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ESTABLISHED JANUARY 2005

Newsletter 18: December 2013



2013 Highlights

- 25 UK volunteers visit OST projects in October 2013

-- Edinburgh Global Partnership (EGP) complete building a new playgroup at Ampalanthurai.

- Pupils at Calthorpe Park School visit their link school, and lasting friendships are made.

- New link with orphanage in Killinochi Northern Sri Lanka.

CURRENT WISH LIST

£25 a month needed to sponsor a teacher. 15 teachers still to be sponsored.

£10 A MONTH to sponsor a child. 10 children still on waiting list.

PAGE 1: Founder's Message, and Calthorpe Park School Fleet prepare for Sri Lanka.

PAGE 2: UK volunteers reflect on their time in Sri Lanka.

PAGE 3: OST news, and report from Mrs Rachel Angel, teacher in charge of Calthorpe Park School group.

PAGE 4: Message from Mr Thevarajan, Headmaster of Pulliyadimunai School.

Welcome to our 18th Newsletter. As the work of Ocean Stars Trust continues to grow from strength to strength it is time for me, as Founder of the Trust, to thank you all, for your continued support for our work. Witnessing first hand the impact the trust has on the people on the ground is a very humbling experience. The joy and smiles on the faces of children as they met with members of the team will remain with us for ever. Every pre-school supported by the trust was visited by a team member so over 500 children heard the story of the Gruffalo and went home with a Gruffalo mask. We also distributed teddies knitted by people in the UK,



Calthorpe Park Team 2013 reflect on trip



"This has been the best experience of my life....What an emotional roller coaster.....we have changed lives.....absolutely amazing.....priceless moments."

and for most of the children the teddy will be the only toy they will ever possess. Every child received a chocolate milk drink of Milo and over 900 cartons of milk were bought during the team's visit.



Enabling children in remote communities to access pre-schools is one of the aims of Ocean Stars and there are 18 pre schools on our waiting list. If anyone feels their school, club, or group would like to link up with a pre-school and provide the teachers with a wage, and the children with uniforms, then please do get in touch with us. OST firmly believes that education is a route out of poverty and is firmly committed to providing access to as many children as possible to a pre-school education.

The teams spent an evening with all our sponsor families and saw first hand the importance of sponsoring a child. In her welcome speech to us Minali said "As we celebrate your visit today we look back at our past and with a million thanks and everlasting gratitude for all the help you have given us during those dark days. You have brought sunshine into our lives and given us strength and confidence for a new life." Our waiting lists for sponsorship grows, so please contact us if you feel you would like to make a real difference to a child in Sri Lanka by donating £10.00 a month.



I would like to wish all our supporters a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year. Dilanee, OST Founder.



<http://ocean-stars-blog.blogspot.co.uk/>

"We had met such amazing people with kind hearts and a great appreciation for what we were doing for them, it was hard to say goodbye, but we will never forget them and

hope they feel the same."



"Our feelings were running high and the tears were flowing in streams as we reminisced about the days we had and the people we had met. Now is time for bed as we are going to get up early tomorrow and drive to Colombo!"



UK OST VOLUNTEERS WORK WITH OCEAN STARS LANKA

EGP: Edinburgh Global Partnership build a playgroup in the village of Amaplanathurai. Buidling a well to supply water for the children.



The EGP team report "After our initial settling period our love for the village and the people has grown even stronger. We've enjoyed everything the village has to offer including swimming in the lagoon, trips on fishing boats and beautiful sunset ferry crossings. The project has come on at a staggering pace over the last weeks, which meant the team were able to have a week off to see more of Sri Lanka (and some well needed R+R!) We were all excited to get back on site and see the progress; the building is now only about a week from completion. "

"It is also great to be back in the village with Christy and his family's wonderful hospitality. A wonderful surprise came in the form of a digger late in the day, which spared us the arduous task of filling the land around the nursery with sand. With only 10 days to go we're already dreading the thought of having to leave Ocean Stars and its amazing work behind. Before that though we have the grand opening ceremony to organise, which we hope will be a great way to repay the enormous debt we owe the people of the village for their hospitality. All of us now share a love for Sri Lanka, her people and the incredible work Ocean Stars does."



We hope that this is very much the beginning of our wonderful relationship with Ocean Stars. The opening ceremony was one of the proudest days of our lives. It has been exceptionally difficult saying goodbye to Amaplanthurai and everyone there.

To find out more about the EGP project please look at:

<https://www.facebook.com/EgpSriLanka2013?fref=ts>

OST team 2103 visited Shining Stars playgroup in October 2013 and spent a morning with the children. The teachers are very pleased with their new pre-school.



Hayley and Clare from Aberdeen University spent 4 weeks volunteering for OST in Sri Lanka. <http://clareandhayley.wordpress.com>

We can't believe we've only been here less than 2 weeks - it feels like months! The people are so welcoming and friendly. We have been made to feel very at home. We got on very well in Trinco with Janabdeen and his family. The school kids there are adorable and so bright! We couldn't believe that they could write some english words already! A wonderful gift to be able to spend time there. We found it quite emotional saying goodbye to them all! Aysha in particular - she has definitely mothered us while we are here in Sri Lanka! We are in regular contact with her via text and phone.

Batti has been such a different experience but very enjoyable also! Ranchan has been great, as has Diana. Joseph is also great! So smiley and chatty! A perfect base for us while we spend time here. Today Ranchan's niece got us to help a bit with making lunch (as if she needed it!). We didn't realise how long it takes to make curries here and how much there is going on!



[Ocean Stars Web-shop](http://www.spendandraise.com/oceanstars)

www.spendandraise.com/oceanstars

We would like to remind you to shop at www.spendandraise.com/oceanstars. All you have to do is log on to our web shop at www.spendandraise.com/oceanstars and select the retailer that you would like to shop from. You will then be directed to the normal on-line web shop of your choice. Any purchases you make from the retailers will generate commission for Ocean Stars - at no additional cost to yourself. Many of the big-name on-line retailers feature on the web shop e.g. Amazon, Marks & Spencer, John Lewis etc and many have **free postage**. The commission they pay Ocean Stars is our reward for promoting their retailer.

Judy Kendall from OST TEAM 2013 reflects on her trip...

I reckon I saw about 150 little children in the last week(3-5year olds). I read to them, played with them, laughed with them, coloured and decorated Gruffalo masks, made snake noises and handed out little woollen teddies to every child (knitted all over the UK). We sat on concrete floors, or tiny child sized chairs, in rural playgroups in areas where there was little or no transport, where the roads had been left to deteriorate to tuk-tuk sized pot holes. In each case the children were just children, tearful, tremulous, sweet, excited, engaged, warm, smiling and trusting. To see white flashing grins come out of initial tears, children hugging teddies, shrieking with glee for their milo drink was lovely.



Each time, by the end of each morning we had warmed each other's hearts. A real privilege, satisfying, an honour and a delight.

Judy's tuk-tuk ride to a pre-school.....Today we went to Kannakudah nursery travelling in a tuk-tuk with our resources piled behind our heads and rolling on to our shoulders. ('How did you get that concussion madam?' 'A box of Milo hit my head'). The road was very bumpy. Some of the pot-holes were as big as the tuk tuk. On the way we stopped at a petrol station with one pump and many jugs and funnels - to fill with small amounts of petrol. The driver came back with a litre bottle full. While we were waiting three cows crossed the very very busy road in amongst hordes of cyclists making their way to school and work.



Rachel Angel Teacher in Charge of Calthorpe Park School/ Ocean Stars Team 2103 reflects on visiting their link school: Pulliyadimunai High School.



For me the best part of the whole trip was working with the students in Puliyaadimunai school and the difference between working with children in the UK and the children in Sri-Lanka is huge! The students in Sri-Lanka were so keen to learn English and to have an English person in their classroom. Everywhere you looked around the classroom were children trying to look in through the windows or stand in the doorway watching what was going on and wanting to take part in the lesson. The children were very keen to learn and to practise the English they had been taught already. They were interested to learn about London and knew many words already. I was impressed with their level of English and even the small children knew how to count. My favourite day was on the sports day where small children kept coming up to me and asking me to dance with them and they just copied every single thing I did, they were so happy to take part in any type of dancing or game on the day and had so much energy and enthusiasm.

The second best aspect of the trip was seeing the impact the visit had on our own students. They worked tirelessly in the heat and even though some of their lessons did not go to plan, they changed activities and coped very well in the circumstances. I think it made them appreciate how hard teaching can be and how important it is to be spontaneous and positive when things don't go to plan. The students spent a lot of time talking to the Sri-Lankan students and interacting with them, showing them photos of their families and teaching them words and numbers in their free-time. We were all shocked as to how bad some of the young children's teeth are and were quite overwhelmed when giving out toothpaste which is such a small thing that we take for granted in the UK.

Coming back to the UK after such a positive and energetic week has brought its challenges. Teaching students who have so much already and take so many things for granted is difficult after having worked with the Sri-Lankan students who, by nature are all very positive and upbeat and do not complain about trivial matters. Our strength in our success was the team spirit amongst our group and the students sharing their experiences with their peers. Their determination to make a difference and to re-visit Sri-Lanka next year will keep things positive as we start planning next year's trip!

I could not have done the trip without Tommy and Wendy who were very helpful during the trip and of course, to Dilanee and all the meetings we had in planning and preparing the trip and our wonderful tour guides and friends, Gihan (God) and Modusham (the Cobra) who we all miss very much already.



<http://www.spendandraise.com/oceanstars>

OCEAN STARS FUND RAISING EVENTS

Several fund raising events have taken place in 2013. A quiz evening, a bike ride from London to Brighton, Cake Sales, a Variety show, market stall, bag packing @ Sainsbury's, half marathons, raffles, marathons, garden party, harvest lunches, school assemblies, mufti days, car washing are some of the many events that have helped raised funds for OST in 2013.



London to Brighton Bike Ride team 2013



Stall at Fleet Market



Cake and Soft Toy tombola at school fair



OST quiz night raised over £1000

GIFT AID

If you are a new donor, please contact us about receiving a Gift Aid form. If you are a taxpayer, we are able to claim tax back on your donation.

Gift Aid is an extremely important form of finance to OST. It should be noted that if you are a higher rate tax payer, you may be able to obtain further relief on your Gift Aid donation in your tax return.

OST TRUSTEES CELEBRATE THEIR 50TH MEETING WITH AGM AND TRUSTEES MEETING

The OST Trustees meet every two months and have a long agenda to get through at most meetings. As Founder I would like to thank the trustees for all their hard work for the Trust which is growing at a rapid pace.



FISHING BOATS FOR FAMILIES IN VELLAIMANAL VILLAGE

Following an appeal in our summer newsletter for funding for two more fishing boats we were able to raise sufficient funds for not one but two more fishing boats for the community. The recipients of the boats are always very grateful to Ocean Stars for providing them with a means to earn an income and provide for their families.



OCEAN STARS FUNDS NEW PROJECT IN KILLINOCHI, NORTHERN SRI LANKA

Matt Marshall, an OST trustee, recently visited Mahadeva Achchirama Children's Home in Killinochchi and felt that this was a new project that OST could get involved with. As always OST was introduced to this project by our team on the ground who are able to recommend projects in areas of greatest need. The home has 300 children who have been placed into their care by the courts - either orphans, children of single parents who can't afford to support them, or parents who have abandoned them because they have suffered during the war. As



organisation supports two nurseries well as children from the home. OST were happy to support this project. nurseries.



well as the children's home itself, the which provide for local village children as was asked to provide the nurseries with a playground and we OST will continue to help with the ongoing needs of the two

Dilanee meets the Head Teacher Mr R.A.Thevarajan of Bt/Puliyadimunai GTMS Batticaloa



The launching of a Kids Athletic Programme with 9 local schools participating was the highlight of the week for the students from Calthorpe Park School, Fleet, Hampshire. The fundraising the students did during the year helped to finance this event. Over 100 students had to be transported from rural schools to Pulliyadimunai School. There was a party atmosphere the whole day. Various different events were organised, javelin, long jump, endurance events and with a plate of noodles for everyone at lunchtime. Ocean Stars provided over 300 cartons of chocolate milk for spectators and participants. Mr Taylor from Calthorpe Park School provided a Gangnam-style warm-up for over 100 students.

Mr Thevarajan said of the day.....It is with lots of happiness and joy, when I think about this programme lot of colors and flowers blooming in my mind. This is the first time in Batticaloa district Kids Athletic programme has happened and I am very proud that it took place in my school, I would like to thank Ocean Stars for making our people happy and providing us with the funds to make this event happen. Every single event beginning to end goes very well. The welcome, the sports, certificate giving and cultural programme happened beyond our dreams. Every single item goes with fun. In this time I would like to mention our students and English students participated this event with out any language barrier. Thank you Dilanee and Ocean Stars Lanka and UK for bringing such happiness and joy to the pupils of Batticaloa and Pulliyadimunai School. We will never forget you.



Ocean Stars Trust: Rebuilding shattered lives in Sri Lanka

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter.

We hope you continue to support our work in making a difference to the lives of the people of Sri Lanka. Donations made payable to "Ocean Stars Trust" can be sent to us at the above address.

We will continue to keep you updated with our work



Dilanee Bunter: Founder, John Bunter: Chairman, Andrew Marshall: Treasurer, Jo Barton: Secretary



Maureen Johnston: Trustee, Kate Whyatt: Trustee, Matthew Marshall: Trustee, Danny Carter: Trustee

Trustees of Ocean Stars Trust

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