

Newsletter April 2012 • Edition# 17

Uttaran Observes International Women's Day 2012



Attendees at International Women's Day



Arpita Sengupta introduces TCA President Prathama Das

Our recognition of International Women's Day was one day early this year because the 8th of March clashed with Dol-jatra. So we were ahead of the world at large.

Every woman associated with TCA in any way was invited and the event took place from noon until 4.30 pm.

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Soma Ghosh, an Uttaran trainee opened the occasion with a song and she was followed by Saradindu and Monisha Adhikary, who, accompanied on the tabla, sang "Jodi tor dak sune keu na ase", as well as a devotional Krishna bhajan and a Holi song.

Poems by Sukumar Roy (Bengali poet and playwright 1887-1923) and Rabindranath Tagore were recited by Rohan Ali Mondal, the son of Halima Mondal. Further readings were contributed by Srimati Prathama Das ("Samyobad" Kavi Nazrul Islam, the 'rebel poet', musician and independence fighter, 1899-1920, author of over four thousand songs) and by Gopa Chakravarty ("Sobola," Rabindranath Tagore).

"Employee of the Year" award went to Srm Sabita Manna for her outstanding work. Prathama Das gave her a certificate of appreciation, an uttoriyo, and a cheque for Rupees three thousand.

Another award was the "Long Term Service Award" to Srm. Nira Rani Das, a similar recognition with a cheque for one thousand rupees. Nira has served TCA for about 18 years, one of our most loyal helpers.

The audience was entertained by the foot tapping numbers of Sushmita Mukherjee and the dancing of Beauty Mondal, accompanied by her own recorded track.

Lunch was served, followed by an interactive session with all the trainees. The trainees shared their experience of Uttaran, their opinions and even some grievances. Our teachers also spoke of their experiences and encouraged the trainees. "Our thanks to all those who attended today's event," said by Arpita Sengupta of Office and Field Supervisor.

Written by Arpita Sengupta and edited by Chris Furedy

Thank you for supporting us for 24 years

A Message from the International Board of Directors

On-going services of The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation's three key areas continue to flourish with your generous donations and assistance, namely

- Health and Basic Hygiene
- Education and
- Vocational Training.

Basic health and vision

The need for basic medical care is enormous in both villages beyond the city and in the remoter areas of West Bengal. Without access to doctors, many people are forced to travel to the city in search of treatment and advice, and some simply give up due to lack of funds. For twenty-four years TCF has been sending a medical team of doctors and aides weekly to some of the needy villages. Using the main clinic at Naktala as a base, we reach out to Raghampur, Boral, Badhe Hooghly, Ghutiari Sharif, Brahmapur and Bakultala supplying health checks and some medicines. On average about one thousand people attend the field clinics each month.

TCF is pleased to report to our donors, patrons, volunteers and supporters that it held twenty eye camps providing eye glasses to 1936 patients, out of 2658 patients seen so far in 2012. This was possible as a result of donors' support. In addition, TCF also held a Thalassemia Camp in Bakultala on April 12, 2012.

Education

Both Brahmapur Children's Academy (BCA) and Ghutiari Sharif School (GSS) are running very well. In addition to clean drinking water and separate bathroom facilities for boys and girls, TCF has not only painted the BCA building and but has put in a set of new electrical fixtures and outlets in the classroom for better lighting. BCA now has a new library for pupils. Our thanks to Colin Bhowmik, the founder and CEO of KOLS Canada, whose generous contribution was instrumental in creating the library. You can see mention of our collaboration with KOLS on their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/KOLS2011. For the story of KOLS foundation and mission see <http://www.kols.ca/our-story/>.

Ms. Janet Mokades, a leading educator from London, UK visited the school in February 2012 and suggested some changes for the junior kindergarten class such as having the children sit in a circle in the class instead of in rows on chairs. The teachers gladly took this advice. We have installed a rack for school bags and shoes. Such changes have improved the school environment.

Students from art, music and dance classes have demonstrated their skills in front of many guests including Mr. Parsh Chakravorty in March 2012 whose financial assistance made this school program possible.

Ghutiari Sharif School has expanded from 84 students to 103 students this year. New students were very happy to receive uniforms and shoes. Tiffin is provided to the students every day, and we monitor the snacks to maintain their quality. Three students with cleft palates had operations and are being followed up by medical practitioners. Our thanks to Mr.

Gora and Mrs. Phillis Aditya and Mr. Niloy and Mrs. Nandita Sen who paid for the operations.

In April 2012, TCF undertook a water project and modernized the drinking water facility in Boral Swamiji Vidyapith High School whereby 1500 students will benefit from the modernization. Also, TCF added a number of faucets adjacent to the field so that students playing in the ground need not go inside for drinking water.

Vocational Training School

'Uttaran' meaning 'Uplifting', continues to provide sewing training to women in need at Boral. A batch of students wrote the examination for a certificate in February conducted by Usha Sewing School. A new batch of 53 women, up from 30 women, is now enrolled for 2012.

In February, Uttaran women held a sale of their products and it was a great success. They also celebrated International Women's Day. Every woman associated with Uttaran in any way was invited and the event took place from noon until 4.30pm.

The Uttaran trainees also make the school uniforms for Ghutiari Sharif School. By doing this TCF saves costs and provides some income to the women. Knowing how much the uniforms are appreciated by the children is a good incentive for careful work.

New Toronto Projects

TCF is pleased to report our collaboration with Women's Habitat (Toronto) in the programs "Skill Training for Women" and "Girlz After-school Space" in Toronto. TCF will fund the projects and Women's Habitat will run them. Both WH and TCF are hoping to continue the relationship with each other. Women's Habitat is dedicated to ending violence against women and providing services for women and children who have fled family violence.

On February 26, 2012, young health professionals held a Heart Health Day: they shared their Knowledge to Save a Life in Toronto. It was greatly appreciated by the community. TCF will continue to fund these kinds of projects in the future.

As ever, TCF would like to take this opportunity to thank all donors, advisors and volunteers for their ongoing support. Needless to say, without their help TCF could not sustain its much needed programs for very underprivileged children and women. A big **"Thank you"** to all of you.



BCA Library



Ms. Mokades with Mrs. Mazumder



We are United

People who donate to the United Way can name The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation as a registered charity for their contribution. Please

see section 4 "to another registered charitable organization" on page 2 of the UW form. Please name Toronto-Calcutta Foundation when you donate.

Brief News

TCF Partners with Women's Habitat (WH)

TCF and WH have agreed to organize two projects in Toronto. While WH will provide the expertise to run the two well thought out programs namely "Skill Training for Women" and "Girlz After School Space" projects TCF will fund these programs.

Youth Talent Show and Dinner in August, 2012

Please visit [TCF Website](#) for details.

August Talent Show Raises over \$12,000

TCF is pleased to announce that young talents of Toronto put on a wonderful show for the audience on August 19, 2011 in Toronto. With their help TCF was able to raise over \$12,000 from donors, patrons and advertisers. Thanks to our Young Talents and to the generous contributors.

Bengali Heart Health Day: Sharing Knowledge to Save a Life



Dr Roy, Dr Lala, Ms Tina Banerjee, Dr Mukherjee & Dr Deb



Audience with full attention

This was the first event of its kind: the Bengali Heart Health Day seminar at the Toronto Kalibari. Six young health-care professionals talked to the audience of two hundred about cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cholesterol, nutrition, exercise, and children's health. They emphasized preventative measures to reduce the incidence of heart attacks and other heart illness among the South Asian community.

Dr Soumu Mukherjee, Ph.D., opened the presentations. Since his father died prematurely of a heart attack last year he decided to volunteer his time as a speaker and pursue in charities related to cardiovascular diseases. Not a day goes by without him thinking about the greatness his father achieved. Dr Mukherjee says, "70 is too young to die." His goal since the passing of his father has been to work with health care professionals in the Bengali community to encourage people to live healthier and longer.

Dr Saswata Deb, an accomplished Cardiac Surgery resident gave an interactive overview on cardiovascular disease. "One person dies every 12 minutes from cardiovascular diseases including heart attacks" – a sobering statistic. One of the main messages communicated to the audience during Dr. Deb's presentation was "prevent heart disease by caring for your health early on, take care of your arteries. Most importantly, listen to the signs of your body and get help as soon as possible if you endure any of the symptoms like fatigue, pain in areas of chest, neck, arms, and difficulty breathing".

Speaking to the causes of heart disease, Dr Niloy Roy, a Physician in family medicine, emphasized the threats that diabetes and cholesterol pose for the South Asian community here.

The importance of regular exercise was elaborated by a doctoral candidate in kinesiology, Ananya Tina Banerjee. Reducing risk requires by exercising for 60 minutes three times a week and altering diets high in fats and sugars.

A pediatrician, Dr Prateek Lala, discussed the role of good nutrition in children. "It's important to begin implementing good habits and nutritional diets at a very young age", she said.

Finally, a nutritionist by the name of Thevaki Kulendran spoke to the group about the importance of eating healthy in every day life. The session scheduled for two hours lasted nearly four, and everyone went away better informed on these subjects and well motivated to make changes to reduce their disease risks and lead a healthier life. The health professionals have pledged to return for further such events. (To read the full article please visit TCF's website) Written by Sohini Mondal, Saswati Deb and edited by Chris Furedy

Gala Raises Funds for People in Need in Toronto and Calcutta

The **Toronto-Calcutta Foundation's** annual gala raised funds and awareness for causes it supports recently.

The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation (TCF) is a non-profit organization and registered charity in Canada, working to alleviate the poverty in Kolkata and surrounding areas.

Supporters gathered at the Hilton Garden Inn enjoyed *hors d'oeuvres*, dinner and entertainment. Master of Ceremonies **Piya Chatopadhyay** got the evening going, introducing guest speaker **Olivia Chow**, Member of Parliament.

Chow made a heartfelt appeal to the guests to open their wallets for the initiatives funded by the Foundation. She quoted lines from a Rabindranath Tagore poem:

*Where the mind is without fear
And the head is held high
Where knowledge is free...
Into that heaven of freedom,
My father,
Let my country awake!*

The lines applied equally to Canada, she said.

This was followed by a soulful reading of some Tagore's poems by **Dr Ananya Mukherjee-Reed**.

Miss India Worldwide Canada, **Minu Jose**, shared her experience as a newcomer to Canada. She said she has set up a scholarship for girls in Kerala, India, and spoke of the importance of empowering girls. **Saswati Deb** made a presentation on the Foundation's work with underprivileged children in Kolkata.

"We work in three areas—health, education and vocational training. So our main objective was to raise awareness in these areas as well as raise money to fund these activities," said **Uttam Chakrabarti** of TCF.

"We are looking at ways to help needy people here in Toronto."

For more info, visit **www.toronto-calcutta.org**.

By Shagorika Easwar
Desi News, January 2012



Minu Jose, Olivia Chow, Guest and Saswati Deb

Volunteer Doctors Visit Uttaran Again



Students with their work

In December of 2011, two of our past volunteers named **Drs. Yoella Teplitsky and Fatima Uddin** paid a visit to their old friends at the clinic in Naktala as well as the Uttaran sewing school in Boral while they were traveling through the region. They had a wonderful reunion and look forward to maintaining their connections with the TCA and hopefully a longer visit at some point in the future.

Dr Uddin & Dr Teplitsky



Membership/Donation form

Your membership in the Toronto-Calcutta Foundation is needed to help alleviate poverty in Calcutta and its surrounding areas. TCF funds, supports and/or manages projects that address local needs related to health, education or income generation. In partnership with local communities. TCF is working towards sustainable development.

MEMBERS: \$25

SPONSOR A CHILD: \$100

DONATION (cheque/cash): \$ _____

Membership entitles you to participate at the TCF annual meeting, voting rights and TCF Newsletter

Please complete and return to:

The Toronto-Calcutta Foundation
2 Leland Avenue, Toronto, ON M8Z 2X5

Tax receipts are provided for membership and all donations \$10 or over.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____

Postal code _____ Tel: _____

Email _____