



## 21st Meeting

### FreeSchools World Literacy Australia

DATE commencing: Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2009 TIME: 9 am

DATE completion: Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2009 TIME: 9 pm

INTERNET VENUE: FreeSchools Literacy Australia email network  
[fswl-australia@googlegroups.com](mailto:fswl-australia@googlegroups.com)

### Minutes of the Meeting

1. Rollcall of members and others present and apologies.

There were 17 participants in attendance

Robert Coenraads (President)  
Ben Bowler (Vice-President)  
Ian Esmore (Public Officer)  
Delphine Swadling (Secretary)  
Merindi Belarski (Treasurer)  
Betty Lyon (Committee Member)  
Melissa Aldis (Committee Member)  
Kathleen Swadling (Committee Member)  
Paul Garrioch  
Julian Martin  
Chelsea McLean  
Saskia Raevouri  
Fiona Reeves  
Sue Tennant  
Jo Townsend  
Judy Townsend  
Vern Verass

2. Acceptance of the Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the Twentieth meeting were sent to each member of the committee and were accepted by the committee  
Moved by Ian Esmore and Seconded by Robert Coenraads

3. Reports from the Committee.

The Committee received the President's Report

#### PRESIDENTS REPORT

A formal welcome to you all for our 21st Monthly Meeting, Thank you all very much for your continued enthusiasm and support of our growing project.

In accordance with the usual formality, could you please acknowledge yourselves as present for this meeting.

I also attach the Minutes of the 20th meeting for your perusal and acceptance at this meeting.

Please have a careful look over the proposed Wikipedia Entry for FreeSchools World Literacy (included as an Appendix in the attached Minutes) as I would like to get it up and running in the near future. Having such a Wikipedia entry means that this entry (containing direct links to our own website ) is assured to come up near the top of the search results list whenever anyone does a google search on FreeSchools World Literacy.

One of our Committee was asking me recently what Ben and Jildou were up to recently - and it is certainly a great deal, so please take a look at their website which is a photo essay of their activities. <http://www.benandjildou.blogspot.com/>

➤

Here is an update of the FreeSchools bank account for May 2009

12 May Deposit Melissa Alldis	\$ 220
18 May Donation Belarski Family	\$ 15
22 May Deposit, The Junction Newcastle	\$ 1223
27 May Donation Swadling family	\$ 15
29 May Closing balance	\$10,018.15

I will be sending the majority of this balance, which was especially raised and earmarked for Thailand (\$8,719.60) as soon as I have final confirmation of the Mirror Foundation banking details from Paul Garrioch

A formal apology to you all for cancellation of the scheduled July Monthly Meeting. I would like to cancel this weekend's meeting which would have been scheduled as the first weekend of July 2009, as I am currently away on assignment in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia.

Thank you all very much for your continued enthusiasm and support of our growing project and especially to Vern for the terrific endeavour he has undertaken in assisting with the web site development.

Dr. Robert Coenraads  
President,  
FreeSchools World Literacy – Australia

#### 4. Progress in Thailand

**Robert:** I was planning on sending the FreeSchools donations raised for Thailand directly into your Mirror bank account. Sue has provided me with your banking details as follows:

Account Name: Mr Weera Yoram or Ms Prapai Kedsara or Ms Parisudha Sudhamongkala.

Krung Thai Bank Public Company Limited

Branch: Ha Yek Por Khun Meng Rai

Account No: 539-0-18387-8, Swift Code: KRTHTHBK Telephone No. at bank: +66(0)53717740-3

Mirror Foundation,  
106 Moo 1 Baan Huay Khom,  
T. Mae Yao, A. Muang,  
Chiang Rai 57100,  
Kingdom of Thailand

Please confirm that these details are correct and I will carry out the transfer of funds.

Yes, I also have the same concerns about creating something with concerted and dedicated effort, and then not being able to service it indefinitely into the future. FSWL's survival originally hinged on a handful of individuals (in 2000) but now it is gathering momentum and permanence, so now in 2009 I no longer have that concern about the organization itself. During that time we have been sending our very modest funds raised in Australia entirely to India (on the philosophy that the greatest number of individual children are being helped for our charity dollar) The funds raised through the tremendous efforts of Judy, Jo, Linda and others for the Thailand project are significantly larger than the regular amount that we raise annually in Australia and send to India. I, therefore, do urge caution as I cannot answer any of your specific questions about the regularity of such funds on an ongoing basis. We are not strong enough at the present time to be able to manage a regular monthly budget. I was led to believe that the funds were raised with the one-off development of a specific school in mind, and so it might be appropriate if Judy, Jo and Linda also make comment here. You must be careful, however, not to create a rod for your own back so to speak with potentially unsupportable ongoing expenses. If you create this school, how many students would it hold and what would be its annual running cost?

**Paul:** OK - bank account is correct. Can I check if this is correct:

- Sue has recently sent us enough money to last 3 months? Or 4?
- Robert is soon to send us AU\$7496 which equals around 180 000 Baht.
- Sue would like her contributions from Canada to be CAD\$2000 per month which would equal about 56 000 Baht per month.
- We are currently using 72 000 Baht per month.
- So there is a short fall of 16 000 Baht.

And so the Australian money (180 000 Baht) if divided by 16 000 Baht should last us 11 months once we start using it.

Is that all correct and making sense? Did I get anything wrong?

If it is all correct, I think things are looking good at the moment. So thank you everyone. I have also had an idea to promote FreeSchools in Australia some more - I'll let you know if my idea leads anywhere.

Note: One error in here - we are actually using 82 000 Baht not 72 000 Baht as I stated. (Because I used the figure from that last report that wasn't counting 2 schools).

**Robert:** On Thursday I sent an overseas telegraphic transfer to the Mirror Foundation for \$8,749.60 earmarked for Thailand using the details provided. (I sent the amount of \$7496.60 discussed below plus a more recent donation of \$1223.75 and another of \$29.25). This should more than cover the shortfall mentioned below.

Australian Dollar Amount	\$8,749.60
Thai Baht Amount	223,919.33

This is another milestone for FreeSchools World Literacy, being the largest single donation amount ever sent from Australia. It represents the dedicated work of the Newcastle volunteer group (Judy, Joanna and Linda and their friends and family), and the kindness in the hearts of the people (both adults and Australian school children) that they touched when describing our simple cost effective FreeSchools program being run by the Mirror Foundation in Thailand.

Under the Mirror Foundation's stewardship, these funds will be administered to support the greatest number of poor children for the greatest good, including those children in the school that Judy, Jo and Linda intended to support. And, yes, now we do have a responsibility to meet

an ongoing budget for those schools. A hearty congratulations for all involved in making this a reality.

**Jo:** Wow! Makes me want to go and find another big event to do ....

I'm planning a Ladies Day of Indulgence on a Saturday in October, with 80 guests. It's a cheeky way of drawing attention to girls and education. More to come when venue is booked.

**Chelsea:** I hope all is well with you and I have been monitoring FSWL Australia via the Google Groups email. It seems like things are moving forward especially with the active support of people like Judy and Jo Townsend. Haven't they been wonderful? I have been busy juggling work and mum-hood and have not been as proactive as I wished helping you. I am helping Jo gather some prizes for her October fundraising event in Sydney at the moment. I would really like to continue sponsoring a student and wondered if I can renew my scholarship for Rufus in India? Or is it easier if I just to make a donation to FSWL Australia? Either way, I have been meaning to get in touch for a long while now as I am keen to make another financial contribution.

**Robert:** It's nice to hear from you again, and I am glad that you are enjoying being a mum – one of the most important of life's duties and pleasures. Yes, you can continue to renew your scholarship for Rufus on an annual basis. Just send a cheque made out to FreeSchools World Literacy (send to 8 Trigalana Place, Frenchs Forest NSW 2086) or deposit the donation directly into the FreeSchools bank account.

Bank: Westpac

Account name: FreeSchools World Literacy Inc.

Account BSB: 032 196

Account Number: 266 690.

In her recent letter, Sister Crescence gave us a bit of an update on Rufus' progress:

*Update on Rufus and Mihir: Both passed in their annual exams. They are changing their school - from Hindi medium school, they are taking admission in an English Medium school, which is run by Holy Cross Sisters.*

Thank you for keeping an eye out on us.

## 5. Progress in India

**Sue:** Geri Johnson (in Singapore) persistently pursued the opportunity to nominate Sr. Crescence for the Guru Nanak Interfaith Prize. If anything monetary comes from it, she deserves the credit. Putting the letter together was a group effort and it has now been submitted. I'm sharing it with you so that you might know more about Sr. Crescence and her work.

**Robert:** An excellent effort, Sue, well done! It is clear from that description that Sister Crescence's tireless work deserves some form of recognition from a wider group than just us. Regardless of the Guru Nanak Prize, you have just created an overview of Sister Crescence that is now suitable for listing on Wikipedia. Now, onto another two-pager for Reverend Ashish Amos!!!

## 6. General Business.

The following discussion took place during the meeting and is recorded here:

**Julian:** Thank you again Robert. FreeSchools World Literacy is a very interesting program. Your meeting minutes will be crucial as part of your approach to find other support partners like Opportunity International.

**Robert:** Thank you for your interest, and enthusiasm for FreeSchools World Literacy concept. I will drop the information package at your office at a time appropriate for you on Tuesday.

**Julian:** I talked with David Bussau yesterday (15 June) about the program. He seemed quite interested and took a copy of the FreeSchools newsletter and flyer with him. He also thought there might be some ground to be made with 1) the Association of Christian Schools in Sydney for sponsorship and or promotions and 2) with Mr Mechai Viravaidya (Mr Condom) in Thailand who sits on the board of the MILK which is apparently an NGO working with children in Northern Thailand. Thank you again for introducing me to FreeSchools.

**Robert:** Thanks for your input and valuable time (despite the approaching end of financial year) for the FreeSchools World Literacy project. Looking to catching up.

**Fiona Reeves:** I have been given your contact by Paul Garrioch at Mirror Art in Northern Thailand who we work closely with as our supplier in Thailand. We send volunteers and school group expeditions to Paul at Mirror and so have learnt about Free Schools and the recent Channel 9 coverage by Jo Townsend.

*Antipodeans Abroad is an educational travel company – we work with schools, universities and charities to operate personal development and leadership expeditions, volunteer placements and overseas fundraising events and so are wondering if this would be of interest to Free Schools. I have attached some preliminary information regarding the charity challenge program and concept and how it works. Put simply a group of 10 – 25 charity supporters take part in a challenge overseas – 10 day trek in Northern Thailand, trekking along the Great Wall of China, through the Himalayas etc..and raise sponsorship money. The funds raised cover all trip costs with the remainder going to the charity as a donation. Typically charities can raise anywhere in excess of \$100,000 from one challenge if the supporters are proactive enough.*

For Free Schools our Charity Trek Challenge in Northern Thailand, finishing up at Mirror Art would work very well and Paul seems to think Channel 9 would promote and cover the event providing more media coverage for Free Schools. We could also do the same in India – where do you operate in India?

What are your initial thoughts? Would it be suitable to set up a meeting so we could discuss further – I would be more than happy to come to Frenchs Forest or our office is in Chatswood if that's more convenient for you? I look forward to hearing from you soon.

**Robert:** Thank you for your email. I would be most interested in meeting with you to discuss FreeSchools World Literacy and how it could fit into your innovative program. In fact, I used to work with a company called Australian Academic Tours where I ran similarly guided study archaeology/geology/cultural eco-trips to Mexico, Easter Island etc.

It would be convenient to meet you at your Chatswood office as I work during the day in the city. I will call you, or you can contact me on 8216 0777, and we will arrange a suitable time.

**Fiona:** Firstly, thank you Robert for meeting with me this morning and taking the time to discuss the Charity Challenge concept as a way to raise funds for Free Schools Literacy. I felt it to be a very positive meeting and I am hopeful we can arrange a group to take part in a challenge in Thailand which would involve a trek in Northern Thailand along the Elephant Trail coupled with a community project at one of the Free School / Mirror schools. Judy and Linda – what are your thoughts on encouraging a small group to join a challenge for Free Schools?

- Paul – we can discuss the community project at the end of the trek and see what fits best. I am excited by the prospect of this working out and Free Schools potentially receiving as large a donation as perhaps \$50,000 from it.

- Robert – I'll work more closely on the challenge itinerary and inclusions and let's talk again soon about the next step.

**Robert:** Please read below about the meeting that I had with Fiona of “Antipodeans Abroad” which was arranged by Paul Garrioch of the Mirror Foundation. For some years now, Antipodeans Abroad have been bringing people in to Thailand as volunteers to work on Mirror projects. Usually this takes the form on some kind of exciting adventure trek followed by a stint of volunteer work (e.g. helping with a building, or teaching English to a class, or using some other of the Volunteer’s special skills etc).

This kind of experience is particularly inspiring for an individual. Judy, Jo and Linda can attest to the inspiration gained from their visit to Thailand, and this vibrancy and enthusiasm of theirs has gone on to lead to FreeSchools being able to dispatch \$8,749.60 in donations to where they are needed most. Fiona, herself, has spent much time working in both Thailand and India has been likewise inspired to be involved in charity work.

Can you imagine the lifetime of dual positive benefits that might flow from someone (for example, a wayward or somewhat disoriented youth trying to find their place and purpose in a somewhat difficult, cold and hollow western society such as ours) taking part in a stint of meaningful volunteer work. Particularly in terms of remodeling the individual themselves and creating a positive purpose and direction for their lives. The results of this flowing through a community would be immeasurable. I think that there are many people around that are desperate for such a new orientation and meaningful goal in their lives. The trick is hooking them up with the numerous needy causes such as FreeSchools that are indeed around.

I look forward to your comments exploring how this concept might help FreeSchools develop a regular funding base to expand its education network for the poor and needy, and further publicize FreeSchools mission.

**Fiona:** Thank you Robert – great email to read and has made me proud to be working in this area and with many of the incredible projects that I have come to know and respect through my work. Look forward to ongoing discussion with regards a Free Schools Charity Challenge.

**Fiona:** Hi Linda and Judy, Thanks for your lovely emails – Joanna please don’t rule out not being able to participate in the challenge because of your knees just yet – one of our Charity Challenge mottos is no limitations!

As an organisation our Charity Challenge program can manage all the logistics from designing the ultimate challenge itinerary to suit the supporter audience and cause – some of the biggest ticket items are trekking along the Great Wall of India, the Kokoda Trail, Everest Base Camp etc...challenges need to be physically demanding to allow supporters to work towards something and appeal for sponsorship. What we’ve found (two of us here worked in fundraising in the UK where the charity challenge concept is more advanced than in Australia) is that challenges should not be restricted to one market of keen fit travellers – it needs to be encouraged to all supporters – some of the most rewarding sights I have seen is watching those who never thought it possible complete a trek or cycle having known they’d raised a significant amount for their charity.

Of course for Free Schools to begin I would think it’s important to start in Northern Thailand but as I think you said Judy it’s a fundraising idea that has life and can be operated year after year in different destinations – North East India would be next on the list! We have a tried and tested trek along the Old Elephant Trail north of Chiang Mai that would be perfect – it’s 8 days and so can be cushioned afterwards by a 3-4 day community project at one of the Free School schools (classroom or toilet block renovation) – Paul is working on the logistics of that. The trek takes you through little visited and stunningly beautiful parts of Northern Thailand and we camp or stay in homestays along the way with a night in a traditional Mae Hong Son hotel at the beginning and the same in Chiang Mai at the end.

The cost to participants covers all trip logistics – international flights, transport, accommodation, food, Antipodeans Leader and Medic, local guides, all construction materials needed on for the community project, pre departure preparation and a large fundraising percentage. Typically from a trip like this the total cost would include a minimum of a \$2000 donation to the charity – with just a group of ten keen beans the charity can easily expect in excess of \$20,000.

Once the charity agrees it is a method of fundraising they are keen to explore we can work with them to promote to the supporter database (ie you...!) in the form of posters and promotional material followed by a launch information night and then working with those who sign up through the whole pre departure process of fitness sessions, fundraising workshops, vaccinations, insurance etc. Of course if Jo can also cover it through all forms of media that would be a huge help to get people on board in the form of participants or sponsorship whilst also of course increasing the profile of Free Schools Literacy.

It really is a win win situation and a challenge I would personally love to get off the ground and see work for Free Schools so let's make it happen.

The first step may be for me to put together the proposal for Robert and then start actively promoting a trip from that. Robert – with your approval we can start talking dates to get the skeleton of a potential trip in place – I would propose February or November (through until the following February) 2010. It may be more feasible to think of December or January (2011) top fit in with school holidays for Linda and Judy.

Look forward to ongoing discussions.

**Ben:** Robert thank you for the mention of Jildou's blog in a recent mail. I would like to take this chance to fill you in on what we have been doing here in Fang (see APPENDIX 2)

**Sue:** Hello dear Ben and Jildou, Thanks so much for your update. So happy for you that you are expecting a baby. Fantastic!

Thanks for the report on all the incredibly good work you are doing for the Shan and Hill Tribe people. It can't be easy working both sides of the border. All the projects you describe are wonderful but I know they are challenging and in need of financial support. Let's pray that's forthcoming.

God bless you both abundantly for your stellar demonstration of service to those in need. You two are an amazing force for good and I send all my love and prayers for success beyond your expectations. Love always,

**Robert:** You really are an inspiration to us all with all of those vital projects. Thank you from all of us for your tireless work, and Ben for your continued support of FreeSchools World Literacy as our Vice President. Congratulations to you both on your new up and coming arrival.

**Saskia:** Hello all you wonderful Aussies!  
I second everything you've said, Robert! What inspiring work Ben and Jildou are doing, and what an amazing child that will be!

Today -- on the spur of the moment -- I purchased a domain called [www.ServiceToHumanity.org](http://www.ServiceToHumanity.org) <<http://www.ServiceToHumanity.org>> . I couldn't believe it was available! This will give me a chance to publicize FreeSchools and our various trips to India without the Urantia connection (unavoidable on my SquareCircles site). It will provide a better platform to raise more money for related projects such as Sr. Crescence's dormitory for girls (Bridge Course) and Dr. John Lange's medical work. Also I can promote the work Ben and Jildou are doing in Thailand (I hope to turn Ben's report into one of the first articles!) as well as people like my Dutch cousins who are supporting schools in Africa. The possibilities are endless! More on that later and I will keep you all informed. Again, congratulations to Ben and Jildou!

**Saskia:** I completely neglected to mention what a SUPERLATIVE job you are all doing Down Under with your inspiring fundraising efforts! It illustrates perfectly the concept of the mustard seed, starting small and growing with a solid foundation. Of course I hope to include stories on that as well on my new site!

**Robert:** That domain name was a great score!!! Thank you so much for your support.

## **FSWL Charitable Status**

**Ian:** There appears to be no query re last years AGM and info sent to Justice Department. I spent 11 hours straight on FSWL paperwork last Sunday. Sent off final forms for ATO. Need to await response. Not totally sure whether we are legally required to be audited by an accountant. If that is the case I have an accountant who could assist (bona vida). We may even have to entertain a slight amendment to the association, rule on finances dissolution clause. Felt it best to forward all data and plead some ignorance (volunteerism and get their feedback and advice). Essentially the important thing to convey is that I feel all is OK and whilst appearing to be slow, is in the long term, not necessarily hindering the journey undertaken in grounding the FSWL mission in Australia.

## **FSWL Website and Communications**

**Sue:** Vern has come through for us with a great generosity of spirit. Aren't we fortunate! Right now I'm attending a social media conference for charities in Toronto. Today is the last day. I'm so woefully deficient in both the time and skills that require effective use of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and when I took on the "President's Blog" a few years ago, I had no understanding of the commitment involved. But most charities today have a vital Blog as a minimum and I believe that our new website has to focus on doing at least this well.

Until now, I didn't realize that a blog must come out every week (or two at the most) to be effective and that you can solicit writers from within or outside the organization to write about the following:

1. personal experiences (ie.fundraising events or visiting FreeSchools)
2. thanking donors who take initiative
3. expanding understanding of issues that impact the charity (ie. gender inequality, necessity of world literacy etc., using recent books, magazine and newspaper articles to promote awareness etc.). I do want to commit to a better Blog but it can only work if others commit too.

I also didn't realize that an effective Blog is meant to engage people in dialogue so that feedback (comments) are an essential aspect. Abusive comments can be refused but negative feedback invites a respectful response and can extend the opportunity for greater understanding. I have been thinking about possible writers and they include the following:

Robert and one or two other AU Board members  
Me and Dr. Heather Palmer (new Cnd. Board member)  
Brennan O'Connor  
Judy Townsend  
Joanna Townsend  
Saskia Raevouri  
John Tennant  
Dr. John Lange  
Geri Johnson  
Paul Garrioch  
Dr. Ashish Amos/Anu Amos

Bloggers from other sites interested in South East Asian literacy/gender bias issues, Hill Tribes, Burmese refugees, poverty/world literacy goals

The U.S. documentary film crew. Our next planning meeting is in October, the site visit is in January 2010 and filming in November 2010. There could be a lot of blog material (photos and reporting) arising from the planning and the execution of this documentary. But this also might be the time to introduce YouTube.

Before proceeding with a blog, the commitments for writing must be in place. The goal is to become an authority on our topic over time so that others want us to write Blogs for them and they reciprocate. We share audiences who may become supporters. It all spread the word to those who have an interest. A Blog is separate from a website but links to it. Please let me know what you think.



**Robert:** We can only ask and see if some of our Australian Committee might like to write about some of their experiences. Saskia has certainly done a good job in this regard, as you have, in documenting of your India visits and personal experiences in the field there. Could these be fed on as supplements? Could we also use some of the material from our minuted monthly meetings (eg Indian children's speeches, progress reports, thanking donors, issues affecting the charity etc).

I suppose that you have to be careful not to make a rod for your own back here, (I am not sure whether I would have the spare time to become involved in general dialogue on a weekly basis when there are so many other things to progress - amongst trying to fit in a day job!), but it is certainly something to think about. To me, the Wikipedia entry has more appeal as it is something that takes work up front to set up and then, once done, just sits there as a reference on who and what we are. It is on a very popular search engine so, hopefully, people who have something meaningful to contribute can still get into contact with us from there.

**Vern:** Attached is a proposed site map for your website. Let me know if you need any modifications before showing you individual page concepts.

A hosting company we can recommend offers hosting for US \$78 per year for 1GB of server space and 10 email accounts.

**Robert:** You're a good man, Vern. Thank you for spearheading this move into unchartered territory.

**Robert:** Ian, What do I need to do about this renewal message? Do we continue to register this Australian address now that Vern is working with Sue in building another website for the entire FreeSchools organization:

*Click'nGo! Domain Name Renewal Reminder Dear Robert Coenraads, Our records indicate that your domain name, freeschools.org.au, is due to expire on 2009-08-21. To avoid losing your domain name or any disruption to services attached to this domain name, we recommend you renew this at your earliest convenience. To renew your domain name please visit Click'nGo <<http://www.clickngo.com.au/domains.html>> . Kind Regards, Click'nGo!*

**Ian:** We need to keep the domain name functional and I will renew this in the near future. The .AU is important in the address. Whatever work Vern does with Sue is independent to this function. We should have our address on all public and letterhead material. On typing the address they will automatically enter the website hosted in Canada or where ever. Vern will know how to establish the link when the time is OK for his work to go live.

**Sue:** Please keep this domain name because you will need your own website for [www.freeschools.org](http://www.freeschools.org) <<http://www.freeschools.org/>> to link to. You need to manage your own site for attracting and communicating with an Australian audience. There will be a lot of content on your website that is pertinent only to the activities and goals of FSWL-AU. We will need the same situation for the US - one main website interlinked with two others that share the same design but custom content. At least this is how I understand it. Please let me know if there is a better solution.

**Sue:** When we go live with the new [www.freeschools.org](http://www.freeschools.org) <<http://www.freeschools.org/>> website, we have to link to pages (or separate websites) for both FreeSchools (Canada), FSWL-AU and FSWL-USA with content that includes contact information, Board of Directors information, local events and fundraising campaigns, how to donate, blogs and other local content.

USA will have the ongoing story to report of making the documentary film that may take the form of updates on a Blog. FYI, our next planning meeting with the documentary crew is in October and our site planning visit will take place in India this coming February with final filming in November 2010. While the plan is not yet confirmed, one of our new Board members hopes to

travel with us in February with her three children (9,8 and 6). One of the US Board members (Rajuc Lochan), who was born and raised in Bihar, will also travel with us to facilitate communication between FreeSchools children and Canadian kids. We should have some exciting film footage after that trip which can be posted on all sites.

So we need all this content on hand before you can start to build the site. I have to finish what I've started so that you can see everything you'll need to deal with. Robert Coenraads (or some other Board member) will have to create the content for Australia and for now, I will create the initial basic content for USA. Robert Burns (president) will soon be stepping down as president of the Fellowship and will soon have more time to devote to this.

Please bear in mind that each country has to be able to manage their own content. I am copying the two Roberts for their information. So realistically, I think we could begin in October. How does that work for you? Many thanks again for your incredible help with this, Vern.

**Robert:** Sounds like an exciting visit to India coming up next year. It will be a great experience for those children and one that I would dearly love to be able to give to my own children (Francheska and Leonora aged 11 and 9) one day. I am sure that they still don't realize just how privileged they are to live in a first world country. It is clearly evident that people's personal awareness is often only heightened by means of a personal visit.

Vern has been a godsend in being able to help us organize and coordinate and link our websites.

### **FSWL Newsletter and Publicity Materials**

**Robert:** Please find the blank Free School World Literacy Certificate of Appreciation for your use. It has been left blank for you to be able to insert the Schools details using calligraphy. If you would like the school's name inserted individually by Vern using the beautiful calligraphic fonts that he has on his computer, then please do not hesitate to contact him. Thanks again Vern. For the records, could you please advise me of the name of every school that has been involved in fundrasing and that you have awarded with one of our certificates.

**Sue:** Thank you so much for your recent contribution to FreeSchools. I found the design of the FreeSchools Certificate absolutely exquisite! I love the colour combinations and the reverse logo. It makes a dramatic impact and is so tasteful. The professionalism appeals to me so much that I don't think we could improve upon it for the masthead of our new Home Page for the new FreeSchools website. Would you be willing to let us use this design on all three websites (the main portal [www.freeschools.org](http://www.freeschools.org) <<http://www.freeschools.org/>> and the websites to which the option "Global Partner's" (Australia and USA) will link to? It would give us consistency and I think everyone would be thrilled to give you credit.

I am working every chance I get on the content which I hope to have ready by the end of this month - providing I have no more major interruptions. The depth and breadth of the content is substantial and It has been the monkey on my back for several months. Please let me know how you feel about sharing your design and thank you for your kind consideration.

**Judy:** What a wonderful idea. Somebody has been busy. Just a few notes on the Wikipedia Entry. It is Chiang Rai, not Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand (where we stayed with Paul and Mirror.) You refer to "camps" but I think it should say villages. I don't think there are any refugee camps serviced by FreeSchools. There is no red line coming up so maybe travelled is spelt

> traveled? It is traveller so I think it should be travelled. (Can you tell I am a teacher!) This is just a first glance. It is great for me because I learnt things about FreeSchools!

## **FSWL Fundraiser Events**

**Betty:** I thought I'd better touch base and report to "the boss".

The Franklin Primary School appears to be interested in the FreeSchools project. I'm not sure to what extent but have been told to make contact after the school holidays. They are apparently looking to do something for 2nd Term and our project may be just the one .....we'll see - I will keep you updated. The cheque I sent you was for \$257.00 dated the 18<sup>th</sup> May and posted soon after that date. It was sent to your home address in Frenchs Forrest. If you receive it within the next few days could you let me know otherwise we will stop the cheque and write another.. Our winters are very cold in Tassie so I possibly wont have another 'Tea' until it warms up a bit. People just don't like going out in the cold.

After an excellent 8 weeks of Fund Raising for the Victorian Bushfire Appeal I can now put that behind me. I have talked myself into producing another musical (or is it others who have talked me into it !!!)

'STARS ARE BORN' is the title of my next Grand Concert which will show in Hobart in October.

The venue is the very historical Scots Memorial

Uniting Church with a capacity to seat 250 or more people. I'm very excited about it and if they all say 'Yes' I will have an outstanding cast of performers. It is a fund raising event with the proceeds going to .....FREESCHOOLS WORLD LITERACY..... and The Uniting Church to help assist them with the wonderful work they are doing for poverty stricken communities here in Tasmania. Robert I can't put a figure at the moment on the funds which we will raise except to say my last two musicals were sell-outs. Will keep you posted as it all unfolds. I think that's it for now.

**Robert:** Thank you for your update and it looks like you, again, have a very busy schedule. Thank you especially for your FreeSchools work with Franklin Primary, and we now have a very nice Certificate of Thanks to award to such schools. I have not yet seen the FSWL cheque that you posted, but will keep my eyes out for it. What was the amount that you sent? Good luck with your next musical and be careful not to get too tired. My daughter, Francheska is in a musical. "Patience" that is being organized by the Forest Area Musical Society FAMS, and she seems to be enjoying it.

Your letter and cheque for \$257 for donations raised during the Morning and Afternoon Teas held in your home in Franklin, Tasmania, has now safely arrived and I will bank it in the FreeSchools account on Tuesday. Thank you so much for your support and enthusiasm for the FreeSchools World Literacy project.

**Judy:** Our next venture is the clothes swap evenings - one at my place and the next at my wonderful friend Coral's. Not a clue how they will go but so far the reaction has been great. Not given out many invites as yet because I am holed up here with Emma after her knee surgery. All has not gone to plan and she is in a lot of pain. The invitations are all printed and it is RSVP only as places are limited. I will try to attach one now to give you an idea of what we are doing.

**Robert:** what a fabulous idea for a fund raiser. I will send a bunch of FreeSchools pamphlets for you to use on the days to 19 Lakin St, Bateau Bay.

**Judy:** Thanks Robert. Actually Jo is talking to a group of schools next week and showing the DVD, so could I please have about 20 or so sent ASAP. I forgot all about them to be honest! It is a leadership day and Jo is to be the guest speaker. Thanks for the suggestion.

**Merindi:** Bernie and I are going to Newcastle tomorrow (Sunday) morning and could possible drop a stack of brochures to you in Bateau Bay on the way. We have brochures here to use.

**Jo:** Merindi, that would be wonderful! A stack would be good... mum has 2 x clothes swap evenings planned, and I am talking to a leadership group (the top kids from about 25 local high schools I think) on Wednesday so that would be great.

**Judy:** Perfect. Thanks Merindi. Jo does her talk on Wed next week and I the clothes swap party is 2 weeks after that. See you tomorrow. Em is here on crutches after her knee surgery.

**Merindi:** How did the clothes swap go? I'm thinking I may organise something similar with my girlfriends ...

**Jo:** Its on the 23rd - we'll send you our notes!

**Melissa:** And me to please. I'm interested in the clothes swap idea also for a fundraiser.

**Judy:** Here it is Melissa. The secret seems to be getting a "pool" of clothes to start you off because then you don't panic before the night! Will let you know how it goes. It is on a week from tomorrow and i have absolutely No idea!

**Judy:** Jo is hoping to hold a big fundraising ladies day of indulgence and has found the most perfect location. It is in the new Surry Hills Library so people could get there on the train at Central. Sponsored by Nudie Juice and a champagne company so far. She has hit a snag - they want to know our charitable status to organise insurance!! I thought that perhaps Jo could just buy insurance for a day - she thinks about 100 people will be there. She needs to phone you - or perhaps have the Council phone you and I have lost your phone number. Could you please forward it to Jo. I have been very sick with no voice, flat out with reports at school, Mum has been pretty bad BUT we have had 2 successful clothes swap parties and my cousin had a 50th birthday where she asked for donations for FreeSchools rather than presents..... So we hope to send you about \$1000 after the last clothes swap party in Newcastle (one of Linda's friends is holding it.) Isn't it wonderful. I must say that most people were more interested in the clothes they could swap rather than the little schools, but now a whole new lot of ladies have heard of FreeSchools Ideas needed for the day of indulgence - called the Sunday Splurge. I am providing book recommendations for all ages. There will be lovely food - (hopefully all donated) tea, coffee (again hopefully sponsored,) hair, make up, perfume, massages, manicures, maybe someone to read your fortune for fun. here's hoping that people come and buy some raffle tickets. I hope to have another quilt ready by then.

**Robert:** Unfortunately with many unscrupulous "charity" types working to line their own pockets, so there are very stringent requirements in Australia to prove yourself officially as a Charity. Wih Ian jumping though the hoops on our behalf, hopefully FreeSchools should be there soon.

## 7. Correspondence with Supporters and Donors

## 8. Set date and time for COM meeting. Close meeting

Meetings of the Committee of FSWL Australia will be held on the first Friday of each month.

The next official meeting of the FSWL Committee of Management will be from Friday 7<sup>th</sup> of August to Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2009.

I would like to thank the Committee of Management and other supporters for all of their efforts

END OF MINUTES

## APPENDIX REPORTS

### APPENDIX 1

May 29, 2009

Re: Nomination for the Guru Nanak Interfaith Prize

Dean Bernard J. Firestone  
Hofstra College of Liberal Arts and Sciences,  
200A Heger Hall, 115 Hofstra University,  
Hempstead, NY 11549-1115,

Dear Dean Firestone and Honourable Members of the Selection Committee,

Bihar, India (population 83 million) is the land where the Buddha began his teaching and Mahatma Gandhi led forth his vision of Satyagraha against injustice. Today, another humble and valiant soul lives the supreme values that all religions espouse and whose actions enhance and inspire thousands of Hindu, Muslim and Christian families. With admiration for your search to find an ideal candidate who contributes significantly to interfaith understanding, I respectfully submit for your consideration Sister Mary Crescence SSH, a Catholic Sister of the Sacred Heart Society in Bihar, India.

Sr. Crescence has had a distinguished career unknown to the world at large. Her work has been emblazoned in the minds and souls of thousands of children and their families though few outside of Bihar have heard of her. The eloquence of her interfaith dialogue is expressed by uplifting minds and souls in her community comprising 18 million Hindus, Muslims and Christian in the West Champaran District of Bihar. For the last 13 years her commitment has included the eradication of intolerance, corruption and illiteracy by the empowerment of women and children through free education.

In 1997, with modest financial help from a young British volunteer, Sr. Crescence founded the first free evening school in Motihari. It had long been her dream to bring literacy, and therefore a potential future, to children who had no educational opportunities. All that was needed was enough money to train a capable female teacher from the village to teach the fundamentals of reading, writing, mathematics, civics and hygiene. Classes were held in the evenings in existing classrooms, for 2-3 hours when children could be released from their working obligations. The free school flourished, giving hundreds of children a primary education.

In 2000, more financial support came from Australia and another free evening school was opened in Muzzafarpur. By 2005, an ongoing commitment of funding from Canada made it possible to expand the model and today Sr. Crescence manages more than 40 schools with the help of both FreeSchools World Literacy\*, a Canadian registered charity, and FreeSchools World Literacy - Australia. These free schools follow a simple but effective model created by Sr. Crescence.

The FreeSchool model:

- teach only students with no access to education

- locate schools where the need is greatest
- use existing schools after hours or any donated place safe for children
- focus resources on teacher salaries and learning materials
- hold classes in the early evening in order not to conflict with family responsibilities
- train and employ trusted teachers, mainly female, who speak the village dialects and understand the culture
- provide ongoing teacher training and supervision
- ensure respect for all religions with no proselytizing
- give girls priority, but not exclusivity
- provide a quality curriculum of reading, writing, mathematics, civics, hygiene and job skills
- provide HIV Aids and human trafficking awareness
- provide learning materials, nutritious snacks, clothing and transportation when needed
- encourage capable students to continue their education in government schools
- provide modest scholarships for exceptional students

Success is measured by the following:

- involvement and support of parents
- parents wanting education for themselves
- villagers organizing donated land, building materials and labour to build their own school
- growing demand from neighbouring villages for a FreeSchool
- older children volunteering to teach younger children
- cultural programs that showcase the development of natural talents
- subsequent enrolment in government schools
- former students becoming FreeSchools teachers

The FreeSchools in Bihar are successful because Sr. Crescence inspires her tireless teachers to overcome parental scepticism. Where education was once ignored, now it is valued. (After generations of illiteracy, parental resistance can be the greatest barrier to education and eludes many government initiatives and NGO programs.) Classes have swollen from an optimum 45 students to 65 to 80 students, and in a few areas over 100 students. Students, along with their parents, regularly see the model of Hindus, Muslims and Christians working in harmony while they embrace each other's differences. All religious traditions are honoured. Common values are lived daily, but no religious instruction of any faith is given.

Born Clara Goldsmith in a poor village, not far from where she lives today, Sr. Crescence is the eldest of six daughters and a son. Her father was an educated man who taught music and preferred simple village life to the overcrowded chaos of the cities. Her mother's poor health created early responsibilities for the children and at the age of 14 Clara entered the Sacred Heart Convent as a novitiate. She became a brilliant student and in just four years qualified as a teacher with honours distinction in Hindi, English and Mathematics. Over time, a conviction grew in her heart that all children should be educated, regardless of gender, caste, economics or religion.

Sr. Crescence has spent most of her nearly 70 years in Bihar. Despite her unassuming nature and passion for teaching, her community early directed that she become an administrator. She served as assistant to the Mother General for 12 years and was herself Mother General of the Sacred Heart community in Bihar for 12 years. Her leadership is characterized by unfailing fairness, faith in all kinds of people and the ability to win friends and allies outside her Catholic order.

In addition to managing the FreeSchools program, Sr. Crescence currently serves as Superior of the Sacred Heart Convent community of approximately 20 Sisters in Banuchapar, Bettiah. Associated with the convent is St. Mary's Convent School which provides formal private schooling for 850 students. The convent also provides training for nurses and social workers from all castes to uplift the millions of poor in West Champaran. Despite the daunting challenges of

overpopulation, poverty, systemic preference for males, HIV Aids and the trafficking of women and children, the Sisters and 350 Hindu and Muslim lay workers, supported by international NGOs, unite in their purpose to improve life for the downtrodden. And despite the deeply entrenched caste system, backwardness and corruption, including recent escalating violence creeping in from other parts of India towards Christian religieuse, these dedicated, but religiously diverse, field workers persevere in service to their community and country.

In all her activities, Sr. Crescence seeks justice for the disadvantaged, does not participate in bribes, and has an uncanny ability to embrace all people with loving regard. She uses her generosity of spirit and keen humour to win trust, from backward villagers to powerful bureaucrats.

Sr. Crescence fundamentally understands that each and every person is unique and houses an aspect of the Divine. That is why she can devote herself so wholeheartedly to the service of so many poor and desperate people and encourage them with real possibilities of hope. It is amidst the needs of the poor that her interfaith dialogue becomes interfaith collaboration, transcending religious divides to serve the common good. Her light inspires the best in those who know her and work with her and reflects a generous and inclusive God, the Supreme Being of all.

Sr. Mary Crescence SSH may be contacted at the Sacred Heart Convent in Banuchapar, Bettiah, P.O. Box 1, P.O. 845 438, West Champaran, Bihar, INDIA  
Tel# 91 6254 232594; Email sr.crescence@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Sue Tennant  
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\* FreeSchools World Literacy-USA is currently being incorporated as a 501 (3)c in California.

#### Profile of Nominee

Sue Tennant: Ordained Interfaith minister (New Seminary, NYC, 1992). Founder of the Multifaith Festival of the Family in Toronto, Ontario CANADA (1993). Founder of the Ontario chapter of World Interfaith Education Association (now Interfaith Ontario). Former Director of the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN). Founding president of FreeSchools World Literacy (2005).

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **BEN & JILDOU'S ACTIVITIES IN FANG**

As some of you know we launched Blood Foundation some 12 months ago. We are registered in the Netherlands and are going through the process of registering here in Thailand. Locally our main focus is on the embattled Shan people. There are some 5.5 million Shan, the largest 'minority' group to suffer at the hands of the Burmese Junta. Here in Fang valley alone there are more than 100 000 displaced Shan people, more than 20 000 are here with no papers whatsoever and hence subject to exploitation and lives of total insecurity. Here is a Time magazine article about the Shan from several months ago.  
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1077199,00.html>

Our focus is on education and we have something of a three tiered approach:

To deliver education services inside Shan State

To educate 'the larger community' about the plight of the Shan and the Burma situation in general

To inform & educate the illegal migrants in this region

Our teacher training program Learn to Live trains Shan Abbots from inside Shan State to become teacher trainers themselves. We have been lucky to work with some inspiring organisations and individuals who cooperate to put this together. The Abbots after their intensive training in Thailand return to their communities to train the local leaders and teachers, the monks in their temples and the community in general. The syllabus includes Maths, Burmese, English, Community Health, Shan Language and Shan History. It is forbidden to teach Shan History in Burma so teaching this subject gives us a chance to talk with the monks about examples of non violence and civil disobedience, - the Ghandian philosophy inspired by Christ's sermon on the mount and used to such world-changing effect by the likes of Dr. Martin Luther King.

In Shan State one of the only things to unite the whole area is the Buddhist Sangha. Education services inside Shan state are pitiful. While the Junta reserves some 70% of its GDP to maintain their illegitimate and brutal military reign, less that 2% is invested in health and education combined! These numbers are so extraordinary that it's hard to get your head around. To read some facts about Burma go to <http://bloodfoundation.org/whyburma>.

As a result many monks have opened their temples to provide education. They are in the business of teaching dhamma, - Buddhist philosophy, and so they are natural educators. The weakness is in their own lack of knowledge when it comes to secular education. With little or no education themselves it is hard for them to fulfil their desire to bring the light of learning to their people. Our program leverage's the network of temples and these monks' incredible desire to help their people and transfers knowledge to them that they then bring to their community.

The first training in March was an extraordinary event, it is an honour to work with these men. This group is now inside Shan State and conducting their own trainings. We have received one report of such a training from deep inside Burma which I also attach - (Short Training in Shan State). This makes for some sobering reading, I would commend it to you. We will bring them back at the end of this year for an additional training session. Meanwhile we will be training group 2 after the rains subside later this year.

For those interested I attach a Power Point presentation which outlines the key components of this program (BF L2I pres1.ppt) that was prepared by a friend of ours.

Monk for a Month has been steady, we have not had an empty temple now for about 5 months. We usually have one, two, or three people on the program and we have ordained somewhere between 20 -30 guests as novice monks. This brings in a small income but even better it introduces us to some great people. We have been so fortunate with the people that this program attracts and many have experienced life shaping forces while on the program.

For anyone interested, our Facebook site the best place to see what is happening <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fang-Thailand/Monk-for-a-Month/35067157310?ref=ts>. You can also follow us on Twitter <http://twitter.com/monkforamonth>

Many people who we have met through the program are now involved with Blood Foundation in some way. This allows up to raise money for the projects and also to get the word out about Burma.

A great example of this is Ruud Gielens from Belgium. Ruud is a little famous in Belgium as an actor and director. Now Ruud is organising an event in Brussels as an awareness raiser of the situation in Burma and a fund raiser for projects that we do. He has secured the Royal Flemish



Theatre for Saturday December 12 and he is organising media, politicians, artists, comedians, activists etc to put together a one-night-only performance. This is to raise money for projects and also to help get the media spotlight back onto Burma.

For anyone interested in Burma issues I attach a explanation of the philosophy behind this event called We are Burma.

Another Monk for a Month guest, Oke Millet from Canada has recently donated \$2000 to build an orphanage at an IDP camp in Burma. These camps are places where internal refugees gather after their homes and fields have been burnt by the Burma army. They have been requesting us for a dwelling for the children without guardians (unaccompanied minors) and now we have the funds to do it! Construction must wait though until after the Monsoon, probably some time in October. We don't just want to build a building but to provide a caretaker and perhaps a teacher too so that gives us a little time to organise this. We are very happy though to be able to help this poor community.

Jildou is also doing many projects up at the Moug Chum area working with the poor Hilltribe school. We received funding, through Australian contacts for a weaving project and a mushroom growing facility. Now the school year has begun again here these projects are being launched. The weaving project is teaching the hilltribe girls their own traditional weaving skills, once they can make a product we may be able to sell it through the Website (<http://bloodfoundation.org/products>) and so bring a small income into the community. It's good that it is preserving their old skill and this wouldn't happen if we didn't pay a teacher to come to the school to teach these traditional ways. We also have funded the purchase of 10 looms for the students to weave on. The mushroom project teaches children about both agriculture and business as they learn to grow mushrooms and then sell them at market. The money made is reinvested into the projects, the children also get to take some mushrooms home to their families to eat.

Our Flow project is creating an income for families in a Shan refugee camp some 2 hours away from here. While the 600 people in this camp have next to no opportunities to create a future for themselves, many of the ladies are fine weavers. The Shan have a famous reputation as skilled artisans throughout South east Asia and this camp produces beautiful hand woven scarves. These are hard to sell on the crowded local market so we sell them into Holland and now deliver to anywhere through online orders. We have bought around 200 of these scarves so far bringing some 60 000 baht into this camp. We hope this is just the beginning. Please have a look at this project. <http://www.bloodfoundation.org/flow/weaving-project>

Just yesterday we received the go ahead for funding for a Food to Grow project at Son Char government school next to Moug Chum. It was the idea of the Palaung village where most of the children live. This will be an organic vegetable program that we hope will demonstrate good practices and be a model for safe agriculture in the area. There are many sad health effects from the indiscriminate use of pesticides and growth-hormone chemicals throughout this region.

Next week we have a Shan intern coming fresh from a Masters degree in education. She will be staying for 2 months and conducting a needs analysis for us on the migrant workers here on the orange farms and then creating a curriculum for an information service for recently arrived migrants. Finally she will train local Shan people to run the program once she leaves. The program called New Beginnings will cover:

what to expect when living illegally in Thailand

how to find work

how to handle agricultural chemicals safely

how to use NGOs and other resources for their benefit

ways to respond to abuse and exploitation

how to ride a motorbike

(there may be things we are not expecting that pop up during the needs analysis!)

This information service will be mobile, going from farm to farm to conduct trainings with the Shan workers. We intend it eventually to have a Thai language learning component and this is so important for migrant living here.

We're really excited about this, while Chiang Mai has a good number of services for migrant workers, Fang is one of the major routes from Shan State into Thailand and there is very little to support these recently arrived families.

Also we and the Dutch board of Blood Foundation have decided to continue the evening school in Nong Tau. This is teacher Aer's school, one of the first started by Mark and was one that was slated to be discontinued. Many of these kids go to day school at Moun Chum and it is Pui's recommendation that we keep it going to assist the children learning Thai, including those not yet of school age.

We are happy to do this and have funding committed for the next school year.

We also have an active volunteer program for those wanting field experience. While we focus on English teaching there are many areas where help is welcome! You can see more info here <http://bloodfoundation.org/culture/volunteer>

I would also love to tell you about a wonderful program, dreamt up by Jildou called Novice for Children. It is symbolic of the things we are encouraging from Buddhism. Please take the time to read it here <http://bloodfoundation.org/flow/novices-for-children>

On another note Jildou is pregnant! We are expecting this little explosion sometime in October.

So we're still here in Fang and we intend to be here for the foreseeable future. I have been meaning to update the board about our efforts here, clearly there are many significant areas of common purpose. If you made it to the end of the email, thanks for reading!

Final link I promise! here's our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Blood-Foundation/42053144217?v=wall&viewas=608838701> <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Blood-Foundation/42053144217?v=wall&viewas=608838701>>

Personally I remain loyal to the Australian Freeschools board though I may not always have enough time to contribute to the discussion. I do see the amazing work being done on the ground in Australia and in particular in the Aussie schools and it's wonderful to see.

If we can be of any help here to the board both Jildou and I are at your service.

### **The FSWL Committee - Australian Contact Details**

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