



Initiatives of Change

AfL Encounters

News from the Road of Action for Life 3

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Volume 3 Issue 7

29 December 2005

It's certainly getting cold in Panchgani...Asia Plateau has finally run out of spare blankets and we have moved our morning Quiet Time sessions from underneath the tree to the meditation room. Fortunately, a beautiful Christmas spirit warmed everyone's heart and, after a great celebration, we are looking forward to the New Year and the next outreach!

BACK FROM BHUBANESWAR

On December 14th Chris Breitenberg, Han-Ting Pan, Nigel Heywood and Olka Hudz traveled 33 hours by train to join an MRA-IofC youth camp held in Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa. A core group of university students organized the 4-day gathering and 50 participants brought inspiring youthful energy and heart power to the event.

Together with sessions on "Social Entrepreneurship", "The India of My Dreams",

"Orissa, I Care" and "Self Management", the AfL team helped participants explore quiet time in morning reflection sessions which started with yoga and prayer.

The days were a rollercoaster of family sessions, group work, songs, cheering, tears and deep sharing. Many felt that they found the next step in their relationships from sharing with each other. One student shared how he had put things right with his brother and father after the last camp, and now he wanted to rebuild the relationships

with his younger brother.

As the AfL crew flopped onto the train for another 35 hour trip back to join the others in Panchgani, we felt happy to have made new friends so quickly... And soon we began to make some more friends on the train. This is travel in India: another good friend everywhere you turn. Can I buy you some chai?

OUTREACH P.S.!

Last week, we had a chance to enjoy the fellowship of our outreach groups and evaluate our two weeks journey. We tried to look at the experience we all had as a team, what struggles we went through and what learning we have received from our time together. We had a chance to apply our improved presentation skills once again: new songs, new skits, new exercises and stories were shared with the rest of the group.

We concluded this process by taking a deeper look at our personal experiences – our role in the team, our



Action for Life 3: 1 November 2005 – 3 August 2006

"Be the change you want to see in the world." (Mahatma Gandhi)



contribution to the outreach program and our experiences of inner transformation. Some of us have discovered unknown areas within ourselves.

Mira (South Korea) shared:

“My biggest challenge on the outreach was my fear to share openly. It stopped me from fully participating in a team building process, and I felt uncomfortable and lonely. Only after accepting my feelings and sincerely sharing them with one member, was I able to take next steps in becoming part of the team again.”

James (Manipur, India) said:

“When I spoke at the outreach presentations, I had a feeling that people did not really believe my words, not feeling through my emotions... I asked myself how sincere I was with them. So, when I tried to share my heart rather than use my brain only, I saw how different their attitude was. They were living

through my story...That was a tremendous change for me!”

Alex (Australia) shared:

“After reading about Zen meditation I decided to give it a go. The instructions were to count each breath, up to ten, then start again. By my second round of counting, I started to feel very dizzy... I had been rushing each breath to make it to ten, which was so ridiculous as there was no race to win! When I looked at myself, I realised that this is what I usually do in my life: always rushing to get to the future, rather than to just be in the present, appreciating each particular moment and living it fully. To learn to be present here and now is my challenge...”

JINGLE BELLS, NEW YEAR AND THE NEXT OUTREACH

Christmas preparations and decorations made Asia Plateau a festive place over the holidays. Everyone

played a role in making this a very unique holiday celebration highlighted by carol singing, festive meals, a gift exchange and even a Christmas Day treasure hunt. Many celebrated their first Boxing Day as well, which ended with lots of dancing and a bonfire!

With 2006 just around the corner, we turn to a new year with exciting plans on the horizon. Our second outreach starts on January 7th, 2006 and we will send teams to Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kolkata, South India and the North-East.

We wish you all a happy New Year from deep in our hearts and we look forward to sending you our next news from the road again!

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