



BefriendBrief

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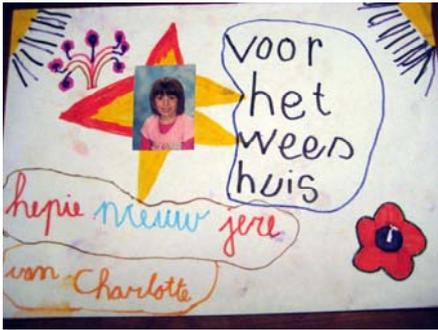
The Befriend Foundation wishes you happy holidays and an inspiring 2008!



- GOOD NEWS -

- Envelope campaign Jan Hekmanschool again very successful - * Interview with Srikanth and Rany
- The Befriend Foundation has received the Verklaring van Geen Bezwaar (Declaration of No Objections) of the CBF (Centraal Bureau Fondsenwerving: central bureau for fundraising). This is a certificate granted to small-scale organisations for good causes that meet all criteria for a trustworthy good cause, worthy of support. Go to www.cbf.nl for more information.
- The Soorya Udayam Illam movie – including interviews with the children – is ready! All donors have by now been sent a copy. Please let us know if, through an oversight you have not received anything. And for all sympathisers who have not become donors yet, you can watch a preview of the video page at www.befriend.nl. We hope you decide to join us.
- At the moment there are 30 children living in the Home: 20 boys and 10 girls. You will hear more about them in the next newsletter, after we have visited the project..

ENVELOPE CAMPAIGN JAN HEKMANSCHOOL AGAIN VERYSUCCESSFUL!



This year the primary school Jan Hekmanschool is once again helping Soorya Udayam Illam. Like last Christmas, an envelope campaign was held. The entire proceeds will go to this shelter and schooling project. All children started by watching the movie about the project (child version with voice-over) with much interest, and after that they each decorated an envelope. These envelopes were then filled with donations from both children and parents. The higher levels had also thought up their own project, and collected money by returning bottles for recycling. The envelopes will all be sent to India, where, as last year, they will be festooned around the walls for the New Year celebrations.

The campaign raised 2.700 Euro. And that is not all. Primary school Het Kofschip in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel will also start raising money for this project next spring. Moreover, at the end of the last school term the Jan Hekmanschool will organise a big sponsor run in support of the Home. The entire proceeds of these campaigns will then be (almost) doubled by the Stichting Wilde Ganzen (Wild Geese Foundation) and go to the tuition centre and further decorating the Home. A lot can be achieved in a small village!



INTERVIEW WITH SRIKANTH AND RANY; THE "FATHER AND MOTHER" OF SOORYA UDAYAM ILLAM

"Love, care and share", is our device.



Home - Health Care - Monthly Measuring of Height of Children



What motivates you to do this work?

R:

It is in my character to help others. In my life I have helped a lot of people because I feel that I have to and cannot act otherwise. As a logical result, I have chosen for social work.

S:

I started my career as an environmental expert. Slowly my field expanded from the environment as a place where we live, to a social environment as well, e.g. by doing projects for clean drinking water. In this way, I became a social worker, as well as an engineer. My engineering education and knowledge fit in with my work for the Empowerment Foundation and came in handy when building Soorya Udayam Illam. During our social work we came across a great number of neglected and destitute children in our community, who hardly attended school. Children who were in desperate need of structural help and education in order to have a chance in our community. Constructive help and supervision for these deprived children could stop the neglect at its roots. We were therefore very glad that we got the support from the Netherlands to build this shelter and educational centre. This means we can dedicate ourselves in a constructive and lasting way to our mission: to help adults via self help groups, but also to give many, many children the chance of a better life and independence.

How do you put this into practice?

S:

After having founded The Empowerment Foundation in 2002 we started various development projects. We focused primarily on "empowerment" of women and added educational activities for kids who attend school. In our work we first try to respond to concrete pleas for help. Subsequently we work at building and strengthening talents and skills, so that a person gets new possibilities. Our spearheads are need-based work and supervision aimed at sustainability.

R: We started by founding and supervising self help groups for women. Over the years they have grown to over a hundred. We also supervise a number of self help groups for men. We use micro credits to give them a chance to leave a hopeless, dependent situation and build a life for themselves. We also organise many educational activities for children in our community and for the children in our shelter. Education in India only consists of skills in reading, arithmetic and writing. The teaching material is often far removed from the children's day to day reality, so many children cannot keep up or quit. Our supplementary education consists of computer lessons, extra training in health, culture, nature, theatre, dance, etc. It is our ideal to start a full time school in the future where children can also receive some sort of "life-education", in addition to the basic training needed to pass exams.

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We try to recognise children's talents. Everyone has their own qualities. At present a large number of young people are out of work because they did not receive adequate education, and so cannot fulfil their potential. It is our aim to stimulate the specific qualities in each child or grown-up, so they will be ready for a future job. Through our approach we offer a person the best possible chance of a worthy and independent life.

What is the function of Soorya Udayam Illam in this respect?

R+S:

The shelter Soorya Udayam Illam is the basis and the heart of all our activities. We are extremely pleased that we got the opportunity to build and manage Soorya Udayam Illam. Through this foundation we can help children who find themselves in a needy and sometimes almost hopeless situation. We can offer help and education from the very basics, up to and including structural supervision leading to independence. Working with children on a daily basis makes us happy. Both of us have worked with children all our lives, and we like the idea of having a lot of children in our lives today as well. They can be very witty or very naughty, but they are very pure of heart. To live with them pleases our own hearts as well, and our work benefits from it. We want to dedicate a lot of time to carefully building the Home. The entrance procedure for the children, where we have to be very strict, is very time-consuming. Fortunately we have good people working for us who take care of most of our other activities.



What are your ideas about the education of children?

R+S

The poorest and most neglected children are often totally out of control because they get little attention and were not looked after properly. Most of them got into contact with misery and depression at an early stage in their lives, and they often have bad habits. They either quit school or do not attend at all, and end up as child labourers. They miss out on being a child. Without our support these children fail to get out of those circumstances. When they come here, they often behave very antisocially. Our first rule is that beating is not allowed, and neither are they allowed to beat each other. Most of them are not used to this. They may have a loving character, but they can also be rough and negative. We try to change bad behaviour by a soft approach. In short, we take them as they come, or for what they have become because of their background. We start with good counselling and talk to them very patiently about everything they have gone through, and about what they expect from life.

Love, care and share is our device, and that is what we want to give them. In as far as is possible we try to give them back what they have lost in their young lives. We see that they are very happy here. We offer them a lot of opportunities to free themselves from their sad past, and to become a child once again in every aspect. At the same time they receive a good education so that in the future they can join the community as responsible, upstanding people. We do everything we can to let them blossom.

You used to work on projects for big (government) aid organisations. You still receive requests for that kind of work. Nevertheless you have chosen to work for your own organisation for which you hardly receive any payment.

R+S

Indeed, we have regularly been offered a lot of other opportunities for well-paid, project-based jobs of a social nature, for example setting up aid projects after the tsunami. Still, we prefer this kind of work because it is much more creative and less bureaucratic than e.g. a government organisation. The line to those in need is much more direct, because we are a small organisation. We do direct need-based work with a possible structural follow-up. This kind of work is very satisfactory. It is creative, effective and rewarding. We see a lot of lives change in a short time, and this means much more to us than a big salary. The women and men in our self help groups are very thankful for their chance of a better life, and you can see the children in the Home flourish.

