

Seeds on the Wind

NEWS FROM BETHANIA • SPRING 2018

Who Inspires You?

CLAUDIA TRAUTMANN

The children and staff of Bethania Kids are constant sources of inspiration for me. Shortly after returning from a trip to India in January, during which I visited many Bethania Kids centers, the Winter Olympics began. With memories of Bethania Kids still fresh in my mind, I realized how, in so many ways, our children at Bethania Kids are very similar to Olympic athletes.

Athletes don't get to the Olympics without numerous years of training, overcoming injuries and keeping a laser-sharp focus on the final goal of competing in the Olympics. They need a whole team of coaches, trainers, dieticians, medical professionals and loved ones to help hone their skills and give them emotional support.

Similarly, Bethania Kids is, essentially, the team for our children in homes and care centers. We provide the coaches/teachers, medical care, housing, nutritious food, discipline, support and love. Often there are injuries to be healed. Sometimes those can only be seen in the glimpse of sadness in a young boy's face, which makes you wonder what his morning was like and what home situation he will be returning to in the evening. Or they are seen in the eyes of a teenage girl whose memories of her mother being immolated by her father haunt her days and nights. There is a story of hardship or injury for each one of our children. However, at Bethania Kids, they are provided with a "team," giving them, first, the loving support and guidance to overcome those injuries and hardships. Additionally, they are provided the discipline and training they need to develop their own drive, thereby achieving their highest goals and becoming the very best that they can be.

It is this inner strength, determination and courage that inspires me the most. Like Olympic athletes, our children may not know exactly how the final competition will play out or what the conditions may be. But you can be assured that with their firm foundation and new-found confidence, they will be there at the top of their game and give it all they have. They earn their place on the winners podium every day!



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For These Blessings We Give Thanks

God has bountifully blessed us this past year with many successes:

- **Five-year renewal of our FCRA certificate** from the Indian government. The enormity of this blessing cannot be exaggerated as it allows us to continue sending funds to India so our ministry can continue. At a time when many charitable organizations are no longer permitted to operate in India, God has constantly guided the leadership of our Indian board through this process as they took proactive actions and insisted on meticulous records.
- Joyful **30th Anniversary celebrations** in India and North America. It was especially gratifying to see the 300 alumni who returned for these celebrations in India and to hear their stories that affirmed the transformative impact of Bethania Kids on their lives as well as the vision and mission of Bethania Kids.
- A very **successful Tour of Love**. The message of our ministry was shared with churches, organizations and individuals through the stirring messages from Josephine Selvan and Cristal Margret. Through God's grace we reached out to 22 churches and gained new sponsors for our children, new Board of Advisor members and several major gifts.
- **A fun-filled evening event in St. Paul, MN**, honoring one of our founders, Gene Hennig, which also resulted in raising \$52,000 for the new Shalom Home.
- Construction of **two new community buildings in Odisha**, which provide wonderful space for our Child and Mother Centers as well as gathering spaces for community classes and activities.
- **Grace Home named as "Best Home"** in the Nagercoil District, a meritorious award for service to the residents of Grace Home and the community. We congratulate Mrs. Selvi Monikaraj and her staff for this honorable recognition of their outstanding work.
- In partnership with **Orphan Grain Train**, a shipping container is almost filled with much-needed supplies for our homes and care centers, including donated musical instruments, bicycles, books, handknit hats, school and art supplies, sewing machines, sports equipment, beds and clothing.
- A **full staff** in North America, with talented and dedicated people who assure the growth of our mission.
- Good **progress on our five qualitative initiatives**, including mental health, medical records, alumni outreach, music and English training for our staff.
- Our **Comprehensive Campaign pledges** passed the \$700,000 milestone.

We ask for your prayers and help with our primary goal for this year, a new Shalom Home.

- The building **plans for the new Shalom Home** are now conceptualized. Over \$150,000 has already been raised, but we need an additional \$324,000 for the project. We will begin construction once we are close to our goal. We urgently need this new home as our present Shalom Home is out of compliance with government regulations for square footage. Help us begin construction in 2018 or early 2019!



Mental Health Initiative

Mental and emotional health is a vital component for the development of a whole person. This is a particular challenge for Bethania Kids because the children under our care, and many of our staff, come from traumatic backgrounds—the loss of one or both parents, desertion, abuse, rejection, witness to horrific events in their lives and more. Under the professional guidance of our North American board member Dr. Ernest Hahn, we are making mental health a focus of staff training this year.

A conference on “**Mental Health Awareness for Children and Caregivers from a Christian Perspective,**” held in Kodaikanal on January 15 and 16, 2018, launched this initiative. It was fitting that January 15 was a major holiday in India, celebrating their harvest festival of Pongal, also considered the beginning of a new year. Foregoing their personal holidays, over 35 staff members from all of our homes and care centers attended. The objectives of the conference were to provide all participants the ability to begin to understand and identify the mental health issues within Bethania Kids family and to be equipped to provide supportive interventions for these conditions from a Christian perspective.

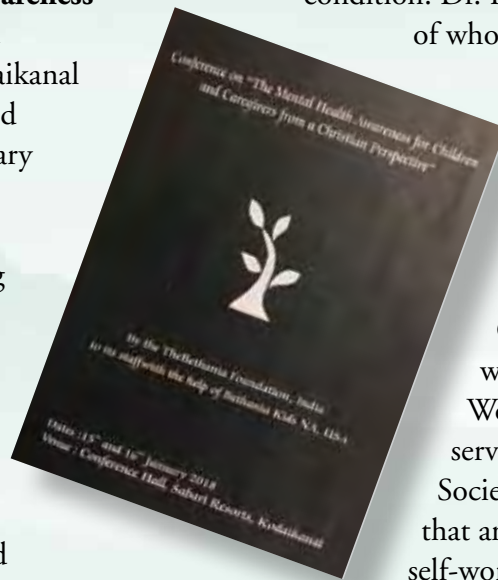
The conference was opened by Dr. Gnanakan, CEO of Bethania Kids Foundation, India, who introduced the fundamental responsibility that we as Christian caretakers have: to be aware of and to learn about mental health issues. As technology advances, access to communication media with its prevalently negative influences increases, often resulting in a decline in society’s moral values. As a result, children in their most precious formative years can become highly vulnerable. Dr. Gnanakan reminded

the attendees of the watch words from Proverbs 22:6, “*Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.*” [NIV]

Dr. Hahn used the first hours of the conference to define various conditions and present case studies of depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, PTSD and ADHD. He is particularly grateful for the courage of those staff who graciously shared their personal experiences with depression, not realizing prior to the conference that what they were suffering was a recognized medical condition. Dr. Kolhatkar and Mr. Arun Selvaraj, both of whom provide medical care to Bethania Kids children in Kodaikanal, described current medical treatments available for mental health conditions.

A presentation on “The Holistic Understanding of Children’s Health Care” was given by Mr. L.G. Barnabas, who is the retired Spiritual Leader of World Vision in India and presently serves as CEO of Christian Mission Society. He introduced two activities that are effective in bolstering the sense of self-worth and value of an individual. The participating staff experienced first hand the effectiveness of these activities.

According to World Health Organization data, suicide rates among women in India are the 6th highest in the world and among men, 22nd highest. Training on how to identify and prevent possible suicide cases was presented by Rev. Dr. Subinraj. In addition to being an Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church minister, Rev. Dr. Subinraj is completing his doctorate in counseling from Concordia Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis. The importance of immediately protecting a person contemplating suicide was emphasized, with practical suggestions discussed and shared.



Foregoing their personal holidays, over 35 staff members attended.

The staff members who participated in this conference were introduced to a new vision of mental health care. In the Indian culture, mental illness and struggles with one's personal emotions are not discussed. One reason for this is the shame that is so often associated with incidents contributing to depression, anxiety disorder, PTSD and the sense of hopelessness that too often results in suicide. Shame for the actions of one individual is frequently extended to an entire family. Shame is often the reason for rejection of an individual by the family and community. Consequently, coping with depression and the effects of tragic situations is often seen as a matter of self-worth rather than acknowledged as a medical condition that can and should be treated. In this conference the staff learned there is no shame in taking care of one's mental health. One participant wrote that "economic stability, education and influence do not bring mental peace and happiness. Like any other disease, such as diabetes or hypertension, depression is also a disease and has to be treated properly." Treatments recommended were prayer, love, protection, counseling and medication.

In addition to now feeling far better equipped to help the children they care for, the staff also recognize the constructive help they can provide to members of the community, who often confide in staff members about their problems. This conference was a very successful first step in our initiative to address mental health issues facing those under Bethania Kids' care. Additional education, training and professional support is still necessary.

We are fortunate to have professionals among our supporters who travel to India and volunteer their time and expertise. Prior to the conference, Melinda and Tom Peters, both trained therapists, spent time working with staff and children at several of our ministries. Dr. Pat

Forman, a psychiatrist, traveled to Kodaikanal and Nagercoil after the conference. She shared practical ways to keep from feeling depressed (prayer, exercise, yoga, sunshine, etc.) with many of our children. As a means of encouraging the children to talk about themselves, she introduced the Draw-a-Person test to some of the staff whereby the children are asked to draw a simple picture of a person and then to talk about various aspects of the picture. These are simple steps to demonstrate to both staff and children the benefits of communicating their feelings as a first step to mental and emotional health.

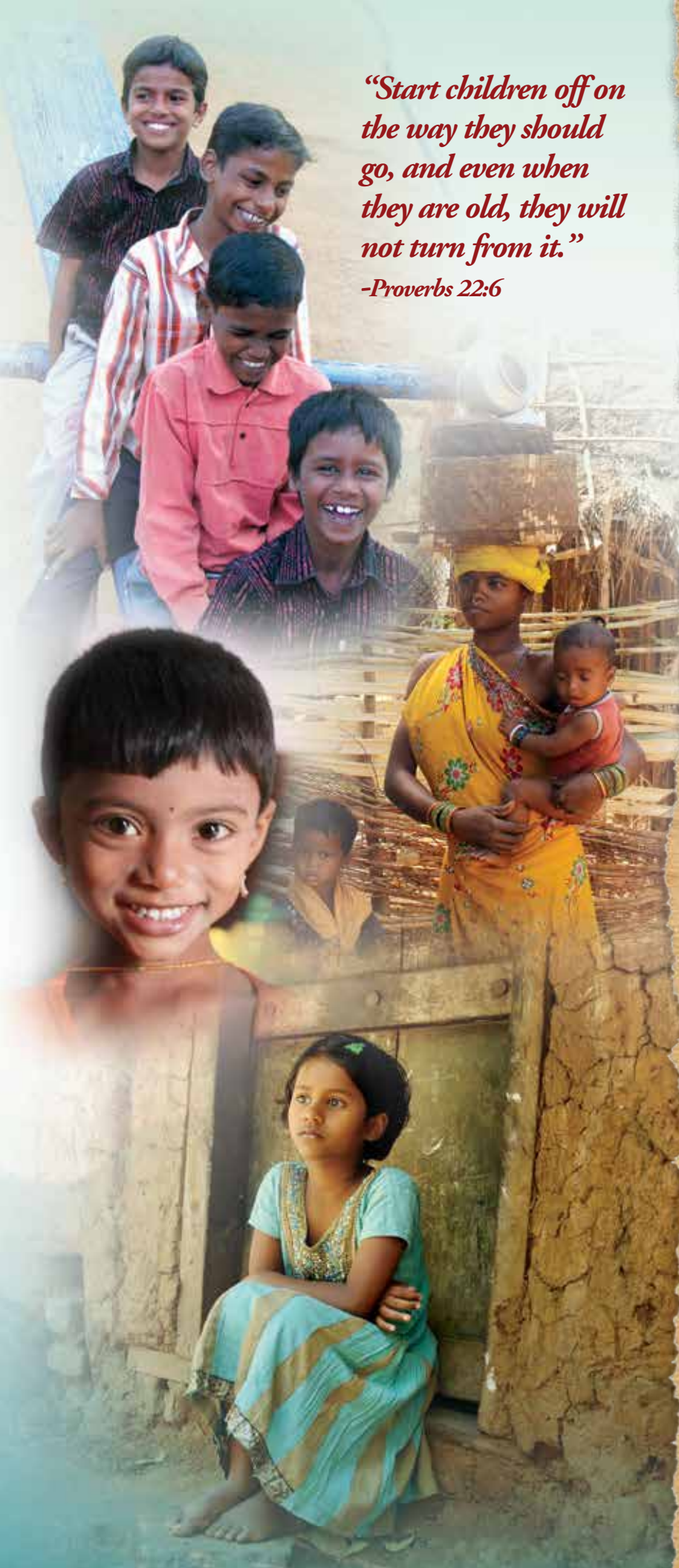
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We extend our sincere gratitude to the many people who made this conference such a success. We thank Drs. Gnanakan and Ernest Hahn, who initiated and led the conference, and Dency Michael and Josephine Selvan, who did an excellent job of organizing and making all the arrangements in Kodaikanal. We also thank the presenters, Mr. Barnabas, Dr. Kolhatkar, Mr. Selvaraj and Rev. Dr. Subinraj, for sharing their time and expertise. Finally, we thank you, our donors, who have contributed to our Comprehensive Campaign. Staff training is one aspect of the Program Enhancements pillar of our campaign, and it is through your generosity that our staff members are now better equipped to help our children at Bethania Kids live more joyfully for the glory of God.



“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it.”

-Proverbs 22:6



In Honor of:

The Armstrong Family
Dave Banks
Thor and Elaine Boaz
Jim Braaten
Paul Bremer and Gloria "Glo"
Hennig (Wedding)
Wil and Olivia Cather
Dorothy D'Arcy (87th Birthday)
Charlie and Michelle Forman
Ed Forman and Kate McGarvey
Pat Forman
Greg Gallo and Family
Steven and Tina Gallo
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David Hagstad and Susan
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Bill and Mary Beth Hagstad
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Madeleine Hawks and
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John Reichmann
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Ruby and the precious girls at
Bethania's Shalom Home
Andrea Saeger
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Bob and Debby Trautmann
Claudia Trautmann
Grete Viddal
Larry and Sue Zimmerman

In Memory of:

William D'Arcy
Nancy Hudson Campbell
Glen Childs
Greta Hahn
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Creative Giving Catalog

You may also honor the special people in your life through the "Creative Giving Catalog" which is available online at bethaniakids.org/creative-giving-catalog.

Bethania Kids

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

We channel 100% of every penny donated into direct ministry for children.

Bethania Kids is an IRS registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit and benevolent organization.

Bethania Kids Administrative Offices

PO Box 2140 • Winchester, VA 22604-1340
Phone (540) 450-2729/(800) 993-5179

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Your Opportunity to Visit Bethania Kids

Seasoned trip leader Alan Lull will be returning to India in November 2018, and would love for you to join him.

Who? Board of Advisor members and donors who wish to have a more personal connection with the children and staff of Bethania Kids in India. It will be a life-changing experience for you personally as you witness the amazing hand of God in transforming the lives of needy Indian children. Upon your return home, you can share your experience with your congregations to strengthen relationships and support for Bethania Kids.

Interested persons should contact Amy Pitts, Mission Trips Coordinator, at amyjpitts@gmail.com.

The trip will be in November 2018. The exact dates and itinerary are to be determined.



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