



NEWS FROM

HOINA

HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

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Three Kings Day

by David Fyfe

Vice President of HOINA Board

I just returned from my ninth visit to India and to HOINA. Over the years there are always numerous changes at HOINA including new buildings, new staff, new children, and a lot more artwork and color splashed throughout the campus. In my classroom I often have a hard time explaining to students how special HOINA is within the context of India. Upon arrival at the campus they get it—immediately—and can see how exceptional this 20+ acre campus is.

All of the students I have brought over the years, who are now considered part of the extended HOINA “family,” understand that this is more of a home than an orphanage. This year I traveled with a group of 14 York College students who decided to spend their winter break volunteering at HOINA. They have a variety of backgrounds and majors, but each of them is clearly passionate about working with and helping children. The purpose of the course I teach at York College is to have students learn about India by doing service at HOINA, everything from helping the kids with their daily homework, to helping staff with chopping vegetables to feed 200 children each day.

At HOINA the children have a celebration on Christmas Day where, through the generosity of our donors, each child receives a special gift. For the new children at HOINA, it is often their first Christmas celebration and the first time they receive a gift of their very own. Many of the smaller children get stuffed animals, board games, cars, or dolls. When our group arrived on December 29th, many of the children beamed with pride showing the York College students their Christmas gifts. While the younger children all



Durga Prasad and Chanti Babu (called Sagar), two of our HOINA boys enjoyed getting their special boxes for Three Kings' Day.

get toys and games, the older children often request specific gifts such as a new backpack, a pair of sport shoes, or a Bible. Each of these gifts are treasured by the children at HOINA.

In addition to their gift on Christmas Day, the children also receive a shoe box full of gifts on Three Kings Day. While I'm not sure exactly when the tradition at HOINA started, during the last decade whenever I have taken groups to HOINA for the winter, we have been able to participate in this celebration. In part, the tradition emerged so that Mom could spend the Christmas holiday at home with her own family and then travel to India to celebrate a “second”

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Christmas with her HOINA family. In fact, this year Mom recollected to the children at HOINA about her own childhood when she spent Christmas at her one grandmother's house and Three Kings Day at her other grandmother's. There they had a "kings cake," which was a wreath-shaped cake with a small baby Jesus doll hidden within the cake, and the person who was served the piece with the doll was going to have good luck throughout the year. Regardless of when the tradition started, it is now very much a part of HOINA where the children look forward to receiving gifts and goodies.

The staff collects empty shoe boxes from local stores in the weeks leading up to the end of the year and purchases all of the items to pack into these small boxes. As in previous years when our group is here in early January, the York College students had the opportunity to fill these boxes and take part in the celebration. The boxes are separated and laid out throughout the courtyard in groups for boys and girls and then further separated into older and younger groupings. All of the boxes get filled to the brim with both practical items such as new toothbrushes, soaps, tongue scrapers, combs, pens and pencils as well as some small bouncy balls, toy cars, balloons, and of course—chocolates! Each box is wrapped with shiny wrapping paper and then labeled with the child's name and number.

This year January 6th (the 12th Day of Christmas) was on a Monday so after the children returned home from school they all headed over to the chapel in anticipation of receiving their box of goodies. The gift boxes that had been packed and wrapped by the York College students covered the stage in the front of the chapel and after an opening prayer and some remarks by Mom and HOINA's General Manager, Anand, each name was read as the children came forward to get their gift. Smiles were contagious as the children clapped and cheered for their HOINA brothers and sisters as they came up to the stage. I particularly enjoyed watching the small children up front eagerly waiting for their names to be called. This year one of our youngest girls, Tejaswini, was receiving her very first gift box.

While the plan is always for Anand to do a countdown after all the boxes have been distributed, the anticipation gets to some children, who sneak



Top to bottom:

York College students prepare gift boxes for each HOINA child.

HOINA President Darlene Large with General Manager Anand prepare to distribute the Three Kings' shoe boxes.

Santhosh Kumar enjoying the celebration.



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Our visitors from York College of Pennsylvania (left to right) are front row: Lauren, Shannon, Dave (group leader & article author), HOINA Mom Darlene Large, Jess, Emily, Natalie, and HOINA General Manager Anand. Back row: Gina, Alexis Eliza, Molly, Katie, Jordan, Lily, Julie, and Tajah.



Tejaswini received her first gift box ever.

peaks throughout the calling of names. This year, as in each time I have participated in this event, I am humbled when the children come up to me and the York College students and want to share their chocolates with us. For the next 15-20 minutes the children go through the boxes and eagerly show us what they received. This year, since the ceremony was before dinner, the kids got samosas as a treat instead of cake and ice cream (although most sampled their chocolates and some had the chocolates gone before dinner!).

York College students always talk about how excited the HOINA children are to receive only one large gift and a small box of practical and fun items. The students also find it remarkable how grateful the HOINA children are for these presents from our donors, unlike many children in the US who receive a lot more during the holidays. While the pictures here show the joy and excitement the HOINA kids have in celebrating Christmas and Three Kings Day, they do not show the sense of gratitude that I, and all of us at HOINA, have for you the generous givers, who make these celebrations possible for the HOINA children.

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

HOINA
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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 2020

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Big Name for a Little Boy

Teja Swarup Naidu, fondly known as Teja, sends you greetings this month. His hope is that someone will sign on to be his sponsor. He joined HOINA last summer and is waiting patiently. He'll be celebrating his birthday on April 9, so you have time to send him a card with your good wishes in it. We do ask that our sponsors not send gifts to specific children, because that makes others who do not receive anything feel sad. Feel free to include a picture postcard from your locale. Please put this in an envelope so that it gets to your child safely.

Teja is one of his parents' two sons. Mr. Roberts, Joint Director of Women and Child Welfare Department in India, recommended this boy to HOINA when he met Teja's mother, who was too sick to care for her children and who had no other family to help her. We happily added him to our HOINA family.

Teja loves playing and watching cricket, and hopes to become a doctor someday. Can you help this hopeful third grader achieve his goal? You can send your first monthly gift of \$35 to our HOINA office listed on the coupon above.

