



One By One

Year 19 Issue 1 (Triple Issue)

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“Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

20 years!

As my 20 year anniversary in India approaches, I am filled with contemplation over the incredible adventures they have given.

I started without dreams; more with a gut feeling. I wanted to teach—it didn't matter how many children, I just wanted to start with one. Step by step, one by one, we grew and we saw success...so we kept taking the next step. It is impossible to fully comprehend how far we have come and what we have accomplished along the way.

But there is still a lot to do. I am determined to keep taking the next steps.

I have been given a family and a second home.

I only hope that I have given as much to India as India and its people have given me.

Celebration 2019— Knowledge is...

Celebration 2019 was a fantastic success. I know we say the same thing every year, but it is true. Our net revenue from the event has stayed the same for the last four years. We have been lucky to have a dedicated group of individuals to plan and orchestrate the event. This year was no exception. Volunteers helped us on the evening itself to make sure attendees were fed and entertained. Our table captains sold enough tickets to fill the hall with exuberance – in spite of the cold weather which always seems to arrive just for us. Apparently people are starting to book their vacation to warm climates by our celebration date. In addition, we are told people plan to attend our event well in advance,

knowing they will have a great evening supporting a worthwhile organization – One! International Poverty Relief.

Our theme this year was “Knowledge is.....” Volunteer Brianne made a 2-foot by 3-foot book. Students in India drew pictures and explained what knowledge meant to them. Students in Edmonton also completed these sheets to put into the book. I will share a few for you.

Rupesh (11, India) “I think if I have knowledge than I can do anything like banking work, shopping mall work, gardening work, etc. We can easily do these things. Knowledge is very important to us like a home.”

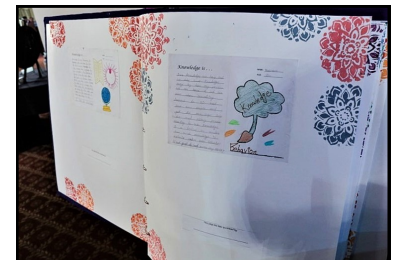
Tulsi (8, India) Knowledge is... “Be sensible. Giving /

getting respect. Be honest. Be brave.”

Brody (10, Canada) “A source of power that grows and grows and never stops growing. You can find knowledge at events, in newspapers or books. Knowledge is anywhere you go.”

Pavaki (8 Canada) Knowledge is... “In all of us. We only have to take it out. When you learn new things your knowledge grows. Always keep your mind working and never give up. There is so much knowledge and learning it will make you successful.”

—Marilyn



Youth Like to Make a Difference

Presentations were made in April & May 2019 to three Edmonton Area Elementary Schools – Velma E. Baker School, Virginia Park Elementary School and Ecole Dansereau Meadows School.

The children were excited to learn about the differences and the similarities between themselves and the children at the One! International schools in Mumbai. They asked in-

sightful questions and made appropriate comments about what they see and hear.

The children at Virginia Park held a bake sale with the proceeds going to One! International. They raised \$475 selling their cupcakes.

The children at Velma E. Baker collected four boxes of school supplies for the One! International schools.

Ecole Dansereau Meadows

School is planning a fundraising drive before the school year ends and are determined to ‘make a killing’.

Youth like to feel they can help to make a difference for their peers on the other side of the world. They understand that every bit helps—no matter the size. Proving that age doesn't matter, these youth have made a difference.

—Marilyn

Sunil

Studying Medicine in Georgia (the country not the state!)

In 2010, Sunil Kumar joined our One! International school in Nallasopara when he was studying in Grade 9. He attended our school part-time. He was a quiet boy that was very focused on his studies. He quickly showed his aptitude in Science and Math. He enjoyed working on his English in Vijay Sir's classes.



Sunil's father, Laleram, is a labourer and has a grade 5 education. Sunil's mother, Rani, only attended grade 1. They are both essentially illiterate.

Sunil's older brother managed to pass grade 12 but needed to help the family financially and started working immediately after graduation.

Sunil's older sister was forced to follow the village tradition of getting married at a young age—17.

Sunil's younger sister works part-time with One! International in order to continue her studies, she has just completed Bachelor of Commerce.

When Sunil graduated from grade 10, his father fell ill and was not able to work. He thought that his dreams

of studying were gone. He spoke to Vijay Sir who managed to convince him that he was too talented not to pursue his further studies. Vijay was able to offer him a part-time job as a math teacher.

Sunil was very relieved and worked hard to prove that he deserved the job and deserved to study.

He went into the Science stream for Grade 12 and excelled.

Sunil's dream of becoming a doctor began when his mother fell ill. She has problems with her thyroid—severe enough that it is a worry for the family every day. Sunil also experienced the local doctors in his neighbourhood of Nallasopara. He witnessed the poor care that everyone was getting and knew that he could truly help those who need it.

When he graduated from Grade 12, he started studying for his Medical Entrance Exam and worked full-time as a social worker with One! International.

He was set to write his exam and dive into his dreams when tragedy struck the family. His older sister, who was in an abusive marriage and 8 months pregnant, had a brain aneurism in Sunil's home. She died on the way to the hospital along with her unborn child. Sunil knew that if the medical system was better, perhaps her sister's life could have been saved, and probably the life of his unborn niece or nephew.

Sunil lost hope along with the entire family.

It took Sunil two years to find himself again, but when he did, he was even more determined to become a doctor and make a difference for as many people as he could.

He studied hard and managed to get 75% on his medical entrance exam.

When searching for medical colleges in Mumbai, Sunil found it financially impossible—upwards of \$40,000 paid up front and fees and books and other costs after that.

Sunil found an agency that specialized in Indian students studying to be doctors overseas. When he gave all of his information, they were determined to get him placed and even gave a discount—he was special.



Sunil found the Georgian American University (GAU). He went through the interview process and was accepted. Including room and board, the cost would be less than half the cost of studying in India.

After receiving special specific donations from generous donors, Sunil is now finishing his first semester at GAU and is incredibly grateful for the opportunity he has been given. He understands that it is a loan that will pay forward to other students like him in the future. He is focused and determined to make everyone proud and to make his dreams come true.

“After I complete my graduation I want to go back to my community because there are so many people who do not get proper medical facilities so I have to help them.” —Sunil

To help Sunil complete his dream, go to: [GoFundMe.com](https://www.gofundme.com/sunils-story), “Sunil's Story”.

Vijay—10 years of Love Given

It is impossible to put into words what Vijay has given One! International over the past ten years.

From day one, his passion to change the injustices that he saw around him in his every day life was unrelenting. Sometimes to his own detriment. He has faced some hard times in trying to comprehend that some things can't be righted...now. It will take time. People will fall—but we have to hope they will pick themselves back up again.

Every time one of his students fell, it crushed him. He took it as a personal failure. He is learning that not everyone will choose the right path and to concentrate more on the successes—to celebrate them.

Vijay was instrumental in the successes of both the Nallasopara School and the Village Project. He has been involved in teaching, planning, administration, social work, advocacy and everything else that needed to be done.

His tireless energy to do what needed to be done no matter the time or distance travelled has not gone unnoticed by every student, staff and volunteer of One! International.

Vijay is now armed with a Law Degree—not to practice law but to better understand the rights of all individuals and to be better able to fight so that those rights are upheld.

Vijay has already touched the lives of hundreds and there is no doubt that



number will become thousands as he continues his heart filled efforts toward positive change and a better world.

Ms. Kyla and Ms. Nina

We have been fortunate over the past 15 plus years to have built a fantastic relationship with the American School of Bombay Grade 2 teachers and students.

Our relationship in the past 5 years has truly blossomed under Ms. Kyla and Ms. Nina.

Both take extra care and attention in building bonds between their students and ours. They take the time in their classes to teach cultur-

al sensitivity and truly make our children feel welcomed when we visit their school—which is more than one world apart from ours.

Ms. Kyla remembers most of our children's names and stories. Soni (10 year old girl) stole her heart when she



first met her 5 years ago and she has watched her grow with love.

Ms. Nina always has a smile and a hug. She wears full clothing during swim day out of respect—a small gesture which has a huge affect in making our students feel at home and heard.

Ms. Kyla and Ms. Nina treat our students like their own. We are so lucky to have them in our One! International family.

Volunteer Program Revival!

We have been disappointed over the past few years at the decline of interest in our volunteer program in India—people finding it difficult to commit to two plus months. Fortunately, the tide is turning.

Currently, Raquel, from Brazil is volunteering. Raquel was referred to One! International by Priscilla who volunteered in 2013. Priscilla continues to be a strong advocate.

Chloe (Canada) is returning to India in June (she volunteered in India in March of 2018 as well). We are also in the middle of discussions with a Mexican and a Colombian, and have other applications as well.

Volunteers continue to be vital in bringing fresh energy, ideas and love to the schools.

In addition, we have also had interest

by a number of people willing to volunteer locally in Alberta.

Our Nursing Volunteer Program will be active again this year when Jocelyn (RN) will be returning to Mumbai in November to do health assessments for the children and the families.

Volunteers need to be willing to work hard to make their placement a rewarding and educational one for themselves as well as for our students.

Contact: MarilynSpilchen@aol.com

Vikas—10 Years of Growth....

It is hard to believe that 10 years have passed since Vikas first joined One! International as a teacher. He had just arrived to Mumbai from his village and was in shock by the new things that the big city was showing him.

Vikas was a terrible teacher (he will tell you!), but was a loyal employee who was always on time and was always ready to do anything asked of him.

I had to make a choice: fire him or promote him to Medical Coordinator. I chose the latter and it was the best decision I ever made.

He struggled at first, but soon made relationships with doctors in all the hospitals and was getting

work done quickly and at reduced costs.

On top of medical work, Vikas is a jack of all trades. He does electricals, plumbing, and any other maintenance work.

Vikas has arranged funerals and searched in morgues to identify bodies.

Vikas travelled to Karnataka (12 hours away) to be with Malesh within hours after Parvati died.

Vikas treats all the children equally and thinks of them as family.

It has been incredible to watch Vikas grow into the professional man that he now is.

He is a well respected member of



our team and we are lucky to have him working with us.

Thank you Vikas for giving all that you have, we look forward to what you will accomplish in the next 10 years!

Volunteer Corner—Francesca and Friends

Francesca (England) has been a bright light in our One! International lives in the past five months. She has a smile that makes you feel at home. She has been determined to not only volunteer her time and help in whatever way she can, but to get as many other people helping in whatever ways they can as well.

Francesca introduced us to Katie and Sohpie. Katie (Eng) volunteers in the mornings before school opens to help the children read. Sophie (Eng) is an emergency room doctor who comes in once a week to help Vikas with some of our more difficult medical cases. She helps us feel comfortable with what has been provided and points us to the next steps.

Francesca has also gathered boxes and boxes and...really it needs to be



said one more time...boxes of toys, books and other donations from her friends.

We have enough toys to properly create colourful and interactive PreStep rooms for our under 5 year olds. The children haven't seen them yet but are going to be over the moon with excitement when they do!

Francesca also introduced us to Prity. Prity and her husband are

dentists who are hoping to give free check-ups to the children. Prity is also collecting donations from her friends—both financial and materials in-kind.

Francesca is also sourcing volunteers to resurrect computers from our computer graveyard on top of other ideas.

In a short time, she has built strong relationships with both the children and the staff.

I have never been apt at networking. Let's be honest, I am horrible at it!

Francesca is amazing and has a way of bringing out the generosity of everyone she meets.

With her help, we are going to be able to give and do more for less.

Thank you Francesca, we look forward to our partnership blossoming even more in the months and years to come.

A Terrible Situation

Ashwini, 8, and Aarti, 5, and their baby sister Pooja are in a terrible situation.

Their mother, Gayatri, who was an orphan, fell in love with an alcoholic at the age of 16. She started drinking too and they ended up getting 'married' and having children. When Ashwini and Aarti were young, Gayatri gave them a shot of alcoholic to keep them quiet. Aarti came to school 'drunk' one day. We threatened Gayatri with a police case and she stopped. We hoped she could change. The girls did well for two years, they came to school regularly and started to gain confidence. They became less jittery and started smiling.

Then their mother and father found drugs to go along with the alcohol. Food became more and more scarce at

home and the girls were forced to start begging.

When Vikas went to pick them up for school one morning, there were five men passed out in the home and Pooja was playing by herself under the bed.

We knew we had to do something.

We tried to set up a temporary foster parent situation for the girls but Gayatri was not ready.

On one of their evenings begging, Aarti and Ashwini were taken in by the police. The police did not want to send the girls to a government home—



knowing how bad they are—but they were also short of options. With the threat of never seeing the girls again, Gayatri agreed to give the girls up temporarily to one of our school teachers—a friend she grew up with her whole life.

Two days in, Gayatri took the girls and ran away with her family. That was 2 months ago. We

have seen the girls twice since then, once at the school because they were hungry and once on the street.

We feel helpless; sometimes situations are out of our hands. We will never lose hope and will never stop trying.



Brief Stint as a Foster Parent—Dilshaad

When we were searching desperately for options for Aarti and Ashwini, it was Dilshaad who stepped up.

Dilshaad has been a student of One! International since 2002. She started grade 10 but fell in love that year which seemed way more important than school!

Dilshaad's life has not been easy. She has a thyroid problem along with diabetes. She has not been able to have children of her own.

She lost her mother and her father is in jail. Despite being one of 9 children, she often feels alone.

When the idea of fostering Aarti and Ashwini was presented to her, she didn't hesitate to say yes. We told her to think on it, but she was just as resolute in her answer the next day—even more strong in the decision with the support of her husband who knew that Dilshaad was the perfect person for the job.

Within two days, the girls were smiling and laughing and eating and playing and watching TV just like they should be at their age.

Dilshaad is very thankful that she was given the opportunity and is even more determined to have a family of her own.

We will always be thankful to Dilshaad for being such a loving, strong and wonderful role model for the girls in her community.

Gord

In the summer of the year 2000 after returning home to Canada after a full year in India, I made a very rudimentary presentation about how I wanted to teach and help kids in India.

I showed it to Gord, my old swim coach. He was a lawyer.. and he was smart... and he would tell me how much of a fool I was being...but he would tell me in a very nice way. He was definitely nice, but didn't tell me

I was a fool. (Though I am still convinced he must have been thinking it.) Instead, he jumped in head first and started listing off the things that needed to be done. Then he started doing them. Before I knew it, One! International Poverty Relief was a registered charity and the rest is history.

The saying 'you have to see it to believe it' doesn't work with Gord. Gord has never travelled to India but has not

needed to. His compassion and drive to make change without the gratification of seeing the results first-hand is amazing.

It is hard to believe that it all started 19 years ago. Thank you will never be enough. Gord fearlessly embarked on each step of the journey with me as crazy as each step sounded. He is a pillar of strength and support allowing others to act confidently around him.

Written by Tania unless otherwise mentioned.

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Unity and Understanding

One! International continues to promote ideals of unity and understanding—despite differences in religion, caste, gender...



Our One! International anthem “Thank You For...” is non-religious and a constant reminder of what we do have rather than concentrating on what we don’t have.

The Search for a Volunteer Accountant

We have been incredibly fortunate over the history of One! International to have only paid an accountant once to do our yearly review—our very first year in 2001. We were given volunteer professional services for the next 15 years from three incredible accountants—Walter, Norman and Milena. With their help, we have been able to keep our administration expenses below 8% of our total expenses year after year.

With changes to the CPA (Chartered Professional Accountants) Association of Canada, and to the Canadian Charities Directorate (which governs registered charities in Canada), accountants now seem unable to volunteer their services in the same way as in previous years.

Since 2017, we have not had an accountant do our yearly review. The smallest quote we have received for a ‘Financial Review’ would be nearly 2% of our yearly budget. It is hard to justify taking that money away from the children. We have been searching for two years but have not lost hope that we will find someone that can generously assist us ‘pro bono’ or at a substantially reduced rate.

If you want to help or know someone who may be able to, please contact: info@one-international.com.

Volunteers are what make One! International Poverty Relief work. All administration and fundraising work is done by volunteers—except for a small portion of Tania’s salary. If you would like to volunteer in any capacity, in India or Canada, please contact us.

Jeetu is a Mechanic!!

It took a lot of convincing for Jeetu not to follow the ‘normal’ path and just get a Bachelor of Commerce Degree; it is the cheapest degree and the default for most teenagers coming out of Grade 12. Unfortunately, it doesn’t guarantee a job. Jeetu is a thinker and an artist—commerce just didn’t seem right. After many months of reflection, he decided that he would like to be a mechanic because he likes learning about how things work and building things with his hands.

12 months later...Jeetu IS a mechanic. He graduated top of his class and is now hoping that after a few years of experience he can study Automobile Design. Oh, and by the way, he also has a Bachelor of Commerce Degree.

We gave him his first pencil in 2007. We are proud beyond words of what he has accomplished and of the incredible young man that he has become.



Landlord Greed

Negotiating rent in Mumbai is a yearly struggle. According to an Oxford Economics Report in 2017, Mumbai had the second highest real estate price-to-income ratio in the world (second only to Hong Kong). Finding a place that is large enough and for a price that is manageable has proven to be difficult.

We thought we found it last year for our Khar School. The landlord seemed to like us as tenants and showed signs that we would be able to stay long term.

Then he decided to increase our rent from Rs. 55,000 (\$1100) per month to Rs. 75,000 (\$1500) per month. The going rate of increase year over year in Mumbai is 10%...NOT 36%!

Vikas and Vijay started the hunt.

They were successful and, after never-ending landlord/agent discussions, found a place for Rs. 50,000 and have signed a two-year agreement. Our first day in the new school is June 10th, wish us luck!

Vicky in Computer Science

In order to graduate from grade 10, Vicky almost had to live on the streets because his dad wanted him to work and not study.

In order to graduate from grade 12, Vicky had to work part-time in order to be allowed to continue his studies. He still had to fight every day to be allowed to study.

Vicky persevered. He studied hard—to the point where all of his friends wondered why he studied so much.

He didn’t have to answer their questions, he showed them. Vicky has finished the first year of his Computer Science degree. He was 5th in a class of 300 students.

He still fights every day at home in order to continue his education, but he feels invincible now and can see the light at the end of what seemed like an impossibly dark tunnel. He is smiling again and is confident of what he will accomplish in his future.