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Tibetan Friendship Group Australia (Inc.)

Patrons: His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Joan M Wilson OAM

TFG CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2021

Tashi Delek and Merry Christmas to all the sponsors and friends of TFG



TFG NEWS

After another difficult Covid year TFG is healthy and thriving despite physical distancing! Meetings have been held by video conference and in October we held the AGM. Fortunately, all positions were filled and the current committee remains the same for 2021.

We are a small group of dedicated volunteers and we welcome your input and any offers of help. TFG was most fortunate this year to receive several donations of Tibetan goods including one large donation which includes beautiful photos of Tibet and Tibetans and several wonderful thangkas (religious paintings). We hope to have a market stall next year to raise funds and will keep you informed of details. If anyone has contributions for the stall, they would be most welcome! We hope you enjoy our TFG newsletters where we try to keep you informed of any news from the Settlements in India. If anyone has any queries about their current sponsorship please contact your Settlement Secretary. (Each Settlement in India has a Settlement Secretary) If you would like to

become a sponsor or make a donation please contact us via the TFG website or by email to: tfgpresident@gmail.com.

COVID NEWS

In the latest update from the CTA (Central Tibetan Administration) they report that the situation with regard to Covid infections amongst the Tibetan population is improving. Most of the current infections are reported from the southern state of Kerala. In India 94.7% of Tibetans over 18 are partially or fully vaccinated and in Nepal at least 83% of Tibetans are fully or partially vaccinated.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2021 has seen TFG continue to operate and support Tibetans in need. Albeit challenging, especially with further Covid cases and lock downs, we have continued to work together remotely to continue the great work that TFG does.

In 2021 we have continued to connect with our sponsors and supporters through our newsletters which we send through the website which gives each sponsor and supporter a personalised email with their name. The newsletters are a great way for everyone to keep up to date with the work TFG does and provides an update on the settlements.

We continue to hold our meetings via zoom which is helpful for us to remain in contact and continue our work even though we are not in the same room.

We are very grateful for the continuous support of our sponsors and supporters and wish you and your families a very enjoyable Festive Season and health and happiness for 2022.

FINANCES

A Total of \$19,244.00 was transferred to the Settlements for the period July 2020 to June 2021. Below is a breakdown of funds sent to TFG Settlements in India

DELEK HOSPITAL	\$1600.00
PURUWALA	\$5900.00
SAMBHOTA	\$3020.00
TIBETAN CHILDRENS VILLAGE	\$2260.00
TIBETAN HOMES FOUNDATION	\$1200.00
TIBETAN INSTITUTE OF PERFORMING ARTS	\$ 760.00
TIBETAN REFUGEE SELF-HELP CENTRE	\$1570.00
TILOKPUR NUNNERIES	\$2934.00



TFG PEOPLE

SUSAN GIBB – LONG TERM SPONSOR FOR TFG



SUSAN GIBB TFG SPONSOR

I have been a sponsor of Puruwala Village for over 15 years. It has been such a rewarding experience helping with child sponsorship and projects which have helped the Puruwala community.

I heard about child sponsorship at a Tibetan Friendship Group function. I am passionate about education so when I learned that some of the children didn't have the opportunity to go to high-school I knew I wanted to help.

I love receiving their letters, reading about their progress and especially how happy they are at school. We share news and photographs of our families, special events and celebrations. They enjoy learning about Australia and the Central Coast of NSW where I live.

Thanks to the Tibetan Friendship Group, the Puruwala families have now become a part of my family.

PAM KAMULA TFG VOLUNTEER

Pam has volunteered with TFG since 2016, initially as Settlement Secretary for Tilokpur Nunneries and subsequently she also took on the role of TFG Secretary. In 2020 Pam moved to a country property near Bellingen but so far has been able to continue with her roles. Here she is pictured with her kelpie pup Pippin.

Pam says: The Himalayan region has always attracted me and I had dreams of visiting Tibet in particular. In 2004 that dream came true and I was so fortunate to travel there and subsequently on other occasions. My first glimpse of the Potala was so special I had tears in my eyes! On returning to Sydney I attended the Vajrayana Buddhist Centre in Ashfield and studied Buddhism. There I saw a flyer for a free course at Brookvale TAFE to become a mentor to newly arrived Tibetans in Dee Why. I knew at once that I would like to do that and I had retired so I had the time. What a rewarding experience! The two families I mentored have become like family to me. As an added benefit I was able to attend many Tibetan Community and private celebrations. I also became part of a small group of mentors, who, with the help of the Tibetan Community wrote and published a Tibetan Cookbook: Food and Tales of Tibet. In that group was a young Tibetan man, Tashi Dorjee who became President of TFG and it was Tashi who asked me to volunteer for TFG. It has been a very rewarding experience to be part of a dedicated team and to know that many Tibetan refugees in India benefit from our efforts.



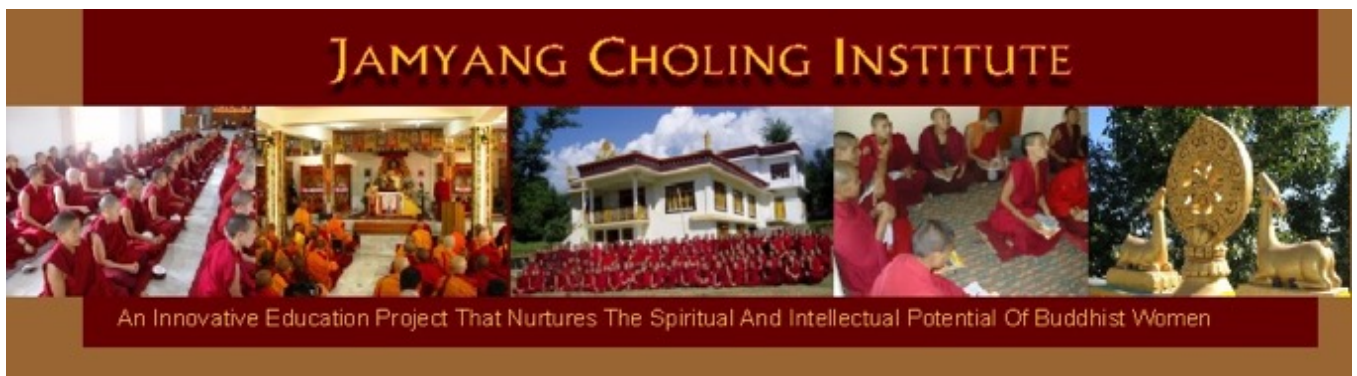
SETTLEMENT NEWS

DELEK HOSPITAL

Delek Hospital in Dharamsala has been at the forefront of Covid vaccinations for Tibetans in the Dharamsala area. They have a small dedicated staff. TFG has received several generous donations to this very worthwhile cause. Our sincere thanks to our long-term supporters.



JAMYANG CHOLING INSITUTE (NUNNERY)



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 donation 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. In 2021 all students were successful in their annual exams. Because of the pandemic, holidays were cancelled and students worked very hard doing inside and outside maintenance. All students have now been fully vaccinated, and as of September there were zero COVID cases in the college.

LETTER OF APPRECIATION FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF JAMYANG CHOLING

Tashi Delek! We are very happy to share with you that we have zero cases of Covid-19 at Our Nunnery at present! I hope this letter finds you in best health despite the current crisis. Jamyang Choling Nunnery wholeheartedly appreciate your kind and wonderful support towards our nunnery which has benefited our nuns for the attainment of a quality education. Currently in India we are still under partial lockdown, but with minimal restrictions. Thankfully we have been able to continue most of our daily practices due to social distancing measures and increased sanitation.

Jamyang Choling is indebted and thankful to you for your kind sponsorship contribution towards our nunnery and we hope and pray that your love and care will continue to further shape our nun's future with the beautiful gift of knowledge and education. Once again, we wish you all very good health and lots of happiness and peace.

Warmest regards

Tenzin Chodon, General Secretary

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.



One of Lha's recent programs is called Livelihood Training. It began in 2019 aiming to support and improve employability capacities in the Tibetan community. Some students from 2021 have already started their own small business in order to become independent. To date over 170 students have participated. In the photo are students from the recent cookery course.

PURUWALA (SAKYA TIBETAN SOCIETY)

Visit by Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration

In late November the Sikyong left Dharamsala for an official visit to Delhi and various Tibetan Settlements in Himachal Pradesh including Puruwala which he visited on the morning of Saturday 4th December on the second leg of his tour.

Tenzin Kunga the main TFG contact at Puruwala says Sikyong was welcomed with great love. He inaugurated the new outdoor gym project as well as touring the Saya Chime Public Health Care Centre, the Settlement office, Sambhota Tibetan School and Sakya monastery. The visit included interaction with residents and both students and staff at the school. It concluded with an address in which Sikyong spoke about the current situation in Tibet. Unfortunately, many were not at Puruwala for the visit as they were away selling their wares to support their families. However, it was enjoyed by everyone in attendance and much appreciated not only by those at Puruwala but by all at the Settlements and Tibetan organisations Sikyong is visiting.



The Sikyong inaugurating the outdoor gym at Puruwala. Views of the Settlement below.



SAMBHOTA TIBETAN SCHOOL SOCIETY (STSS)

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.

TFG has currently 10 sponsors, whose regular donations enable the children, often from poor families, to receive an education. The families and students are very grateful for this opportunity.

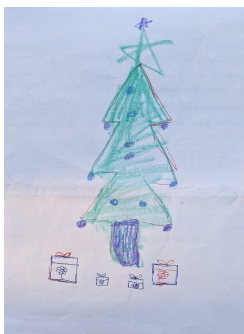
In 2021, due to the pandemic, most children attended online classes.

The children usually write regular letters to their sponsors, which creates a unique relationship, which often continues for many years. Below are two Christmas cards from younger children to their sponsors.



Report from Tenzin Norphel, Sponsorship coordinator STSS

Currently in India the situation is under control and the new cases are stagnant and fewer compared to a few months ago. Most adults above the age of 18 are fully vaccinated and the Indian Government is gearing up to vaccinate the minor children as well. Similarly, by the grace of His Holiness there were no positive cases as of 3 days at our schools. Class V1 and above are attending the classes physically while class 1-V are still attending classes on-line from their respective homes. Our office runs as usual and we attend STSS Head Office physically except for the weekend holidays. All of our teachers and staff members are fully vaccinated



TIBETAN CHILDREN'S VILLAGE (TCV)

In October this year TCV celebrated the 61st anniversary of its founding day. The President, Mr Thupten Dorjee was the chief guest. The day commenced with an incense burning ceremony (Sangsol) followed by official functions. The children presented traditional songs and dances and four of the senior students recited poems of gratitude to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.



The school is located near Dharamsala with beautiful views of the surrounding mountains.

Here is a lovely poem written by one of the children:

A LIFE OF A TREE

*Since the days when it's in its delicacy
It stands for its life that is dubious
Beholding the soil beneath its root
Facing every natural adversity that passes by*

*With the gradual changes in its stance
No wonder how self-reliant it might be
With no case of harm to its surrounding
But only the optimum effects are from its changes*

*Right from the day it was sowed on this earth
It started to be itself by spreading the
Roots for its spontaneity. The virtue of its
Beauty started to hit the world of nature
But no one sensed, other than itself of its presence*

TIBETAN HOMES FOUNDATION

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!



A reading corner set up to encourage the children to develop a love of books

TIBETAN INSTITUTE OF PERFORMING ARTS (TIPA)

NEW DIRECTOR FOR TIPA

In April of this year Ngawang Choepel was appointed as the new Director of TIPA. Ngawang spent seven years in a Chinese prison under unproven charges of espionage while filming his documentary “Tibet in Song”. International pressure led to his early release and in 2009 his film won the Special Jury Award in the World Documentary Competition. Ngawang received international acclaim and won numerous awards for his film and is now working on a new documentary on the most important Tibetan monastery, Ganden Monastery. Ngawang is an extremely well qualified appointee who himself is a graduate of TIPA with years of music teaching experience in Tibetan schools and also specialisations in film studies and international music from a US college. Ngawang laid out his broader plans for TIPA among which he stressed the timely need for promotion of Tibetan cultural arts inside Tibet and its revival in exile. He spoke of a strong commitment to gradually discarding the influence of western musical instruments, songs and dance etc.

YARKYI FESTIVAL

TIPA celebrated its 62nd anniversary on 11th August by hosting the Yarkyi Festival founded on 11th August 1959 in Kalimpong. The festival promotes Tibetan culture and raises awareness of Tibet’s rich musical legacy. It takes place every year and commemorates TIPA’s founding anniversary. It is an internal tournament between Ngonpa and Gyalu Residences with artists from both houses competing. The residences are named after two well-known Tibetan opera and dance characters. The Festival this year was more popular than ever with approximately 24,000 people watching it live on face book, u tube and tibetnet.



Here are photos of the artists performing at the Festival and members of the winning house celebrating their victory!



TILOKPUR NUNNERIES

Normally in November the annual inter-nunnery debate called the Gang Gonchoe is held. This is a large gathering as hundreds of nuns from about eight Tibetan Buddhist Nunneries including Tilokpur Nunnery meet for a month of intensive training. Sadly, it was cancelled again in 2021 due to the Covid pandemic. However, the nuns continue to practice within their own nunneries.



TIBETAN REFUGEE SELF-HELP CENTRE (TRSHC)

2021 has been a challenging year at the Tibetan Refugee Self-Help Centre (TRSHC) in Darjeeling. The second COVID-19 wave in India resulted in a strict lockdown at the Centre for many months. Fortunately, the majority of the children and older people at TRSCH remained healthy. All of the elderly residents were vaccinated by mid-2021 and the children at the Centre commenced studying online. Sadly, two of the elderly residents sponsored by TFG passed in 2021 and a third resident sponsored by TFG has left TRSCH to live with family and friends. However, the need for support from TFG continues. TRSHC has advised TFG of the need for sponsors for some elderly residents including Kalsang Dawa and Sonam Paldon.



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 TRSCH 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.



From all of us at TFG we thank you for your support and wish you and your families health and happiness during the Festive Season and for the year to come in 2022

CONTACT DETAILS

MAIL: TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP GROUP AUSTRALIA (INC)
PO BOX 1347, DEE WHY, NSW 2099
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

