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**ESTABLISHED JANUARY 2005****Newsletter 20 : DECEMBER 2014****2014 Highlights**

- New Ocean Stars Lanka Team started work in August 2014.

- Two Secondary Schools in Batticaloa visited by students of Calthorpe Park School, Fleet.

- 31 UK volunteers visited Sri Lanka and Ocean Stars projects for 12 days in October 2014.

- Ocean Stars Volunteers visited a children's home in Kilinochchi, Northern Sri Lanka, for the first time.

**CURRENT WISH LIST**

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

**£10 per month to sponsor a child. 10 children still on waiting list.**

**PAGE 1:** Founder's Message, and Ocean Stars Lanka Team.

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

**PAGE 3:** Maureen Johnston reflects on her role as an OST-Trustee in past 10 years.

**PAGE 4:** Update from Phillip Wells, Barefoot poet who walked a 1,000 miles for the billion barefoot children world-wide.

Ocean Stars Trust will be 10 years old on the 26 January 2015. Over the last 10 years OST has worked tirelessly to rebuild shattered lives of children and families in Sri Lanka. When I look back over the last decade I am left with a feeling of awe and wonderment at how Ocean Stars has evolved and how so many people in the UK, Sri Lanka and the world have been brought together to work to make a difference to the lives of so many people in Sri Lanka. A strength of Ocean Stars is the emphasis it puts on relationships and in what now has become an Ocean Stars family. People who become involved with Ocean Stars in what ever capacity always comment on how much they feel loved and cared for, and how their lives have been enriched by the people they meet. "People have so little but they give us so much", is often said by visitors to OST projects.

Sponsorship schemes are an aspect of our work that really makes an impact on families. When I see UK sponsors meet their sponsor child and witness the warmth and gratitude expressed to them I realise the true value of the work we do. If £10 per month will help a young person pass exams and go onto University or work then we have rebuilt a shattered life and given a family hope for the future. A whole generation of children have grown up with support from UK sponsors. I would like to thank all our sponsors - some of you have been with us for 10 years - for your continued support for our work. We are always looking for sponsors, so if you feel you are able to donate £10 per month please get in touch with us using the contact information above.



OST enables children in rural communities to access pre-school education—this is a major part of our work. We work with 16 pre-schools in the north and east of Sri Lanka and reach out to more than 600 children. Bringing laughter and a morning of creative activities, songs, bubbles, parachutes, the Hokey-Cokey, has become routine for team who visit our playgroups annually.

I would like to wish you all a Very Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year 2015.



**Ocean Stars Lanka Team. From left to right:**  
**Kugadarshini, Field Officer: Diana Elton,**  
**Ocean Stars Manager:**  
**Pavaleswari, Admin Officer**

"It is our duty to work with Ocean Stars UK to rebuild the shattered lives of the children in Sri Lanka. We like the fact that you visit us every year and bring teams over to see our projects and work with our teachers and children. Thanks to you, children in remote communities have access to pre-school education. The teachers are happy because they get paid. We would like to thank everyone who supports Ocean Stars. We are also happy we have got a new office. May God Bless you." Diana, Kugadarshini and Pavaleswari.

## CALTHORPE PARK STUDENTS and TEAM 2 MEMBERS REFLECT ON THEIR TRIP TO SRI LANKA in OCTOBER 2014.

"This trip has been as incredible experience. I will never forget any of this."

*"The Sri Lankan students trusted us implicitly and it is an honour and privilege to work with them."*

"They appreciate everything. Even a sticker."

*"They have so little but give us so much."*

*"Coming back for the second time it has been great to renew friendships."*

*"It has made me reflect and evaluate the important things in life."*

*"The interaction between the two cultures has been amazing."*

*"This has been a trip of a lifetime."*

*"It has changed my outlook on life."*

*"This trip has created so many new friendships."*

*"Everyone has been so friendly and the warm welcomes we have received will stay with me for ever."*



*"This trip has been incredible. Just incredible."*

*"So yeah as I said at the start this was a life changing trip for me and its helped me to see my own life in a different way."*

"It was an absolute delight to see the students interact with those in the schools, to see everyone so happy and smiling and joining together in the activities. It makes me wish that the magic that exists for that week could be transported to other war-torn areas of the world to make everyone live in peace and harmony."



**You Tube Link:** [Ocean Stars Sri Lanka Trip 2014 CPS](#)  
**Calthorpe Park School Blog:** <http://oceanstarsteam2014.blogspot.co.uk>  
**TEAM 2 BLOG:** [ost2014.blogspot.co.uk](http://ost2014.blogspot.co.uk)

*"At 4 pm The Cross Cultural Variety show began. There were so many amazing talents - the dancing was amazing and unique to the country. Georgie, Leanne and Faye brought fake snow which the children loved touching since they had never experienced it before. At the end, everyone was dancing on the stage, it allowed everyone to say goodbye to each other. Due to the bonds created between the students it was very hard to leave them, however we will never forget the children or the experience they gave us. We all learnt the one lesson that you don't need loads to be happy, as all the children we met had so little, but gave so much."*



## Ocean Stars Web-shop

Why not shop at [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/oceanstars](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/oceanstars)?

All you have to do is visit our web shop at [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/oceanstars](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/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.

**easyfundraising**  
.org.uk

## Keep in touch

Keep in touch with us on your favourite social networks



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OST are now supporting Mahadeva Children's Home in Kilinochchi, northern Sri Lanka.

## 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.

## Maureen Johnston reflects on her last ten years as an OST Trustee



It's almost birthday time and on this occasion, a significant one for Ocean Stars. In January we will be ten years old. As a bare fact it surprises me – time has marched silently and it seems quickly. Yet as I look back, those early days seem distant memories and I realise we've come a long way!!

For me, this birthday landmark has also triggered reflection. OST is now a big focus within my own life and it's both moving and encouraging to look back to those early days and retrace some steps.



Initially there was just pure horror - I remember well the shock I felt watching film footage of the death and destruction caused by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. Shortly afterwards I learned about Dilanee's attempts to bring support to the people of Sri Lanka and almost immediately Heatherside School, where I worked, became involved. We set up collection points where parents and children could bring gifts of toiletries or stationery which would be delivered through Dilanee's contacts to those most in need.

Very quickly it became apparent that 'rebuilding shattered lives' would require long term commitment and support. Supporting the growth of educational opportunities for all became our goal and we worked hard with local families and communities to identify those most in need, establish pre-schools and sponsor children. Their courage, in the midst of daily struggle, inspired me. In 2008 Dilanee took her first U.K team to work in OST projects and I was fortunate enough to be part of that group. In terms of my relationship with OST and commitment to its work, it was a pivotal time. I was humbled, challenged by the kindness and warmth of the people who had suffered so much.

Now, having just returned from the latest OST team trip, it strikes me quite forcibly that our projects are working well and, most importantly, bringing change to children's lives. As a trustee, I'm excited by the developments that I've witnessed in these past weeks. The children in our schools are responsive, smiling and making progress. The teachers work hard and feel supported. We're reaching further into remote areas in the north of Sri Lanka and bringing help to people who have been ignored for far too long.

Perhaps most of all what I love about OST is the way we work. From the outset, Dilanee has built relationships with the people and communities we support. They are our friends, not numbers on a spreadsheet. It is a privilege and joy as a trustee to be linked with them and to work with them. They've truly enriched my life.

We're ten years old and have 'journeyed' far but the process of rebuilding is ongoing. Our efforts will continue. My hope and prayer is that we can continue to challenge injustice and support change for those in Sri Lanka who have suffered much. In the words of our OST song, may 'love and friendship make us one'!!

### FUND RAISING EVENTS IN 2014

**The Ocean Stars community has spent the last year fund raising by having the following events:**

Barn Dance, Curry Evening, Walking the length of the Basingstoke Canal, cake sales, car washes, bike rides, quiz evenings, a variety show, a slug walk, coffee mornings, market stalls, jobs around the home .....and have raised around £15,000 for the work of Ocean Stars. A big thank you to everyone involved.

Maureen spends a morning at Mandoor Playgroup with members of Ocean Stars Team 2. This year the theme was Row Row Row your Boat and the children made hats, sang songs, played games and had lots of laughter.



**The children at Narupulthotam Pre School enjoy a morning of fun with Ocean Stars Team members.**

**A highlight for OST IN 2014 was following the Barefoot Poet Phillip Wells as he walked a 1,000 miles in aid of the billion barefoot children in the world including the children of Ocean Stars in Sri Lanka.**

On the afternoon of Saturday 9 August our intrepid poet Phillip Wells, @theFIREpoet, walked over the Menai Bridge into Anglesey and entered the garden of the Anglesey Arms Hotel. As he crossed the finishing line he raised his arms in celebration. 1000 miles 'barefoot' in aid of the 1,000,000,000 children who have to live in poverty. It was a great moment and OST Trustees Jo and Maureen were delighted to be there with him.



Phillip reflects on his walk:

"Thank you to all those who have prayed and followed the deepest calling of their hearts, especially all

those magnificent and prayerful lodestars of humility from Ocean Stars who walked alongside me, and who continue to be a very real example of how a charity should be, focusing always on its essential aims and allowing itself to grow organically: Dilanee, John, Maureen, Jo, Helena, Dan, Andrew, Ian, Ruth, Kate and Jenny."

"What a team - fearless through the slipperiest toboggan-slopes of Somerset mud; calm as a pond when the directionally-challenged poet leads them all in PRECISELY the wrong direction (Jo gently took responsibility and the map, and thereafter all manner of things went well)."

"Thank you all so much at Ocean Stars for your superbly inspired teamwork, which has worked such wonders for this walk. After all, "without our inspired participation in the world, God is incomplete (Andrew Harvey)."



## 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, Kate Whyatt Treasurer, Jo Barton: Secretary, Maureen Johnston: Trustee



Matthew Marshall: Trustee, Danny Carter: Trustee, Jennie Dunbar: OST Intern, Ruth Hughes: Fund Raising Manager

## Trustees and Committee of Ocean Stars Trust

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