



NEWS FROM

HOINA

HOMES OF THE INDIAN NATION

1175-B S. Aspen Ave. Broken Arrow, OK 74012 • www.hoina.org • April 2025

Beans Speak Louder Than Words

By Elsie Becker, Granddaughter of HOINA Founder Darlene Large

When people in the U.S. found out I was going to India, I received a variety of questions. From coworkers, “What are you doing on vacation there?” From church members, “What kind of ministry will you be doing?” From friends, “What part of the culture are you excited to experience?” It was difficult to explain to others the purpose of my trip and the history of how my grandma was the founder of an international organization. In my own heart, my “goal” for the trip was very simple. Spend my days with the children. While I was excited to see new landscapes, hear new songs, and try new foods, I was most excited to meet the boys and girls on the other side of the world whom I’ve spent my whole life hearing about. So

after getting my vacation days approved, visa granted, and neck pillow packed, off to India I went!

After climbing into a metal tube and hurtling across the sky at 500 miles per hour, I touched down on the other side of the globe (quite an astounding marvel of modern science if you ask me). As we landed, a little girl in the

neighboring row screamed joyously, “It’s my first time in INDIA!” to which I excitedly replied, “Me too!” Upon arrival at HOINA, we were greeted with signs, flowers, and smiling faces all with the same joy and excitement that the girl on the plane exuded.

The next morning I awoke to the unexpected and delightful surprise that some of the older students



HOINA girls celebrate their time with Elsie Akka.

were still on their mid-year break and would be around during the day. As they were preparing beans for lunches, I joined them at their table and retold my tale of hurtling through the air in a metal tube. They asked questions about my journey, and I showed them the flight path of our plane. I asked about the beans they were

preparing (and got to eat some later – delicious!). They showed me how they string the beans and break them into pieces for easy cooking and consumption. I hadn’t even gotten to learn their names yet, but we talked and laughed anyway. When the table fell silent due to the struggle with

continued on page 2

Louder Than Words continued

the language barrier, we continued to prep the beans. I was so grateful to get to spend my first day just living their life with them, helping with a simple chore, chatting, and enjoying their school holiday.

Over the next ten days, I built a relationship with each one of those girls and many of the younger kids as well. We braided each other's hair. We shared English and Telugu songs. We debated over foods we did or didn't like ("Idli" are NOT for me though they are a favorite with the children). We went sightseeing to the mountains of Araku and even spent a day in the city shopping, so I could have a sari to wear before the end of my trip. My

new sisters were such a blessing to me and welcomed me into their lives with such joy and kindness. On our trip to the mountains they took very good care of me, including checking out every "washroom" for cleanliness before letting me use it. I am pleased to report that I did successfully learn how to use an India-style toilet on that day trip. They showed me how they talk to their parrot. He likes to say, "Akka" which is the Telugu word for "older sister" since he hears it so much living in the girls' home. Silly parrot!



Elsie holds an armful of marigolds graciously gifted by the HOINA boys.



Prepping beans for dinner became a bonding time.

My favorite part of each day was dinner time after everyone had returned home from school. I enjoyed checking in with them daily to hear how their civics test went or what they had learned that day. Dinner at the boys' home was also a treat as they were equally thrilled to host me. I had the opportunity to go to school to deliver lunches one day, and the boys were excited to introduce me to their friends. I also got to witness them climb a coconut tree and tried fresh coconut for the first time thanks to the fruit of their labors. Drinking fresh coconut water definitely lined up with the "vacation" image my coworkers thought I was having! But in reality the tropics got the better of me as I received no less than five mosquito bites during the barely 15 minutes I spent standing

under those coconut trees.

Beyond the cultural experiences, I am so thankful for the time I got to spend with the HOINA children. Each of them displays a powerful testimony of what love can do. The goal of my trip was to experience just one day at HOINA, and they shared their entire world with me. Their generosity and kindness radiates across the campus. While I felt the impact they were having on me, I did not feel that I had anything to offer them in return. However, on my final day, I got to see that I was mistaken. The boys,

continued on page 3

Louder Than Words continued

whom I had felt I didn't get to spend nearly enough time with, came and brought me marigolds. Each boy individually came and handed me a flower to say goodbye. As I smiled and said goodbye through my tears, one of the oldest came and stood by me for support with a gentle, "Don't cry, Akka" which, of course, just made me cry more.

As the girls gathered, a couple stood up to speak their feelings. Their emotions were too strong to speak in English, but with some translation help I understood that they were sharing their favorite parts of our time together and were highlighting the first day when we sat around and prepped beans. This was surprising to me as I would have imagined that a vacation trip to Araku might be a little more fun than kitchen work. As I listened, I learned that they were as nervous as I was for this visit. They weren't sure what I would be like, and the fact that I had sat at their table with them on the first day and asked about their beans was very honoring to them and

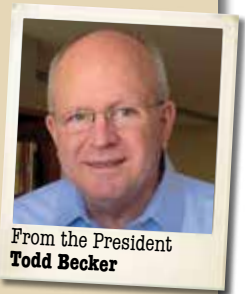


Elsie models her sari purchased while shopping in "the city."

they felt as blessed by my presence as I was by theirs. It was so special to learn that we had the same favorite memories from the trip—spending time together and sharing our worlds. Where words failed, stringing beans was a way we showed each other love. I will take these memories with me and know that I have made lifelong sisters on the other side of the world.

Greetings!

Near the end of my recent trip to India, I visited Hyderabad to connect with some of the HOINA alumni. I looked forward to meeting Swathi since I had heard her story years ago but had never met her in person. You may remember reading about Swathi in our April 2017 issue. She is now a professional athlete competing in the 50 / 100 / 200 / 400 meter sprint events. Being invited to her training and time trials was a pleasure as was meeting her coach and training staff, and even Swathi's teammates. As she shared her story and I shared mine, we formed an instant bond that only HOINA creates.



From the President
Todd Becker

I mentioned wanting to find someone to review the HOINA weekly dining menu. The current menu was created by "Papa Bruce" Large, husband of HOINA's founder, a long time ago. Swathi immediately responded with, "I have a nutritionist I would love to introduce you to. I'm sure she would help." Within a couple of days, the nutritionist and I were talking. We now have a plan for a study using the HOINA population as a base. The menu will be adjusted on a monthly basis dependent upon both nutritional criteria



and how the staff and children are responding. My request was for a one-time "menu" review. God gave HOINA an in-depth study and calibration based upon global standards! I am humbled again.

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

Contact us at:

717.355.9494

Email address: contact@hoina.org

Website: www.hoina.org

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

Send donations and address changes to:

HOINA

PO Box 7167

Lee's Summit, MO 64064 U.S.A.

Email financial questions to: info@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: _____

E-mail: _____

- I want to **Sponsor** a HOINA boy / girl (circle one). Here is my **first** monthly gift of \$35.
- Here's my gift of \$ _____ to help fund the **general expenses** of HOINA as we care for the children.
- This gift of \$ _____ is in **honor / memory** of (please print the name and address of person) (circle one)

Mail coupon to: **HOINA**
PO Box 7167
Lee's Summit, MO 64064



Please consider donating online at www.hoina.org

All donations are tax deductible.

April 2025 



HOINA
PO Box 7167
Lee's Summit, MO 64064

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #810
Lancaster, PA



Smile in Any Language

In January HOINA President Todd Becker took his daughter Elsie to India with him. When the older HOINA girls decided to decorate Elsie's hand with a temporary henna tattoo, designed by Meghana, they asked what she wanted to take home as a remembrance. She told them she wanted the Telegu word *navvu*, meaning smile. It was the first Telegu word she had learned, and she used it repeatedly when she was trying to get good photos of the girls all week!

Many thanks to those of you who have blessed our HOINA founder with 90th birthday greetings. Darlene appreciates mail more than you can know. She cannot always write back, but know she is grateful.