

Ghar Sita Mutu House With A Heart

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

DECEMBER 2007

I started writing this on a Saturday afternoon in September, unable to go out with the children for our usual walk because the monsoon is raging and the roads have turned into a river of mud. It will be a challenge to get the children to school in the morning in their white! shoes and socks. I finished writing this in New York on the eve of our Annual Celebration/fundraiser for Ghar Sita Mutu. It's time for me to focus my efforts on raising operating funds for the coming year, and I want to say how grateful I am for our many supporters and friends.

To give you an idea of where our operating funds go, I'd like to tell you about a typical day at Ghar Sita Mutu.

The day starts at six with a yoga class for the children in the library followed by hot milk and study for thirty minutes. The children get dressed for school and then eat a lunch of rice, dahl and vegetables at ten to eight. They leave for the fifteen minute walk to school at 8:15.



The Ghar Sita Mutu girls surprised Beverly on her birthday with a dance performance in traditional costumes, rented for the occasion.

Our women's training classes start at 11:00 in the largest of the four out buildings. Sixty women attend our sewing classes divided into morning and afternoon groups. They are taught a six-month course by **Metu**, who has been with us since our beginning in 2001. In February of next year we plan to send Metu for advanced sewing training in order to improve our program.

In the Library, 15 neighborhood children who don't attend school receive instruction from 11:00 - 1:30. They can now all read in both English and Nepali and are doing simple



The graduates of the Women's felt making program generously sponsored by a grant from The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation.

math. I'm happy to report that **Jeff Gould**, President of **The Don Splawn Foundation East**, has pledged grant monies to expand the education program for next year.

At 2:00 college student **Priety** arrives and begins teaching the adult literacy class. Twenty women attend daily classes.

In one of our small buildings (the other one is our office), **Rajina** our child care/dance teacher supervises our felt making and puppet making program, started in March of this year thanks to a \$5,000 grant from **The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation**. Our trainees have been in full production for months now, and many different items are now available for sale at my antique shop - A Repeat Performance, 156 First Ave, NY 10009. (212) 529-0832. Excuse the shameless promotion, but all profits support the training program.

Beverly's letter continues on p. 2

UPDATE ON OUR LAND PROJECT

You may remember from the last newsletter that we were looking for help to purchase land next to our house to install a new septic system. Thanks to the generosity of **David and Donna Joss, Kenny Kenny, Fred Ripley**, and others we are excited to be in the process of finalizing the purchase.

Beverly's letter continued from p. 1

The children are picked up from school and arrive home at 3:45. They eat Tiffin (a snack) and then do their homework in the dining room for one to two hours. On Sundays and Mondays (and at other unexpected times), we have no electricity from 5:30 - 8:30 pm, so older children often finish their studies later at night.

Playing outside follows studies. This year we built a great new basketball court. We also have two sets of swings plus a large lawn. Badminton is popular with the kids, as well as skipping, acrobatics and long jump competitions.

When it's dark, the children read, play or tell candle-lit stories until dinnertime, taken in two shifts with the older girls serving and eating later. Afterwards, smaller children wait in the adjoining living room until 7:30 when they go up to bed to tell and (with me) noisily enact, our bedtime adventure stories.

The older children clean up the kitchen and wash and dry the dishes. Then they do a few pages of handwriting practice before going to their bedrooms. Tuesday and Friday afternoons are bath day for the small kids with hot water in sunny weather. There is solar hot water, but no central heat for the house.

CHALLENGES

We face many challenges in raising 16 children, all of who have suffered trauma. I'm grateful to the people who help us to deal with behavioral issues and provide concrete ideas for building a stronger family unit. In particular, I'd like to thank **Dr. Luis Mori**, a Spanish surgeon and homeopath who has been visiting our center for several years, and **Suman**, our Saturday volunteer psychology



Women in the felt making training program.

student, who helped us through a recent difficult period. Thanks also to **Bill Boera**, a retired New York school counselor for suggestions and support.

Prior to my arrival back in Nepal in September, two of our boys were suspended from school for bullying. Also, one of our boys along with our day boarder stole money and told all of the other children they had found it. All the children shared the spoils, and no one told a grown up.

The children lost a few privileges for several weeks as a result and we held weekly meetings discussing values, morals and good habits. These meetings were followed by "Family Fun Night" in an attempt to restore some family unity. This consisted of a talent show with judges encouraged to give only positive comments, followed by a small treat of sweets or everyone's favourite cheese and biscuits.

We had a lot of fun performing and practicing during the week. I now know all the words to John Denver's Country Road, a popular choice of many contestants!

Thank you all again for helping make our home possible. Our centre offers security, hope and education, and the chance for a brighter future. Together we are making a difference in many lives.

With love and thanks and wishes for a happy, peaceful new year,

*Beverly and all the
Ghar Sita Mutu children*



The latest Ghar Sita Mutu family photo.



Karmala and her brothers Buddha, Dorjee, and Dhundup Lama about eight years ago.

KARMALA AND HER BROTHERS

I first met Karmala and her brothers eight years ago when their mother came to ask for help sending her boys to school. She told me she had a six-year-old daughter named Karmala who worked as a servant in her village. Horrified at the thought of a six-year-old working, I told the mother to fetch her back from the village and I would send all the children to school.

Unfortunately for Karmala, she then became responsible for all her brothers and her drunken parents, and worked hard trying to keep the kids in line and in school. She did very well in school, however, and usually came top in her class.

One evening this past October, two of Karmala's brothers, nine-year-old Dhundup Lama and five-year-old Buddha, showed up at our gate. I had not seen any of the children since the year before. Now Dhundup told me his mother had thrown them out. He handed me a letter from their sister pleading for my help. We fed the boys and put them to bed, planning to see Karmala in the morning.



A recent photo of Karmala and her brothers.

The following day Karmala said her mother wanted her to leave school and start work as a labourer for fifty rupees a day. She was not allowed to study at home. Most evenings the four children were locked out of the room while mother and father fought.

We told Karmala that she and the boys could stay a few days while we were waiting to see her parents. When we did see her father, he told us he was helpless to defend the boys against his wife's drunken rages, and intended to leave her. He said if I could keep them it would be better for them. I told him that we would give Karmala a home and would also be responsible for school and hostel fees for the three boys. At this time, we do not have enough room or enough trained staff to take in three more boys, hence our decision to keep them in the school.

The father was relieved to have them in a safe place and told me he was now leaving his wife and moving to another village for work. I explained the importance of citizenship for his children's future (it is very difficult without a father in Nepal), so I am hoping he won't completely disappear.



Sunil works on an airplane during the holiday break in an arts and crafts class taught by Joaquim Herrero.

VISITORS

Our longtime supporter, **Noel Faulkner**, or Noel Uncle as the children call him, was a welcome visitor in September, helping to amuse the children during the long rainy afternoons. He and I spent many hours discussing our future plans and dreams. (With your help, we can make them happen!)

Documentary filmmaker **Fiona Scoones** has been documenting our progress since 2002 and visited us again in October filming our daily activities.

The children enjoyed arts and crafts with **Joaquim Herrero** from Spain during the Dashain holiday break.



The children were excited to welcome goats Kali, Thuli and Shanti to Ghar Sita Mutu, shown here with Govinda, who is particularly fond of animals. The goats moved into a bamboo and tin shack next to our rabbit's hutch and are busy keeping our grasses groomed. Many thanks to **Dona McAdams** for buying the goats.

STAFF

Many of you ask me who looks after the children when I am not there, so I thought I would tell you about one of our staff members.

Sanumaya Joshi, affectionately known as Auntie, is 61 years old from Hetaura in the Terai region of Nepal. She is of the Newari caste and recently retired from 20 years working for her local Village Development Committee. A widow with two children and two grandchildren, she is especially good with the smaller children and has many wise-woman skills ranging from medicinal herbs and cooking to farming and caring for animals. Like most Nepali women she is very spiritual and always enthusiastic about the festival rituals and traditional celebrations. Thanks for all your hard work, Auntie.



Auntie at a blessing ceremony.

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. You can make a real difference in our work.

*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 10011*

Thank you!

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



Beverly with Babu and Suji.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND

My name is Beverly Bronson. I own a small antique shop, A Repeat Performance, in New York City. Eight years ago while working as a volunteer in Nepal, I found two abandoned children, Krishna and Babu, 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 reach into the community every year. We moved into our own home in 2004. I split my time between New York and Nepal.