

Seeds on the Wind

NEWS FROM BETHANIA KIDS • SPRING 2019

TRIBUTE TO SELVI MONIKARAJ

In the early hours of January 27, Bethania Kids suffered a tragic loss in the sudden death of Selvi Monikaraj, the beloved leader of Grace Home for Girls in Nagercoil. Her unexpected passing brought great sorrow and shock because she had faithfully served for 12 years as a substitute mother to the girls at Grace Home.

Our deep condolences go first to Selvi's husband, Rev. Daniel Monikaraj, her three sons and two grandchildren. How grateful we are that their family was willing to share Selvi so unselfishly with the Bethania Kids family!

Since Selvi was the very personification of grace, it seems appropriate that she was chosen to be the leader of Grace Home for Girls. When some of the 45 girls under her care were asked to describe the qualities that they admired most about Selvi, they expressed the deepest appreciation for her genuine love, compassion and devotion to them. All of the girls gave examples of how Selvi had taught them vital life values, beginning with the unconditional love of God, and had always looked out for their best interests. One said Selvi had taught her patience and had provided kind encouragement for anyone who had a weakness. Another girl said that Selvi was "careful with her words when she corrected us" and always gave valuable advice with a smile. A third girl credited Selvi for having a great capacity for understanding people and for being a wonderful peace-maker. The girls are determined to continue living by the values taught to them by their "Selvi-amma" (mother).

Selvi instilled in her girls at Grace Home a love of learning, emphasizing the importance of reading books and learning English. Because of Selvi's high standards, in 2017 five of the girls at Grace Home

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were awarded scholarships by the Indian government out of a total of 26 girls nationwide.

Even as Selvi promoted conscientious study habits with a disciplined lifestyle, she also understood the importance of creativity and fun for these girls, so she arranged for them to learn the traditional Karagam dance as well as many handicrafts. Last year's highlight was a train trip to a water park. No wonder these girls were filled with gratitude and love for Selvi!

While the girls of Grace Home and the entire Bethania Kids family mourn the loss of Selvi, we are comforted by the assurance that she is now in the presence of the loving God that she served so well. Please pray for her immediate family and all of those who knew and loved this remarkable woman, who was truly an instrument of God's grace.



The Power of Empowerment

It was a day Sheela could not see beyond as she sat with her husband in the hospital. While working as an electrician, her husband had suffered a severe injury to his spine when a huge stone had fallen on his back. With a 2-year-old daughter and no means for making money to support the family, what were they going to do? Now, a year and a half later, Sheela has her answer. She and her daughter walk 4.5 miles every day to Mabel Care Center, where her daughter attends the Early Childhood program and Sheela learns skills at the Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) that will earn money for the family.



This memory of feeling helpless to positively change the lives of their families and themselves is a story told by most of the women who have been part of Bethania Kids Women's Empowerment Programs. Jamuna Rani thought she was without value and merely a burden to her family because of her muscular dystrophy until she joined the Poombarai WEP. With the sale of the baskets, flower vases and sweaters she makes, she is now able to substantially contribute to their support. Subaitha Beham's family was struggling to make ends meet with two children and the meager income her husband made as a driver. She is now making a good income sewing uniforms and clothes for people in her community.

Learning skills to earn an income is only one part of what the WEP programs provide for these women. They gain emotional support as they work together and share their stories with each other. Our staff provides counseling and guidance as they work through the emotional challenges that burden their hearts and minds. Although the women are from different faiths (Christian, Hindu and Muslim), they start their day with prayer and devotions. The women pray for each other, and their prayers have been answered with sick children recovering their health, estranged married couples becoming reunited, and peace being restored in households. When Arockia Fatima came to WEP a year ago, she was struggling with very poor relationships with her husband and in-laws, with whom they lived. After prayers, Bible study sessions and personal counseling, she has learned to overcome the problems at home.

Perhaps the most important impact for these women is that they gain greater confidence in themselves along with a sense of independence and heightened respect in their communities. They find their voices and learn to speak up for themselves, beginning with sharing their mutual hardships with the other women in the program. When they begin to earn an income, they are no longer dependent solely upon their husbands for every expense, saving additional money by making clothes for the family and contributing toward school fees. Consequently, they have a more equitable position in family decisions. Their husbands treat

them with greater respect and proudly tell other people that their wives have learned to sew and recommend their sewing services. The women's children, particularly the daughters, see their mothers as contributors to their families and the community.

Participants in the WEP are chosen by the staff based on the difficulty of the family situation and financial needs. It takes about two years to finish the program. In the beginning the women are taught the basics of sewing. They then learn 35 stitches in embroidery, how to use a sewing machine and finally how to cut materials and properly sew various types of clothes. They are also taught basket weaving and knitting. Perhaps this comment best sums up their feelings: "Sewing is something we can do in all seasons and is all we need as it will help in all situations."

Bethania Kids now has three WEP programs in Kodaikanal, serving 55 women, and two in Odisha, serving 30 women. We are happy to report that the WEP will soon be upgraded with better equipment, micro-loans and entrepreneurial training through the Program Enhancement pillar of the Comprehensive Campaign.

Every one of the women who were asked to share their experiences for this article expressed deep gratitude to Bethania Kids for the Women's Empowerment Program. By supporting Bethania Kids, you are not only changing the lives of our sisters in India but also changing the lives of their families and communities for generations to come.



In Honor of:

- Edith Armbrecht's 18 grandchildren
- Christopher, Gretchen, Susan & Andrew Armstrong
- Dave Banks
- Elaine & Thor Boaz
- Ed Forman & Kate McGarvey
- Michelle & Charlie Forman
- Pat Forman
- Greg Gallo & Family
- Tina & Steven Gallo
- Aaron & Kim Hagstad
- Bill Hagstad
- David Hagstad & Susan Armstrong
- Mandy Hagstad
- Mary Beth Hagstad
- Mike & Phyllis Hagstad
- Kyle & Mary Henry
- Mary Howard
- The Kirwin Family
- Ginger & Paul Lambrecht
- Joe McAdam
- Miriam McCreary
- Larry Meitzen
- Ann, Chris, Sarah, Andrew & Joe Mosby
- Addison Mosby
- Laura Mosby
- Henry Nohl's birth
- Wendy Oesterling
- Amy Pitts
- Michelle & Stan Polins
- Allan & Heidi Rowe
- Eva Jo Sieman's baptism
- Lisa Smit
- Beverly Strehlow
- Anita Trautmann's 5 children
- Claudia Trautmann & Ted Christner
- Grete Viddal
- Larry & Susan Zimmerman

In Memory of:

- John Bates
- Al and Polly Hennig
- Gene Hennig
- Mildred Meier
- Martha Meitzen
- Selvi Monikaraj
- Jeevan Paul
- Harold & Velora Pollert
- Elizabeth Reilley
- Fusako Sato
- Henry Schultz
- Joanne Schwichtenberg
- Stan Sorenson
- Bernita Spitzack
- Herbert & Dorothy Zorn

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.

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Exciting Happenings at Bethania Kids!

We are very pleased to welcome Kate (Hennig) Teece as President of the Board of Directors and to announce that Larry Zimmerman is now Chairman. Kate will lead our organization and board of directors in North America while Larry will serve as liaison with the Board of Trustees in India and continue with the Comprehensive Campaign. What a team! To learn more about the board of directors, go to "About Us" at www.bethaniakids.org.

We will soon be transitioning to a new database system. It will allow our staff to better maintain donor records as well as perform more tasks with greater efficiency. As part of the transition, some records will need to be updated, so you may be getting a phone call from Bethania Kids. Please answer or respond to our call — it is not a robo call or hoax!

The Tour of Love is returning this year from September 26 to November 3. Two people from our ministries in India will travel to various forums in the US, giving their first-hand accounts of the impact you are making in the lives of children and families through your support of Bethania Kids. If you would like to host a Tour of Love event at your church or home, please contact Amy Pitts at amyjpitts@gmail.com. Reserve your date now!

Have you ever considered visiting our ministries? This is the year to do it! In July, join a trip to Grace Home for Girls in Nagercoil. Travel with board member Amy Pitts from September 16-26 or with President Kate Teece in November. If you are interested in health issues, Dr. Ernie Hahn and Dr. Kristin DeHaven, both board members, will be conducting the second Mental Health/Women's Health seminar in the fall. Sign up for your trip of choice with Amy Pitts at amyjpitts@gmail.com.

