

Spring 2016

SAHAKARINI



YOUNG LIVES IN THE FOREST MATTER!



University of Alberta students visting with Pipal Tree students

Almost daily on TV, I see the little children of Syria, homes bombed, parents killed, often maimed themselves. No food, no water, no toilets, let alone the possibility of education. My heart cries. Why are we doing this to them?

Nearer home, in the forests of Kabini, near Mysore, South India, the tribal children in the forest are also asking why they cannot go to school, why there is not enough food to eat, why their fathers have turned drunks, why the families have to migrate long distances to the coffee and tea plantations of Wayanad and Coorg in

search of livelihood. Their situation is certainly not as stark and frightening as the children of Syria, but they also suffer neglect, hunger and malnutrition. As things stand there is little chance for them to finish school and break out of the cycle of poverty and exclusion.

Fortunately there are rays of hope here and there. One such ray is a programme of Pipal Tree, supported by Sahakarini. It consists of twenty boys and girls from the Jenu Kuruba and other smaller tribes who live in the adjacent forest. They are now housed in homes outside

the forest next to a high school, which they attend.

Unfortunately Neela is not so lucky. She is a young tribal girl in the forest who is about thirteen. She went to the one room school till the 5th standard. After that she would have to go to a high school outside the forest. One expects parents to somehow find the bus fare to send her to high school. But Neela's father is an unemployable alcoholic. He beats his wife to squeeze some money out of her to buy the cheap packets of illegal booze. Her mother toils hard in the nearby villages to earn a few rupees. Fortunately

Neela and her brother look after the one cow and five chickens they own, and protect them from wild animals. Were it not for the uncultivated food which Neela and her brother gather from the forest each day the family would have perished. They collect wild greens, tubers, gooseberries and birds' eggs. Now and then an older person may come down a tree with a honeycomb and share a bit with them. In another year or two Neela will be married off to another tribal youth and there is every possibility that her husband could be a copy of her father. Life is circular for Neela and her family. There is no breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty, hunger, wife-beating, ill-health and early death.

Thanks to Sahakarini and Pipal Tree Soumya's future is likely to be different. She stays at Children's College and goes to the nearby government high school. She has a father who is alcoholic, and a mother who struggles hard. But her parents have the possibility of being exposed to new values and ideas when they come to the parents meeting at Children's College every two months. Hopefully, her father will realise the importance of family, of respecting his wife and children, of getting out of alcoholism. Soumya is also able
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to talk to her parents when she goes back to the forest during vacations from school. If not for Children’s College Soumya would also have faced the same fate as Neela. Now Soumya can look forward to finishing school, possibly going to college or getting vocational training in tailoring, computers or a host of other professions. She doesn’t have to marry at fifteen or sixteen and end up with the same tenuous grip on life that is her mother’s lot. She also is becoming an empowered girl, learning that men and women are equal. She is getting basic sex-education, learning that

she does not have to suffer early pregnancy and ruin her life forever. She is imbibing modern ways, modern skills. But in all this, Children’s College is acutely conscious that she remain proud of the tribal wisdom and knowledge that is her heritage and that she continue to respect the earth and nature at large, like her forefathers.

Thanks to Sahakarini. Thanks to Pipal Tree. Above all, thanks to our bright young boys and girls.

Submitted by Siddhartha Executive Trustee, Pipal Tree

Varghese Manaloor Project Leader



New Girl’s Dorm under construction at Pipal Tree College

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

Sahakarini’s partnership with Augustana’s Community Service Learning Program has proven both harmonious and productive. The students that have volunteered to work with Sahakarini have been a great asset to our organization and enthusiastically and creatively helped with our Loaves and Fishes Fundraiser. During the winter term five second-year Business students, Shrinkhla Kapar, Corey Kosloski, Lee Metrunec, Kaitlin Losloski and Greg Trondson worked to provide Sahakarini with a marketing plan.

For her Capstone project, Augustana student, Melissa Kinnard, an active member of Sahakarini for two years, volunteered to research the

relationship between student volunteers and community organizations. (She co-supervised the CSL students with the Sahakarini supervisor.) Based on this information, on April 4, 2016, Melissa presented the Board with best practice Guidelines for Sahakarini’s partnership with Augustana.

For her Capstone project, Suham Elmi volunteered 50 hours to assist Sahakarini with improving our relationship with social media. Besides the time she devoted to meeting with the Board, Suham has been devising a set of recommendations to enhance Sahakarini’s participation in social media. She also gave a very helpful and illu-

minating workshop to the board and left us with handbooks to help us connect with Facebook and Twitter.

Sahakarini has benefited very much from our partnership with Augustana. We are grateful to Augustana

for providing this program and immensely grateful the CSL students who have so enthusiastically given of their time and their talents to enrich Sahakarini.

Linda Gervais, Student Supervisor



Linda Gervais with CSL students

Contact Information

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: WHAT DAY IS IT?

If you are reading this on May 3, it is World Press Freedom Day, one of approximately 130 days marked by the United Nations as days of special observance to bring our attention to causes from cancer to the eradication of poverty, to forests, to literacy, to families, and many more. Some, like Women's Day or Peace Day are quite familiar. Others, like World Toilet Day, or Jazz Day may be more surprising. Each is important and taken together they tell a story of humanity's efforts to make a better world, of the need to make a better world, of the resources to make a better world, of the many differ-

ent ways of bringing hope, joy and change, and of the very basic things that are the building blocks of a better world.

At the United Nations there are many initiatives around each Day and many far reaching programs. Having a Day, a Week, or even a Year, draws attention and awareness, but the transformative work takes place on the ground, every day, often in small ways, with ordinary people. Here at home, we must concentrate on the things we are best able to address. Over the years at Sahakarini we have worked together on women's empowerment, re-forestation, water wells, education, maternal health

and more. Thank you for your support in these important efforts.

Siddhartha, the head of our India partner, Pipal Tree has written movingly and very clearly about the lives of two ordinary girls, Neela and Soumya, both of whom faced similar difficult futures. Right now, today, thanks to the Children College supported by Pipal Tree, Sahakarini and others, Soumya has hope for a better world through the power of education and personal development.

Sahakarini's theme for 2016-17 will be *power*. Power, empower, who has the power, what power do we have, how do we use it?

What will we do with that power today? It is a lot to think about.

I invite you to join us on June 6 at our annual general meeting to kick off the new year and to think with us about what day it is and what we will do with the days we are given.

Gail Stolee, President



LOAVES AND FISHES 2015 FUNDRAISER

Our Loaves and Fishes fund-raising dinner and auction was held at the Norsemen Inn on November 7 with the theme *Growing Hope Together*. About 245 people enjoyed the evening together.

Leah Johnson, our keynote speaker shared stories from her internship in Colombia. She worked with the people of Socota on the project *Food Security and Protection of Water Resources*. Thirty gardens and ten protected ponds brought hope to over 130 people in the thirty households who took part.

Rajan Rathnavalu talked about the year's journey of the Sahakarini Sandals, which travelled more locally than in past years, showing up at events sponsored

by the Blue Dot Initiative, at the Camrose water treatment plant, a water ceremony in Maskwacis, a meeting with the Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner Willie Littlechild, and at the meeting where the Camrose City Council adopted the Blue Dot Declaration.

President Gail Stolee introduced our new project, the Children's College in India, where we are working with Pipal Tree, an Indian non-government organization. Our support is helping to expand the program to include ten girls along with the original ten boys.

Augustana students in the CSL program prepared material on the current

projects and set up and staffed the Market. We were able to provide tickets for 46 students from the university.

Our net receipts for Loaves and Fishes 2015 was approximately \$33,000

Loaves and Fishes 2016 dinner is scheduled for November 5th at the Norsemen Inn.

David Edwards, Chairperson

SAHAKARINI BOARD MEMBERS

Many thanks to our dedicated, hard-working Board Members!

Andersen, Carolyn—Secretary
Berger, Rebecca—Director
Edwards, David—Director
Gervais, Linda—Director
Kennard, Melissa—Director
Lindstrand, Jen—Director

Manaloor, Varghese—Director
Parsons, Les—Director
Rathnavalu, Maya—Director
Rebus, Don—Treasurer
Specht, Erin—Director
Stolee, Gail—President
Ken Traylor—Director





UPCOMING EVENTS

AGM

SPEAKER: David Goa

June 6, 6 pm

Messiah Lutheran Church

LOAVES AND FISHES FUND
RAISER DINNER

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Sahakarini would like to thank those who have supported our project work through financial donations and volunteer time. Thank you to the *Augustana Community Service and Learning* students who continue to provide assistance to Sahakarini in a variety of ways.

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FILM AND SPEAKER FESTIVAL

The annual Film and Speaker Festival took place this past January in the Roger Epp Room, Augustana Campus. This year's theme of "Walking Together" was inspired by a discussion after Sahakarini's last Annual General Meeting, where the guest speaker shared her reflections and research on the importance of hope, and that what is so vital for building and sustaining that hope are relationships, partnerships and community.

We were pleased to begin the festival with a full-house. Attendees viewed the film "The Backwards Class", a documentary that follows a class of Dalit caste students through their process of preparing for writing their government exams hoping to qualify for the Certificate programs and university. Varghese Manaloor and Jack

Waschenfelder then spoke about the caste system and cultural realities in India and the potential for social change. They also shared with the audience the parallels between the film and Sahakarini's newest project with Pipal Tree's Children's College.

The festival also viewed: *Even the Rain*, *Colors of Edziza*, and *Craigslit Joe*. With the festival focus on creating dialogue, sharing, educating, and nurturing community, there were opportunities to reflect and discuss together. The festival closed with speaker



SAHAKARINI DONATIONS

Donations can be made three different ways.

1. Canada Post @ Sahakarini, Box 1685 Camrose T4V 1X6
2. ATB Cares website @ <https://www.atbcares.com/donate>.

Your donation will be forwarded to Sahakarini plus a 15% matching donation from Alberta

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- I would prefer to receive information and newsletters by email

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Email _____

Phone _____

Enclosed is my gift of \$ _____

Donations can be made online at www.CanadaHelps.org or through www.atbcares.com