

July Newsletter

Dear Friends,

Fervently hoping that this finds you amidst best.

In the last month Outlook magazine brought out an article on Parivaar.

The Outlook story is available at the following link:

<http://www.outlookindia.com/mad.asp?fodname=20040517&fname=Making&sid=1>

The number of children in our current set-up is 55. Parivaar is going ahead with starting a Girls' Centre in July/Aug. The number of girls in this Centre will be 40 but shall be admitted gradually over the next few months. These girl children are daughters of women in prostitution, orphans, children living on streets and railway platforms of Kolkata and suburbs.

All children in Parivaar, except those in pre-primary (kindergarten level) have been admitted to Formal Schools. The pre-primary ones will be admitted next year.

The First Day in School

30 of Parivaar children are going to St Elizabeth School situated on the busy Diamond Harbour Road, at a distance of about four kilometers from our home, Parivaar Centre.

Considering that most of the children came from unconventional backgrounds it was quite a task to admit children into an established formal school such as St Elizabeth's. The School Principal and teachers were apprehensive that parents of other students may not really appreciate the idea of their children studying with children of Parivaar considering their history.

Finally it was agreed that admission would be considered should Parivaar children perform well in the school admission. The school arranged the admission tests and it was decided that whosoever would pass the test, shall be admitted to the class he/she was appropriate for.

16th of March was a big day for Parivaar. The first batch of thirty students appeared for admission test on this day. The preparations started on the night before. The answer sheets were to be readied and pencils sharpened. The clothes to wear were to be kept tidy. We all woke up early, and after all had taken their breakfast the children were taken to the school. It was a short test and we were delighted to know all the children were successful and had gained admissions into the school. The children of Parivaar finally joined a reputed formal school and were "school-going students". Some PGP students from IIM Calcutta treated the children on their success at IIMC and took them for a half-day picnic at the Joka campus. The children enjoyed every bit of that.

The pics of the IIMC outing are uploaded on the following link:

<http://f1.pg.briefcase.yahoo.com/bc/gansofindia/1st?.dir=/PARIVAAR&.view=1>

The fees and all the necessary papers were submitted and admissions confirmed the next day. A tailor was appointed and he came to take measurements amidst much excitement among the children.

The school began its new academic sessions on the 5th of May.

On 5th of May the children at PARIVAAR were all up in the wee hours of the morning. They just could not wait for the School Bus (contracted to Parivaar Centre for the whole Year) to take them to their first day in school. The School hours are from 6:30 to 10:30 A.M. The children wake up at 5 A.M. and readied themselves for a new life. The children were looking very smart in their new uniform and their faces beamed with great pride and uncontained joy.

Just before they were to board the bus to their long and arduous journey of life, Vinayak led them to prayer, a short meditation, and an inspirational talk making them realise the import of that day in their lives. The children were visibly overwhelmed, and one by one touched Vinayak's feet and sought his blessings. This was a touching and emotional moment in the life of Parivaar. We offered silent prayers to the Almighty that the first step had been taken with hope of changing destinies of these children, and that having walked the first step He may bestow upon us strength so that the subsequent steps would become easier to take. The mission of Parivaar of changing destinies has begun and there is no turning back.

The words of Vivekananda rang true to our ears,

"It is not the work of a day, and the path is full of the most deadly thorns. Come then, look it in the face, brethren, it is a grand task and we are so low. But we are the sons of Light and children of God. Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed. Hundreds will fall in the struggle, and hundreds will be ready to take up the task. You know the disease, you know the remedy, only have faith. Faith, sympathy - fiery faith, fiery sympathy. Glory unto the Lord, march on, the Lord is our General. Do not look back to see who falls - forward, onward! Thus and thus we shall go on, brethren. One falls, and another takes up the front."