



December 2007

Dear Friends,

Asha Deep Vidyashram has just finished up the second term of the school year – just one more term left to go!

This term we shared joys and sorrows. One of our youngest students, little Harsha, died in October. She joined the school in July and will be remembered as a quiet but bright little girl. She amazed us with her singing in a small program the children put together in September. She had been sick for some weeks before her death, improving then regressing in cycles before finally succumbing to her illness. Most likely, her death would have been preventable, but her family could not afford proper medical care. Some scenes get etched like photos in our memories; I will never forget watching Harsha's father walking numbly away from their home, moving slowly with squared shoulders down the dirt road, carrying her stiff wrapped body toward the river where her final rites would be performed.



Participating in Harsha's death re-confirmed my determination to do whatever we could to improve the health of our children. Along these lines, we have arranged for a doctor and a nurse to administer several vaccinations in January when the children return from winter break. Also, this same doctor, a retired German physician, has agreed to fill the role of school doctor, examining the children quarterly and being on call for special needs. It will be of great help to have someone we can trust, someone with the children's interests at heart, to offer proper diagnosis and prescriptions for our sick children.

On December 20, our children finished up one of the most exciting programs they have ever participated in. A European charity, Performers Without Borders (PWB), came to our school and conducted a month-long circus skills workshop. Arriving in mid-November, this group of eight delightful performers put on a show for our students and their friends. Then they invited the children to spend a month of afternoons learning skills like juggling, balancing, hula-hoop dancing, and poi, at the end of which the children would put on a public performance of their own. The month was full of happy



kids, all excited about the new things they were learning. They learned so quickly – there were a lot of successes! "Connie Ma'am, Connie Ma'am! Look at this!" Every day they had new tricks to show me.

Last Thursday, supervised by the PWB Team, the children dressed up in costumes and make-up and walked from the school to a nearby park carrying banners they had painted. The procession created quite a commotion and we

ended up with around 300 spectators. Our kids performed ten various routines, to the enjoyment of the crowd. With only one month behind them, there were dropped balls and missed steps of course, but there were also some great accomplishments. Two of our boys even performed their tricks on stilts. We got in the local press and were even featured on TV, but the greatest reward was seeing the huge smiles on the kids' faces. It was a day they will never forget.



The PWB team was fantastic; they came with a lot of enthusiasm and patience, they showered the kids with love, and pulled off something amazing. They will hold these workshops four places in India this year; we were very fortunate to have had them. You can check out their website at: [www.performerswithoutborders.org.uk](http://www.performerswithoutborders.org.uk).

After a two-week break, we will be back in session. Besides the day-to-day teaching and learning, we will be holding our vaccination clinic, we plan to prepare a street play to perform in the community, and we will need to get started on our annual Spring Celebration children's performance. Never a dull moment!

We wish you all the treasures of the season: peace, joy, and love, and best wishes in 2008.

love,  
Connie