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Tibetan Friendship Group Australia (Inc.)

Patrons: His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Joan M Wilson OAM

TFG MID-YEAR NEWSLETTER 2022



TFG NEWS

Although our TFG Committee continues to hold meetings by video conference, which works very well and keeps us all in touch, we do hope to meet up in person this year and have a fund-raising stall to sell many special Tibetan items which have been donated by TFG supporters. If you have any items you would like to donate please contact TFG secretary, Pam Kamula on 0439 400 622.

This newsletter contains some very sad news of the passing of Val Grogan, TFG Australia founder, as well as the passing of a beloved teacher at Tibetan Children's Village and that of one of our sponsored nuns at Tilokpur Nunneries. We won't forget them and send our deepest condolences to their families and friends. On the bright side we look forward to another good year for TFG, thanks to your support! We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As we are more than 6 months into 2022 it is a good time to reflect on the year so far.

Here at the TFG, the committee has continued working to support the settlements and all the incredible work they do to support the Tibetans. We continue to hold our meetings virtually as we find this to be efficient particularly as many of our members live far away.

We are very grateful to the sponsors who continue to be so generous and kind, and the settlements who work so very hard.

A TRIBUTE TO VALERIE (VAL) GROGAN, AM (ORDER OF AUSTRALIA) AND DSTJ (DAME OF JUSTICE OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN)

Sad news that Val Grogan the founder of the Tibetan Friendship Group in Australia passed away on Xmas day last year. A funeral service described by many as "a wonderful celebration of an extraordinary life" was held for her in January of this year at which Joan Wilson, OAM & TFG Patron as well as a close friend spoke of Val's long association with TFG.

Val is remembered as a woman of great achievements who had a very strong history of supporting the Tibetan cause along with her husband Judge Peter Grogan who was involved with the International Commission of Jurists, one of the oldest human rights organisations in the world. In a letter dated 15 February 1989 to Hon. Justice Michael Kirby, His Holiness the Dalai Lama wrote "As for Mr and Mrs Grogan, our gratitude and the concern and devotion for the Tibetan is beyond limit".

She was involved with the St John's Ambulance organisation for over 60 years.

Val will be greatly missed not only by her family but by the many charities and organisations to which she gave so much of her time and energy.

**VALE VAL GROGAN
18.09.1934-25.12.2021**



STORY OF A SPONSOR BY JOAN M WILSON OAM

Recently I got a late call on my phone – it was Dawa, the little girl I had sponsored years ago. Very excitedly she told me she and her family were coming to Australia as migrants.

I met Dawa when I was living in India for a year with my then new husband, the late Don Wilson. We spent time in many places and in Dharamsala His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Don became quite good friends – they shared laughs together! Dawa was one of two little girls who were part of a group of children brought to India by monks in about 1995 to escape the persecutions in Tibet. Most never saw their own families again. The girls called me “mother” and I began sponsoring Dawa and Yangkyi who were placed at Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) in the Kullu Valley.

We kept up the correspondence and Dawa went on to become a graduated Nursing Sister, and is now married and has 2 two children. Yangkyi went on to Chennai University and passed with First Class Honours in Master of Business. She then went to USA, working in New York, which has the largest Tibetan population in the west and became a very successful business woman! Over the years it has been Christmas Cards and a few emails from her. I have had so much joy from my Tibetan families!

MY MEMORIES OF TFG BY ANN TRENOWETH (EX TFG PRESIDENT AND COMMITTEE MEMBER)

I first became involved with Tibetan Friendship Group back in the early 1970s when Joan Scharkie, Wendy Paton, Val Grogan and Judy Sperling were members too. These were the early years of Tibetan settlement in India and the community there was in urgent need of help. We were a small group but we did what we could to support as many refugees as we could.

I began sponsoring a young teenage nun called Monlam Sangmo from the nunnery at Tilokpur. I am still in touch with Monlam today. Ten or 11 years later, my elder daughter, Samantha, and I travelled to India to visit Monlam, Wangchuk Palmo and the wonderful nuns at Tilokpur (see photos below). We were given a tour of the nunnery, Monlam invited us for afternoon tea and we went to prayers with the nuns. There we noticed the newest arrival, the sweetest five-year-old girl called Thinley. She was so little, and I remember her falling asleep leaning against one of the older nuns during prayers. I thought, 'this little poppet needs a sponsor'. As I was already sponsoring Monlam, I was hesitant at first but when I couldn't find anyone else straight away, my family sponsored Thinley too. Eventually Thinley decided the nunnery was not for her and moved to the USA where her brother lived. Today she works as a pharmacy technician in Minnesota and we're in regular contact. I think of her almost as a granddaughter, and I love her dearly.

Being part of TFG gave us a very special introduction to Tibetan culture. In Dharamsala, on that trip, we were very grateful to be invited to stay in a boarding house, Kashmir Cottage, which was owned by His Holiness the Dalai Lama's sister-in-law, Rinchen Khandro Choegyal. I remember the view from the front porch across the Kangra Valley and the traditional Tibetan dinner that was prepared for us, including aromatic momos flavoured with spices we'd never tasted before in our lives.

We didn't meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on that visit but I have been blessed with audiences with His Holiness many times, and have sat in his presence and heard his teachings, which have changed my life enormously, and made me, I hope, a better human being.

Some other memories from my time with TFG include:

- Those afternoon teas in the early days where we chatted about our sponsorships over home-baked biscuits and delicious tea made from lemongrass picked fresh from Wendy Paton's garden.
- Losar celebrations with the Tibetan community have always been a highlight of the year – especially the traditional dancing and watching the little children trying to keep up with their older siblings.
- The time Samantha and another TFG member and good friend, Leslie Christiansen, organised a benefit concert with Midnight Oil to raise the seed funds for the founding of the ATC. And later holding that very first ATC meeting in our home at Lindfield.
- Hosting a lunch for the then Prime Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration, His Eminence Professor Samdhong Rinpoche at our home in Haberfield. There was a lot of nervous excitement and cooking beforehand, and he was so gracious.
- Attending those wonderfully successful *Cave in the Snow* film nights at the old Valhalla Cinema in Glebe and being invited to hear the teachings of Jetsuma Tenzin Palmo when she visited Australia.
- Finally, there have been so many stalls, so many raffles, so many rugs to be won, and so many settlements helped by the kindness of our many sponsors.

The Tibetan community in Australia, and around the world, have been extraordinarily generous and welcoming to me and to my family. And I thank them from the bottom of my heart for all they have given us.

Tashi Delek

Ann Trenoweth

ANN VISITING TILOKPUR NUNNERIES IN THE 1980'S

With sponsored nun Monlam Sangmo on the left and a group of Tilokpur nuns on the right including 5-year old Thinley, also sponsored by Ann & family.



TFG PEOPLE



JULIA HARRINGTON TFG SPONSOR

In 1985 at Lismore, seeing a video of H.H.XIVth Dalai Lama in India inspired me to visit Dharamsala in Northern India. I spent 10 weeks of my 3-month visa studying Buddhist theory, a retreat at Tushita Institute, and attending lectures in English at the Tibetan Library. Whilst in the area I visited Delek Hospital and got to know some Tibetan families around McLeod Ganj.

Back in Australia I was excited to attend personal teachings by His Holiness in Melbourne and Sydney. Also, I spent time at Chenrezig Institute and Vhadrahara Gumpa continuing my theory and practice of Buddhism. At this time, I started to sponsor 2 monks who were refugees from Tibet and now studying at Sera Je Monastery in India; and a nun at Jamyang Choling Nunnery. During my visit to Dharamsala I appreciated the great work done at Delek Hospital and with great compassion started on-going donations to the Tibetan Torture Survivors Clinic run at Delek Hospital. I am honoured to be able to support these worthy causes via the Tibetan Friendship Group and Nying-Jey Projects. I extend blessings and best wishes to all!
Julia Harrington aka Geneth.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

His Holiness celebrated his 87th birthday on 6th July and we at TFG wish him good health so that he may continue to inspire not only Tibetans but people from of all walks of life throughout the world. We at TFG are extremely proud and honoured to have him as our patron.

Each year the Tibetan diaspora in Australia celebrates His Holiness's birthday. Tibetans in traditional dress hold gatherings with speeches, dancing and Tibetan food. Below are photos from the recent celebrations on the Northern Beaches of Sydney, taken by a TFG committee member.



SETTLEMENT NEWS

DELEK HOSPITAL

Delek Hospital continues to serve the community, especially the poor and destitute who receive free health care. The majority of the hospital's funding is provided by donations from dedicated supporters and contributors worldwide. We at TFG are grateful to have some very generous supporters of Delek. You do make a difference!



JAMYANG CHOLING INSITUTE (NUNNERY)

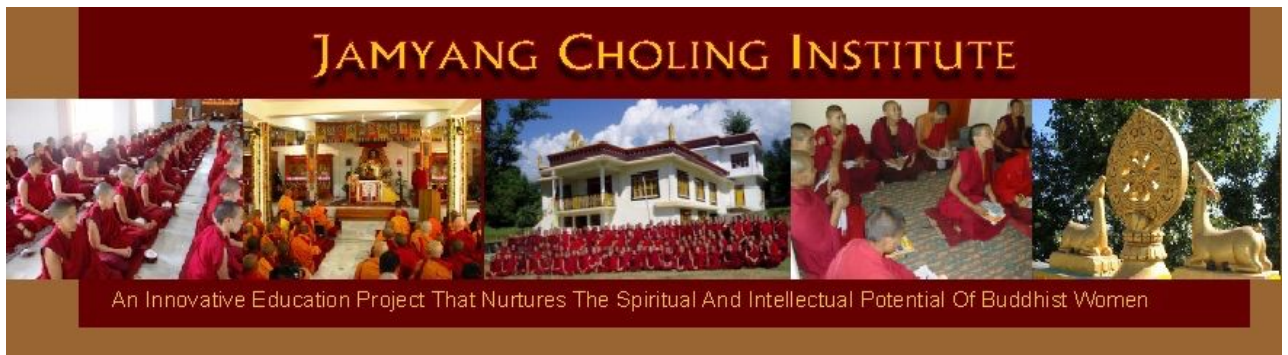


Photo left shows nuns with their yellow hats – a symbol of the Gelug tradition

Jamyang Choling Insitute was founded in Dharamsala, India in 1988. It is a 15-year comprehensive education program for women, blessed by HH The Dalai Lama, which enables students to become teachers and spiritual mentors in their communities. Students' ages range from 15 to 40 years. TFG currently has a sponsor for 1 nun, and a regular donor to the Institute. Funding provides education, food, shelter and clothing to the nuns who come from diverse Himalayan regions areas, Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and India.

LHA CHARITABLE TRUST

Lha is a unique organisation providing a huge range of services to Tibetan and local people from the Himalayan region since 1997. These include language programs, cultural exchange programs computer and yoga classes and much more. as well as facilitating an easy transition for the Tibetan refugee community. Many volunteers work with Lha enabling them to offer a great variety of programs. Lha is funded by several organisations and by donations.

Areas of Focus



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Preservation and Promotion of Tibetan Language and Culture



Under the umbrella project of preservation and promotion of Tibetan language and culture, Lha has been running and managing a bi-lingual website (samdhongrinpoche.com) on the valuable writings, speeches and teachings of His Eminence the Professor Samdhong Rinpoche. Up till now Lha has added 952 of Rinpoche's teachings on wide range of topics including Buddhist philosophy, Tibetan politics and environmental issues to the website. Lha also manages a YouTube channel and a Sound Cloud profile dedicated to Rinpoche's teachings, speeches and interviews through which numerous videos and audio files have been made accessible to the general public. Lha has added 341 videos on the *YouTube* channel and 1,112 audio files on the *SoundCloud*.

PURUWALA (SAKYA TIBETAN SOCIETY)

Tenzin Kunga the Settlement Secretary has recently written that “it is now summer time in Puruwala and very hot, everyone is waiting for rain to come, especially those with no electricity.” He has also provided an update on two important parts of the Settlement, the Health Centre and the Sambhota Tibetan primary school.

The Tibetan Primary School was established in 1969 with generous funding by the Swiss Aid to Tibetan organisations and ongoing grants from the Central Tibet Administration. It follows a National Curriculum for pre and primary students and academically has been achieving very good results both in scholastic and co-curriculum areas. The school today has all the basic facilities including classrooms, a library, computer labs, playground etc. Students study subjects such as Tibetan, Maths, Science, Social Science, English, and Arts and Crafts. There are also various co-curriculum activities like games and sport, music and dance, calligraphy and literary activities.



HEALTH CENTRE PURUWALA

The Health Centre for which in the past several TFG Australian sponsors have generously provided funds, is staffed by a general physician. It is attended not only by Tibetan patients but also anyone in the area requiring medical attention. Each day about 20 -30 people attend the centre and sometimes there are more than that number. At certain times a free medical camp is made available and is attended by approximately 200 very needy patients. The centre opens six day a week from 9am-5pm.

SAMBHOTA TIBETAN SCHOOL SOCIETY (STSS)



CHILDREN IN THEIR YOGA CLASS

Sambhota Tibetan School Society, and The Department of Education, manage schools in Northern India. Many of the students come from very remote villages to centrally-based schools to study.

A message from Tenzin Norphel, Sponsorship Coordinator: “After 2 years of uncertainty, our schools are currently functioning at their full capacity and the children and teachers are glad to attend classes in their respective classrooms after a long time. Students are giddy with excitement as they get to meet their friends and classmates. The grim and gloomy situations seem to be behind us for now as things are rapidly moving back to normalcy.

Currently, it is summer here, days are scorching hot but nights are bearable. During summer people here at Dharamsala prefer swimming and picnicking. How is the weather at your end?

Finally, STSS remains steadfast in our goal to provide free basic education to all our children here in exile in India. Also, STSS looks forward to furthering our cooperation in support of our shared goals. STSS is forever grateful and appreciates your indelible contribution in the sphere of education.”

TIBETAN CHILDREN'S VILLAGE (TCV)

The Mission of Tibetan Children's Villages (TCV) – an integrated charitable organisation – is to ensure that all Tibetan children under its care receive a sound education, a firm cultural identity and become self-reliant and contributing members of the Tibetan community and the world at large.



Very sadly TCV lost a beloved teacher very recently. Below is an extract from his obituary from TCV.

AN OBITUARY: GEN PHUNTSOK NAMGYAL LA (1955 - 2022)

“Gen Phuntsok Namgyal La joined TCV Upper as teacher in 1975, a fresh college graduate when the TCV was in very urgent need of educated Tibetans to teach Tibetan students in exile.

In those early years, life was tough for everyone but as time goes by Tibetans schools were established and communities start to grow up as and Tibetans start to move west but Gen la remained dedicated to cause of Tibetan Children's education and well-being till his last breath.

Gen La's sudden and untimely passing away on 19 June 2022 is a big loss to the TCV and Tibetan community at large. Gen worked his whole life in TCV right from young age after his college education and till his last breath. Gen la put his whole life in the service of TCV and Tibetan Children's Education and welfare and served over 48 years in the TCV for the betterment and the well-being of Tibetan Children's village and school.

We, the TCV - children, staff and alumni mourn the demise of our great colleague, a teacher, mentor, leader - Gen Phuntsok Namgyal La for his journey from this life to new life...

OmMaNiPedMeHum OmMaNiPedMeHum OmMaNiPedMeHum

Our deepest condolences to his immediate family, wife and daughter, relatives and friends. TCV as a whole family will always miss your service, love, wonderful deeds and life-long company.”



GEN LA WITH TCV CHILDREN

TIBETAN HOMES FOUNDATION



STUDENTS RECEIVING THEIR CERTIFICATES

THF is a charitable Institute set up to care for orphans, semi-orphans and destitute Tibetan children in exile. The aim is to provide a caring home environment as well as give children a good education and preserve Tibetan language, cultural values and tradition. More sponsors are always needed for this very special organisation!

YONGLING CRECHE AND KINDERGARTEN

The photo below shows the children on graduation day at Yongling. These children look so beautiful in their graduation outfits and little mortarboards!



TIBETAN INSTITUTE OF PERFORMING ARTS (TIPA)

The 25th Tibetan Shoton Festival kicked off on 6th April this year at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) in Dharamsala, from 6 – 13 April. The week-long Festival is a celebration of Tibetan opera.

Following the reception of special guests including Sikyong Penpa Steering, the second democratically elected Sikyong of the Central Tibet Administration, TIPA's acting director introduced the origin of Shoton Festival and its subsequent developments to the Tibetan residents of Dharamsala and troupes amassed at the venue. Besides the Communist Party of China's attempts to wipe out Tibetan identity, he said, "under the dynamic leadership of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama over the last 63 years, we have managed to preserve this tradition of opera in its truest form."

In his remarks, Sikyong Penpa Tsering briefly recounted the story of yogi than tong Gallop, the founder of Tibetan opera (Ache Lama) who is well known for his social works in the 14th century, saying his benevolence should be echoed over simply enjoying the performances. He further elucidated His Holiness the Dalai Lama's contribution to the preservation of Tibetan opera while calling for innovations in narrating opera stories to younger generations to inherit. Emphasising the preservation of Tibetan opera and every other Tibetan tradition in general, Sikyong ensured facilitation from CTA and, at the same time, appealed Tibetans to contribute to the preservation and promotion of Tibetan cultures. The eight Tibetan troupes performed their respective stories of opera in the following days of the Festival.

ONE OF THE TROUPES PERFORMING THEIR OPERA.



TILOKPUR NUNNERIES

The photo on the right shows a young nun from Tilokpur Nunnery washing her clothing.

Vinaya texts insist that robes should be clean at all times and should be dried in the open air. This, of course, is a challenge during the monsoon!

The cloth and sewing pattern of monastic robes has ancient symbolism. Like the wandering holy men at the time of the Buddha, the first monastics wore a robe stitched together from rags. The Buddha instructed the first monks and nuns to make their robes of “pure” cloth, meaning cloth that no one wanted. They scavenged in rubbish heaps and cremation grounds for discarded cloth and cut away any unusable bits before stitching the pieces together to form three rectangular sections of cloth. The humble nature of the cloth itself represented detachment from the physical world in pursuit of enlightenment.



Tilokpur nuns

The nuns at Tilokpur continue with their daily practices and study as well as taking part in the many celebrations of the Tibetan calendar year

Sadly, one of TFG’s sponsored nuns passed away earlier this year. Her sponsor kindly agreed to sponsor another young nun for which we are very grateful.

TIBETAN REFUGEE SELF-HELP CENTRE (TRSHC)

Elderly Tibetans need sponsors too!

Those elders who are able, continue to produce handicrafts, the main source of income for the centre. (see photo on the right)

Life is fortunately not only work and study and the Centre has tried its best to provide a wide variety of recreations and entertainment. These include a recreation room with indoor games, cable TV and video shows. Cultural programmes are organised and performed by the Centre's people themselves. The staff, workers and students of the Centre have formed a Sports Club, which provides an opportunity to learn different games and participate in local tournaments. The club has its own artists who stage different historical dramas and traditional cultural shows for the entertainment of the Centre people as well as the general public, thus raising funds for the maintenance of the club. These events never fail to draw a big crowd including many foreign tourists.



Can You Help?

Kalsang Dawa⁺ is 86 years of age. He was born in Lhasa and became a Buddhist monk when he was very young. Kalsang fled Tibet after the occupation of his homeland, arriving in India in 1959. In order to earn a living, he joined the army and served for many years. At retirement Kalsang joined TRSCH and commenced spinning wool for the Centre. In recent years, Kalsang has been unable to work as he now has Alzheimer's disease and very poor vision. Sponsorship will help Kalsang access the health and support services he needs.

Sonam Paldon⁺ is 88 years of age and one of the oldest workers at TRSHC. Sonam fled Tibet in 1962. As soon as she arrived in India, Sonam joined TRSHC with her husband and commenced wool spinning in the Centre. Sonam continues to do this work as much as possible in spite of her deteriorating vision. She is well known in the Centre for being friendly and helpful to others. Sponsorship will assist Sonam to obtain food, clothing and access health and welfare services.

+ names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

If you would like to sponsor Kalsang or Dawa for \$25 per month please email Cathy, TRSHC Settlement Secretary: cathytfgaustralia@gmail.com Sponsors will be provided with further information about Kalsang and Sonam as well as an annual update and photograph.



AN APPEAL FOR MORE SPONSORS

Our TFG settlements in India are always in desperate need of more sponsors for nuns, children and elderly Tibetans. If you have family or friends who are interested please ask them to contact us. Here are ways you can help.

One Time Donation

Make a “once off” donation to a TFG program in need of funds.

Regular Donations

Make a regular monthly, quarterly or yearly donation to a TFG program of your choice.

Sponsorships

Sponsor an older person or nun for \$25 per month or a school student for \$30 a month.

A Donation in Celebration

Celebrate a special occasion by making a donation or ask family and friends to make a donation on your birthday rather than buy a gift.

A Donation in Memory

Make a donation in memory of a loved one. TFG can send a card acknowledging your gift to their partner or family.

Bequest

Leave a gift to TFG in your will. Your generosity will enable us to continue our programs in the future.



From all of us at TFG we thank you for your support!

CONTACT DETAILS

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EMAIL: tfgpresident@gmail.com
WEBSITE: www.tfg.org.au

PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR DONATIONS

CHEQUE: PAYABLE TO TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP AUSTRALIA (INC)
DIRECT DEPOSIT: CBA BSB: 062 173 ACCOUNT NO: 2802 0635
PAYPAL: VIA WEBSITE



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