

## YORK COLLEGE TRIP



SUBMITTED

Students at the Homes of the Indian Nation orphanage show off their Christmas gifts.

## Large's leap of faith helps Indian orphans

In October of 2013, in a small class setting at York College of Pennsylvania, I had the privilege of meeting an amazing woman originally from Lancaster. A Penn State graduate, Darlene Large realized her

calling in life in 1971 — to care for underprivileged children.

She told our geography class she dreamed that God wanted her to adopt Native American children. After making the attempt to do that, she was told she could not adopt if she was not at least part American Indian herself. Mrs. Large was frustrated and uncertain what her next step would be until she met a man on a flight in 1975 who told her she needed to go to his native country where there were thousands of children in need of loving families. That country was India.

Shortly after this meeting, Mrs. Large quit her teaching job in Lancaster, traveled to India, and on Aug. 3, 1975, with a unanimous family vote, they moved to India and adopted an Indian girl. Mrs. Large immediately began plans to open an orphanage.

In 1978, she rented a small house for \$15 a month and took in seven young boys to live there. Those seven young boys grew up into fine teenagers, graduating high school and eventually college and reaching numerous personal achievements. That first house burned to the ground when the entire village caught fire, so Mrs. Large took \$2,900 of her own money and a \$10,000 grant and bought land to build a large-scale home for orphans, naming it Homes of the Indian Nation (HOINA).

Fast-forward to the present time. My York College geography class traveled to India with our professor, David Fyfe, for a service learning course and spent nearly a month in India. We lived on the HOINA campus, spending every day with the children. We were all in amazement at what the Large family was able to accomplish since 1975. Mrs. Large's faith in God was the driving force in all that she has accomplished in India. The campus is on 22 acres of land with two dormitory-style homes, one for the boys and one for the girls. In addition to the two dormitories, a staff house, a guest house (where we stayed) and a church was constructed. The church is the most recent construction and has been subject to interference by the local village because HOINA is a Christian-based organization.

The staff attempts to run HOINA as self-sufficient, growing crops and having livestock to meet the needs of the children. While we were there we saw the difficulties of this, as the animals often ran off or ate the crops. The limited acreage is not able to feed the livestock, causing the cows to be malnourished and unable to produce the much-needed milk for the children. To supplement the lack of cow milk, a soy milk machine was purchased,



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but sadly, the milk machine broke while we were visiting. Funds are being raised to purchase a new boiler in order to supply the children with the calcium their growing bodies need.

We celebrated Christmas with the children of HOINA. It could be expected that children who have lost one or both parents may be sad and have no hope, but that is not the case. These children were full of life and extremely happy to have visitors from the United States to share in celebrating the birth of Jesus. After all the children were handed their Christmas gift, the manager of the home asked them if they were happy, and they screamed back at the top of their lungs, "Yes!"

Their joy at receiving what most of us would consider basic needs — combs, hair ties, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste and the like — were overwhelming. In addition to their box of goodies, they were able to request one special gift. Some children asked for toy trucks or baby dolls, but most asked for gifts that American children would be disappointed to receive at Christmas: gym shorts, sneakers and dress shoes, material for dresses, book bags and school books.

Their gift requests touched us in a way that cannot be explained and made us realize just how selfish and superficial we can be as Americans.

We learned many things while in India. Indian culture is mostly based on Hinduism, and as Christians we were often surprised at the religious traditions. Off the HOINA campus we were able to visit many Hindu temples and Buddhist mosques. The citizens of India were eager to talk with us and have us share in their culture and religious practices. As a religious studies minor at York College, I found this all interesting — though I chose not to participate in their rituals, as I did not wish to honor a god other than that of the Christian faith.

As a professional writing major, all of my experiences in India became writing opportunities, from the travel to India, to the places we visited and the stay at HOINA. Mrs. Large's achievements prove that one woman can make a difference, and through her personal faith in God, she has saved more than 4,000 children from life on the streets, slavery, prostitution, disease and death. It was an honor to meet her, visit her home for Indian children and give of myself to help her cause. I am inspired to continue helping at HOINA through sponsoring a child and by raising funds to keep the organization operating.

If you are interested in learning more about the nonprofit organization HOINA, visit [www.hoina.org](http://www.hoina.org) or feel free to contact me personally at [pcrider@ycp.edu](mailto:pcrider@ycp.edu).

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