

How 2006 Grand Prize Winner Olga Murray Spent her Award Money  
Thursday, February 15, 2007  
Katmandu

Well, let me tell you how we used the award I won last November. Last month, we rescued 280 young girls from virtual slavery. It was the time of the Maghe festival in the western district of Dang, when fathers more or less sell their young daughters to labor contractors, who bring them to Kathmandu and other cities in Nepal to work as domestic servants. Mostly, neither the parents nor the girls know where they are going; abuse of all kinds is rampant, and the lives of these girls are pretty well ruined.

We gave each family a piglet or a goat to make up for the lost wages of the child, and placed the girl in school at our own cost. We have rescued or been responsible for the rescue of about 3000 of these kids. All are in school (except for a few of the older ones in vocational programs), and some of the first ones we enrolled in our program are about to take their college entrance examinations. The rescue of each girl cost \$100, including the first year of schooling.

The award has done so much good here, as you see. I was so impressed with everyone from the company I met when I was in Philadelphia. Please give one and all my best regards. I will be back in the U.S. in July and look forward to reading the applications.

Warmly, Olga

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Olga Murray's Spring 2006 Dispatch from Kathmandu

Hello from Kathmandu,

Spring has sprung here, the flowers are blooming, the birds are singing, and the weather is pleasant since the rainy and buggy monsoon season has not started yet.

Best of all, the country seems to be at peace after a 13 year bloody insurgency. The Maoist revolutionaries have come in from the cold and joined the government, and although things are far from settled, the tourists are back, and the long-suffering Nepali people have a reason for optimism.

So has NYOF. I tell you, it's hard to be pessimistic about the human condition when you are working with kids in Nepal. There is such a tremendous opportunity here to help children, not only in improving but even saving their lives. We do this frequently at our Nutritional Rehabilitation Homes, where severely malnourished children are nursed back to health and their mothers trained to care for them.

The conditions under which some of Nepal's children live are hard for us in the western world to imagine. Take the case of a ten year old boy named Mim. He lived in a very remote area of Nepal, without roads or electricity, in an impoverished household with disabled parents. Mim was the oldest child in the family and his parents were eager to educate him as their ticket out of poverty, but the nearest school was two or three hours walk away. So they listened to some slick and unscrupulous fellow who told them that if the parents could pay for his air ticket to Kathmandu, he would take Mim along and place him in school in the capital. (Hundreds of children in Nepal have been the victims of this racket.)

Instead, he abandoned the boy in a children's home which was appallingly awful. Mim contracted Japanese encephalitis while he was living there. He was finally taken to the only general

children's hospital in the country, where his condition deteriorated rapidly. Someone called his parents to tell them that their son was dying, and an uncle was dispatched to be with Mim. After 26 days in the hospital, the doctors decided that nothing more could be done for Mim, and they asked that he be moved.

The staff at the NRH was called to the hospital because, among other things, Mim was severely malnourished. They thought they could save Mim even though he was virtually unconscious, covered with the most terrible bed sores, and no one thought he would survive the most miserable child imaginable. He could not sit or stand or walk or talk and was in constant pain. He could only cry.

He was moved to the NRH, where his slow recovery began. The doctors and nurses, with patience and skill and love, saved this child's life. After a couple of months, he was able to feed himself and to walk alone and, hard to believe, to smile again. Unfortunately, due to his illness, he cannot speak. The uncle told us that Mim would not survive if he went back home. There was no one to care for him, and the family would find it difficult to raise a child who could not contribute to their survival. So we have found alternate accommodations for Mim in Kathmandu. Our social work staff will check on him on a regular basis, and he will receive the therapy he needs.

I am not going to send you a picture of Mim as he looked when he was admitted to the NRH because it would make you too miserable. But I do have a picture of a smiling Mim. If you would like to see how he looks today, my staff would be happy to send his picture to you. Please send your request to [jolson@nyof.org](mailto:jolson@nyof.org), and we will e-mail you his picture.

Such are the satisfactions of life here.

Love to you all,  
Olga