.

During my visit to HOINA, I took time to ask each child for their name and proceed with my follow-up question: “What makes you happy?” I recorded their responses. While I heard many different answers from the children, similar themes emerged. Learning what makes my brothers and sisters happy was so eye-opening and enlightening. Immanuel said eating makes him happy, Anand said singing makes him happy, Santosh said friends makes him happy, Lydia and David said playing, Ashkya said chocolates make her happy, Durga said reading, and Esther Joy said watching movies. The most common answers from the majority of the kids, however, were: my brothers and sisters, mom and dad, HOINA, and God.

My happiness project taught me that what makes the kids truly the happiest are the little things in life. I still think about how happy Kusuma was to get an orange on New Year’s and how she wanted me to take pictures of her and her orange (see photo above right) and how all the children were over the moon at the Three Kings



York College student Lauren, the author, with (left to right): Bharathi, Kusuma, Venkata Lakshmi.

Day celebration, receiving a shoebox filled with pencils, chocolates, and soap. Their gifts weren’t much, and I bet if you gave the same present to a child their age in the United States they would be outraged; but the children at HOINA love everything and appreciate the smallest things with their whole hearts.

While I was at HOINA, we did the simplest things together. We played, sang, and danced; but those simple things brought out the biggest smiles and laughs. Being at HOINA for that winter break brought me personal joy and happiness, and my young brothers and sisters taught me much as well. I learned from these kids that when you remove the materialistic things from everyday life and focus on what really matters—like sharing time with your family and friends, offering a smile and greeting people with warmth and love when you see them, and appreciating the opportunities and things you have—you come out as a happier, more positive individual.

After I left HOINA, I promised myself that the lessons I learned from the children would be incorporated into my everyday life. I’m proud to say that since leaving India I have still managed to be stress free, but more importantly I am the most happy and joyful I have ever been. I make sure to look for the simple things every day and make sure to spread happiness and positivity wherever I go. When I think



Left to right: Lasya, Bhavana, Kanaka Maha Laxmi. Back is Venkata Laxmi.

Will You Help Her?

Y. Keerthana entered HOINA last summer, when she was 11. Her name means “psalm or song,” which is fitting for this peaceful child. She was the only child of her parents. Her mother worked in a rope-making factory until she died in an accident there. After the death of her mother, Keerthana moved in with her maternal grandmother until her grandparents were unable to educate her. Keerthana is enrolled in the sixth grade now with her HOINA peers, and she hopes to be a teacher someday. If you would like to support her, please send your first monthly donation of \$35 with the coupon on the back page.



Happiness

continued from page two

about the children’s backstories and the lives they lived before HOINA, they have every right to stay angry and be unhappy, but they aren’t. My brothers and sisters at HOINA spend every day living their lives to the fullest. They are joyful and have so many dreams and aspirations. If they spend their days moving forward and building the most beautiful futures for themselves, then why shouldn’t we be as positive and as happy as they are? Because of the lessons I learned from my brothers and sisters at HOINA, I have a healthier mindset and am able to see happiness wherever I go, even if I’m having a rough day. I will always be grateful for them, and I am forever blessed and honored to be their sister.

CURRY for a CAUSE



On Saturday, February 22, HOINA Board Secretary Glory Janes and her husband Doug, organized a fundraiser to benefit HOINA. The 5th Annual Curry for a Cause event included a buffet dinner of Indian specialties, classical Indian dance performances, a HOINA presentation, and items including clothing pieces and handmade cranberry orange cookies available for a donation. We give our thanks to all who participated, either by working at the event, performing, or buying tickets to attend. That Saturday dinner changed lives around the world.



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

HOINA
PO Box 87
Saint Charles, MO 63302-0087
U.S.A.

This newsletter is published to inform our readers of the work HOINA does among the handicapped and abandoned in India.

Edited by Letti L. Becker
Layout by Eberly Designs
Printing by Prestige Color

Send donations and address changes to:
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

The official registration and financial information of Homes of the Indian Nation (HOINA) may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, 1.717.787.1057. Registration does not imply endorsement.

HOINA Sponsor and Contribution Coupon

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Account Number (on your mailing label): _____

Mail coupon to:

HOINA
PO Box 636
Brownstown, PA 17508-0636



April 2020

I want to Sponsor a HOINA boy / girl (circle one).
Here is my **first** monthly gift of \$35.

Please use this gift of \$ _____ toward the HOINA
General Fund / Education Fund.
(circle one)

This gift of \$ _____ is in honor / memory of
(circle one)

(please give name and address of person): _____

(please print clearly)



All donations are tax deductible.



HOINA
PO Box 636
Brownstown, PA 17508-0636

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #910
Lancaster, PA

CURRY for a CAUSE



HOINA would like to thank Summer Nelson, Mandy James, Glory Janes, Ashley Murphy, Anu Moturu, Selma Belts, and Anna Kravchuk, who all served at the Oklahoma fundraiser that benefited HOINA this year. See more photos inside!