

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 2009

So many people need help in Nepal. Even though we cannot help everyone, we do try to give some small assistance or offer some hope of a solution to a problem. Over the past nine years Ghar Sita Mutu has helped many women and children in a variety of ways including emergency medical help, education for children and women, vegetables from our garden, gifts of goats or clothing, skills training, and sometimes financial assistance.

Mostly we always try to give hope, for without any hope of change, life can feel pretty desperate. Some women are so desperate they abandon their children thinking they will have a better life without parents.



A recent photo of the GSM family celebrating Dashain wearing new clothes for the new year.

It is, of course, thanks to all of you, our generous supporters and friends, who have made and continue to make it all possible. My sincerest thanks to all of you.

I took our children to visit Nepal's state orphanage, and we wanted to bring all the babies home with us. The conditions are awful. Babies are lined up in cots or sectioned off in small areas, starved of attention and stimulation. One baby literally crawled over a smaller baby to get to me first when I entered the room. Some children will eventually be adopted through foreign adoptions. It costs a lot to adopt a child, and we wondered where the money goes. We only saw one toy and one teddy bear in the whole place, and there were very few staff.

We all felt very bad when we left, but our children realized they were luckier than most. We went home planning to send some toys and if allowed, visit again.

We have many more plans for next year, and I'm looking forward to the year ahead. Wishing you a happy holiday season. With love and happy smiles from the children...

— Beverly

ROBBERY

As I write this, I have been back in New York for ten days and just got the bad news that last night our home was invaded and robbed at 2 a.m. by a gang of masked men with large sword-like khukuris (Nepali knives). They got past the watchman, terrorized Priety our literacy teacher, and threatened our co-manager Rajina.

Luckily, the small children slept through it, and thankfully no one was hurt. We lost 85,000 rupees or about \$1,300 in cash. They took a lap top, two cameras and several mobile phones. Rajina's wedding jewelry was also stolen.

The police have been very responsive, and we are hopeful they will find those responsible. We are looking into hiring a professional guard and installing an electric alarm system.

MOUNTAIN MUSIC PROJECT

The **Mountain Music Project** works to encourage the preservation of traditional Nepali music in rural and underserved communities. The organization has been working in Nepal since 2002, recording traditional musicians and producing music festivals. This year they are employing some of Nepal's talented traditional Gandharba musicians to teach children, passing on skills to a new generation. GSM was fortunate to be chosen to participate in the program. Four of our children are learning to play the sarangi, a traditional Nepali instrument.



Babu helps Sujita play the sarangi.

FUNDRAISING PARTIES

We are so grateful to the many people who have hosted parties with the proceeds benefitting Ghar Sita Mutu. Students from **St. Francis College** in Letchworth Garden City, UK, and **Woodbridge School** in Woodbridge, UK, each raised money for us. Many thanks to **Bryn Benson** & her son **Ian Iyengar** for hosting their annual fundraiser at the Curry Hut in the Chicago area. A big thank you to **Val Chater** who hosted a party at her home in the UK. We are so grateful for the generosity of the people who attended. Also many thanks to **Omer Abdullah** whose 40th birthday party guests generously made donations to GSM.

With no paid administrative staff here in New York, it's such a huge help to us to have you host parties.



Thirty-two women took part in our recent knitting workshop.

OUR TRAINING PROGRAMS

Our training programs continue to expand thanks to the funding from **The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation**. We recently gave a ten-day knitting workshop attended by 32 women. Plans are to continue this program and have some women work at home producing crafts that can be sold to tourists here in Nepal and abroad in the UK and the US.

Due to the success of our candlemaking workshop last year, we will offer the training again this December. Women will be able to make simple candles and be able to sell them to local shops and neighbors. This is a fairly steady business due to the many power outages here.

The women in the felt making program are producing many new items, including jewelry, scarves, slippers and accessories, as well as children's wall hangings, puppets and purses. We are approaching some designers in New York in hopes they will design some new items for us.

LITERACY & ENGLISH CLASSES

Our literacy classes are still well attended by about 40 women. We also offer English classes five days a week.



A recent graduation ceremony for the Women's Training Program.

We've been able to expand these popular programs because our main trainer **Priety Aryal** has finished her college degree. As a disabled person (she suffered from polio as a child), she faces much discrimination, including finding housing, so I'm pleased that she recently moved into a room at our house. Priety is very interested in helping other disabled people, and we plan to send her to counselor training next year to help her achieve that goal.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTRE

Part of the grant from **The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation** also enabled us to purchase some new benches for our library as well as supplies for each of the 25 children in our Children's Learning Centre. Many children received books, schoolbags, crayons, pencil cases, and sketch pads. For most of them, these were the first gifts they've ever received.

The GSM children spent a very happy morning giving clothes away to these children. Many of the students who attend our Learning Centre show up in rags or clothes that are too large which belong to older family members. Three of the girls who regularly attend our classes are working *(cont.)*



Some students in our Children's Learning Centre.

A Success Story



Dev Kala has just finished the advanced sewing training and the literacy courses. Inspired by her success in our literacy class, she has enrolled in a local night school to finish her education, which had stopped when she was a young girl. Meanwhile, she continues to work for us supervising the felt and sewing trainees. She is also in the process of setting up her own small sewing shop with an industrial sewing machine provided by GSM.

(cont. from the previous page)

for families cleaning, cooking and doing laundry. They are only 11 and 12 years old, but despite their hardships, they always seem to have a big smile when they are at GSM. Because they live far from their families, they are also grateful for the extra attention they get in our centre.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

Many young Nepali women and men are lured by the offer of overseas jobs, where they are often exploited. The mother of one of our Learning Centre students is about to leave for Kuwait. She had been working in a carpet factory

and was being verbally and sexually harassed by one of the owners there, and felt her only choice was to quit and go overseas to work as a domestic worker.

I talked to her and other women like her, and none were aware of their rights as workers. One woman told me she had worked in a carpet factory for seven years and had never received a raise. Others said they are beaten by sticks when they make mistakes. When I return in February, we'll hold a workshop on labor rights led by our lawyer **Suresh KC**. We will cover the changing labor laws in Nepal, and also be on hand to advise them if they are having marital problems and suffering abuse at the hands of their husbands.

NEW LOW-COST GREEN PROGRAMS

We just bought 2 kg of worms to start our own worm farm! Vermicomposting, or composting with worms, will allow us to make excellent compost in a small space. We will teach the women how to make and sell their own compost at home.

A \$300 donation from **Emma Lorenzin** and **Karla Lovell** from Australia will fund the building of a greenhouse to provide a year-round supply of vegetables. We will also involve the women in this project. When we eventually produce more than we can eat, we will sell the surplus and give some to needy families.



Maya teaches visitor Mike Ogletree the words to Nepali's national anthem.

VISITORS

Mike Ogletree, a Scottish musician living in New York City, visited and taught rhythm workshops and gave drumming and guitar lessons to the children. He recorded them singing the Nepali national anthem and also played games with them to encourage team work & stimulate concentration.

Our children were happy to welcome ten Australians from **Eyes Wide Open**, a non-profit that facilitates volunteer opportunities in the developing world in partnership with rotary clubs from Melbourne, Australia. Our children enjoyed playing sports with them and hearing opera performed for the first time by one of the members.

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.

Ghar Sita Mutu
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Students from the Children's Learning Centre. Some of the children are wearing their new donated pj's (thanks to the group from Naples, FL!). They also received donations of used clothing.

We're on Facebook. Please
add Ghar Sita Mutu
as a cause on your
Facebook account.



Printing and distribution of the
newsletter is courtesy of Bryn Benson,
Ian Iyengar, and the Lake Forest
College Visual Communications

A LITTLE BACKGROUND



Sunil, Krishna & Babu (l to r) with little Laxman. Compare this with the photo at right of Babu & Krishna.



Babu & Krishna, ages 2 & 5

My name is Beverly Bronson. I own a small antique shop called A Repeat Performance in New York City. In 1999 while working as a volunteer in Nepal, I found two abandoned children named Babu and Krishna, ages two and five. Unable to find 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.