



NEWS FROM

HOINA

HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

PO Box 87, St. Charles, Missouri 63302 • www.hoina.org • May 2019

Generations of HOINA Support

by Letti Becker
Newsletter Editor

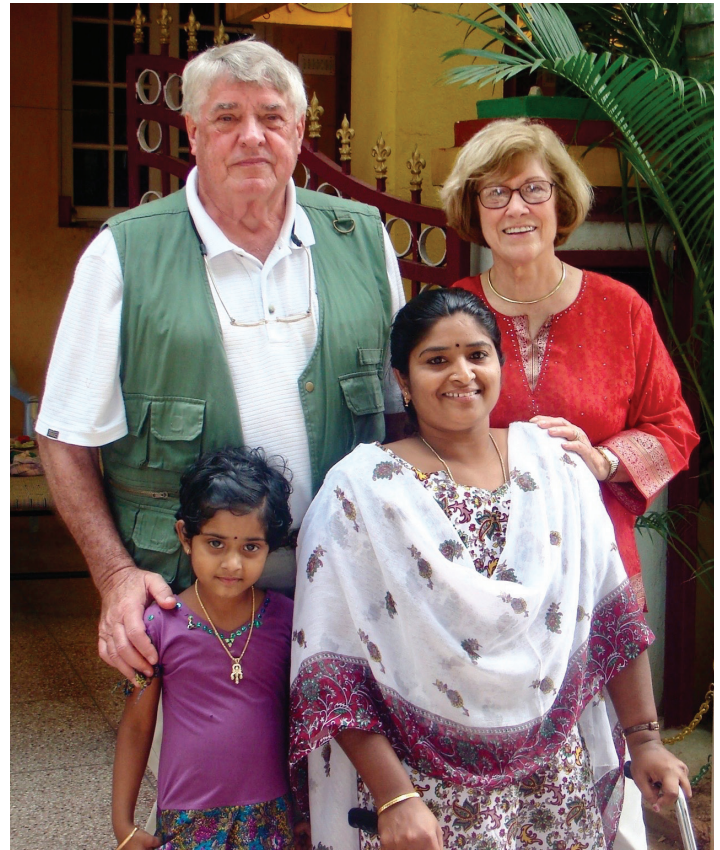
We featured an article by David Cunningham in our March issue. This month, we'd like to introduce you to his parents, Marge and Jim Cunningham. Jim and Marge have both been to HOINA in India in past years, but this time Jim went with his two sons and daughter-in-law.

LB: You have been HOINA friends for a long time. Can you remember how you came to know about the work and when that was?

MC: Our son Dave introduced us to HOINA through his friendship with Raja Daggumalli, who was raised from 11 years old by Bruce and Darlene Large. Dave and Raja were close friends and classmates in high school. In 1988 the Larges came to Dave's graduation party at our home, and from that time we became friends and got involved with HOINA.

LB: What was your first active involvement?

MC: In 1988 when HOINA brought Aruna Kumari to the U.S. for surgery at the duPont Hospital for Children, in Wilmington, Delaware, [to correct her severe and life-threatening scoliosis] Darlene was concerned that she would not be understood due to her inadequate English skills. So I picked her up each day to bring her to our home. We would spend our days reading books and have long conversations to get her familiar with some of the words and phrases that she may hear in



Longtime HOINA friends, Jim and Marge Cunningham, with HOINA graduate Aruna Kumari and her daughter, Likki, on a previous visit.

the hospital. Later, I helped put out the HOINA newsletter as part of the volunteer crew who met each month at the Larges' home.

LB: Jim, you eventually joined the HOINA board. What did you see you could bring to the group?

JC: I joined the HOINA board in 1995 along with Dr. Larry Gagnon. I felt I may have some experience to add to the board because of my frequent travels to

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India as a pilot for United Airlines and my visits to HOINA that I had taken in the past with my wife, Marge.

LB: Your involvement with Dr. Gagnon in Rotary International was a large piece of your dedication to HOINA, was it not? Tell us about that.

JC: Dr. Gagnon was an outstanding educator who had a keen interest in developing the HOINA schools. Our first endeavors resulted in the Cunningham-Gagnon English Medium School at the boys' hostel in Bapatla, A.P. We also were advised that a vehicle was needed to carry on much of the daily work at HOINA. With the coordination of the Lancaster-Northeast Rotary Club, matching grants from Rotary International, and support from the local Rotary in Bapatla, we were able to procure the first HOINA vehicle—a Mahindra Jeep. That Jeep served us well for so many years that Papa Bruce [Large] finally decided we had spent enough on repairs, and it was traded for a newer model. If I recall correctly, I think the odometer read around 450,000 Kilometers [nearly 280,000 miles!]

Our next project was to acquire (with the help of our Rotary clubs) two Toyota 25-passenger buses, which were needed to get the children to and from school along with the many other trips to the city. These vehicles served HOINA for many years and, actually, one of them is still on the property.

Over many years with the help of Rotary, we were able to have new bunk beds built for the girls for the home near Chennai. By the way, when I visited in January of this year, I saw that those beds are still in use today. They are ready for a new coat of paint and varnish. If anyone has the inclination to visit HOINA, that would be a helpful service project. [HOINA does have guest quarters to rent for a minimum fee to host you for a visit, but you must connect with our office prior to coming to assure that we can accommodate you.]

LB: Tell us about your relationship with Aruna.

MC: After Aruna returned to her life at HOINA in India, we kept in close contact, mostly through letters and an occasional telephone call. I also



Dave and Aruna reunion

visited her on my frequent trips to India. Aruna left HOINA and went to college. We helped her with some college expenses and continue to aid both her and her daughter. It is with great pleasure that we have watched Aruna raise her daughter even with her severe handicap. She has been an inspiration for many HOINA kids that have followed.

LB: Jim, please tell us about reconnecting with Aruna and what she is doing now.

JC: Our visits to India always include a three- or four-day visit with Aruna and her daughter Likki. It requires a little extra travel, but it is always so worthwhile. It has been a wonderful eye-opening experience to watch Likhitha grow into a beautiful and caring teenager and follow her success in her educational endeavors. Aruna deserves a wealth



Jim, David, Laura, & Jim Cunningham

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of credit for having raised such a caring person. Aruna continues to teach computer science courses in the University in Tirupati and maintains her independent household in spite of her crippling handicap. She is so pleasant to be with, and we enjoy the hospitality that she exhibits. We always feel so welcome.

LB: How did it feel to see her again after so many years?

JC: The most gratifying incident I experienced on my recent trip to India was watching Aruna and my son David getting reacquainted after not seeing each other for 30 years. Both were in tears, and I know that David's wife Laura and our son Jim, along with me had the same pang of emotion to see them in a great bear hug.

LB: What are your thoughts about HOINA after so many years of connection to the organization?

MC: We have watched HOINA grow and change into the amazing home and school that it is today. The children are a testament to the beauty and safety of their surroundings. They help each other without being asked and are always kind and obedient. They are dressed well and have nutritious and ample meals each day. Their performance in school is outstanding and reflects well in the community. It is always a joy to spend some time in India visiting the campus.



Keerthana, Lavanya, Joshna, Lydia and Bharathi show off one of the many new rose bushes planted on the HOINA campus.

Darlene has done a remarkable feat in establishing this facility and caring for so many children who need our help.

JC: There are so many more stories I could tell, but space is limited. I would ask all those who support HOINA to give some thought to visiting this remarkable facility. I am sure you will not regret the effort. If you need a more personal contact for info, feel free to contact Marge or me by reaching out to the HOINA Headquarters in Brownstown, PA.



In Tirupati this year, Laura Cunningham models her sari for Likhitha, Aruna's daughter.

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

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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:

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May 2019

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Share Some Joy with Jyothi

[Editor's Note: Our featured child this month is a full orphan, but her story is very sad. Please preview this article before you allow children in your home to read it.]

Mr. Naga Venkata Prasad and Mrs. Udaya Vhanu were married and blessed with one daughter. They were from Korukonda, East Godavari. The couple lived happily for a while until they had a misunderstanding. This fight led Jyothi's father to commit suicide by lighting himself on fire just two days before Christmas in 2015. After his death, Mrs. Udaya developed a health issue and died on February 27 of last year, leaving Jyothi's uncle as her caregiver. He is a daily laborer and not able to take care of Jyothi properly with the money he makes. When he came to HOINA seeking admission for Jyothi, our staff welcomed her.

If you decide to sponsor Jyothi, you have plenty of time to send her a 13th birthday card for her August 29th birthday. Be this teen's "surrogate" parents. Help give her hope and a future. Your first gift of \$35 can be sent to our HOINA office in Pennsylvania, or you can set up a direct funds transfer from your bank so you don't have to remember to mail a check each month.

