

NEWSLETTER

FreeSchools

WORLD LITERACY

www.freeschools.org.au



ABN ~ 13 233 167 644

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 ~ 2012

Welcome to FreeSchools World Literacy — AUS Newsletter!

It has been a while since we have sent out a newsletter and we wanted to update all our generous donors and supporters on FreeSchool's activities and progress.

Currently, we have 74 FreeSchools World Literacy funded centres in India, Bangladesh and Thailand with 87 on staff teaching over 3000 students. The students are being taught the basics — reading, writing, arithmetic, health issues, civic awareness and crafts and other income generating skills such as sewing.

The purpose of FreeSchools World Literacy is to provide free education in order to break the cycle of ignorance and poverty that leaves millions in hopeless despair. The organisation provides free literacy programs; teacher employment and training; income producing skills; health education; food and clothing and is documenting changes in the wellbeing of the community as a result of its programs. By providing ongoing funds and scholarships for the existing and planned new schools; FreeSchools World Literacy hopes to replicate its model throughout India, Thailand and other Developing Countries of the World.

We do this with the help of our overseas field partners: Sister Crescence and the Fakirana Sisters Society in Bihar State, India; Rev. Ashish Amos and ISPCK in New Delhi; Amarok in Bangladesh and the Mirror Foundation in Thailand. Thanks to their continuing selfless work we are seeing the real benefits of this education flow back in the local community.



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**THE AFFORDABLE GIFT THAT
CHANGES A GIRL'S LIFE!**

What's Been Happening

Our fearless leader, Robert Coenraads (President FSWL Australia) has been tirelessly working on the FreeSchools World Literacy application to grant us "Approved Organisation" status with AusAID (an Australian government accreditation organisation). This would mean that all donations would be tax deductible. This process is a lengthy one, and as a pre-requisite, we were required to be granted signatory status to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) which we have proudly achieved and this year for the third time, we present to the AGM

audited accounts in the ACFID format, thereby creating a track record and paving the way for achieving "Approved Organisation" status. Robert has submitted the official document to AusAID and we await the minister's approval for tax deductibility status.

Another exciting development is that in Thailand, FreeSchools World Literacy is working with the Thai Government to help with the funding of the FreeSchools teachers. The strategy is that if we can show 90% attendance for a class being taught by a FreeSchools teacher, then the Thai Government has offered to take over the funding of the teachers needed

for these students. This is a wonderful step forward as it then allows FreeSchools to support a new teacher in another poor region. The cycle can continue with the set-up of a new school, and the hope that the government will eventually take responsibility for the teacher in the new region.

Field Trip Report — India

Recently a number of our fellow FSWL - USA Committee members including the FSWL-USA President, Geri Johnson, visited some of the FreeSchools in India. Geri wrote a wonderful report describing many of the highlights of their trip and I thought it important to share these with you to show how the FreeSchools' committee members are actively participating, contributing and monitoring the existing FreeSchools in India.

Geri and the other FSWL-USA committee members visiting had other purposes for this trip, such as teacher sharing (showing the existing FreeSchool's teachers new learning and teaching strategies that would engage the children). Michael, Beth and Geri came prepared to offer such training. Bruce, Finance Chairperson on the FSWL-USA Board, wanted to better understand how funds were being apportioned and Margaret provided computer training to the office assistants.



Geri states that the first teacher sharing appeared to be highly successful judging by the FreeSchools teachers' eager participation. Feedback from the teachers included:

- They liked how Michael got them working as an interactive group and how they could do that with their students
- They were impressed that children could and should "talk to each other" and how they were encouraged to "work out their own answers"
- Teaching with music and stories was "fun" and did not seem like "learning" nor was it boring for the children

As well as visiting the FreeSchools, Geri and colleagues also visited 3 existing sewing and tailoring schools with advanced students and inaugurated 2 new tailoring schools. Geri provides us with an insight in to the tailoring schools and what is being achieved.

"The tailoring schools instruct girls 12 years and older to sew by hand, with a treadle sewing machine, to crochet, knit and embroider. These skills enhance home making as well as provide the opportunity for income. The young ladies usually stay about a year learning to create patterns and to make clothing and household items (i.e bedspreads, curtains and tablecloths). The quality of work amongst the advanced students was stunning. The blouses, knitted sweaters, purses and embroidered bedspreads were worthy of high praise but more importantly could be sold in any market"

However, it was the "Joy of Books" that Geri witnessed from the children that as she states was what "made EVERYTHING worthwhile for me". Geri gives another lovely account of how a simple picture book can bring such joy to a child. Geri and Beth took a stack of books out to some of the Indian children. "Once the books were placed before them and they were invited to take a book, they pounced. They were excited to read the books aloud to us. Sometimes 5 or 6 children would read at the same time. Others were just excited to tell the story from the pictures. There was sheer joy on their faces and lots of laughter as they enjoyed story after story"

Thanks to all our supporters

We would like to thank all our regular donors for their ongoing support, the Galloway Family, the Elaine Callan Memorial Fund and the Francis Carleonet Nieves Memorial Fund, Kathleen and Trevor Swadling, Bernie and Merindi Swadling, Andrew and Delphine Swadling, Julian Martin, Robert and Francis Carleonet Nieves Coenraads and the congregation of the Forest Kirk. Your generous and ongoing contributions have brought hope to the lives of many underprivileged children.

Without the help from our fabulous donors and fundraisers, the FreeSchools work would not be possible. We encourage everyone to contribute, however small, you can do this by being a regular donor,

fundraising or volunteering, whatever works for you.

As well as our regular donors, we would like to make special mention of the amazing efforts of Jude Townsend. Jude with the help of her family and friends and "The Inner Wheel" ladies organised a fundraiser at her local cinema and gives her account of the events that led up to what was ultimately a very successful fundraiser.



Jude Townsend's "1st grader" movie night at "Avoca cinema"

"The First Grader" Movie Night, came about because I am on the mailing list to see movies at Avoca Beach Picture Theatre. One of the movies advertised was "The First Grader" and the blurb said it was about an elderly illiterate man who wanted to go to Free School to learn to read — but he was refused admittance. I thought it was amazing that I read Free School — even though it was two words.

I rang Avoca Beach Theatre and told the owner about the FreeSchools World Literacy Charity in Thailand and their wonderful work with The Hill Tribe children who would otherwise be unable to attend school, because of their language difficulties and isolation. It turned out that Beth, the owner, had trekked in Thailand and knew about some of child trafficking in northern Thailand. She offered us the opening night — all we had to do was sell 280 tickets!!! I am flat out organising two of my friends to meet me at the movies — let alone 280 tickets!

I asked "The Inner Wheel" ladies (a charity that was familiar with the work that FreeSchools did) if they could help with supper and they gladly offered to do it for free. They provided the most amazing supper — they had so many good comments. My wonderful friend



who owns “Signature on Hastings” in Noosa said she would give everyone who attended a present from her shop. This involved hours of wrapping as she sent everything in boxes with strict instructions as to how they had to be presented. The next job was promotion. I went to lots of librarian meetings, staff meetings of other schools, and I sent out a flyer with the film’s synopsis to every school on the coast. I rang the ABC radio and they were happy to interview me. “Avoca Beach Picture Theatre” had a big promo picture in the window of the theatre — and basically it was a sell out a week before viewing.

On the night everyone got their present on arrival, and were directed towards the free supper, because of this almost everyone bought raffle tickets. We had big pictures of the schools on display and some gorgeous Hill Tribe craft. Lots of people gave donations for raffles and we ended up with 5 big prizes + 12 Lucky Door prizes, probably too many — but no one complained. Tickets were only \$20 — for the movie, gift and supper. We raised about \$4800 and I will repeat this again this year if I get the courage.

Special Thanks

I would like to thanks the FreeSchools World Literacy Committee, many of which have been members since the Committee’s inception for their tireless and ongoing support.

And, finally a special mention to Vern Verass of Design Direction for helping with the design and production of this newsletter.

The rewards of literacy

- Literacy empowers girls with income-producing skills
It keeps them from early marriage and reduces birth and infant mortality rates.
- When able to read and write, add and subtract girls are less likely to be cheated, sold into bonded labor or tricked into human trafficking.
- The study of Health and Hygiene helps protect against HIV AIDS.
- Literacy finds expression in music, dance, drama and humor — liberating natural talents that have been submerged for generations.
- The brightest are scholarshipped into formal schools and will become leaders.
- Village women initially partner with *FreeSchools*, but the whole village discovers the benefits of cooperation and grassroots democracy.
- *FreeSchools* demonstrates caring respect for the individual and has no religious discrimination.



Some of the teachers are young enough to be students.



Yes I would like to support *FreeSchools* or sponsor a student

Please find enclosed my gift of:

\$ (your choice) to support the operations of *FreeSchools*

\$ 16 to support a child to attend a *FreeSchool* in India

\$ 72 to provide a scholarship for one student to attend regular school for a year

There are two methods to make your donation.

1. You can pay by cheque

My cheque is enclosed and crossed “Not Negotiable” and made payable to *FreeSchools* World Literacy

or

2. You can make a deposit directly into the *FreeSchools* Westpac bank account

Account name: *FreeSchools* World Literacy Inc.

Account BSB: 032 196

Account Number: 266 690.

Please complete your contact details below.

Name Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr:

Name of supporting organization (if applicable):

Address:

State: Postcode:

Telephone: Email:

or

Please debit my

Bankcard Mastercard Visa

Account Number

Expiry Date /

Repeat Donation Annually yes/no

Signature

Send your donation to:

FreeSchools World Literacy — Australia

Attn: Dr. Robert Coenraads — President

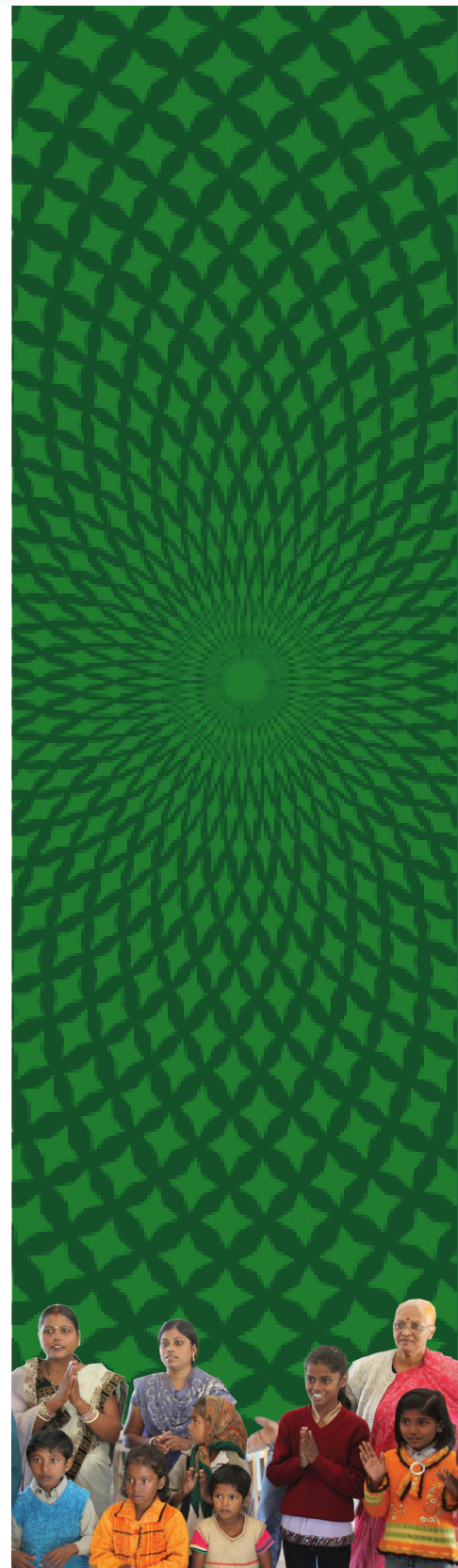
8 Trigalana Place, Frenchs Forest, New South Wales 2086.



FreeSchools World Literacy is now a signatory to the ACFID Code

More information

For more information and photos, please see our website <http://www.freeschools.org.au>
 You can contact the President directly — Robert Coenraads (02) 9451 8496 or email the Editor, Melissa Alldis, at melissaalldis@gmail.com. Or perhaps you might like one of us to give a presentation about *FreeSchools* to your group or organization.



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