



October, 2016

A non-profit charitable, U.S. foundation assisting...  
...*"the forgotten children of Nepal"*

## EARTHQUAKES DON'T DISAPPEAR..... they leave indelible scars and an endless trail of grief and slow recovery.



our work in Nepal, we have been providing continuous emergency funding to support earthquake victims whose housings were destroyed, suffered serious medical injuries, lost family remembers or became orphaned. As much as we have already accomplished, there remain endless challenges for Nepal and our cause to benefit a suffering population and the many children in our care. We hope and trust that our supporters will appreciate our efforts and join the VCN team effort to continue our humanitarian service.

Nepal is only now beginning to stabilize from the 2015 magnitude 7.5 earthquake that devastated the nation and took over 9,000 lives. A careful estimate is that over 32,000 homes were destroyed, adding untold misery to surviving victims. As one of the most impoverished countries in the world, the effort to rebuild homes, lives and entire villages require resources un-

available to almost all Nepalis. Their present circumstances are tragic, but their resolve and courage to rebuild and carry on with acceptance and determination is inspirational. VCN has witnessed the horrendous challenges that so many families and survivors must surmount for years to come. With the extensive program relationships that VCN has established through the



**Virtue's Children Nepal is an ALL-VOLUNTEER FOUNDATION**

No funds are spent for U.S. salaries, office rent, bonuses or special benefits. Board members cover their own travel expenses. Administration costs in Nepal are minimal and are covered by board member contributions.



## CHILD LABOR RESCUE

With endless earthquake destruction to replace, the brick factories of Kathmandu in Nepal are in full force, and so is the continued harm to the innocent children trapped into hard labor and factory servitude. Even small children are a major part of the workforce in the factory compounds, with heavy loads of bricks to haul on their backs from the kilns and pile into drying stacks. It's a disturbing sight and a miserable situation that demanded change and opportunity for children. VCN established Path of Light School several years ago in an effort to relieve children from the punishment of these harsh labor conditions.

It wasn't an easy transition, but with time and continued outreach, we eventually convinced the parents of these child workers to allow the children to leave the factory compounds 6 days a week for a daily, free nutritious lunch...and education. The changes in the children and their families have been remarkable, with new futures realized and

growing awareness of the rights of children.

## SUPPORTING OUR ORPHANS, BLIND STUDENTS and SCHOLARSHIPS

Our continued support for 3 orphanages brings enormous rewards, for the children and for VCN. The girls' orphanage we started 5 years ago is a remarkable home for 25 sensational, young girls who are achieving scholastic prominence in school, as well as living together in an inspirational bonding of sisterhood.

Our second home for 7 young girls who were rescued from dire circumstances in remote villages has grown into a rewarding, happy family life. Incredibly positive children, succeeding in school with top honors. One little 8 year-old seems to be breaking all scholastic records – "Number One" in entire school, with almost perfect exam results. 3 years ago she was sleeping on the floor on a tea

house in a remote village and performing labor duties to survive.

The boys lost their orphanage to the earthquake and have now resettled into new accommodations on the edge of Kathmandu. They attend a local school of outstanding reputation and have adjusted well into their new environment. Along with the our orphanage girls, we provide house items, winter clothes, jackets, sport shoes many other items the children require to insure that the children remain warm in the winter and stay healthy and presentable to the world.

Gratefully, we have been able to seek out and provide full scholarships for dozens of deserving, blind children, and most all of them prove their worth by achieving top scholastic records. Our support carries them through their college years, and all who have graduated are finding employment as school teachers or other work. Independence, pride and self-worth have become their achievements.

Additionally, we provide over 55 full scholarships for a mix of orphans, financially poor and disabled college level students.



## "UNTOUCHABLE"

is a severely cruel identity for anyone, but for children in Nepal it also bears painful social stigma and life-long consequences. To send time with the children who are victims of this demeaning social order, is to recognize the ugly injustice and punishment to those people already suffering untold inflictions and the squalor of their circumstances.

In Kathmandu, the majority of these victims manage their destitute lives near or in the compound of the Shiva Pashupati Temple, a major tourist and pilgrimage sight. As quiet and reverent this temple compound is in the day time, at night it transforms into a hideout of prostitution, drug sales, lepers, beggars and crime. Within these surroundings, adorable children carry on with an in-

nocent level of optimism and ignore or accept the harsh realities of the environment that entraps them. As the children grow older they quickly fall into the influences that surrounded them, and they adapt into whatever means of survival is available. Even low-cost government schooling is not an expectation for these boys and girls. Their backgrounds declare their low status, leaving little hope for opportunity to improve their lives.

Fortunately, or by miracle, the Bal Sarathi School was established 7 years ago by Nepali women volunteers to serve children in the Pashupati neighborhood. Education with a free lunch program has replaced the sordid daily life of these children with the opportunity to learn, play and progress. These days over 175 children attend free classes 6 days a week,

enjoy nutritional meals and special programs, tours, health camps and leadership. In the beginning, the temple clans were far more appreciative of the free lunches for the children, than the classrooms, but in the scheme of things, education took root and the progress in the lives of these children has been remarkable.

VCN has long been a generous supporter of Bal Sarathi and has joined this team effort to provide donations and scholarships to ensure that each Bal Sarathi student has the means to pursue their studies and self-worth.

**The school building survived the earthquake, but barely, and is functioning with serious damage to its structure. We are making every effort to contribute to the repair and reconstruction of this most essential contribution to the lives and futures of the most deserving children.**

## A VERY SPECIAL STORY

Four years prior, from the 2nd story roof of Kathmandu's Paropakar Orphanage, I was enjoying a late afternoon view of crowded pedestrian traffic on the road below, when I spied a young, teenage boy staring up at me. He was a very handsome young man dressed in a school uniform. He gestured up to me the traditional, prayer hand "Namaste" greeting, accompanied by a beaming, warm smile. I didn't recognize the boy and I asked one of the older orphan boys who was standing with me, if he was familiar with the boy below. He remembered very clearly.

I had been volunteering as an English teacher and supporter for the orphanage for several years, and five years earlier I had become aware of a disturbingly disfigured little boy, about 8 years-old, who lurked in the alleyways behind the orphanage. The boy had an extremely gruesome cleft palate from his open mouth into his nostrils. The frightening image set him far apart from other children and caused him immediate alarm if he was approached by anyone. He lurked in the shadows and stayed mostly hidden from public eyes. The orphans were aware of the boy in their neighborhood, but knew nothing else about him. I have no medical training, but I was aware of the success of surgeries for cleft palate victims...something that is normally done soon after birth in developed countries. I felt that there could be treatment for the boy, and it became my challenge. Several times when I would see him, I would make valiant, but unsuccessful attempts to talk to him, but he would be terrified to see me following him and scatter away. He knew the ins-and-outs of the twisted, narrow lanes of

the neighborhood, and each time he would disappear and I would find my way back to the orphanage.

Without a game plan, I stayed alert for a sighting of the boy for several months, with trust that determination would lead me to his whereabouts. I also wised up and selected some of the older orphan boys for my search team. These boys were disturbed by the horror of the cleft palate damage, not knowing whether it was threatening or a curse. I had a long, father-like conversation with them and they were introduced to some basic facts about modern medicine, cleft palates, surgeries and compassion. Soon enough they were confident and ready to take part in our rescue mission.

It didn't take long before I got a report from Neer, one of the orphan boys who had joined our quest with full enthusiasm. He had learned from neighbors that the boy's name was Krishna. He also managed to cleverly mean-der behind our target one afternoon without causing suspicion. Soon enough he had seen Krishna enter a primitive, one-room construction of mud and brick, ten walking minutes behind the orphanage. The shelter served as home for our boy and his family, and that afternoon Neer guided me there. The door to the dwelling was open and Neer and I sheepishly poked our heads inside and offered soft "Namaste"s. We totally startled a young woman and two children. Krishna immediately hid behind his mother, fearful of our intentions. When a bit of calm had settled in I had Neer explain to the mother in Nepali language that I was interested in seeking medical help for her boy and I would like to discuss the situation. I felt certain that I saw a

look of encouraged amazement in the mother's eyes, but I was told that I would need to meet with her husband, who was a day-laborer and would not return home for an hour. We returned as suggested and met with both parents and the children. Nice family of four.

The family was culturally low-caste, which essentially bound them in ignorance, superstition, illiteracy and social oppression. Even our visit surprised them as only other low-caste would allow themselves inside this home. I don't know where this placed us caste-wise, but we enjoyed tea and simple hospitality from the parents. Sadly, the parents were tightly bound to Dark Age explanations for their lot in life and any tragedies that befell them, including Krishna's cleft palate. Wrath of gods, bad karmas, unclean past lives, and even auspicious markings, would help explain Krishna's condition. Also, because of their backward beginnings and poverty, they were apprehensive about seeking medical attention. They knew of hospitals and doctors, but were uncertain of how these developments related to the low-castes who were intimidated by, and socially discouraged entry into so many places. In their own lives they continued with daily prayers and primitive home treatments for their wounds and injuries. It took two friendly visits for me to convince the father to allow him and Krishna to accompany me to visit doctors for an evaluation. Fortunately, our timing couldn't have been more perfect. A team of American doctors was in Kathmandu for two weeks, performing volunteer surgeries on many medical issues...and I had a backdoor connection for making a convenient appointment arrangement. Sort of a "head-of-the-line" kind of position, but essential to facing a crowd of hundreds wait-

ing and scrambling for attention. Our visit was brief, encouraging and supportive. The two doctors who examined Krishna were very pleasant and positive about success for Krishna. Along with their nurses in the room, they took a personal liking to Krishna. His sweetness and courage charmed everyone. We were required to make pre-op visits to the doctors, and on my third visit, Krishna, his father, Neer and a taxi were waiting and we sped off to Teaching Hospital in central Kathmandu to make final preparation with the doctors for surgery. This very kind team of plastic surgeons and their staff gathered around Krishna for examination and reassured us that corrective surgery could be performed the next day. His recovery should be for only for a few days and was expected to be successful. All of this was translated by Neer to Krishna's father, who understood little, but took all advice at face value and agreed to the surgery. A stoic Krishna had heard the discussions and simply put on a brave front and offered no protest or tears. He was admitted into a hospital bed that day.

The surgery the next afternoon lasted only a little over two hours, after which he was returned to his hospital bed covered with bandages around his mouth. Krishna's father never left him and stayed by his side for two days of recovery. I advised Krishna's mother of what was happening and I visited the hospital each day. The third day the bandages were removed for the doctor's observation, lesser bandages were applied and we returned a very happy Krishna to his humble home. Two days later, we took a bandaged Krishna and his father to meet with the doctors for supervision of the healing and minor follow ups. The American medical staff had developed strong affection for Krishna dur-

ing his brief time with them and one nurse asked me if she could sponsor him into school through my assistance. Guaranteed!

The big day came within a week and the stitches and final bandages were removed. It was a highly emotional moment for the doctors and staff, and especially for Krishna's father and me. Krishna stared into a hand mirror beaming an incredible smile...the first physical smile in his life. A really handsome, young boy had emerged....a moment of magic for Krishna. Reaching home, Krishna's mother was overwhelmed to see him and performed prayers of gratitude and blessings to selected Hindu gods. A curse had been lifted from her son and good karma had arrived to bless their family. Welcome to the world, Krishna. Amusingly, Krishna's little brother wasn't sure who this new boy was, and was highly nervous about this intrusion until all was explained and brother bonding was restored.

So, here I am year's later, starting down at an almost grown Krishna who hadn't forgotten me. Our connection was far more than a customary salutation. A true spark of feeling flew between us and it was expressed in our eyes as well as our smiles. I was seeing an image of happy school boy surrounded by friends, and Krishna had the opportunity to let me know that I wasn't forgotten through the years. After a few minutes of these highly tender moments, we waved parting farewells to each other as he walked up the road with his group of friends. He briefly turned around and saluted a final "Namaste" and wave to me before continuing up the road. I had a wonderful night's sleep that night and many nights following.

Allan Aistrop

## WELCOME

VCN board members are very proud to welcome two new and prestigious additions to our board.

### JOHN FLINN

John Flinn served as travel editor for the San Francisco Chronicle for several years and continues with his talents as a highly respected freelance travel writer, especially in adventure and wilderness stories. Nepal has long been a major destination for his journeys. John developed a deep fondness for the Nepal people and their culture, as well as for the many trails and climbs in Nepal that he challenged over the years.

### JERI FLINN

From a very successful business background in public relations, Jeri used her acquired skills to become involved in environmental programs and social causes. She founded and was director of the Pacifica Environmental Family for several years, as well as being an enthused activist in Wildlife Rescue and Tropical Forest Network. Jeri joined her husband on many global journeys and in their travels they discovered Nepal and became especially attached to the Nepali culture and people.

## WE WORK AS VOLUNTEERS TO DIRECTLY RESCUE AND SUPPORT THE MOST DESTITUTE AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN IN NEPAL

- \* Support and provisions for orphanage homes for boys and girls.
- \* Support for the Bal Sarathi free school and lunch program, serving over 175 low-caste children.
  - \* Scholarships for over 55 orphaned, blind and physically impaired students.
- \* VCN sponsored "Path of Light" School, providing free education and nutritional lunches for child workers from brick factory compounds.
- \* Services and donations to elderly victims of leprosy.

### VIRTUE'S CHILDREN NEPAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Virtue's Children - Nepal  
invites you to join  
KarmaQuest  
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and Adventure



Travel on a customized, cultural tour of the Kathmandu Valley and Pokhara, and a jungle safari in Chitwan National Park to benefit orphans and physically impaired children in Nepal. A highlight of this journey will be a visit to Paropakar Orphanage in Kathmandu, where you will become acquainted with incredibly courageous and delightful orphan boys and



girls. A portion of the cost of this trip will be donated through Virtue's Children Nepal to directly benefit these children or other orphans with emergency aid or educational support. Virtue's Children Nepal board member Wendy Brewer Lama and her husband Karma Lama are directors of KarmaQuest, an award-winning adventure travel company based in Half Moon Bay, California. They have designed this special tour to highlight the medieval wonders and UNESCO Cultural Heritage treasures of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur cities, while giving you a taste of village life in Nagarkot, a bird's eye view of Mt. Everest on "an unforgettable mountain flight, a restful stay in serene Lakeside Pokhara and a three-day, guided jungle safari excursion in Royal Chitwan National Park. Customized treks to the Everest region will also benefit Virtue's Children Nepal and its work in Nepal. Please inquire for details.

Your travels with KarmaQuest will benefit from Wendy and Karma's extensive knowledge of Kathmandu and Nepal, and their ability to introduce you to cultural insights and new, cross-cultural friendships through their expert Nepali guides. To learn more about KarmaQuest and their trips, partners and beneficiaries, please see [www.KarmaQuests.com](http://www.KarmaQuests.com) or contact Karma and Wendy at [karmaquest@earthlink.net](mailto:karmaquest@earthlink.net), or telephone at (650) 560-0101.

**Our progress in Nepal is completely dependent upon the generosity of supporters who believe in our goals and wish to join a team effort for the rescue of impoverished and neglected children in Nepal. When you plan your charitable participations, please consider the purpose of our work and the maximum extent to which our contributions are utilized for the direct support for the children we serve.**



#### A NON-PROFIT, ALL-VOLUNTEER, CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Virtue's Children Nepal is a U.S. 501 (c)(3), charitable foundation. Donations to our organization are tax-deductible and acknowledgement letters are provided for donations received.

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