



Editor:  
Tyler Drosdeck

"Ask me not where I live or what I like to eat...  
Ask me what I am living for and what I think is keeping me from living fully that."  
- Thomas Merton

## WINTER 2020

### PAPA'S UPDATE

On Sunday, February 1, 2004, a 51-year-old experiencing the world beyond America for the first time in his life arrived in Nepal. He had prepared for this moment for the past year by slowly withdrawing from society, beyond his family, and looking inward to sift through his life and pack it away in hope of arriving in Nepal as empty a vessel as possible.



*Our first 26 children. Though sick and malnourished, they smiled with a radiance I had not seen before.*

Here is an attempt to sum up the past 16 years. The years have been good, that much comes easy to this report. This morning as I write we have 32 of our children attending a picnic, fourteen more from

class 10 at school in an exam prep course, 57 children at college, 11 children in 4 different countries in work/study programs, several here in Dhapasi as full time staff, and approximately 30 more children who have married and are living mostly back in the villages of their husbands, and who have provided NOH with at least 9 grandchildren.

And so, let us look back over the years...

[\[Click here to continue reading Papa's Update\]](#)

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## Welcome to Tanya Nair- New Director of Transition

In August, Tanya Nair, began her work with Papa's House NGO as our new Director of Transition. A young woman from Mumbai, India, Tanya graduated from Davidson College with a degree in psychology in the spring of 2019. In collaboration with the Director of the Chelsea Center and the Director of Operations, her responsibilities include: helping students decide what to study and how to be successful in college; working with Skylark and CECC teachers to improve the academic achievement of their shared students; helping college students find internships; and leading workshops for young adults on life skills (e.g., time management, studying, dancing, journaling, personal finances), and career topics (e.g., creating effective resumes and cover letters, networking and interviewing).



*We are happy to welcome Tanya Nair into the NOH family!*

In her first Transition Director's Report, Tanya noted the numerous tasks she had undertaken during her first three months on the job. These included: reviewing the academic scores of all students, helping the CECC teachers to restructure the communications classes in order to emphasize reading comprehension and public speaking; observing children in Skylark School classes with follow-up discussions on study strategies and any behavioral issues; mentoring the Dashain Ayo (Today's Me) 'mindfulness through art' project at the Chelsea Center; leading two workshops during Dashain ("The Importance of Asking Questions" and "Ten Things You Want from Life"); helping individual students to set goals and develop action plans to achieve them; meeting individually with the college students to learn about their talents, interests, and career aspirations; organizing a workshop on debate, explaining points of view, and emphasizing healthy disagreement; researching possible internships and job opportunities for the young adults; and hosting interactive sessions, one with Dhiraj, a Papa's House young adult in his second year in university in Australia, for interested grades 10 and 11 children on studying abroad. Needless to say, Tanya has hit the ground running, forging trusting relationships among staff and students that promote personal, social, and academic growth.

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## A safe return from Beijing for our children

This past November, five of our children traveled to China to be part of a two-year work study program in hotel management at a university in Beijing. The program combines learning Mandarin with apprenticing in international hotel chains. The students receive room and board and nominal monthly pay for their 40-hour work weeks. After two years they earn a certificate of completion and a guaranteed job at any of the hotels of their chain anywhere in the world that is hiring at that time.



*Our children, having received Tika just before departure.*

The students have been happy with the program, until the Coronavirus emerged. Beijing acted quickly to shut down much of the city, including the students' hotels. The University closed its campus to the outside and we thought that our children would weather the storm within, and until January 31st that was the message.

Just a few days before, we had been informed that all international students had been brought back home by their respective governments, and the Chinese students had also returned to their homes. The only ones left on campus were Nepalese students. But the university assured them, even as the shelves were becoming bare, that the grocery store on campus would remain well stocked and the children would be able to buy what they needed from their food allowance.

On Thursday evening the children decided they wanted to come home and on Friday morning they informed us. Saturday was to be the last day planes would be allowed in or out of Beijing, so we scrambled and found five affordable tickets for the next day. We checked with the students before hitting the "Buy" button on Expedia, but they said "Stop," that they had been told that if they left China they would have a hard time being allowed back, and so they wished to stay. They felt that since the campus was closed, they would be safe. So we did not purchase the tickets.

Twenty-four hours later the children said new information was that the University did not want the responsibility of the Nepalese students and that they would need to return home, but would be welcomed back. We checked online for tickets and not surprisingly no planes had flights.



Our children then informed us that Himalayan Airlines, a Nepali carrier, had one flight on Thursday the 6th. This was a little suspect, but upon calling we were told it was true, but there were no seats available. A kind man in charge of this flight said if any non-Nepali were on board he would remove them and replace them with our children, and sure enough he managed.

The kids arrived back in Kathmandu late Thursday night. No quarantines, just a quick thermo forehead scan and all passengers were welcomed back into the million+ population of Kathmandu.

All's well that ends well. We hope soon the virus will wither away and in the interim a vaccine is born and, following that, our children may return to China.

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## Winter Picnic at the CECC

"Picnic" has become one of the most popular events for the women students at the Chelsea Center and they are always excited for the next one. They have been excited for the winter picnic since this past summer. As soon as they returned after the fall holidays they started asking when we would be going. They get even more excited than most of the school kids.

This year our destination was Nagarkot, an attractive place from where we could see peaceful snowy mountains. Without waiting for any particular occasion, we honored our students who have been studying here for more than three years with mugs and bags featuring the CECC logo. They enjoyed the moment dancing with their friends, filled with joy and good humor.



[\[Click here to read more news from the Chelsea Center\]](#)

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**Meet Mike**

by Shreya Upadhyay

Introducing one of our most resilient and hardworking volunteers: Michael Schwartz. He first joined our program during the winter of 2017, and since has been a constant support to the children of EDUC, SERC and OCPF. Quite witty in nature, he is admired for his perseverance and his dedication to better serve children and communities.



*Michael Schwartz (pictured right) celebrating Holi on a previous volunteer stint with us.*

This March will be his third time volunteering with us. When asked what draws him to Volunteer Nepal, he simply smiles and says, "It feels like home." He has not only been a constant volunteer in Nepal the past years but he has traveled across numerous countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia as a volunteer. To Mike, he is doing his bit to bring change, one step at a time. From all of us at Volunteer Nepal, thank you so much! We are very excited to see you again in March.

[\[Click here for more updates on the Volunteer Nepal blog\]](#)

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Nepal Orphans Home  
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