

India Schools Help Students Conquer Challenges

By Sarah Schafer

Nithyanandan's father rolls Indian cigarettes called beedis and his mother is a homemaker. The family's meager income provided little opportunity to acquire services for Nithyanandan and his two brothers, who are blind. In India, children with disabilities are not valued.

Long-time LCMS partner church, the India Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC), is reaching out to families like Nithyanandan's, families with children with disabilities. Through its nearly 90 schools for children with disabilities, the IELC provides opportunities for government sanctioned services and training.

Nithyanandan is now in the fifth grade at the Lutheran School – Home for the Deaf and Blind in Vellore, India. His brothers attended the school through eighth grade. Now one brother, Ethiraj, works for a car parts manufacturer earning about \$50 (USD) each month to help subsidize the family's income. "After his employment, the entire family is happy," said J. James William, the school headmaster.

For more than a decade, LCMS World Relief and Human Care has supported IELC schools and education programs by providing funding for teachers' salaries, building repairs and expansion, equipment, and materials. It is through IELC

schools that the church provides holistic care for families – providing for their physical and spiritual needs.

"The IELC is a dynamic and fast-growing church with loads of capacity and potential capacity, and their numerous educational ministries reflect this," said Darin Storkson, Asia Regional Director for LCMS World Relief and Human Care. "Their enthusiasm for Gospel-centered educational ministry is remarkable, but many of their schools desperately need our help to update their technology."

Despite great success stories, like Nithyanandan and his family's story, IELC schools are not state of the art. The school's staff cope with outdated and sometimes unreliable equipment. At Nithyanandan's school in

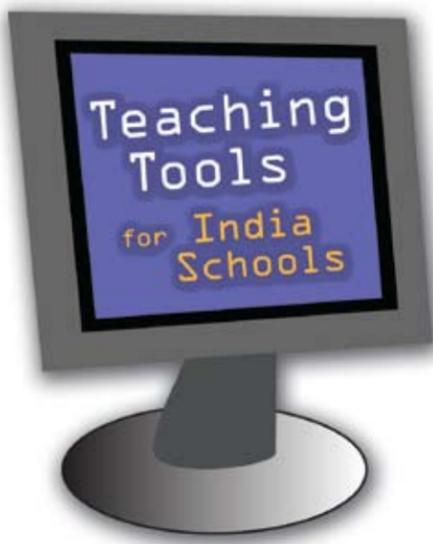


Nearly 300 students with disabilities learn life skills in a Christ-centered environment at "Happy Home" boarding school in the Kolar Gold Fields of southern India.

Vellore, for example, the school uses hearing aids that look out of date by U.S. standards, but make a huge difference in the children's lives.

This summer, students in the United States have an incredible opportunity to continue building the IELC's capacity to minister to students and their families. As part of Concordia Publishing House's 2009 Vacation Bible School curriculum "Gadgets Garage," kids can learn about and raise funds to help Indian students – with or without disabilities. Through the VBS mission project "Teaching Tools for India Schools" sponsored by LCMS World Relief and Human Care and LCMS World

Mission, participants will learn that kids in India often don't know about Jesus, but Lutheran schools share Christ's mercy and teach kids about the Savior. According to government mandates, Indian schools must provide English language education. To stay open, these schools must improve their English programs – and that means major technology needs. Opportunities for children with disabilities in India are limited, but Lutheran schools provide loving, Christian environments for these children to grow and learn. During VBS, children are encouraged to share offerings to help Lutheran schools in India continue to reach out with Christ's mercy and His Good News to more than 20,000 children and their families. To support this project, visit www.lcms.org/VBS or call (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1380.



Give God Glory...

... for the Egger children and their friends in St. Louis, Mo.! After hearing about the help Mercy Medical Teams provide to sick and hurting Kenyans, the youngsters set up Kool-Aid and snow cone stands to raise funds. Instead of gifts at a birthday party, they asked their friends to make a donation to LCMS WR-HC projects in Kenya. Thank you, Egger kids and friends, for supporting Christ's mercy work in Kenya! Pictured are: Jay Leighton (left), Bonnie Egger, and Abram Egger. Andrew, Stacey, and Ellen Egger also participated.



The mission of the church through LCMS World Relief and Human Care is to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, motivated by Christ and His Gospel, according to the Lutheran confession of the faith.

SHARING is available free to individuals and in quantities to congregations and other groups. SHARING is the bi-monthly newsletter of the disaster response and self-help development ministries of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; (314) 965-9000 or (800)-248-1930. Web site: www.lcms.org/worldrelief

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Despite Struggles, St. Louis School Remains Outreach Driven

By Sarah Schafer

Second-grader Kaylin Love is thriving at River Roads Lutheran School in St. Louis, Mo. But River Roads is more than just a school for the honor roll student and her family. When Kaly'n's mom, Tifani, lost her job, the school helped her find tuition assistance and hired her temporarily until she found permanent employment. The Love family supports outreach ministry the school offers, as well.

Now the Love family gives back every chance they get. "I'm there to support River Roads because they are there to support my daughter in the same way," said Tifani, who served on the PTL, volunteers to keep the computer lab operational, and creates flyers and other publicity items for school events. Among other things, they participated in the school's back-to-school drive, handing out supplies to families in need.

Despite dedicated staff and parents, the school struggles. Situated in a low-income neighborhood in the city, nearly 15 percent of the 133 students (pre-K through eighth grade) at River Roads rely on financial aid. At the beginning of the school year, Principal Yvonne Boyd wondered if education and ministry at the school could continue. Teachers sacrificed paychecks as bills piled high.

Last summer, Boyd met Rev. Carlos Hernandez, director of Districts and Congregations with LCMS World Relief and Human Care. She heard about his community outreach efforts, particularly through the Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs process. With great assistance from LCMS WR-HC staff member Mary Jo Becker, they formed a task force to link school leaders with the resources and people they needed.

"For the cost of a few box lunches, LCMS World Relief and Human Care provided encouragement and capacity to River Roads to educate students and reach out to families with Christ's mercy and the saving Gospel," said Rev. Hernandez.

With the task force's help, the school set short and long-term goals. Currently, the school board is working to more aggressively collect tuition. While funds remain tight, the school is now meeting payroll and is insured. Long-term, Boyd will seek financial support from local congregations and individuals.

"It is God's blessing that we were able to meet with Pastor Hernandez and utilize his leadership. He rekindled that spark we had," said Boyd. "Yes, we are supposed to do this. We are supposed to be here."

Besides meeting operating needs, Boyd and her team are passionate about sharing Christ's

mercy in their community. Despite some student's limited finances, they gave back to their community at Christmas. One class collected gifts for kids in need. Others caroled at homes in the school's neighborhood.

Deaconess Ruth McDonnell, the Missouri District mission coordinator for metro St. Louis, and Rev. Quentin Poulson, director of mission networking with LCMS Black Ministry, joined the task force to help the school attain its mission-minded goals. With their help, a bi-monthly praise and fellowship service began, led by local LCMS pastors. "It gives children and adults the chance to know what Lutheranism is about," said Rev. Frazier Odom, interim director of LCMS Black Ministry, who has led services.

"River Roads is mission-minded and aware of the impact they can have on the community," said McDonnell. "They have gone from being afraid of the future to looking forward to the future."

The future is certainly bright. In the spring Hernandez will work through the Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs process with the school.

To learn how you can support River Roads Lutheran School, visit www.riverroadslutheranschool.com or call 314-388-0300. To learn more about the Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs process, contact Rev. Hernandez at carlos.hernandez@lcms.org or call 314-956-2005.



Students learn about feelings during class at River Roads Lutheran School in St. Louis, Mo. LCMS World Relief and Human Care helped the school build its capacity for mercy ministry.



More than 130 students attend River Roads Lutheran School in St. Louis, Mo., where they learn basic subjects and biblically-based lessons in a caring, Christian environment.

"...stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

We must be in the cities. I recall very clearly walking the neighborhood around Zion, Ft. Wayne (then the poorest census tract in the state of Indiana), calling on members of my parish and making visits among others, sharing Christ and inviting folks to church. It was right in the era of the Rodney King debacle in Los Angeles. A white guy walking in the neighborhood had been a rarity, and one with a clerical collar on was even rarer. I did wear out the soles of several pairs of shoes in those years.

I approached some young men, and greeted them. One 20-year-old, whom I'm sure had a very challenging life, refused to greet me or shake my hand. Then he got right in my face with a very aggressive stance. I kept smiling through the tense encounter. His friends stood silently, somewhat embarrassed by his

behavior. Just then, the tension was broken in an amazing way. "Pastor Harrison! Pastor Harrison!" Six grade-schoolers saw me from across the street, still in their Zion Lutheran Academy uniforms. They came running and gave me great big hugs, smiling and laughing. I told the young men, "God bless you. I'm pastor at Zion. If we can be of any help, come on by and talk to me." Then I walked and the girls and boys skipped happily along to their grandma's house (a Zion member) not 50 yards away.

Our cities are very challenging places. The residue of racism remains. The chaotic sinfulness of human failing and frailty is often exacerbated by the heritage of legalized oppression. Just as the shackles of legalized racism were loosed in the 60s, the sexual revolution hit, and it hit hardest among those most socio-economically challenged. It has been



enormously difficult for the Missouri Synod to remain in challenged urban environments. Our wonderful polity is not geared to sustain struggling churches. And yet these churches have remained, like Christ himself, becoming "incarnate," sharing in the poverty and weakness of those whom they serve. They richly deserve our eternal love and support, even as so many know Christ because of their witness. We must "stay in the city."

Pastor Harrison