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OCEAN STARS LANKA

Ocean Stars Lanka



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This Christmas Ocean Stars appeals for their Feeding Programme to provide a nutritious meal for over 500 preschool children. Details of our appeal and how you can donate to feed a child for 50p can be found on Page 3. We thank you for your support.



LATEST NEWS

Ocean Stars Lanka wins an award by the Sri Lanka local government for services to the local community.

75 teachers attend a residential teacher training in July 2022.

Trustees met for annual Awayday to discuss our OST Strategy and to review our goals and objectives.

5 sponsor children pass A Level exams and go onto University, Nursing and Vocational Training.

Breakfast programme now in 14 preschools - marked improvements in children's health and weight have been recorded.

Hope House 3 was opened in July 2022 offering sewing classes for 22 women in the local village. After the 6 month course the students want to set up their own business.

Plans are being made to resume volunteer trips and Calthorpe Park School have 21 students signed up for October 2023. 3 members of staff from Calthorpe Park School in Fleet went to Sri Lanka in October 2022.

We welcome Kim Gilbert as our UK Preschool Manager.

Message from Dilanee, Head of Operations

As we approach the end of 2022 it has been another year of challenges and changes for Ocean Stars Trust. In the UK our Chair Maureen stepped down in May 2022 and we welcomed John as our new Chair. The Trustees continue to meet bi-monthly and various focus groups, Finance, Child Development, Sponsorship, Preschools, meet in the interim. The Trustees and I would like to thank all our donors and friends for your continued support and donations for our work. The situation in Sri Lanka continues to be challenging. After the Easter Bombings of 2019, and Covid Pandemic of 2020 and 2021 we were hoping for a calmer 2022. However an unprecedented economic crisis led to shortages of fuel, food, electricity, gas and even commodities like paper for printing examinations. Our staff and families faced daily power cuts of up to 10 hours a day. As the Sri Lankan Rupee was devalued in April, overnight prices went up, and food inflation currently is at 85.6% . The UN has been concerned about the rise in malnutrition amongst children in Sri Lanka and Ocean Stars Trust has responded by setting up feeding programmes for our poorest and remotest preschools. Around 600 children now have access to a nutritious meal every day and the local health workers have commented about the weight gain in children attending our preschools. In spite of all the challenges we managed to open Mahadevan Playpark in the rural village of Karuvapankeny. We are hoping to resume our volunteer trips in 2023 and our communities are looking forward to meeting UK visitors who they have missed seeing for 4 years. I wish you all a Very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year 2023. As we commence our 18th year of operations I would like to say a huge Thank You to you our friends, supporters and donors who make our work empowering children through education in Sri Lanka possible.



In this newsletter you can read about our Playpark Project, Feeding Programme for over 500 children, Calthorpe Park Staff visit to Sri Lanka, Ocean Stars Lanka award, Teacher Training and the Beyond Boundaries Team.

THE CHILDREN'S PLAYPARK PROJECT AT KARUWAPANKERNY BATTICALOA



Ocean Stars Trust was approached by Mr Kiri Mahadevan who wanted to build a Playpark in Sri Lanka in memory of his grandmother. Seeing his own children play in a park in the UK Kiri felt he wanted to give a similar opportunity to children in SL who may not have access to a playpark.

From initial talks to the final opening ceremony on Saturday 23rd July the project has taken a year. Nobody could have anticipated that the country was going to run out of foreign currency,



experience an unprecedented fuel crisis and electricity shortage, that imports were going to be restricted and the currency was going to be devalued. All these factors could easily have made any project manager and funder decide enough is enough!

We are so grateful to the Mahadevan family for being with us all along the way and for supporting us when the budgets kept changing due to the economic situation in SL. We are also so grateful to our Ocean Stars Lanka staff for working tirelessly to make sure that every stage of the project was monitored and completed to a high standard. We are

also grateful to the local DS Office for donating the land to Ocean Stars Lanka so the project could go ahead and impact children who have no access to a playpark.

Seeing the joy, laughter, delight on the children's faces and hearing the squeals of children as they come down the slides or go round the merry-go-round has been heart-warming. The resilience, fortitude and determination of everyone involved has been an inspiration. The arrival of a beautiful playpark with equipment imported from Hongkong has been no short of a miracle.

The opening ceremony was a happy event with speeches from government dignitaries and OSL staff. Trees were planted and the traditional oil lamp was lit. Recent UK visitors to the park commented and what an amazing achievement the whole project was. Parents of children who were playing at the park asked us to pass on their heartfelt thanks to Kiri and his family. They thanked us for giving the children an opportunity to be happy and to have fun. Children from local preschools also use the playpark as part of their early years education.

Ocean Stars would like to extend a huge thank you to Kiri and his family for their kindness, generosity and patience and for inspiring this project. The community have received a safe space to escape to during the problems of 2022.



BACS DONATIONS

If you would like to make a donation by BACS please use the following details :

Account Name: Ocean Stars Trust

Sort Code: 30-93-32

Account Number: 02662990

Reference: Gift



We extend a warm welcome to Kim who joined our OST UK team as Preschool Manager in May 2022.

Donate £10 towards our ongoing work in Sri Lanka by
TEXTING oceanstarstrust to 70085

(Texts cost £10 plus one standard network rate message).

BREAKFAST PROJECTS AND FEEDING PROGRAMMES OCEAN STARS TRUST UK AND OCEAN STARS LANKA

Ocean Stars Trust UK is committed in its mission of empowering children through education in Sri Lanka and providing a high standard of education for our 1000+ children who attend our preschools. In order to access this education programme, children need to be in the right physical and emotional state.

As Sri Lanka is going through an economic crisis the country is facing shortages of fuel, electricity and gas. Food inflation is currently at 80% and general inflation at 50%. This has led to a shortage of food in some areas. Our preschool teachers noticed that several of our children were coming to preschool hungry having had no breakfast. To help alleviate this problem the Trustees agreed to extend our breakfast programme to include more of our poorest preschools in a time-bonded manner. We would like to extend a big thank you to Beacon Hill United Reform Church, Calthorpe Park School Fleet, Fonthill Foundation UK, Narthana 2022, Fleet Methodist Church and many other organisations and individuals for supporting and funding our breakfast programmes, so no child has to go hungry.

During her recent visit to Sri Lanka, Dilanee visited some of the feeding programmes and interviewed the parents. The parents were so happy to be involved with the project. They felt they got to know each other better, relationships between parents and teachers were strengthened, the children gained weight, their attendance has improved and eating together everyday has improved the social skills of the children.

The United Nations World Food Programme on their website Sri Lanka page comment that :

Sri Lanka is experiencing its worst economic crisis since it gained independence in 1948. It comes on the heels of successive waves of COVID-19 threatening to undo years of development progress, severely undermining the country's ability to achieve the **UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals**.

An estimated 4.9 million people – 22 percent of the population – are currently food-insecure and require humanitarian assistance.

Reduced domestic agricultural production, scarcity of foreign exchange reserves and depreciation of the local currency have caused food shortages and a spike in the cost of living, which is limiting people's access to healthy and affordable meals.



Please donate to our Feed a Child Programme so that no child goes hungry in our preschool communities. 50 pence will buy one meal for one child. £2.50 will feed a child for one week. £10 will feed one child for one month. To feed 25 children for one month it costs £250.00. If you would like to support our Breakfast programme in anyway then please get in touch with us at oceanstarstrust@gmail.com or make a donation via our website.



RESIDENTIAL TEACHER TRAINING JULY 2022

FUNDED BY FONTHILL FOUNDATION UK

Ocean Stars Trust UK is committed in its mission of empowering children through education in Sri Lanka and providing a high standard of education for our 1000+ children who attend our preschools. We would like to extend a huge thank you to Fonthill Foundation for funding our Teacher Training and enabling us to provide a high-quality educational experience for our students.

Teacher Training is a key part of our work in Sri Lanka. We run 30 preschools and employ 75 teachers so making sure our teachers access current up to date training is very important to us.

We run regular training sessions for our teachers during the year at our Ocean Star Lanka Office in the town of Batticaloa. Our teachers value these opportunities to get together and share best practice and network.

Since 2019 thanks to Fonthill Foundation UK we have been able to offer our teachers an annual residential teacher training. This has become a valuable part of our teachers' lives. It gives them an opportunity to leave their villages and come to a safe and secure environment for 3 days and follow a wide variety of workshops and talk on early years education. During the last 3 years this residential teacher training has played a really important part in our work as our teachers have had to live through the aftermath of the Easter Sunday bombings and the pandemic.



We recently completed our 2022 residential teacher training event. Once again, this year with a background of lack of fuel, no gas, no power and food shortages we were able to still run our event. What was indeed amazing was that our all-island teachers were able to attend. Teachers from Kilinochchi, Colombo and Yatiyanthota all travelled to Batticaloa. These teachers had been saving fuel for 4 weeks so they could travel to the event. Workshops included basic English and nurse rhymes, child psychology, music, home gardening, emotional awareness, yoga and nutrition. The teachers really value

the opportunity to be together to share friendship and laughter as well as following the training. They commented on how much they value being together and sharing ideas. The teachers particularly valued the English Language workshops and went away feeling more confident about using English in the classroom.

Each of our preschools was also provided with a bag of resources to help with their early years' programmes. The teachers also receive a certificate of attendance. This year when the people of Sri Lanka are facing unbearable difficulties and challenges this Teacher Training provided our teachers a few days of light and hope. We thanks



Fonthill Foundation UK for funding this valuable and crucial part of our work empowering children through education in Sri Lanka.

Ocean Stars UK and Lanka focus on Strategy Planning

The UK Trustees met on Saturday 24th September for their Strategy Day and reviewed their Focus Areas, Key Objectives and Key Activities. This planning day is an essential feature in our calendar. It helps us to continuously evaluate our work and to make sure our strategy is relevant and reflects our vision and our aim. Ocean Stars Lanka also held their strategy day and the team worked on their Vision and Mission statements.



VISITING LINK SCHOOLS IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE AFTER 3 YEARS - CRAFT ACTIVITIES, DANCE AND SAMBA BAND DRUMS



The Principals of the link schools commented on how much the students enjoyed working with their UK visitors. Playing music, doing craft activities, dancing, being creative, laughing and having fun all impact the students in ways that cannot be measured. The students will never forget this day for the rest of their lives. They said they are truly grateful for all the hard work and preparation that Ross, Charlotte and Wendy had put into the trip. They cannot wait to welcome UK students in October 2023. Since their first trip in 2013 Calthorpe Park School have provided 6 Samba drum sets, computers, a music room, a preschool building, a preschool playground and enriched the lives of thousands of children in Sri Lanka.

Ocean Stars Lanka Wins Award for Services to Local Community

Ocean Stars Lanka was recently nominated for an award for their work in the community especially the feeding programmes which have had a huge impact on hundreds of children and families. The ceremony took place on the 11th October 2022 and was a high profile event attended by 5 national government ministers. Many congratulations to our OSL team who work tirelessly to make sure that all our projects are delivered to a high standard. The team regularly attend meetings run by the local government and are invited to attend prestigious events. There are over 50 NGOs working in the Eastern Province so to be nominated and to win an award is a great achievement, and confirmation that Ocean Stars as an organisation is embedded in the local services, and our work valued by the local government.



Ross, Wendy and Charlotte reflect on their long-awaited return trip to Sri Lanka in October 2022.

Ross: It has been amazing to do different things we have not done before. It was great to return to our link schools and be welcomed so warmly. I was blown away by the Ocean Stars Lanka team. The playpark project was staggering. We were able to pick up straight away after a 3 year absence. I can't wait to return. A lot of effort had gone into making us feel welcome.

Charlotte: It has been a fantastic experience. The relationship we have built with the Beyond Boundaries team is very special. I loved returning to Navalady school. The students really appreciate and value our contribution. The OSL Team were fantastic. The new office is amazing.

Wendy: I love going back to our link schools. They are always so welcoming and appreciative. The children are a joy to be with. The OSL team do a marvellous job. Our day at the link school was brilliantly organised. The office was very welcoming and clean. Being there gave us a sense of the bigger picture of all the work that is done.



Ocean Stars Trust are very grateful to the team at Beyond Boundaries who make sure that travel arrangements on the ground in Sri Lanka run smoothly for all UK volunteers. After a break of 3 years they are very happy that our trips are happening again. Madushan, Chamila and Gihan work tirelessly to make sure that everyone under their care has a wonderful experience of Sri Lanka. Their encyclopaedic knowledge of the history and traditions of SL are constantly relayed to the students and volunteers. Hotel arrangements, ground travel, visits to sites, food and entertainment are all taken care of. Volunteers always comment on how safe they feel when travelling with the BB team. Whatever volunteers need or ask for just appears. The BB team in turn are very happy to support the work of Ocean Stars Trust and volunteer their time to work in the link schools with the UK students. They see how friendships are formed between students in the UK and Sri Lanka. Thank you Beyond Boundaries. You are truly awesome.



Ocean Stars Lanka Team



From left to right: Nishanthini: Preschool Manager and Sponsorship Supervisor, Chitra: Office Manager, Shalini: Assistant Director and Finance Manager, Salujah: Preschool Manager.

Founder and Trustees of Ocean Stars Trust UK



From left to right: Dan: Trustee, Dilanee: Founder, Jo: Trustee, Jennie: Trustee, John: Chair and Finance Manager and Cameron: Trustee.

We thank you for your continuing support.