



New Year Wishes for 2022

By Glory Janes, Executive Director

After waiting for a long two and a half years, I was so happy to be back on the HOINA campus and to bring you this report about how things are going overseas. My journey began with Covid-negative tests, self-declaration forms, attestations to the Indian Health Department, and overwhelming documentation, but then I reached HOINA. All there was peace, calm, big smiles and big hugs—and children, happy children.

Honestly, I didn't see too many changes from 2019 until last month; yet, we all know how much everyone has been through during this pandemic. Much like our kids in the U.S., the HOINA children have dealt with the drastic changes of being locked down, then some more lockdown, the mask struggles, the virtual classes, and not being able to see their school friends. The biggest difference for some HOINA kids is that they had to go back to their relatives, if they had any, per the Indian government's mandate. Eventually, they were allowed to come back to the campus but were then sent home a second time. In these couple of years, Covid-19 has made it onto the HOINA campus, as have other sicknesses, terrible flooding, and more. They know we've got them just as my kids and your kids have been living their lives without adult worries,



HOINA teen boys on their field trip to the city.

knowing mom and dad are dealing with the big issues in life.

I just said the HOINA kids' lives were impacted with so many hardships; however, in spite of not being at physical school and not seeing their school friends, our kids still thrived. They built deeper relationships with their peers and siblings at our home. They still had friends to play with, they had open courtyards to walk and run around in, they had playgrounds for outdoor play, and playrooms for indoor play. I can tell without a doubt in my mind that this was because of the way the HOINA campus was designed and built. If not for Mom

Darlene's vision and giving her life to make this vision a reality, our HOINA kids would be like many other lonely kids stuck indoors with no friends, fatigued with online schools, and bored with a lack of any physical activity.

On my visit, we were able to get out and take the older teen boys and girls on some field trips to the city, where they got to meet the city teenagers and watched them sing and play music. It was a full day of fun and laughter.

On our way back to the HOINA campus, some of them came to me and said "Akka, I've always wanted to play an instrument. It's so nice to see these

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people sing and play music. Can I learn music too?"

Then came more voices, "Me too, me too!"

"What is it you would like to learn to play?" I asked.

"Guitar."

"I want to learn keyboard."

"I want to learn drums."

And on and on. Too many voices for me to understand, but one thing I did understand—we need to start a music program. HOINA Mom Darlene Large has always emphasized the importance of having arts as a part of learning, part of childhood for all children.

November 14th is Children's Day in India, celebrated on the birthday of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who loved children. He is also the father of Indira Gandhi, India's first female Prime Minister. All schools in the country celebrate this special day. HOINA's Children's Day activities were hosted by General Manager Anand and other staff, who conducted various competitions for the kids. They enjoyed competing in singing contests, quizzes, races, and some team games. What an experience it was to watch them play against each other. Screams, loud sighs, and cheering one another on showed the intensity of the competition. (My apologies for not having photographs of this event as I was having too much fun participating.) At the end of day, everyone shouted and chanted "HO...I...NA..." together. We really are one team, after all.

As far as the campus goes, many of you have seen the flooding that Cyclone Gulab caused and parts of the boundary wall that had come down. We got that rebuilt again as well as designing the bridge with a larger opening and a small gate to lift up when the water force increases, acting as a water-controlling device. It has been an unusual year of cyclones coming in after the normal season. While Cyclone Gulab came during the last week of September, two back-to-back cyclones followed while I was there in mid-November (see storm clouds at right). It rained nearly every day for seven days straight, and the water was filling up again. December 3rd saw another cyclone that was going to make landfall in Vizag and Vizianagaram, but thankfully it took a turn and hit more in the north of our State of



Above: Our chatty girls on the way to the city field trip. At right: those same girls wiped out from a full day, sleeping on the bus.



Pictured above: reconstruction of the wall that Cyclone Gulab took out complete with a new system for mitigating flood waters.

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Andhra Pradesh. With the way severe events keep occurring, we definitely have to make sure our campus is weatherproofed as much as possible to prevent and/or minimize the damages.

My three weeks went by so quickly. It was hard to say goodbye, but then, when isn't it hard? It pinched my heart when one of the girls was saying, "Don't go, Akka, stay for Christmas."

I said, "Sweetheart, I will come back again. I left your little brothers in the U.S. and came here. They are still so young, and they need Mommy for Christmas."



March 2012 Newsletter

Excerpt by Darlene D. Large (edited for space)

It was early on a mid-January morning when I came out of my apartment above the girls' home near Visakhapatnam and looked down into the courtyard that borders four dormitories. I noticed five little girls huddling in a circle, shivering, and hugging one another to stay warm. The temperature was about 48-50 degrees, and they wore sleeveless cotton dresses with no socks, no sweaters, no coats. In their tropical climate, anything below 65 is considerably cold to them. This year has been an unusually cold season for them at a time when they are normally used to lovely San Diego-like temperatures in the balmy 70s.

I called the little girls upstairs to my apartment. One of our volunteers had arrived from America to teach English to our staff. He had been kind enough to bring us a large hockey bag containing hoodies and sweatshirts from a kindergarten class near Kansas City, Missouri. The children had collected many different sizes and colors as a Christmas service project. Along with those, the York College student volunteers from Pennsylvania had brought other beautiful ones from another donation. With all of these donations, we had enough hoodies and

She thought for a few seconds and said, "Well, why can't you all come over here for Christmas?" Of course, I didn't have an answer for this. I just gave her a big hug, in silence.

In spite of it all, when I arrived, I was met with big smiling faces, laughter, and love. Our children's resilience and attitude have encouraged me in so many ways. It seems as if there was and is nothing big enough to dishearten these children, as long as they have HOINA, as long as they have Mom, and as long as they have you. To all the donors, sponsors, partners, friends, and well-wishers, we thank you and wish you well in 2022.

sweatshirts to outfit all of HOINA's boys and girls from toddlers up to the big boys. We were short only 13 for our larger teenage boys. After we handed out what we had, I made a call to Papa Bruce who was still in the U.S. He went out to buy those last 13 and brought them to us when he arrived in mid-January, so now all of HOINA's boys and girls have something warm to wear! The children kept thanking us again and again. They were very grateful. They wore them in the early morning until it was time for school and the sun was up and warming things a bit. Then they folded them and placed them under their pillows before going off to school. In the late afternoon as the wind picked up and temperatures again dropped, the children would don their hoodies and play cricket or swing on the swingset or just hang out with their friends. It was as if a smiley virus had infected our campus.



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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.

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January 2022 

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