



NEWS FROM

HOINA

HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

P.O. Box 636, Brownstown, PA 17508-0636 • www.hoina.org • December 2021

Dance Career Blossoms Through Hard Work

as told to HOINA Executive Director Glory Janes

My name is Meenakshi, and I was born in 1980 in the city of Madurai. We are six children to our parents. I have two brothers and three sisters, and I am the fourth girl.

After our birth, my family was in extreme poverty. Because of having many kids, my parents struggled to even give us one meal a day. So they decided to move from Madurai to the big city of Chennai in hope of finding some work to do. At this time I was six years old. Seeing our family's struggles, one of our neighbors told us about HOINA.

When my parents heard about HOINA Girls' Home, they contacted them, and my parents asked for me and my sister to be taken in. With the help of God and Mom, my older sister Meera, and I were taken into HOINA; and it became home. From then on, I got beautiful dresses to wear, healthy food to eat, a sleeping bed, a bathing soap and a tooth brush. I was living a life of and in luxury now. [When having your own bed, own bath soap, and own tooth brush mean so much to a child, you, as a donor know what impact you are making on the children.]



Big sister Meera (left) with little sister Meena dressed in costume for a Bharatanatyam performance.

When I was nine years old, HOINA had a classical dance teacher come to give us girls dance lessons. This is when my love for dance began, and I learned the peacock dance, snake dance, kalagam, etc. as a part of Bharatanatyam [a classical Indian dance form]. I became so good that whenever there were any school occasions, I was asked to perform every time and every year. I won many awards at school and also

won awards for best Bharatanatyam dancer at the District and State level. After I finished school, I cannot forget the day in 1998 when Mom [HOINA President, Darlene Large] took me to the Andhra [Pradesh] HOINA campus, to do a performance. After the performance, all the audience was cheering me, and I wasn't even able to get off the stage because they had all surrounded me in appreciation. Then Mom came and

continued on page 2

Dance Career Blossoms

said, “I am proud of my Meena.” Even until today, whenever and wherever I perform, when it is done, the memory comes to me of mom saying, “I’m proud of my Meena.” Her encouragement and words stay with me always.

When I was 18, Mom asked me what my ambition was for my life. I told her that I wanted to become a dancer. A few days later, Mom took me to Chennai to the famous school of dance called “Kalakshetra.” It was an excellent school but was also expensive. Mom went into the office while I stood right outside the door. She spoke to them and asked them for an admission. Then they quoted the fees [tuition], and I still remember that it triggered an anxiety attack, and I was shaking a lot.

Suddenly, I felt a hand on my back, and the voice of Mom who said, “Don’t worry, Meena. I will help you.” That was one of the moments in my life, when I felt like, this is God working, for sure! I joined in Kalakshetra right away. Mom found a way to pay all the fees and charges for my four years of college study.

The years after I graduated in 2002 were full of blessings. Soon after graduation, I took up a job as a dance teacher in a small town near Tiruvallur. My first salary was Rs.1500/month, and I donated it to HOINA. After this I started getting opportunities to work at a few more schools simultaneously as a dance teacher. Soon I joined into the Music Academy to learn Indian Classical Carnatic Music. While going to music school, I also started school for a Bachelors Degree in Commerce in the Madras University. I graduated with a B.Com, and then applied for the best dancer award with the state in 2006, and was awarded it for the year 2006-2007. I got married in the same year, and we now have a seven-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter.

After my kids were a little older, I started a dance school called “L.S. Gurukshetra” with just one student. Within three years, my school grew to 75 students. I also was able to do a Masters in Arts in Bharatanatyam and am currently doing my M.Phil in Dance.

People wonder how I am able to accomplish all this. Because of the good habits we learned at HOINA, I learned to have a discipline in life, to have ambitions, and to work hard. At HOINA, we have a routine, we have a structure and, most importantly, we have a home!

My sister Meera has also done well in her academics. She did her Bachelors in Education, and also a Masters in Economics. She is a teacher at a Higher Secondary School and is doing well. She is married and has two children also. Her older daughter is now studying to become a Chartered Accountant.

We are ever so grateful to Mom and HOINA. I want to say “Thank You” to Mom and everyone that helps HOINA. HOINA has given me a safe and comfortable home to grow up in and shaped my future.



Pictures above show Meena through the years.

HOINA is a 501(c)3, tax-exempt organization.

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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.

Hey there, I am Shayne Buchanan and I joined the HOINA Board in 2020. My friend Johnathan Murphy asked if I would consider joining. I have spent a good part of my life volunteering in my local church, but this is my first time I have been part of an international service organization. In fact, I have never travelled overseas before. I had listened to Johnathan talk about his trip to India several years back. The one thing that stood out was how he explained a typical day for an Indian resident, and how it is nothing like what we experience in the U.S. Listening to him planted a seed that made me want to know more and help when I could. Then several years later this opportunity opened. Meeting HOINA President Darlene Large has shown me the true definition of love. The love she has for these kids is unbelievable. I believe it is exactly what Peter described in 1 Peter 1:22 to love one another deeply, and that is what we do here at HOINA by loving those who are truly in need. *[Editor's Note: Shayne has accepted the position of Treasurer on the HOINA U.S. Board and will be serving that capacity in the future.]*



Christmas Needs

Would you consider helping us to provide a Christmas celebration for our children and staff? Your donation to our Christmas Fund will buy a gift for your sponsor child or for one without a sponsor. In these uncertain times and with our supply chain troubles in the U.S., making a gift in honor of someone here could be easier than trying to find something on store shelves for them. And you'll save on shipping costs! You will allow our staff to shop for all of our children and provide bonuses for our employees, who may have extra expenses this year due to the cyclone. Please send your gift with the coupon on page 4—any amount would be a blessing. As always, your generosity is such a blessing, and we thank you.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

February 2013 Newsletter

Excerpt by Darlene D. Large (edited for space)

Last March as I worked on my "To Do" list, a police constable, who was a HOINA friend, brought a small child to my door. He had found the boy sitting on top of a garbage pile, searching, unsuccessfully, through all of the debris for a morsel of food. As the police searched for his family, this little boy was lodged in a government orphanage. After some time, they discovered he had come from a nearby mountain tribe. His neighbors were monkeys, tigers, and bears. The police learned from other villagers that his name was Ganesh, his mother had died, and he had no father. Recently, his grandmother had also died. With no food, Ganesh left their small hut and went in search for one banana. The police never learned how he came from his mountaintop village down to our valley. Ganesh would not or could not communicate. The police tried Telegu, Hindi, and English; however, Ganesh spoke a tribal language.

The police constable told the staff at the government home about HOINA and our animals, flowers, bright colors, toys, playgrounds, and smiling staff. He said there were happy children and good food, sometimes even ice cream. If anyone could get Ganesh to talk, it would be the people of HOINA, he reasoned.

The next year when I returned to HOINA, Ganesh ran up to me, put his arms around my knees, which nearly knocked me over, and looked up at me smiling as he said, "Mom, I love you." I was shocked! I guess the constable was right. HOINA was the right place for a little boy without family to learn to communicate and to find a gift called love.



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December 2021



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- Please use this gift of \$ _____ for construction & repairs.
- Please accept this gift of \$ _____ in honor of HOINA's 50th Anniversary.

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Remembrances

Thank you to the many donors who chose to give memorial gifts through October 31, 2021. When requesting a gift to be listed in someone's memory or honor, please include the name and address of the individual or family so we can send them an acknowledgment.

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Gene Biddle
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In Honor of

Darlene Large



In Honor of

HOINA's 50th Anniversary

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