

Seeds on the Wind

News from Bethania

Two Small Hands

BY MAX HEIDELBERGER

My name is Max Heidelberg. I'm 17 years old, and a senior from Boyce Virginia. I was blessed to spend three months this past summer at our Angel Children's Home in Rajahmundry. During this time, I saw many miracles worked in the lives of forty-five boys. Today I would like to share with you the story of Nikhilesh.

I first met Nikhilesh when he was admitted into our Bethania boys' home in early July. He was small for his age, his frame shortened by malnutrition. His skin had been roughened by dust, and his hands were worn. The only things he possessed in the world were carried at his side within a small suitcase—no more than an extra set of clothes and some cheap trinket he had found on the street. But it was his eyes that were the saddest of all. Hollow, joyless, and flashing with insecurity, they were the eyes of a boy who had experienced and endured tremendous suffering and poverty.

Nikhil stood before Solomon, the manager of our home, blinking and self-conscious. The life he had led was unbelievable! Nikhil's father had perished in an accident, and every day starting at 6:00 am, Nikhil would remain alone and unprotected until 8:00 pm, entertaining himself in the streets or begging for coins from passersby.



Nikhilesh

In this issue...

Read how God is transforming the lives of children in surprising ways

Solomon put a hand on his shoulder and pulled him close, speaking gently to the stone-faced boy. I couldn't understand the words, but I clearly remember how Nikhil's face lit up in surprise at Solomon's touch, and how his eyes, so dark and dim, suddenly flickered with a hint of warmth.

In the days that followed this first meeting, I quickly sought to make our new brother feel welcome, wanted and loved. But my intervention was unnecessary, for the other forty-four boys welcomed Nikhil into our community with brotherly affection. I have never seen so many boys simultaneously take on the role of older sibling.

In this warm environment Nikhilesh flourished. His body soon became strong, flesh filling out over his once visible ribs. His eyes were no longer sunken and dark, but full and bright. Regular bathing soon washed away the dust and sores of his old life. He received his first set of schoolbooks, and dug into the material with unrestrained excitement. And of course, he was introduced to Christ, a personal relationship with his Creator, which must have filled him with hope and joy.

To my utter surprise, over the summer Nikhil proved himself capable of an absolutely brilliant smile, which became more and more frequent as the days progressed. His eyes gleamed and they radiated an excitement which bore no hint of the hopelessness that had been before. But what moved me most was the sight of

this once lonely boy on his knees, with two small hands, which had once been callused and roughened by hardship, now clasped tightly together as he mouthed a prayer to our Heavenly Father. What a privilege it was for me to be a witness to this transformation, and what a miracle!



Max Heidelberg

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We would like to acknowledge a generous contribution from the Million Dollar Roundtable (MDRT), which is being used to further develop Bethania Kids Centers in Kodaikanal. Thank you for changing the world through Bethania Kids!

Behold, the New Has Come

Murugesan anxiously looked out the door of his hut. He was hungry and it seemed that his father was never home. Where had his mother gone? It had been many months since she'd left. Didn't she want to come back and see him? Since the new woman came to their hut, no one seemed to care about him. He felt alone and always so hungry.

At school, Murugesan was a fast runner. He smiled as he reached the banana trees first. Looking over his shoulder he saw Suresh right behind him, followed by Raman, Lakshman and Mohan. Mohan came up last and tumbled into Raman. The two laughed as Raman cried that it had been an unfair tackle. Since the new boys had come to this school in Kannivadi, Murugesan was drawn to them and wondered what it would be like to have a brother who was a close friend.

"You're fast, Murugesan. I wish I was as fast as you," said Mohan. "Where do you live?"

Murugesan looked down and said nothing. He was ashamed.

That evening Murugesan stood alone, looking out of his father's hut, feeling the hunger growing in his stomach. But a greater hunger was also there. He felt anxious and confused. Murugesan shuffled around outside, swinging a stick and scanning the horizon for his father. A man was digging with a múnvarti in a neighboring field. A long way off, he could see some goats getting into mischief looking for a meal among the parched vegetation. It was a hot summer in 1987. He was 9 years old and had so much hope in him, with no one to share it.

The next day at school, Lakshman asked, "Murugesan, why don't you come to our home after school and play?"

That would be the first time Murugesan came to the Bethania Kids home in Kannivadi. He met Prabhu and Priscilla and an elderly woman whom everyone called, 'Dayavu amma.' After running around and playing, a meal was served and Murugesan almost cried at the good food and the laughter all around. Prabhu noticed that he ate very well, and afterwards Dayavu amma asked where he lived. After a brief conversation, Prabhu decided he would visit Murugesan's father that very day. Only a few days later, an overjoyed Murugesan came to live at the Bethania Kids home.

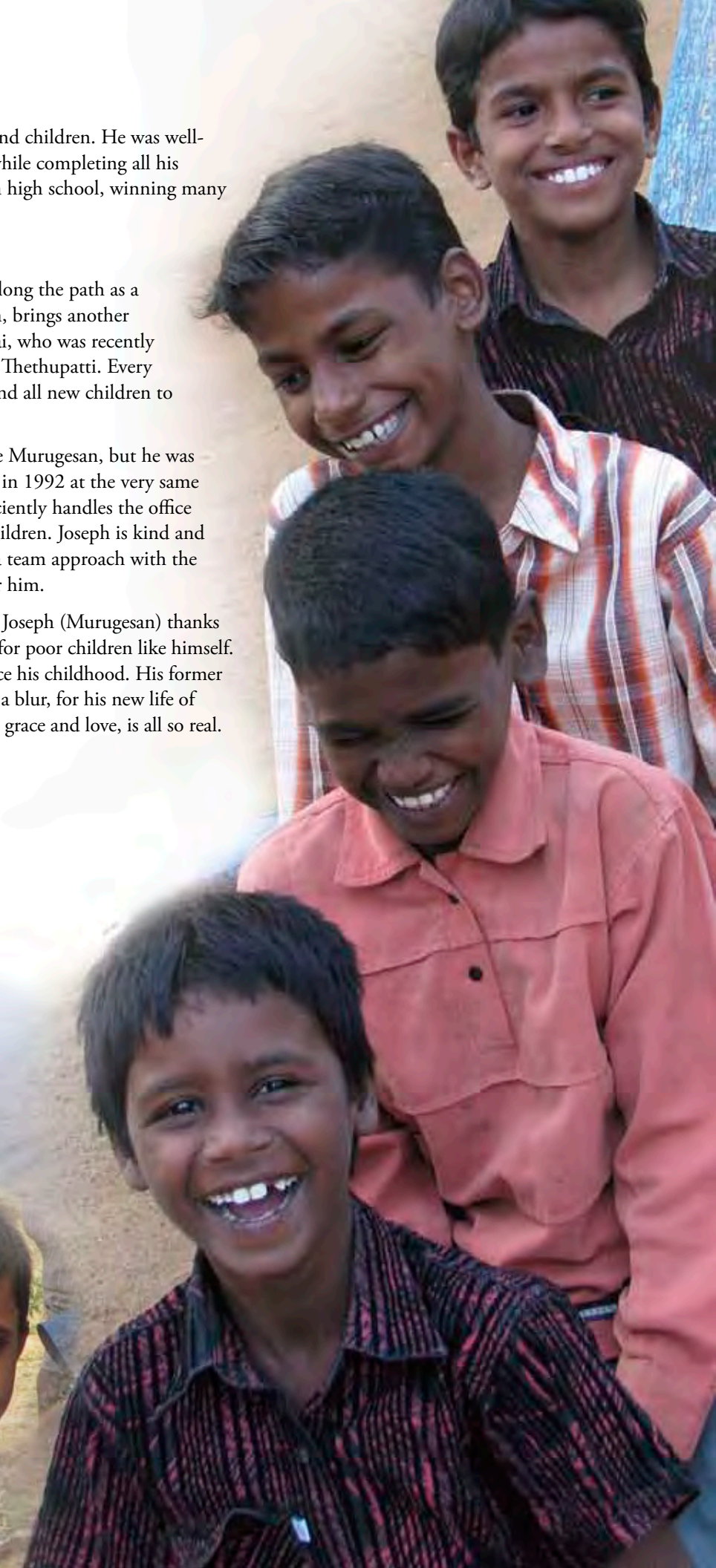
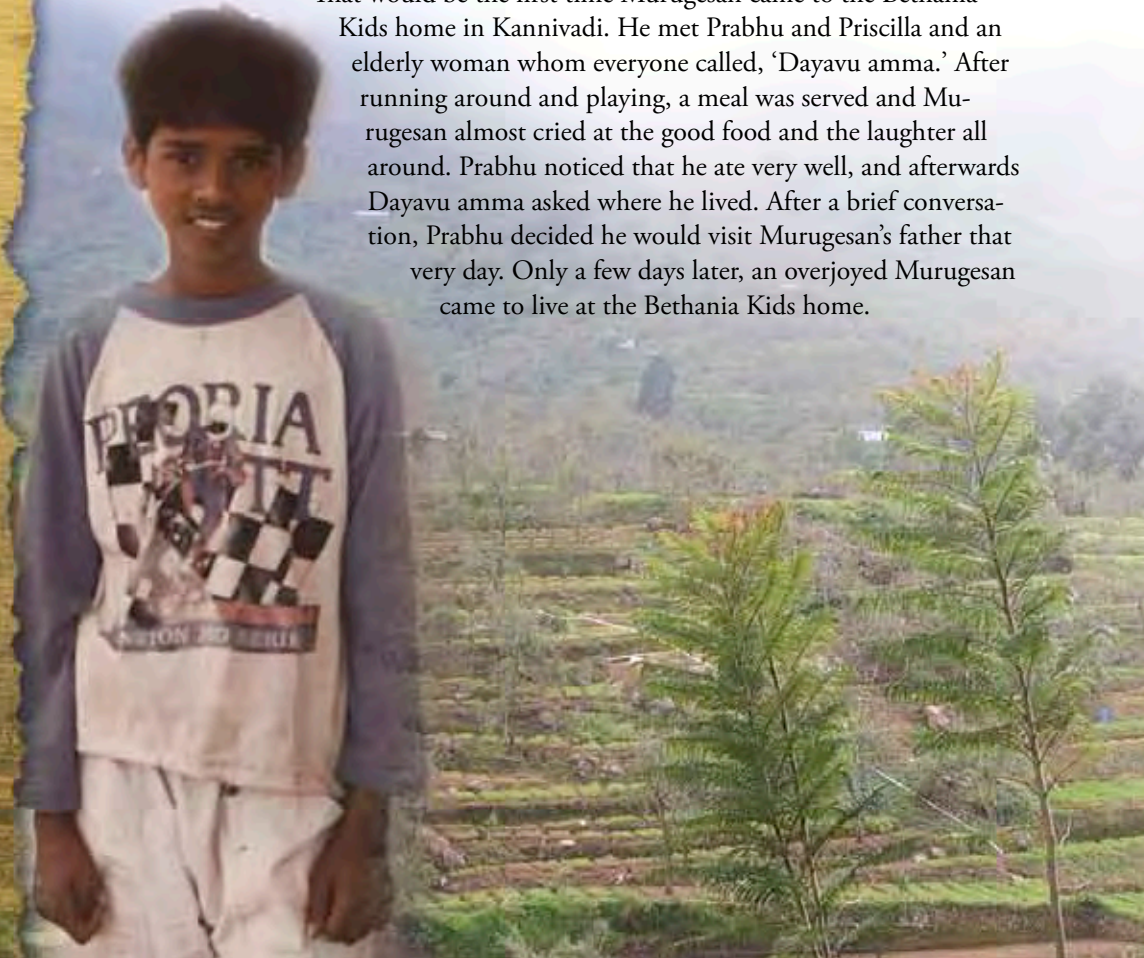
Murugesan was always friendly with both adults and children. He was well-liked by his teachers, and worked hard at school while completing all his chores at Bethania as well. He excelled in sports in high school, winning many trophies and awards.

Today, twenty one years after Murugesan played along the path as a child, the manager of the Kannivadi home, Joseph, brings another young child to Bethania. Her name is Mugambigai, who was recently found begging at the Raja Kali Amman temple in Thethupatti. Every day Joseph and the other kids help Mugambigai and all new children to feel welcome at the home.

You see, at birth, this manager was given the name Murugesan, but he was baptized 'Joseph' and committed his life to Christ in 1992 at the very same Bethania Kids home. Now his wife, Anushya, efficiently handles the office work and the stores, and tutors the high school children. Joseph is kind and well-loved by all the children, and he has created a team approach with the staff, some of whom were once parental figures for him.

Sometimes, when he has time to reflect on his life, Joseph (Murugesan) thanks God that he has been given the privilege of caring for poor children like himself. He is grateful to God for the calling he has felt since his childhood. His former life as a lonely and hungry semi-orphan seems like a blur, for his new life of nurturing and equipping children, a life filled with grace and love, is all so real.

Truly, in Christ, Murugesan is a new creation.



Left: Murugesan as a young boy cared for by Bethania Kids.
Above: Joseph (Murugesan) today
Near right: Mugambigai
Far right: a new generation at Kannivadi

Bethania is a Christian mission bringing wholeness and hope to poor, abandoned and disabled children in India, equipping them to share God's love.

100% of your contribution will be used directly for children's ministry in India.

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Only In Their Hearts

This summer, Camille, Chloe and Lauren, of Scottsdale, AZ caught the Bethania vision at a Vacation Bible School at church and began their own crusade right in the neighborhood. They canvassed the streets in 105 plus degree Arizona heat!

Armed with only their enthusiasm for the kids that needed help in India, they went door to door to collect money. They didn't tell anyone what they were doing until after the fact, when with huge smiles on their faces they announced that they had raised \$57.00 for 'the kids in India' and they weren't finished yet! The following day they raised even more, bringing the grand total to over \$200, almost enough to care for one child for a whole year.

What's truly amazing about this story is that the girl's didn't even know how to pronounce the name of the organization they represented and had absolutely no literature to help them explain their cause! Their simple enthusiasm was contagious. They had nothing in their hands, but only in their hearts, letting the Spirit of God speak freely--not needing all the facts--just letting God's infinite kindness be channeled through them.

When asked what was the hardest part of their fund-raising efforts, they replied 'Well, it was pretty hot outside...' No mention was made of asking complete strangers for money - that seemed to be the easy part for the girls. Their innocence was truly beautiful and humbling and they just had such energy and excitement after doing this project!



Help us reach the children!

Please prayerfully consider making a generous donation so that Bethania Kids can continue to rescue children in need.