LIFE AT SHISHUR SEVAY

A view on how we are dealing during a Global Pandemic

A note from our founder, Dr. Michelle Harrison

We Are All Connected

When talking about the meaning of family, a little girl once said to me, “Family means the people you share germs with.” Never has that been more true because we all share germs. At this moment we are trying not to share a certain set of germs, but we understand we are all vulnerable. We are all family; none of us is immune. So, Shishur Sevay wants to share with our friends, family, supporters how we are weathering this pandemic. India is on lockdown, total lockdown until 15 April. If you go on the street you will be confronted by police demanding to know why you are out of your home. But we are fine. Teachers are giving classes online; everyone is doing what they can from home. The massis/caretakers are staying here. I am taking up the slack and spending time with the children. Thank you for caring.

Karate class through online video instructions.

One of the girls reading Malgudi Days through Skype

The girls have managed the technology for the classes including and also do some basic troubleshooting. When problems have occurred they worked via teacher instructions and screen sharing. For the past three years they have all been in a weekly computer class.

Sharing a Subitizing image through skype

An ongoing online session

STAYING CONNECTED

FEEDING THE POOR

Our girls’ origins are among the extremely underprivileged. We taught them that these were the foundations on which to gain strength and grow. Today they asked how we can help the poor and hungry during the #lockdown. We all decided to cut our food budget while still staying healthy. The money saved goes to a program feeding the hungry.

CLICK HERE to read e-paper article - Bengali newspaper El Samay: To Fight Against Coronavirus Michelle Harrison And Her Shishur Sevay Decided To Cut Their Food Budget And Money Saved Would Go To A Program Feeding The Poor
A Sweet Sixteen for Ganga and Bornali’s 16th birthday. We made it a little more special for them. There is a lot that they miss out that the other girls are able to do, so we wanted them to have a special day.

The girls attending Mamata Shankar’s Udayan Kala Kendra participated in their annual program Prayaas, at Science City Auditorium.

One of our girls taking centre stage in the performance

Saraswati Puja, worshipping the goddess of knowledge, was celebrated. The girls performed the rituals themselves, always making sure their sisters are included.

The girls participated in the KKI cup National Level Full Contact Karate Championship. Two of them were adjudged third in their respective groups.

Bidipta Khasnobis, a college student, started her internship at Shishur Sevay. She has been very helpful, working with our youngest one, helping her with her schoolwork, and making material for our upcoming playschool.
For the place that would house the centre. Dr Harrison and Board Vice President, Seema Gupta represented Shishur Sevay in the contract and one of the girls signed as witness.

- Board member Jayita Dey along with three of her friends, Tamalika Das, Sujata Chatterjee and Sutapa Dutta organized a trip to Nehru Children’s Museum, where the girls saw dioramas depicting Indian epics and dolls from all over the world.

- One of Puja’s paintings was chosen as the cover for a collection of poetry by Manoj Dey, a friend of Shishur Sevay.

The book cover with her art

- Our older car was close to 15 years old and was having frequent breakdown, by Indian law it had to go off the road within the year. Friends of Shishur Sevay donated funds to buy a new car. Some of girls who are more abled, now go out on their own using public transport but for our girls with severe disabilities that is not an option and having a car that is dependable is necessary.

Ganga and Bono with Dr. Harrison, staff and the new car
A special thank you to FOSS president Meera Rao and Treasurer Dean Gould for raising the funds and making the arrangement in time.

We had a wonderful visit from Meera, timed just around when the new car was delivered.

- One of our students who is in the advanced group in Udayan Kala Kendra performed at Basant utsav Spring Festival, on the occasion of Dol Purnima, a very popular festival in West Bengal, dedicated to Lord Krishna. The day is usually marked with colours and is on the day before Holi, the more popular festival of colours, celebrated around the country. She was part of a performance which included seniors and teachers of Udayan Kala Kendra. Later Dr. Harrison and the girls smeared abir (dry colours) on each other.

- Ever since signing the rental contract, work has begun to set up the playschool, the Children’s Smart Centre. The walls are painted, some school supplies have been bought already, some ordered and some in the process of being shortlisted. Shishur Sevay staff including Dr. Harrison have made home visits to prospective parents in the basti areas nearby. Flyers have been posted in the community.

- Sagarica Rudra, Board Member of Children’s Hope India visited us and spent time interacting with the girls, listening to their incredible life stories. CHI is one of our longest time supporters and a visit from them is always special.

The opening was planned for first week of April with classes starting mid-April but that has been postponed for now, because of the Covid-19 pandemic. More on the lockdown later.

- Three of the girls attended a two day Tanjore Painting workshop, each finishing a small piece by the end of it.

- A group of volunteers from the NGO Bandhur Sparsha visited Shishur Sevay. They have requesting our help in improving their school for children with cognitive and developmental disabilities.

- National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) exams stand postponed till further notice. Two of our students are scheduled to appear for one paper each.

- Many of our plans have been brought to a grinding halt because of the Covid 19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown. As per government instructions all staff except the essential ones, the childcare workers and a guard have been given off/are working from home. One of the childcare workers who came from far, travelling in buses, has also been given off. Dr. Harrison is there with the girls overseeing everything.