

Laura Louie Hope Projects



December 1, 2012

Dear Friends & Supporters,

We can't believe it's time for our yearly newsletter! This year has been extremely busy, exciting, challenging and sad!

Father Abraham passed away 4 days before we arrived in India on August 28, 2012. He was 87 years old. Born in Nova Scotia, Fr Abraham joined the Society of Jesus in 1941, was sent to India in 1948, where he was ordained a priest in 1954.

Father Abraham is revered in the Darjeeling District of India and especially Kurseong for his work with the poor. The whole town of Kurseong shut down for his funeral as they flocked to St. Alphonsus School, which he built literally stone, by stone with his students. Not only did Father Abraham touch every person in this town but also every person who met him.

We first met Father Abraham just before Christmas in 2007. He was instrumental in helping us connect with community members to start our projects in India as well as teaching us how to work with the poor. Thank you Father Abraham!! You will be greatly missed!



Photo above: Father J. Murray Abraham SJ



Photo above right: Father Abraham believed the best way to get children to learn good pronunciation of the English language was to teach them in song. Here is Father, at Morning Star for poor children, singing songs like Oh McDonald had a Farm. Everyone had such a good time!!

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The acupuncture clinic at Adarsha Nursing Home in Kalimpong, India is flourishing. We did a second training in February, March and a third training in September 2012 in acupuncture, massage and nutrition. The nurses are doing extremely well and have learned the medical protocol treatments successfully. Currently we are only treating pain conditions. In fact, all patients who have come to the clinic have had great improvements in their symptoms and quality of life. We are all overjoyed at the excellent results!



Photo above: Here we are at the acupuncture clinic getting ready to start our day.

Photo above right: Ashmita and Ramit discussing a patient case before doing acupuncture treatment.



This last trip in September the administrator of the Adarsha Nursing Home came for treatment of back pain. He was amazed that he was able to move without his back support and that his pain had decreased significantly after only one treatment. He is now an avid supporter of acupuncture.

We recently spoke with Ashmita, one of the nurses trained in acupuncture, and she said the clinic is going really well. They have a minimum of 6 patients a day and run the clinic two days per week. We are thrilled at the prospect of helping community in this way.



Photo above: Here is a photo of the acupuncture clinic. There is no central heating and with temperatures similar to Vancouver in November, it's COLD!! The clinic closes during the coldest months of December, January and part of February.



Above Left to right: Nordén, myself, Dr. Gyalmi, Ashmita, Ramit, Mandira, Karuna and Sunita. Our last day of clinic followed by a wonderful ceremony. The nurses are all in their beautiful saris. We didn't realize the skill and time involved in wearing a sari until we were waiting about 1.5 hours for the nurses to change from their uniforms!! Nordén is the person who went above and beyond in helping us start and maintain this training program. He has been an incredible gift!

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In September 2012, we also sponsored a workshop on Community-Based Responses to People Living with HIV and AIDS in Darjeeling, India in conjunction with the Shanker Foundation. We were surprised to find out that this is the first time an international organization has ever hosted a workshop on this topic in this community.

The need for this workshop came to our attention 4 years ago when we saw the huge stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS as well as the misunderstanding of the condition itself and the impact on the communities. In 2002 the first case of HIV was identified in the Darjeeling district and 5 years later the number of people infected had reached 141. Today it is estimated there are 3000 people living with HIV and AIDS. With this rate of increase you can only imagine what the numbers could be like in another 5 years!

We were not sure how many participants would come to the workshop and expected approximately 20 but hoped for 40. In the end, 60 participants came the first day and unfortunately we had to send some away as we did not have the resources for this many participants and in fact some could not stay for the full 5 days which was needed as one day built on the previous day's work.

The workshop focused on the fact that it's been almost 4 decades since HIV was identified and that no country has been spared. Everybody is at risk of infection and no sector of the community is left unaffected. HIV does not only lead to AIDS but it can also lead to serious emotional, social and economic problems which can have a devastating impact on personal, family, community well being and national development.

To prevent further spread of the virus and to mitigate the suffering and the ensuing impacts requires the help and support of every sector of the community. No one person or organization can solve the problem alone. Everybody must join hands and work together to manage this problem.

This workshop was for community leaders and was given by our colleague and friend, Mr. Laurie Maund, of the Sangha Metta Project. The workshop was unique in that it was participatory with many group activities which helped to solidify the learning and how participants could help their communities. For example, on large pieces of paper were written different professions such as teacher, doctor, housewife, military man, policeman, prostitute, truck driver, etc. The participants were asked to work together to put the professions in order of the highest risk group to the lowest risk group. Interestingly in this community, the highest risk group for men was injection drug users and the highest risk group for women was housewives. This may be not what you would have suspected.



Photo above: Several participants were given a profession and then they were asked to line up from highest to lower risk of contracting HIV – actor, dancer, farmer, vendor, housewife, singer, doctor, etc. **Photo left:** Here is one group giving their presentation on the impact of HIV on the community. They were given the group of being children of parents who were HIV positive and asked what problems they would face. Each presentation was followed by discussion which was extremely helpful.

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On the last day of the workshop Laurie took the participants through an action plan. Each group was given a problem and had to take it through the causes of the problem; goals and objectives; strategies; time frame; resource persons; budget; indicators and evaluation. Once done each group presented and a group discussion ensued. It was very interesting and educational.

At the end of the workshop, participants were extremely motivated to go back to their small communities and start doing workshops. We were thrilled!!



Photo above left: This was a great activity and was lots of fun. Everyone was broken into groups and given a large piece of paper. One person was blindfolded and the others had to direct them on how to draw an item, e.g., a mountain, a river below the mountain, a big tree beside the river, etc. This activity shows the participants that if you have the help of your friends you can complete the activity. Just like if you are going to set up a project in the community, you need the help of your friends. You can't do it alone. You need to work together, listen to your friends, follow directions correctly and then you are able to finish the project successfully. When you start a project you are like a blind man but with the support and help of your friends you can complete the project brilliantly.

Photo above right: This is another group activity where Laurie was teaching them that you need to solve a problem by looking at the cause. If you don't eliminate the cause of the problem, it comes back.



Photo left: Here I am with Esther one of the members of the Shanker Foundation. She is getting her course certificate and is such an inspiration! Behind us is Hari, the president of the Shanker Foundation, who is incredible and was instrumental in making this workshop happen.

The **Shanker Foundation** was started in 2005 and is the only organization run by people living with HIV and AIDS in the Darjeeling district of India. The Shanker Foundation helps people living with HIV and AIDS to give them a more productive life with self confidence and dignity as well as helping them with their health care needs and quality of life. Their activities include educating the public regarding HIV and AIDS and helping with the struggle against stigma and discrimination.

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The Mae On Project in rural northern Thailand, continues to thrive and help people living with HIV/AIDS and the public. The acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital has been running successfully for almost 9 years now.

The acupuncture clinic at Mae On Hospital draws many NGOs, healthcare professionals and medical doctors from all over the world. This is because the Mae On Hospital's HIV/AIDS program is unique. This community-based program incorporates allopathic medicine with complementary medicines including acupuncture and traditional Thai medicine. In 2012, there were 5 groups of visitors from nursing students from the USA, Finland and Singapore to NGOs from Bhutan, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Nepal and Burma.

Unchalee Pultajuk, the head nurse of the HIV department of Mae On Hospital, continues to oversee the acupuncture clinic and to amaze us.

Unchalee has started her own acupuncture treatment protocol for lipodystrophy which is a side effect of some antiretroviral therapies. It is characterized by the loss of subcutaneous fat typically face, buttocks, arms and legs. Her patients are especially concerned about their face and the way they look. The patients feel the acupuncture is helping and it is making them feel better about themselves. Good job Unchalee!!

Unchalee also has given 5 presentations on using acupuncture as complementary medicine with people living with HIV/AIDS throughout Thailand at various forums and conferences during 2012. Go girl go!!



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Photo left: Unchalee setting electro-acupuncture machine for patient with Jeed looking on from the base of the bed. Unchalee and Jeed were the first brave nurses to learn acupuncture in 2004. Wanida, an acupuncture assistant is standing to the far right.

Photo above: The incredible Unchalee Pultajuk!! She is reason the Mae On Project has been so successful for almost 9 years now. Thank you Unchalee!!

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We wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season. Thank you for your continued support and for giving so many hope.

With much gratitude and appreciation,

Laura

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Photo above (left to right): Tee (our interpreter), myself and Jeed (one of the first nurses trained in acupuncture at the Mae On Hospital).



For more information on these projects and how to make a donation, please visit our website at www.LauraLouieHopeProjects.org. For donations of more than \$50, you will receive a charitable tax receipt (Canadian residents only).

Your charitable donations will help to make a dramatic difference in the quality of life of many resource-poor people.