

March 2023

Dear Friends,

With report card distribution yesterday, we have just finished our final school year in our current location. I had been thinking that this would be a sad day, but since an astonishing 60% of students (80% in classes 5-8) have decided to stay with us, even though it will mean an hour and a half of travel each day, there was more a feeling of excitement as we prepare to transition to our new school building. The next school year will open there in June. I am incredibly touched that the students are willing to make a sacrifice to remain in the safe, happy, and truly educational environment we have created at Asha Deep. What we have is very unique, and it seems our students understand that.



Before I review some of the happenings in the last few months, I would like to give a shout out to Christy Sommers and her goat calendar. I am so grateful for her hard work in bringing together a superb collection of goats-in-sweaters photos as well as in marketing and managing sales and shipping (with the help of her mother and sister). I'm also grateful to everyone who purchased one or more calendars and for so many who added special donation amounts. This year's sales yielded an astonishing \$12,215 for Asha Deep. Thank you so much!



*Republic Day program, January 26*

Moving on to school happenings . . . We enjoyed good study time in January and February, before moving into an **extremely** busy March as we prepared for both final exams and our annual public performance. In addition, some volunteers with Chances4Children came to do preliminary eye testing of all our students. Nine were found to have weak vision. After a more thorough check by an eye doctor, these students have now received appropriate prescription glasses.



*Eye testing and*



*Kiran with her  
new glasses*



Throughout the year, in weekly sessions, we teach the children facts they should be familiar with in the fields of science, social studies, the arts, and current events. Once a term we hold a written test with the top scorers winning prizes. Our annual competition, which contained questions from all our sessions starting last July, was held in March. The incentive was a pizza party for those who scored over 85%. I was pleased with the effort the students put in to get in on that party; 22 students made the mark with one girl attaining a perfect score!



Also in March, we celebrated Holi, applying colored powder to each other and then dancing! The kids love this day of play with their teachers and friends.





All this has been punctuated by practice, practice, practice for our annual Spring Extravaganza which will be held tomorrow (April 2)! We decided to hold our performance at our new location this year as a way to introduce ourselves to the new community.



*Circus skill practice (left) and creating letters (ASHA DEEP VIDYASHRAM) for stage decoration (above)*

A few weeks ago, our teachers canvassed the two slum areas closest to our new school, telling them about Asha Deep and giving them invitations to our upcoming performance. It felt good to begin our mission of offering hope through quality education in our new neighborhood. Quality teaching is a **huge** need there; a group of our teachers talked to a family who has a daughter in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. When they asked her to read a sample of Hindi, however, the girl could not even recognize all her letters. It's heartbreaking that whole communities of children are being sentenced to a life of poverty due to the lack of proper teaching in nearby schools.



Since we have announced our opening at the new location, there is a growing sense of anticipation among the families of Narottampur, the name of our new location. When I visit the school site, I am inevitably followed by a group of children, almost jumping up and down with excitement as they tour their new school. Construction continues at good speed; the building will be mostly complete by June.



*Giving them a better future!*



Here are some recent pictures of our new building:

*This was taken  
before work had  
started on the  
third floor.*



*View from the front  
balcony onto the  
adjoining village.*



*Interior courtyard*



*Our teachers on neighborhood canvas day*

With best wishes to all of you as we move into Spring,  
love, Connie

*In this view, the  
walls are nearly  
complete.*

