



**PLATFORM
KIDS**

August 2007
Newsletter

APPALA RAJU'S VISIT



Appala Raju and John with PKF member Betty Peaker at God's Farm, Gracetown

It was about 5pm on 15th January at Perth International Airport. The first wave of processed passengers from Malaysian flight 125 had pushed their trolleys into the crowd of waiting friends and relatives.

Thoughts of, maybe he missed his connecting flight, or, even worse, he was being interrogated by Australian authorities and having trouble with our nasal accents, had barely entered my mind when there he was! His cheerful smile, which proved to be powerful medicine during my post-op blues, hadn't changed. He looked fresh and not a bit crumpled after the flight.

My foster son, Appala Raju had been worried about me. The last time he had seen me I was very well. That was at Hyderabad airport, way back on 8th January 2005. After I realised in May of that year that I had cancer in my larynx, communications between Appala Raju and I started to break down, so he decided to come and see for himself how I was. The Australian High Commission in New Delhi granted Appala Raju a three months visa on compassionate grounds.

What a three months it was! Appala Raju brought with him beautifully prepared promotional materials, including brochures, photos and a well-produced power

point presentation. We wrote scores of letters and made heaps of phone calls. During his stay Appala Raju made at least 18 presentations, attended at least 10 meetings and visited at least 26 members & supporters in Perth, Fremantle, Mandurah, Collie, Pemberton, Bunbury, Bridgetown and Cowaramup. It was a whirlwind of laughter, planning, prayer and that special joy which Appala Raju brings into peoples' lives.

As well as spreading goodwill, Appala Raju's "tour" produced a financial bonanza! Our bank accounts have never been so healthy. Thanks to you, our loyal members, we can expand our dreams of better lives for children forced to beg on Indian railway stations. We are well on the way towards having enough money for our next two major projects:

- To find some land in Kothavalasa on which to construct a two storey building with vocational training units downstairs and a shelter above.
- At Kantakapalli, our own water bore and a new toilet/shower block will further enhance the quality of life for our kids.

Thank you all for the warm Aussie hospitality you extended to Appala Raju. He was shown much love and respect which encouraged and motivated him.

I'm so happy to be able to report to you in such a positive way. Keep us in your thoughts and prayers, as we keep you in ours.

May God bless you, John McCulloch

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 6 October at 2.00pm

Australia Asia Association

275 Stirling Street (cnr Bulwer St), Perth

Your response and nominations form is attached / enclosed

Message from India

By Karri Devereux

"All at once twenty two hands reached and stretched through the taxi door window and I was personally welcomed by each child"



Karri Devereux is a naturopath and yoga teacher who volunteered for 4 weeks at Platform Children's Society. Karri is a dear friend of our Vice Chairperson, Helen Shaylor.

"Having never visited India, I wasn't sure what to expect. Being a little dubious about travelling alone, I was relieved to see a large triangular sign with my name 'KARRI' written on it as I stepped outside into the ocean of faces at Hyderabad airport. Behind the sign was the anticipatory smile of Appala Raju. He took my heavy pack and handed me the sign; he'd written it on the back of a bunch of flowers. It was this sweetness of thought that I would come to know of AR and all the beautiful hearts at the Platform Children's Society.

During the next day, we chatted about my background of natural health and yoga and how it might benefit the children. That evening we taxied to the train station where we would make our 13 hour journey to Kantakapalli and the orphanage.

Those long hours in the tinny, rattling coach gave me my first experience of the innocence in which India breaks your heart. A small boy crawled along the carriage floor sweeping up the discarded food scraps from other passengers. I placed 10 rupees in his dirty, cupped hand and he continued on; his head bent low, his young back hunched. I never saw his face, but the expression of his body was enough to know the sadness in his eyes.

I had a troubled sleep and woke with eyes puffy and bleary from humidity and dust. Peering through my squint into the already searing morning sun I saw two beaming smiles of boys from the orphanage who had come to collect us. The excitement and enthusiasm bounced off the whites of their eyes and teeth and I knew then the difference the orphanage had made to these boys' lives. I prayed that the boy on the train also would find his way to a happier life.

"Aunty! Aunty!" the children all cried when they saw the taxi pull into the orphanage grounds. The tough grass outlined the cricket pitch and the cool blue paint of the classroom building made a vibrant contrast with the orange dirt of the volleyball court. All at once twenty two hands reached and stretched

through the taxi door window and I was personally welcomed by each child before I had a chance to get out of the car.

The cool shade of the huge mango tree further welcomed me with its massive boughs outstretched to embrace the dining area and kitchen building. This is where all meals are enjoyed, where evening prayers are sincerely offered and Christian songs are heartily sung.

My mornings begin with a wake up call 'Aunty! Aunty!' just before six. We rub the sleep from our eyes as we climb the stairs to the classroom roof. Here the children impress me with the speed at which they learn yoga. After a breakfast of chapatti and curry each child trundles off to their classroom for a day's learning in their native Telugu language, the national language Hindi and English.

During those hours AR and I spend time in the office replying to emails, writing letters and discussing tasks to complete during my stay. Last week we painted the classroom and had an excursion to the beach for swimming lessons. During their breaks in class the children come to the office door to say hello. AR is a loving and firm father figure and complements Jyothi's warmth and infectious giggle.

The afternoons are filled with laughter and shouts as the children test their skills in their favourite sport. Volleyball and cricket are popular with the older boys while the younger children play on the swings. Our English lessons are taken with bright enthusiasm under the shade of the mango tree. It ends with a hand shake from each child before they run off to water the garden, fill the water tanks and sweep the grounds.

After a dusk bath under the clean water of the bore pump, they spend some time in private study before their evening prayer and dinner. The cool evenings are ideal for sleeping under the stars and they fill the classroom roof with one mass of human carpet. Intertwined in each others' limbs, they sleep peacefully knowing they are surrounded by the nurturing love and support of their brothers and sisters who are safe and happy."



Extra Dollars \$\$ to India



Due to the generosity of all our fabulous members we have recently found ourselves in the wonderful position of having a little extra funds available (above our normal monthly commitment) to send to India.

We will soon be purchasing a 'she' buffalo to be named "Docka". She will produce enough milk for the children and the surplus can be sold to create an income. This is part of our plan to make the project more self-sustainable, while teaching animal management and business skills to the older children.

New books, paints and writing materials will be purchased for the school, along with new school uniforms for the children.

One of the children, "Praveen", is to join the Vizag Defence Academy shortly. Funds have been sent to cover his joining costs. We wish him well in his new vocation and hope he finds much enjoyment with his chosen career.

A new water bore is required on the property so we are very pleased to have enough funds to start this project.

NEW LOOK

Notice our eye-catching logo and professional-looking newsletter?

Artist *Emma Blyth* designed our new logo and desktop publisher *Clare Callaghan* created this newsletter.

We are very grateful for their time and expertise. Thanks!

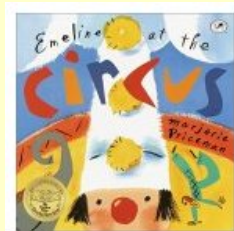
Our website will soon be updated using the same colours and style. Note that '.au' has been added to our web and email addresses.

FUNDRAISING IDEAS PICNIC

About 20 members and friends gathered in King's Park on a Sunday afternoon in January to brainstorm fundraising ideas for 2007.

There was lots of enthusiasm despite the heat! We now have many suggestions for events and spare hands to call upon to put them into action. A group of the "young girls" have already started planning a huge Circus-themed party for November...stay tuned!

Thank you so much to all who came along and contributed ideas.



BOLLYWOOD FILM FESTIVAL

On 23 February we hosted the showing of an Indian film at the Luna Outdoor cinema in Leederville to raise funds for Platform Kids. We provided snacks and the opportunity for people to meet Appala Raju, our Programme Manager visiting from India. It was a sell-out and we raised \$1,050.

The contemporary and moving story of *Rang de Basanti* was enjoyed by all - well, all those who don't mind the length of Bollywood films!

It was such a great success that we hope it will be an annual event on our calendar. Thanks for your support.



www.platformkids.org.au
enquiries@platformkids.org.au
Tel: 0422 445 661

Desperately Seeking Secretary

The position of Secretary on the PKF Committee is now vacant. Can you, or someone you know, step up to the plate?? No previous experience required, just access to a computer and email. The 'job description' is simply taking minutes of meetings and some letter writing.

Thank you Sue O'Donoghue & Melwyn d'Penha for your efforts; your input is sorely missed.

LOB IN FOR A LOO!!!

Our next fundraising target is to install a new toilet/shower block at Kantakapalli, so we will be busily working towards this goal in the coming months.

If you would like to make a donation, please use the form below, email enquiries@platformkids.org.au or phone David 9527 6785. Online payment is an option.



Special Appeal for Ablution block

Note: Tax deductibility only available for donations of \$50 or more. Tax-deductible gifts must be processed through the Global Development Group with whom we are affiliated. PKF pays 5% to GDG for this service.

I wish to make the following donation to The Platform Kids Fund Inc.:

\$10 \$20 \$50 \$100 \$200 \$500

Other amount: _____ I wish my donation to be tax-deductible: YES / NO

Name/s: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail address: _____

Enclosed please find cheque / money order / credit card authority

Name on card: _____ Card type: _____

Card No.: Expiry date: ____ / ____

Cardholder's Signature: _____

Please mail to: The Platform Kids Fund Inc. PO Box 501 Mt Lawley WA 6929