

Around the World

Support for International Work

International programs in India, Ethiopia, and Guatemala were the recipients of fundraising efforts at this February's WECAN conference in Spring Valley, NY. The generous contributions from those attending the conference made it possible to support each program with the amount they had hoped to receive. The impressive and inspiring work being done in each of these programs is described below.



INDIA—Kandala Seminar

Waldorf education was first introduced to India seventeen years ago. In this country of 1.2 billion people, there are now six schools going from nursery to tenth grade, and twenty-two kindergartens. Many new initiatives have begun in the last three to four years.

One endeavor supporting teacher training is Kandala Seminar, founded sixteen years ago. A report from Caroline Glass, the IASWECE representative from Scotland who has taught in this training, gives a picture of the May training session. Caroline writes:

“May 2014 saw the sixteenth Khandala Waldorf Training Seminar take place at DC School, Khandala, a hill station about an hour’s drive from Mumbai. The first week is particularly for people new to Waldorf Education and this year one hundred and twenty participants from all over India and Nepal took part. Aban Bana who initiated the Course is fairly confident that it is the cheapest Waldorf Training in the world at two thousand rupees (twenty four euros) per week for full time tuition fees, making it financially accessible to almost everyone in India.

This is the second time that I have been invited to lead the Early Childhood Seminars at Khandala and again during the first week we split our group of fifty people into alternating morning and afternoon sessions, one studying *The Education of the Child* by Rudolf Steiner each day, while the other looked at practical and fundamental elements of our work such as movement, rhythm, repetition, reverence, imitation/example, play, senses, and self-education of the teacher. Every day we practiced “The Blacksmith” circle-game.

The second week is for those with some experience of working in a Waldorf setting, and of the eighty-five people who attended, about twenty-five were early childhood practitioners wanting to go deeper. Music was our theme and we worked at understanding and practicing going from modern music to traditional to pentatonic and on towards “moods of the fifth,” which Steiner indicated as being most closely related to the young child’s consciousness. In an experiential way the participants, many of whom considered themselves to be unmusical, got a feeling for ‘Quintenstimmung’ and a basic understanding of

music theory, including how to begin reading and composing music. We concentrated on rain songs with the monsoon season about to start, and many of Wilma Ellersiek's hand gesture games dove-tailed beautifully into this theme. There was great warmth and enthusiasm for practicing her healing work of 'Giving love, bringing joy.'

Khandala has the mood of a festival, a celebration of education each year. The day begins at 7:30 am (before it gets too hot), with a morning circle

where each day a different 'prayer' from India's many religions is spoken. A big circle of over a hundred people is formed in the school yard. This is followed by songs, rhythms and games to use throughout a Waldorf curriculum. After a spicy breakfast the seminar work begins interspersed with singing, eurythmy, painting, flute-playing and speech and more spicy food."

The money raised on behalf of India will go to support teacher training. ♦

ETHIOPIA—The Phoenix of Hawzien

Ethiopia is a highland in northeast Africa with an ancient history. In the days of the Egyptian Pharaohs it was known as Punt, during Roman times as Axum. It was long a mighty empire. It accepted Christianity before it was a state religion in Rome, and the ties to Christianity run deep. The oldest Muslim community outside of Mecca and Medina is in Ethiopia, as is a small Jewish community which has dwelt in Ethiopia for thousands of years. There are more than 200 ethnic groups of different religions living together. It is a very poor country where nearly half of the people are undernourished. Drought and floods, coming more and more frequently, aggravate this situation.

In the town of Hawzien, a terrible tragedy occurred in 1988. The marketplace was bombed in broad daylight and 2,500 people lost their lives. Out of this catastrophe, amidst a desire to provide a better future for the children, the Phoenix Society for Integrated Development was founded. A Waldorf-inspired kindergarten was also opened at that time. Today there are 120 children in the kindergarten with plans to expand into another group so the size of the groups can be reduced. More children are waiting for a place in the program. Parents hope to see the kindergartens expand into a school where the children can continue this kind of holistic education. The school has become a haven for the children, who come to school as though it is a second home. Parents are also experiencing the benefits in a new sense of harmony.

Another objective of this project is to strengthen health education through work with the children and parents in the school. AIDS infection continues to be a problem. In 2006 approximate-

ly 1.2 million children were orphaned from this disease.

Hawzien Waldorf Kindergarten expressed that funds are needed to support more children attending and for teacher training and mentoring. Boulder Waldorf Kindergarten, devastated by a flood in fall of 2013, received the conference collection support last year. As Boulder Waldorf rose out of the muddy flood, they sponsored fundraising for Hawzien and raised \$1000 to reciprocate the generous support they had received. This, together with what was donated at the conference, reached the financial goal for this coming year. ♦



GUATEMALA—Escuela Caracol

The little town of San Marcos La Laguna sits on the edge of Lake Atitlan with three towering volcanoes in sight. 3,000 people live in this town, which has existed since pre-Hispanic times as a Mayan village. It is an extremely poor region with 80% of the people living in poverty, one-third of these in extreme states of deprivation. Here Escuela Caracol has been founded as the first Waldorf Kindergarten and school in Guatemala.

This small community is a microcosm of social and economic imbalances that dominate the world. Most of the indigenous population occupies service positions with more wealthy foreign immigrants. More than 70% of the students in the school are Maya who need financial support to attend the school. Waldorf education has been adopted because of its respect for the individual and its goal of supporting social health. Guatemala

is still recovering from thirty-six years of civil war. Waldorf education and the school stand as a catalyst for social change.

The school's name, "caracol," means "snail shell." This symbol carries especial importance in Latin American and within Mayan culture particularly. It is seen as a symbol of life and community that is both modern and very old, serious and playful at once. It is seen as an emblem of learning.

A raffle generated nearly \$1000 for the school at the conference. At approximately \$30 a month to sponsor a child for class fees and food, this amount will last about 33 months for one child. Everyone who would like to learn more about the school and needs for sponsorship is invited to visit their website at escuelacaracol.org/support-us/. ♦
