

Ghar Sita Mutu - House With a Heart

A home for abandoned children, a training program for destitute women, and a support program for needy families in Kathmandu, Nepal

DECEMBER 2008

The plight of the children and the women of Nepal first drew me to the Kingdom (now Republic) nine years ago. Happily, the 17 children living in our home, along with the additional children we take care of, are healthy and in good spirits, but our school and food costs have more than doubled at Ghar Sita Mutu and we are struggling to raise enough funds to keep up. We grow what we can and share what we can with others, but the increases have hit us hard.

The ever increasing food prices, political uncertainty, flooding, and lack of safety nets are taking a noticeable toll on the impoverished people of Nepal. As I sit here in the comfort of a heated building, I know that many people cannot afford to buy food and warm clothing, and street children and frail people in Kathmandu will possibly die this winter from cold and exposure.

I cannot stress strongly enough how much a difference even the smallest of contributions make. I know times are tough for all of us now, but I would ask you to consider making a donation to Ghar Sita Mutu.



Your donations make a real difference in the lives of Nepali children and their families.

FUNDRAISERS

Many thanks to **Tibet House** for designating us as a co-beneficiary of their well attended benefit auction held December 1 at Christies. While I didn't do any bidding, it was fun to attend and to meet and thank **Nena and Robert Thurman** who co-chair the event. A thank you also to **Kyra Borré** and **Angie Kwak** for their work.

I have been thinking of ways to raise additional funds while at the same time accommodate people who have expressed an interest in coming to meet the children of Ghar Sita Mutu. I am considering organizing a **group trip to Nepal**. This would include a visit to our House along with a Himalayan trek. Perhaps Ghar Sita Mutu could raise much needed funds while at the same time combine a first



Beverly walks with the Ghar Sita Mutu children to school.

hand look at our work with one of the greatest adventures in the world. Further details will be available soon on our website, but in the meantime I would appreciate your feedback on this idea.

PROGRAM PROGRESS

Our training programs continue to expand and we have a waiting list for women wishing to learn new skills. We are now teaching sewing, felt making and candle making, and have started making candle holders out of wax and glass. Our puppets and wall hangings are selling well. Thanks to **Bill Andrews** for securing orders in the Chicago area.

Of course we would not have been able to offer the paid training classes nor many of our other programs without the generous general support of **The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation**. I am also so thankful for their generosity in buying Ghar Sita Mutu a new laptop computer when ours was stolen from my antique shop two days before I left for Nepal. Special thanks to **Rachel Weingeist** and **Bruce Payne** for their support, understanding and help.

On the first day of school after the holidays there was a strike, and we all trooped home again. Unfortunately the strikes seem to be one of the best ways for the people to protest, and they are held often and for many different reasons. This one was held on the day I planned to meet with **The Direct Help Foundation**, an organization from Spain interested in a collaborative effort. We will teach their women our skills, and they will teach our women theirs. Many thanks for their support of our literacy program and for the books and pencils they supply.

Our Children's Learning Centre continues to offer basic

education for children whose parents are too poor to afford school. When we have the funds to expand this program, we will hire an additional teacher and take in more children. In October we were helped by **Lauryn Arkin**, a teacher from California who spent a few days teaching our teacher and the children some fun educational games.

We started the Kathmandu Girls Club based upon the American model, and our girls have loved the experience. We've partnered with the Lower East Side Girls Club in NYC and will be setting up a means for girls from both clubs to communicate online. I am grateful to Director **Lynn Pentecost** for working on this collaboration with us. Thanks also to **Christy McFall** who will continue working with the girls in Nepal while I'm in New York.



The Ghar Sita Mutu boys and girls celebrate Bhai Tika, the fifth day of the Festival of Lights, where sisters put "Tika" on forehead of their brothers to ensure a long life.

HOSPITAL EXPERIENCES

When I arrived in Nepal this last August it was as wet and muddy as ever, and one of the first things I did was to visit Bimala, one of our trainees who had delivered her baby ten days previously. When I was in Nepal last February she was three months pregnant and had not yet seen a doctor. I sent her to the clinic and she started to get care. I thought she was in good hands and getting good advice.

Unfortunately she started to bleed before going into labour and did not know that she should immediately see a doctor. She was alone in her room and by the time her sister came to see her three days later, she said she was in too much pain to attempt to go to the hospital. The dirt road was a river of mud, making it difficult to walk and impossible for vehicles to navigate. Two days later she gave birth in her room, attended by two neighbors. When I visited her she was still in pain and had a high fever. I tried to persuade her to come to the hospital but she refused. I took her two-year-old daughter home with me and said she should think about going with me the next day.

The next day I convinced her to go to the hospital. She had a severe infection that the doctor said could have killed her if she had waited much longer. The terrible condition of the hospital had to be seen to be believed, but

A Volunteer's View

I was a three-month volunteer at Ghar Sita Mutu in Nepal and I jumped at the chance to write a piece for this newsletter. Beverly Bronson is fully in charge of House with a Heart. She oversees every detail of what goes on here – from how much salt is in the children's diet to taking on the role of elder during religious festivals to soothing an upset child. Oh, and she visits schools and families and directs staff and volunteers. She takes children to doctors and plays games and watches over their studies. She does it all extremely well.

I was struck by the sustainability of the House. Fruit trees were planted and now there is guava, pomegranate, and papaya for the picking. Two organic gardens provide a variety of vegetables and herbs and there is even a small rice paddy on the grounds. There is a solar panel to heat water on sunny days for washing dishes and a rare Nepali hot shower. All clothes – including school uniforms – are passed down from child to child and when they no longer fit the children here, they are distributed to needy families in the local community. Nothing goes to waste here.

My hat is off to Beverly for what she has accomplished in such a short time. I hope that she continues to receive generous donations to improve the lives of so many people.

Colleen Boland lives in Ithaca, NY

luckily she recovered and both mother and baby are now home. [See www.GharSitaMutu.org to read the full story.]

This was not my only hospital experience this trip. One of the children, Kamala, was in terrible pain and we brought her to the hospital by taxi. Luckily it wasn't serious and she was treated and released. While we were at the hospital, a woman was brought in unconscious from a severe knife wound to her head inflicted by her husband. She was left bleeding in a hallway on a stretcher with no blanket and only her young son and daughter to keep her from falling off. She had been turned away from one hospital and since this was a private hospital and she had no money, she was to be transferred to an even more dismal government hospital. Even there, she would need 1,000 rupees (about \$15) just to get admitted. We gave her son some money so that she could receive the treatment she so desperately needed. Thanks to all of you who support our work in Nepal and make this kind of help possible.



A recent graduation of the Women's Training Program.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY

In October we had a month-long holiday from school for Dashain and Tihar. Life became even more chaotic when Kamala's three brothers came to stay (we pay for them to live in their school hostel as their parents are unable to care for them). We also had daily visits from the other children we are responsible for but who do not live with us. Luckily I had some help from visitors and volunteers. Noel Uncle (**Noel Faulkner**) came for three weeks bringing three ukuleles, music, and the patience to listen to three children playing three different songs at the same time. "Over the Rainbow" and "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da" were the favourites. **Chris Redman**, an old friend of mine and Babu's sponsor, came to visit us in November and remarked how surreal it was to hear ten children singing "Knees Up Mother Brown" whilst walking around Boudhanath Stupa. Upon her return, Chris held a fundraiser of her own in Portland, Oregon. Thank you!

Colleen Boland, from Ithaca, New York, brought money with her donated by her generous friends. Colleen helped with so many things including tutoring, playing basketball, giving English lessons, developing our earthquake plan (we shared this with several other organizations and schools), and teaching the children how to care for the 9 – yes 9! – new puppies. Colleen will continue to raise funds for us on her return to the States.



The children enjoyed learning to play the ukuleles with Noel Uncle.

brought and send this message to him: Come back soon, Fred Uncle.

Kyle Knight was introduced to us by our friends at **The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation** who, along with the **Duke University Visual Studies Initiative**, funded a photography project directed by Kyle, where he teaches kids to use digital cameras. He also arranged to have **Duke University Women's Basketball** donate basketballs for our children. We are thrilled to have these balls which are of a much higher quality than those we can buy in Nepal. Kyle spent a lot of time playing basketball with our children and also worked on the photo project with them. The photos will be part of a spring exhibit in NYC. You can see them at www.kyleGknight.com.

Many thanks to **Bryn Benson** and the **Lake Forest College Visual Communications Department** for taking on the printing and distribution of our newsletter. It's a tremendous help to our small organization.



The children love playing with the new basketballs generously donated by Duke University Women's Basketball. Photo credit: Kyle Knight

I have been blessed with a tremendous amount of help and support from volunteers **Alexa Doering** and **Lisa Hartmann** in New York whose tireless efforts on our behalf are greatly appreciated and have made us more efficient and effective. Please note we are all volunteers at Ghar Sita Mutu (with the exception of the Nepali staff), and my airfare is paid for by a kind friend.

EXPANSION PLANS

We have many ideas about things we would like to do and programs we would like to start, and we will look for funding from our generous donors and from grants. One such project is the installation of a bio-gas system for cooking and a solar system for heat and electricity – all of Nepal has electricity blackouts for seven to 11 hours every day. These green projects will help us save money and be more self-sufficient.

The new government is constantly making new rules for NGO's and one of them is that boys and girls must sleep in separate buildings. We are considering the cost of building an addition to house our boys. The addition would also include sleeping quarters for volunteers and a small room that could serve as a clinic space staffed periodically by visiting doctors and a sick bay for our children.

We have hopes of one day offering computer classes to children in our area. At present we have no computers so if anyone would like to donate used laptops we would be most grateful.

Puppets available online!
www.GharSitaMutu.org

You can purchase handcrafted gifts
made by the women in
Ghar Sita Mutu's
Women's Training Program
www.GharSitaMutu.org



Ghar Sita Mutu
PO Box 152
New York, NY 10113

We're updating our
website frequently.
Check it out!
www.GharSitaMutu.org



Printing and distribution of the
newsletter is courtesy of Bryn Benson
and the Lake Forest College Visual
Communications Department.

Of course before we expand, we must raise the money to cover our annual expenses. Not an easy task. If you can help, I assure you that donated money is carefully spent and makes a huge difference to the lives of the women and children we serve. I would not have been able to start or continue Ghar Sita Mutu without the support of so many people. I am truly grateful for your belief and trust in me. I wish you all a happy holiday season and send you love and thanks from all of our children. Hope to see you at our party on **December 22 at Theater for the New City!**

Beverly

Here is how you can help

*Ghar Sita Mutu relies on the generosity of friends like you. All donations are **tax deductible** and go directly toward running and expanding our programs.*

*Please make all checks payable to our fiscal sponsor:
The Candy Jernigan Foundation for the Arts
and note "Ghar Sita Mutu" on your check.*

*Mail checks to:
Ghar Sita Mutu
P.O. Box 152
New York, NY 10113*

You can also give online at www.GharSitaMutu.org.

Thank you!

For more information, call Beverly at 212-529-0832.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND



Babu & Krishna, ages 2 & 5

My name is Beverly Bronson. I own a small antiques shop, A Repeat Performance, in New York City. Eight years ago while working as a volunteer in Nepal, I found two abandoned children, Babu and Krishna, ages two and five. After searching for a loving home for them I had no choice but to put them in boarding school. Safe but bleak. The school appointed me as guardian and I went back to New

York with plans to raise money to establish a centre to house abandoned children and help destitute women.

With the help and generous support of Noel Faulkner and Dr. Mark Rodgers, who both made a long term commitment to help me raise the children and build a centre, I returned to Nepal with enough funds to rent a house. We opened Ghar Sita Mutu - House with a Heart in 2001 and have been expanding our outreach to the community every year. We moved into our own home in 2004. I split my time between New York and Nepal.