

Half-Yearly Newsletter of ROSHNI , Rehabilitation Opportunities, Services and Health for the Neurologically Impaired, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Ramakrishnapuri, Gwalior, MP, INDIA

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July-August 2008

ROSHNI MOVES INTO NEW SWARNA JAYANTI MODEL BUILDING

There was a period of intensely hectic activity for everyone at ROSHNI, when we were occupied in shifting into the new building, and simultaneously preparing for the Ashrama's Golden Jubilee and ROSHNI's own Tenth Anniversary celebrations. There were often some quite amusing and confusing moments when the security systems were put in place! We are truly grateful for all the support and help we had from all, especially from Penny and, and her parents Clare and Michael Fox, brother Damian, friends Simon, Vicki and all members of Friends of Roshni UK, who were with us from the last week of September through the month of October; her husband Damian came later. We could not have made this move without your help and support.

The Volunteers wrote: *Penny and family arrived 28th September and preparations for the move to the new building and its' opening interspersed the timetable. Our involvement in the preparation included the painting of a rainbow on the EI room. Penny's family produced wonderful murals & designs on the walls & doors. A chance to observe Penny & Vicky (Penny's*

boss) doing assessments was most useful to Kate & I, also Uttam Sharma (Indian physio volunteer). It was also lovely to get to know Penny & her family a little better.

On 4 October 2008 ROSHNI Swarna Jayanti Model Building with access for all persons with disabilities was inaugurated by the Governor of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Balram Jakhar, and presided by Shri CK Lahoti, former chief justice of India. The President of India was to come but had to cancel on account of some unforeseen circumstances.

VISITORS FROM GUJARAT

The summer term started with much activity. The first week saw the visit of a team from Blind People's Association, Ahmedabad, from the 7 to 10 July to impart training to 45 parents, teachers and professionals from NGOs and the Roshni Staff on Deaf –Blindness; they assessed 6 children with multiple disability associated with Visual and Hearing Impairment. This was a new area for us at ROSHNI and extremely useful. Nagma Pandya and Krupa Vilani, were enthusiastic and good in this area; they even managed a trip to see children at



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Shivpuri. Rakhi had attended a 10-day training on the subject at BPA, in May.

GAPPERS & VOLUNTEERS from US, Oz and UK

Sahil Jain a young student from the US came to work with the students from 1st to 14th August. He made a wonderful PowerPoint Presentation on getting back to the US and is actively raising funds for Roshni. His experience is given below:

I spent 15 days working at ROSHNI in August. If I left with anything after my work at ROSHNI, it was the appreciation learned.

The children are incredibly intelligent, more than I can describe through words; and considering what all is holding them back, mentally and (for many) financially, they are a thousand times smarter than you or I

In India, awareness for such instances is very low. In a chain effect, the funding to help such children is also very low. After leaving ROSHNI, my efforts are solely devoted to helping this institution. If ROSHNI can make a name in India, then it can set an example for many other similar societies in the nation

Our GAP volunteers Zoe Salt and Nicole Harrowfield, from Australia (for the 2nd year) and Volunteers Physiotherapists from the UK -Kate Webb and Liz Mawson arrived on the 1st and 12th September respectively. They were with us at Roshni through the sweltering heat of September and October and helped us not only working with the students but also the shifting into the new building and all through the preparations for the Inauguration of the new Building of Roshni and the build-up to the Golden Jubilee Celebrations. Cath and Charlie arrived in late November.

Some of their experiences are jotted below by Zoë and Nicole, and supplemented by Liz:

We arrived into Gwalior on the 1st of September after having spent 3 days in Delhi. On the 2nd we were taken to Roshni by Manjula and shown around the school. We were introduced to the staff and students and given a brief insight into their classes and methods of teaching.

Our first week at ROSHNI involved English and Math classes, pre-vocational work and getting to know the Roshni family. Although it was a little confronting, we had a very warm welcome and felt like we had someone to go to if we had any problems.

The opening of the new Roshni building was fast approaching and we could sense that everyone was anxious about getting everything done in time. We were very excited for the students to have a new learning environment as we thought it was necessary

for their development. However this was a very stressful time and we sometimes struggled to communicate with the staff. This made it difficult to get things done. However we did have the help of Penny and her family. They were instrumental in the process of moving to the new building and we would not have been able to do so without them. Their involvement and presence during this time not only helped the ROSHNI staff but was also very helpful for us as volunteers. We enjoyed having other foreigners to talk to.

After the opening of the new building we found the atmosphere at Roshni much more controlled and productive. We noticed that the students had more of a timetable to follow on each day. This allowed us to really teach the kids and see an improvement in their English and Maths. We also began teaching them more practical skills as well, such as cooking and art and craft classes. They would then be able to apply these skills to their everyday life.

We have had an amazing time at ROSHNI and have found the experience life changing. We hope to come back soon and see the progress the children have made.

Liz Mawson: *Our visit to ROSHNI began on September 12th 2008, a Friday. We were taken to Mr & Mrs ML Malhotras' house, we unpacked our bags and shortly after we were taken to the Roshni Centre. We spent a few hours there, being introduced to staff and students; we also had our first lunch at the Ashram. The following day we were able to observe the orthotic specialist from Delhi. On the Sunday, the ROSHNI bus took us to the fort, where we were able to appreciate the splendor of the architecture and told some of the history of the buildings there. It has been fortunate that our visit coincided with a number of celebrations and important meetings. This has given us more of an insight into Indian life, culture and the organization of services.*



The next week we started to build a timetable of activities/treatments.

NATIONAL TRUST MEETING Rakhi Asthana attended the AGM of the National Trust in Delhi, in early September

SNAP ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual meeting of **State Nodal Agency Partners SNAP** was held on **19 & 20 September** in Gwalior, hosted by ROSHNI

Ramakrishna Ashrama; we are one of the 4 SNAPs in Madhya Pradesh. **The venue for the Meeting and the place for the stay of the Delegates was the State Institute of Health Management & Communication, who gave their full support.**

We became involved in the organization and enjoyed meeting delegates from so many different parts of India. It was inspiring to hear of their achievements and good that there was an open sharing of problems and solutions. We also saw some more of the sights of Gwalior (Light & sound show at the fort, Mohammed Ghaus & Tansen tombs).

It proved to be very successful on both the professional and social level. It was the Chairperson's inspiring thought, that each delegate light a diya (lamp) decorated by the students at ROSHNI, in a moving Inaugural Ceremony.

Discussion and feedback sessions gave the 33 delegates from 29 SNAPs, of 20 different states, a chance to share ideas, air problems and feedback directly to Smt Poonam Natarajan, the chairperson of the National Trust. They outlined the state of support for people with autism, cerebral palsy, mental and multiple disabilities and problems their families and other carer's face.

The highlight of the meeting was the fun element and thus the visit to the Gwalior Fort which dominates the skyline of Gwalior, around the monuments; the finale being the impressive 'Light and Sound Show', which provided a historical background of the fort and various dynasties that ruled Gwalior through the middle ages; this was followed by a dinner at the State Health & Communication Institute Hostel, to which some pupils of ROSHNI, their parents and some local persons in the field, Mr PD Shrivastava, the Joint-Director for SJ&E and LLC Members - RS Rathore



and Mr D Tomar, Legal Advisor, were also invited. This was an excellent chance to network and make new friends, exchange email addresses ... and also sing together! There was a visit to the Ramakrishna Ashrama and ROSHNI (including the New Building) and the Sarada Balgram, the next morning, 20 September

NATIONAL TRUST AWARENESS-LOCAL NGO MEETING

A National Trust meeting for local NGOs and parents was held on 8 November. Information from the AGM was disseminated to NGOs and some from neighboring districts and other interested parties.

“The most important need is to change one's attitude and perception of persons with disability.” This valuable advice was given by Dr (Smt) Kalpana Jain, Civil Surgeon, Gwalior to the 28 participants from local and outstation NGOs and parents who were present to learn of the new schemes of the National Trust and recent Government Schemes for the benefit of persons with disability.

Such meetings are essential as many government schemes are not well promoted and many people know nothing of the financial and other support that could be available to them. .Vivek and Col Rawat were in Delhi to attend the National Trust SNAP meeting held there on 15-16 December.

OUTINGS

There were 2 outings with Primary Group to the Zoo at Phoolbagh on the 5th and the Prevocational Group to the Scindia Chattris on the 6th November

STAFF HAPPENINGS

3 staff members Shubha, Gayatri and Vegwati, were on a 5-day Professional placement at AADI, in early November. This programme is very beneficial to all. We hope to do some more to other organizations.



We finally had the staff outing on December 6, to the most unusual place Padavli and Mitavli and Bateshwar – marvelous, ancient monuments, that none of us had seen before; they were very near Ram’s village, where all of us had a delicious cup of tea and saw his family home and also saw a CP child with a lot of potential.

December Liz and Kate are in their last week and Catherine Lomas and Charlotte Jennings, are settling down after some bouts of illness. They have also enjoyed the Tansen Music Festival, all four of them attended the Music concert at the birth place of Tansen, at Behat, on 8 December, quite an adventure!



All of them were off to Bandhavgarh and Khajuraho, on the 12th December, on a long weekend

WORLD DISABILITY DAY

We had a great **Inclusive Art Competition** on the 3rd December, World Disability Day with 110 participants-students, from 5 Mainstream Schools-Morning Star, Wendy School, Kiddy’s Corner, Woodstock and Siddhant Convent Schools and five NGOs including Roshni, Snehalaya, Amarjyoti, Asha



School (Army) and the Mercy Home. Zoe’s parents and brother were also with us during the World Disability Day celebrations.



Dr Mohan Sharma and the Rotary Club Gwalior Midtown, sponsored the Celebrations and provided the refreshments. We were really happy to have the Rotary President Mr Ajay Singhal and other members, with us on this occasion.

ANJALI CHILDRENS FESTIVAL

It was great that 8 Students from ROSHNI and Sarada Balgram Yogesh, Yogendra, Pradeep Ruchika, Ashok, his friend OmPrakash Kiran and Shammi, went to the Anjali Festival at Bhubaneswar, with Ram and Mamta as escorts.

.The trip was from 24 to 28 December 2008; They learnt pottery, fine Art and craft and Photography and children performed a group dance and folk song. It was a wonderful experience, learning a variety of new skills and traveling, we have a interesting report by the girls.IT was great to send the first inclusive group to Orissa.