

# Ghar Sita Mutu - House With a Heart

A home for abandoned children, a training program for destitute women, and a support program for needy families in Kathmandu, Nepal

JULY 2009

What's the hardest part of the day in a house with 20 children? Doing the washing up by candlelight—with no water in the tank because the electric pump does not work without power.

The boys, Sunil, Govinda, Krishna and Babu take turns going outside to pump the water manually into urns. The urns are hauled inside to fill a plastic bucket we keep next to the sink.

The older girls—Mamata (if team A has kitchen duties that night)—wash the dishes with soap and a wire scrubber and then put them into the second sink for rinsing. Benita, also on team A, then rinses the plate with water that her assistant (one of the younger girls, Sanjeeta or Manisha) scoops from the bucket and pours over the dish or large pan that needs to be rinsed.



*Manu and Sunil use pedal power to generate electricity for our dining room.*

Sweeping the floor and cleaning the dining room in the dark is hard too, of course, but the children do their best, and perfection is not expected. Perfection would be nice as we are always concerned about attracting rats, but when the lights are out, it's not a luxury we can strive for. The electricity shortage is a big challenge. It is difficult for the children to do their homework and to study for exams.

I'm horrified when one of the small girls nonchalantly picks up a candle to go to the toilet or when I see the older girls studying with candles sitting on the edge of their bed. As most others in Kathmandu Valley who have no power, we all go to bed very early, especially in the winter.

You can see a video of the children in action at our website: [www.gharsitamutu.org](http://www.gharsitamutu.org).

Thanks to **Mike Kwiecinski** for the wind-up headlamps he donated. They are a big help, and the pedal powered generator he found for us now lights the kitchen/dining room.

Solar backup power is one option we are exploring, despite the fact that prices have risen considerably in the past year. Our Internet campaign for the \$4-5,000 we need for this system has raised \$450 so far, but we really got a boost the weekend of May 31<sup>st</sup> when **Bill Boland** from Arizona (the brother of last year's GSM volunteer **Colleen Boland**), held a fundraiser at the Village Coffee Roastery in Scottsdale, AZ, and raised \$2,600. We are most grateful to Bill for his efforts, and thank all who participated and sent in donations.



*Three-year-old Maya Tamang is the newest member of the GSM family. She was working as a servant at a local tea shop.*

## NEW ADDITION TO OUR FAMILY

I am happy to announce that we have a new child in our home, three-year-old **Maya Tamang**. Unable to cope alone in a small village, Maya's mother committed suicide after her husband abandoned her.

Maya was brought to the city and was washing cups in a small tea house near our home. On arrival at Ghar Sita Mutu she offered help and proved adept at both washing clothes and sweeping. Luckily for her she will NOT be expected to do either in our home. She is a happy child but

sometimes cries in her sleep and because she is of the Tamang caste, she doesn't yet speak Nepali. Her new sisters and brothers are delighted to have her around as she is quite comical and often uses really rough language.

#### RUBIN GRANT

I'm excited to announce that **The Shelley and Donald Rubin foundation** has awarded us another generous grant. We are most grateful to them and to **Rachel Weingeist** and **Bruce Payne** for their continued support and encouragement.



*Seven-year-old Bimala has many chores to do at home before she leaves for classes in our Children's Learning Centre.*

#### CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTRE

Before coming to classes at our Learning Centre, seven-year-old Bimala must fetch water and wash her family's dishes. Children in our Learning Centre learn basic reading and writing in Nepali and some English. They are also given clothing and vegetables from our garden to take home. These children are often hungry so we now feed them a snack which serves as the humble beginning of our feeding program.

We are grateful to have received a second grant from the **Don Splawn Foundation East** which helps support the Learning Centre.

#### THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE

Thanks to the people who held or are holding parties on our behalf. This is a huge help to us.

A PJ & Underwear Fundraiser was held in Naples, Florida and was hosted by **Nancy Davenport**, **Sara Farley**, **Barbara Quinlan**, and my daughter **Kyla Rodgers**. It was great fun as guests arrived in their PJs bearing gifts of underwear and sleepwear for me to take back to babies and children in Nepal. About 40 people attended this event and nearly \$8,000 was raised.

This summer some friends will host small parties to help me raise the money we need to sustain our program for the rest of the year. Then I must worry about next year.

Like everywhere else, prices have risen considerably in Nepal. Fortunately, we are lucky to have land on which we can grow our own fruits and vegetables. As you might imagine, this helps reduce our food budget.

**Colleen Boland** will be holding her 2<sup>nd</sup> annual fundraiser in Ithaca at Castaways on July 12, which will feature three bands who have all donated their time. Many thanks to Colleen and **Ayurveda**, **Mike Ogeltree**, and the **Magnetics**. See our website for details.

Thanks to Noel Faulkner's cousin **Geraldine** for dedicating her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday gifts to our fundraising efforts and for making a generous donation herself. Happy 50<sup>th</sup>, Geraldine!

A big thank you to my son-in-law **Matt Rodgers** who arranged for the donation of a basketball signed by the **2008 Los Angeles Lakers** complete with a letter of authenticity. Many thanks to **Phil Jackson** and the Lakers for their generosity. We plan to auction it off.

With no paid staff in New York to conduct regular fundraising events, independent fundraisers are critical to our success. But let's not forget that small donations are vitally important; we need only look at recent U.S. history making for that proof.



*The older children went on their first ever overnight trip to the Chitwan animal reserve (see them riding the elephants above). The younger children went swimming and as a special treat stayed at "Hotel Mummy" (Beverly's room at the house). They were very excited and happy to snuggle in bed.*



## A Success Story



**Draupadi** (center) completed our literacy program while working as our cleaning lady. She is now able to do simple math and has opened a shop of her own down the road from our house.

During the last election John McCain sent out letters asking for \$500 donations while Barack Obama asked individuals to help make a difference with \$5 donations. We saw how successful his campaign was—a small donation from a lot of people (many of whom had to sacrifice to send in that \$5) made a difference. It does for Ghar Sita Mutu as well. Every dollar has an impact.

### POLITICAL SCENE

The ever-changing political scene in Nepal continues to amaze me. It interrupts normal life and the children's education because of strikes that are often for seemingly any reason whatsoever. Recently, the Prime Minister resigned which has caused a lot of unrest and an atmosphere of uncertainty. You can track developments in Nepal by going to BBC news on South Asia.

### RECENT VISITORS

As noted in our first online newsletter this spring, the House is getting an increasing number of visitors. Many thanks to **Hannah Herr** who designed some beautiful new products for our women to make, including scarves made of felt & silk.

In addition, **Ruth Montlake** and friends visited our learning centre and met and played with the children. Many thanks to **Silvia Montes** from Brazil who came again this spring and also helped design lovely new items for our women to make.

### PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS

Our women's program continues to help very poor women improve their lives. That brings hope to families who never

before had a chance for a life outside of poverty. Women are paid to attend classes in felt making, candle making, puppet making, sewing, and literacy. Graduates are successfully taking what they learn in our training outside to make livings, albeit meager ones; others are able to supplement another income.

We are looking for a **volunteer with marketing experience** to help us market the beautiful products the women make.

We are considering beginning an incense making program and have arranged to learn how to do that from **Direct Help Org**, a Spanish group similar to ours which supports itself through its incense sales. In return, we will teach the trainers for Direct Help how to teach felt making and candle making to their women.

We are enjoying our new partnership with the **Lower East Side Girls Club** in New York and have started a small club with our GSM girls and some of the young girls in the local area. I am most grateful to the Club for providing us with a digital camera and video camera for our use in Nepal. We are trying to upload our photos and stories written by club members so that they can be shared with the club in New York, but thus far our internet bandwidth has proven insufficient. I am also very excited that Ghar Sita Mutu has been offered office space in the Girls Club's new building which will be completed in about two years. We look forward to continuing to learn and share with them.

### TRANSPORTATION

My most recent eleven weeks in Nepal passed very quickly with nary a dull moment. There was a month long school holiday and we went on several day trips and once to the swimming pool at a hotel. We also changed schools yet again and hope the children will do better in this new environment.

The school bus is expensive for fifteen children and this new reality highlights our strong need for our own vehicle. Luckily, **Les Lawrence** whom I met on the London to Delhi flight last year and who subsequently visited the House in Nepal, is campaigning to get us a bus.



*This is the kind of small bus we're hoping to receive—but we won't be carrying a goat on top.*

Ghar Sita Mutu  
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New York, NY 10113

We're updating our  
website frequently.  
Check it out!  
[www.GharSitaMutu.org](http://www.GharSitaMutu.org)



Printing and distribution of the  
newsletter is courtesy of Bryn Benson  
and the Lake Forest College Visual  
Communications Department.

The hardest thing about being in New York? Yes, I miss the children very much, but the most difficult thing is asking for—and trying to raise—money to support our programs and home.

May I just say once again how grateful I am to all of you who have helped and supported me over the last nine and a half years. I would not have been able to continue to run Ghar Sita Mutu without you. You are helping me make a difference in the lives of hundreds of Nepali women and children, and we all thank you.

—Beverly

#### ***Here is how you can help***

*Ghar Sita Mutu relies on the generosity of friends like you. All donations are **tax deductible** and go directly toward running and expanding our programs.*

*Please make all checks payable to our fiscal sponsor:  
**The Candy Jernigan Foundation for the Arts**  
and note "Ghar Sita Mutu" on your check.*

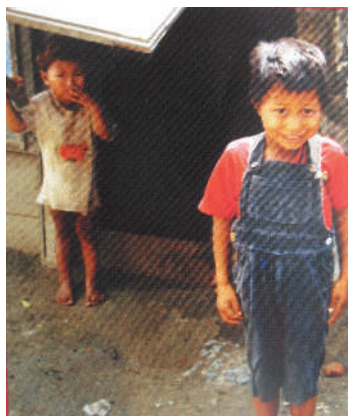
*Mail checks to:  
Ghar Sita Mutu  
P.O. Box 152  
New York, NY 10113*

**You can also give online at [www.GharSitaMutu.org](http://www.GharSitaMutu.org).**

*Thank you!*

For more information, call Beverly at 212-529-0832.

#### A LITTLE BACKGROUND



*Babu & Krishna, ages 2 & 5*

My name is Beverly Bronson. I own a small antique shop called A Repeat Performance in New York City. In 1999 while working as a volunteer in Nepal, I found two abandoned children named Babu and Krishna, ages two and five. After searching for a loving home for them I had no choice but to put them in boarding school. Safe but bleak. The school appointed me as guardian and I went back to

New York with plans to raise money to establish a centre to house abandoned children and help destitute women.

With the help and generous support of Noel Faulkner and Dr. Mark Rodgers, who both made a long term commitment to help me raise the children and build a centre, I returned to Nepal with enough funds to rent a house. We opened Ghar Sita Mutu - House with a Heart in 2001 and have been expanding our outreach to the community every year. We moved into our own home in 2004. I split my time between New York and Nepal.