

Vocational Training Update - by Jim Ice

Everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man. – Ecclesiastes 3:13



It is with great joy that I report that the vocational education program at Angels' Place has made great strides. The classes are designed to deliver career-oriented skills to supplement traditional academic education. With funds from several grants a small training center was built on the grounds providing space dedicated for vocational instruction. A full-time program coordinator and several local part-time instructors were hired to advance training in sewing, bookkeeping and baking. Early outcomes are very encouraging.

When I visited Angels' Place last spring, I watched a dozen young girls in the sewing class. A local talented seamstress was teaching them the basics of cutting, patterns and sewing – by hand and with a machine. That day, the children were making pink dresses. The laughter and joy that filled that room as they worked hard to apply new skills was wonderful. Imagine my surprise later in the week to see these same young girls at a local wedding dressed in those beautiful, detailed pink dresses! Each dress was tailored to fit the wearer and showcased just how much our students have already learned.



Several of the older children are learning basic bookkeeping. This practical skill will prepare them to work for companies both large and small. During my trip I observed a local accountant teaching basic concepts including debits, credits, profit and loss. After extensive training on these basic principles, they began to apply these principles using software called 'Tally'. Tally is a popular bookkeeping software used across India. Grant funds allowed us to purchase two computers and licenses to access this software. Angels' Place kids do not have regular access to computers like most kids in the US, so they are working in pairs to learn the pre-requisite computer skills of typing and basic computer operation. Once they have mastered these computer skills they will move quickly to the practical training on how to use the Tally software to execute basic bookkeeping operations. Although the Tally training is still in its infancy, it holds excellent career possibilities and lots of children are interested in this program.

The most recently added vocational program is baking and it quickly generated excitement with the children both to learn and to taste the outcomes. Once the requisite baking and safety equipment was purchased and installed, instruction started with critical safety and hygiene training. The children have been learning about types of ingredients, measurement and correct use of baking and cooking tools. Early baking successes of cream balls and doughnuts were devoured by all the children with great joy!

Khenthang, who came to the home in 2007 and graduated in 2014, is now a self-employed, confident driver, plying his own Tata Sumo vehicle between Lamka and Aizawl. Khenthang was taught driving while he was in Angels' Place as a part of our various vocational training programs.



look after orphans ...
in their distress ... James 1:27

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An update from Executive Director Jan Swensen

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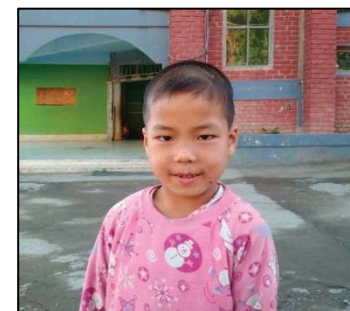
New building for vocational education (on left)

We have always emphasized education for our children and have worked successfully with private schools with Christian faculty and staff to provide academic curricula. The children have performed well. Over the past three years over 30 of our kids have graduated from class 12. About 85% of those graduates have continued their education into college.

But what about the ones who do not qualify nor want to go on to college? For them, we have emphasized vocational education. Please read in this issue Jim Ice's update on the development of this program as well as our story about our new coordinator Santi and the profile of Lawmching, an ambitious young woman who has made the most of her life at Angels' Place.

Earlier this year, through local newspapers, we learned of the urgent needs of five children from one family who had been abandoned and had entered the local hospital suffering from life threatening malnutrition. We immediately took in four of them while the youngest, still in diapers, was taken in by a missionary working in Manipur. We brought them back to good health with food, love, nurturing and exercise. Now that they have regained their vitality, their tribe has reclaimed them. We understand they remain together as a sibling unit.

Our lemongrass production progresses well. Our partner in this venture – an American company named doTerra - agreed to buy our lemongrass oil at a very generous price. We hope to produce at least three crops a year and extract the oil and ship it all to doTerra. Our operation is now in the black and every shipment produces needed funds for our children's support. This project expands every year and is our Indian partners' way of helping to finance Angels' Place.



We have run into a snag amid all this progress regarding our ability to regularly send funds from the USA to the James Connection Trust which manages our money in India. Please read about this obstacle in the article inside. I am confident that we will solve this problem, but it is causing a significant disruption for the time being.

Whether it is by writing letters to kids or sending financial support, please know that both efforts are the foundation of our success and we cannot do it without you.

May God bless us all in these endeavors.

Jan C. Swensen
Executive Director



SUCCESS STORY: LAWMCHING



Lawmching came to the home when she was 7 years old.

Nianglawmching – known as Lawmching by her friends at Angels' Place – is an ambitious young woman who is benefiting from both academic and vocational education. She readily passed the state exam at the end of Grade 10 and has been studying dutifully at Rayburn College since then. She will complete Grade 12 and sit for the final exam this coming Spring. Nobody doubts that this very capable gal will be successful.

But success was once unimaginable for Lawmching. At age 5 her parents divorced following her father's years of drug addiction. Her mother's subsequent remarriage meant that Lawmching and her siblings were orphaned. An uncle with no steady job was unable to provide for them so at age 7 Lawmching came to Angels' Place.

Over her twelve years in our care, Lawmching has thrived. She is now 19 years old and has been baptized. Through self-motivation, she has made the most of the opportunities available to her at Angels' Place and that includes her full participation in the new Vocational Training Program.

We asked her how it was going. Here's what she told us:

In Her Words

I began cooking when I was 10 years old during the summer and winter vacation when I visited my father. He was preparing the morning and evening meals and it gave me so much joy to work in the kitchen preparing food with him. Here at Angels' Place when we have guest visitors, I often help the one who is in charge of the kitchen in preparing meals for our guests and I enjoy it very much.

I cannot imagine myself earning a living from cooking. Rather, I consider cooking a hobby and an important factor for a woman to possess for the wellbeing of her family. But because the baking classes and the accounting classes collide, I had to choose and I chose the Tally class.

We started Tally/Accounting classes last March. The most important thing I have learned is how to manage finance and to keep saving. This is very much relatable for our daily lives and I am confident that the skills I've gained will enable me to handle and maintain finances well once I have started earning my own money.

The vocational skills training knowledge I am learning about accounting, finance management and bookkeeping will be my biggest assets which will give me more opportunity and scope to apply for a job whether it is in the private or government sector or even if I want to start up my own business.

My academic goals are to continue to work hard so that I will pass by Class XII board exams with excellent results so that I can pursue further studies and become a Civil Servant one day. I am not very sure whether I will be able to afford to continue studying, but I think that the vocational training skills experience I am getting now at Angels' Place will be my major strength to open a way for me to earn income for supporting my further studies.

Apart from the three trades provided in Angels' Place's vocational program now, I would like to see if we can have Arts and Handicrafts skills training for the children.



SPOTLIGHT ON SPONSORS:

Like most people, word-of-mouth led the Melissa and Bob Yohman family to sponsorship of a child at Angels' Place. Melissa first heard about it from another mom at Pre-school and later at church, where she thought, "That's nice, but we aren't rich and we have plenty of expenses with our own two kids with sports and music and all."

A few years later, Melissa felt called to help after a presentation at church by James Connection board member Jim Ice upon his return from a visit to Angels' Place. "I'd been hearing about the kids at the orphanage from lots of people at church and I began to think that I had a responsibility to share," recalls Melissa. When Bob learned the cost was only \$35 per month he quickly agreed, and a few years later after another presentation following another visit, Bob looked at Melissa and said, "I know, you want to take on a second child. Okay, let's do it!"

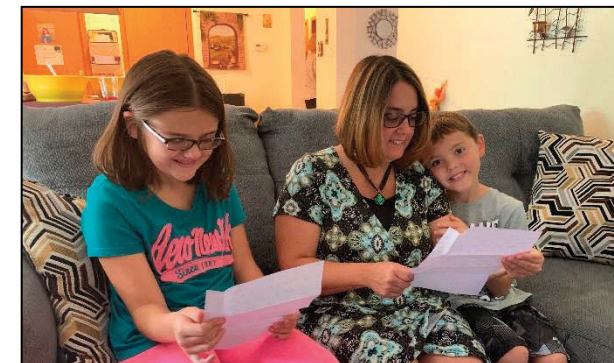
"Part of our motivation is to set an example for our kids," says Melissa. Brenna is 12 and Noah is 9. In the beginning Brenna, then age 7, wondered why her mother wanted to sponsor another child especially when letters came calling Melissa "Mummie." "You have me and Noah, why do you want another child?" she asked. Melissa took the time to explain that the kids at Angels' Place don't have parents and need help that the Yohmans can give.

Now, through their exchange of letters, Brenna finds that she and Mawi have a lot in common despite their very different circumstances. They both love soccer and reading and drawing. The whole family was moved beyond words when their second sponsored child – 5 year old Muan – wrote in his first letter, "I don't feel like I deserve your love." This sparked a family discussion about God's love for all of us.

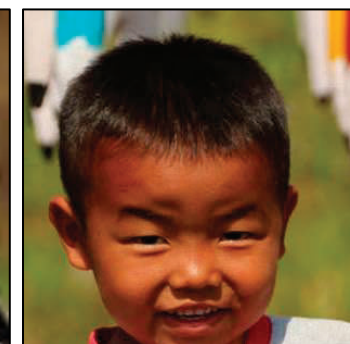
Melissa faithfully manages the letter writing to Mawi and Muan with help from Brenna who offers questions and dictation. They send pictures of themselves, their home and even their dog as well as stickers, word puzzles and copies of short books that Brenna likes. "At first I didn't know what to write and I didn't want to make the kids feel sad by comparison to our life, but we soon made such a connection that I feel like I'm writing to my own daughter." "If I weren't such a nervous flyer, I'd really like to go to Angels' Place to meet these children," says Melissa.

Melissa works part-time in the Plum School District administration office in addition to her full-time job managing their household and kids. Bob works for Wesco and is a numbers man who is savvy about online banking. "Once we set up the monthly payments from our checking account, we honestly don't even notice the financial impact."

The Yohmans are grateful and cheerful givers to Samaritan's Purse, St. Jude's Hospital and several Angels' Tree projects each holiday season, but Angels' Place is their first sponsorship program. "We have photos of Mawi and Muan on our fridge and framed ones in our bedroom so those dear children are on our minds and in our hearts every day. We are so grateful for the chance to help."



Brenna, Melissa, and Noah Yohman



Mawi and Muan, the children sponsored by the Yohman family