

## JAN SWENSEN'S REPORT ON 2022 VISIT TO ANGELS' PLACE

This report of the trip of Jim Ice and me in 2022 will be in the first person, giving my subjective descriptions of Angels' Place, its children, history and physical facility. I have been going to Churachandpur almost every year since 2004 and have many memories that all came back with this latest visit. I have had the privilege to see God's hand at work in this blessed project and was overwhelmed to take in what has happened at this little place on earth. I will report on four subjects in this volume: 1. Some of the graduates of AP, 2. The present roster of children at AP, 3. The physical facilities at AP, and 4. The staff at AP.

### 1. ANGELS' PLACE GRADUATES

By far the greatest joy I had in this visit was to see and meet so many graduates of AP. It astounds me to realize what has happened to the lonely, hungry, mistreated and endangered children we took in beginning in 2005. Let me just tell of a few of the lives that we have touched in a good way.

Tinneihmawi (Mawi) came to us in February 2004, at the age of nine, on a motorcycle being driven by a cousin asking to be admitted to our future orphanage. She had lost her parents and had no one to care for her. 186 children applied for admission that day. I knew we could only take 50, so we had to determine who had the greatest immediate need. Mawi was given number one to designate that she had the greatest need. We opened a year later and she came to us in February 2005 with 59 other destitute kids. (Even though we only had room for 50, Sanga talked us into taking in 60.) Mawi graduated from AP in 2017. In those years she became a healthy, energetic, wonderful young woman and became a Christian. She has since married, a young man who is an Executive Chef. She came to visit us with her two beautiful children. She looks great and was a joy to see.

Khup Elsang came to us in 2006 in the second group of ten to be admitted as we had expanded a little. His little sister came with him. They had no parents and lived with their grandmother who was disabled and could not even care for herself. When I visited their house Khup's grandmother lay on the floor unable to get up. Khup was an energetic boy and a good student. He passed the state examination in class ten qualifying him to go to classes 11 and 12 at Rayburn College High School. After his graduation he went on to college at Rayburn and got his degree. He now teaches history at a private school. He has grown into a fine young man and looks great. His sister also graduated from Rayburn and we hired her to be a warden for our girls. She looks great too. They have both become Christians.

Suresh Singh had no parents. He came from a Hindu family and had no one to support him. He came in 2005 in the first group. He immediately impressed everyone. He became healthy and active and had much talent. He was a good student, a good athlete and very popular with all the other kids. He was chosen as a leader by the staff. Like Khup, Suresh completed all 12 grades. He became a Christian. Then he went to Imphal and attended the Imphal School of Preaching and Imphal University. He got his degree and married and got a good job as a medical supply representative selling to local hospitals. He came back and wanted to speak to the assembled staff, kids and visitors to tell how much he appreciated being nurtured at AP. He looks great and still shows his leadership skills.

Muanginthang came to us in 2007 at age ten as we continued to expand. He lost his father at age six and lived in a village in the mountains on the border with Burma/Myanmar. He excelled at school and graduated from Rayburn College High School. He became a Christian. He then went on to Imphal School of Preaching and to college. We hired him as a warden for our boys. He takes responsibility for devotionals and leads spiritual activities. He is a very impressive young man.

Rejoice (She has a lengthy name but preferred to be called by the name she chose when she became a Christian.) came to us in the first group in 2005 at age 8. Her mother had died when Rejoice was just 4. Her father had abandoned her to live with her widowed grandmother. She was always a sweet but shy girl. She engaged in all the activities but did not want to go on to school after class ten. She has married and came to visit us with her two beautiful little girls. She makes her own clothes and she and the girls wore matching dresses made by mom. Her husband works in construction. She looks great and is much more outgoing now as an adult woman.

Sophia came to AP ten years ago but she comes back every time I visit there. She has abundant energy and became a leader as soon as she came to us. She was a good student and passed all her state examinations with ease and has graduated from college. She is now working on her master's degree in education. She plans to become an English teacher. She was so anxious to meet with us that she came with another graduate and then volunteered to speak at the assembly before staff, children and visitors. She was effusive with praise for AP and even presented Jim and me with hats that are made in Manipur. She

became a Christian and loves her name especially since I explained to her that it means “wisdom.” Sophia is always a joy to see.

Esther (Chingngaihmaun) came to AP in 2008 at age 8. She lost her mother at age two and her father was disabled. She was active in everything and was a leading singer. She did well in school and went on to college. She just joined the Central Paramilitary Forces (Police) through all India competition. She will likely work at airports. She has grown into a fine young woman. She looks great too.

That’s just seven of 14 young adults who came back to visit with us that we had time to see. We will record in our archives the visits with the others. I am beyond proud of all of them. I tell of just these seven as examples of the fruition of the work of many people and of the grace of God.

I have no way to measure how many lives we have saved, but I know it is a lot. Altogether almost 300 children have gone on from AP into the world. They have all been fed, educated and nurtured. Many of them were in mortal danger when we first met them. Everyone who has helped these kids can be assured that your investment in them has earned many dividends. I am amazed. As Jesus said in Mark 10:14 “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” God has surely blessed this work.

I want to see more follow up on tracking our graduates. For instance, I would like to begin collecting wedding pictures of all the alumni that have married. Having seen children that have become adults leading lives that show taking responsibility for, not only themselves but, others is confirmation of the success of this mission. It will be a source of reward for the staff, volunteers, workers and donors as well.

## 2. THE PRESENT ROSTER

We have 138 kids living at AP now. They look absolutely the same as the kids that came to us in 2005. The kids were waiting for us in front of the boys’ dormitory on the entrance road all lined up and looking terrific. They applauded when we got out of the car. When I yelled “hi, kids” they all yelled back “hello.” Then they serenaded us with a welcome song and yelled out a

cheer when they finished. They all smiled and wanted to shake hands with us. We had arrived late in the afternoon. They soon went off to their pre-dinner games. The sound of children laughing and playing is as beautiful as a Mozart symphony. At the dinner bell they line up in their files and hear the latest news. Then one of them leads a prayer and they sing a thank you song. They eat mountains of rice and have chicken and eggs at alternate days during the week. The vitality of the children as well as their facial appearance and their enthusiasm indicate that they are well nourished. I would like to see some more protein in their diet.

They had a devotional in the main hall in the evening. The children stayed attentive for the whole lesson.

The next morning everyone was up by five AM. The children all have their routine organized. They clean themselves, brush their teeth, clean their latrine, clean the halls and get dressed on schedule. They are every bit as organized as a young military group. Angels' Place is just like church camp, only it is every day and every month.

One of the priceless pleasures of visiting AP is just sitting and talking to the kids. They all speak some measure of English. Of course, the older ones handle the language better. If you sit on one of benches, the kids soon come sit down with you and ask you questions. They love to have their picture taken. With the cell phone cameras it is easy to entertain them by taking their photos and showing them. Then they get excited and tell you to take more and more photos of groups of their friends. They laugh and have a jolly time pointing to the pictures.

They want to hear all about me and my family. I asked them if they wanted to know all about my trip. They yelled yes. I said let's go in and look at the world map. About 30 of them crowded around and we put the big world map on the floor and I showed them Pittsburgh, London, Delhi and Imphal and the arc of the flight path. They wanted to know all about what it was like, what kind of plane we flew and about time zones. They have no concept of what the rest of the world is like. Of course, most Americans have little to no concept of what their life is like. We had this kind of conversation any time they weren't in school or eating. I tried to talk to as many kids as possible and as many as would talk to me. Some of the kids are more shy than others. The girls seem to be more outgoing to me than the boys.

I was glad to see the children playing lots of games. My impression is that they are getting more into sports with each year I go there. We need to make more facilities available to them. They play soccer on a field that is a little smaller than regulation and has some puddles after rain but they play on it anyway. They play basketball, soccer, badminton, volleyball, swings, seesaws, hop scotch and jacks. They may play more games that were out of my view, but I could hear their sounds of joy.

The children of AP are very kind to one another. I never see any arguments, bullying or fights. In all the years I have visited AP I have seen less than ten kids crying. I consider that astounding. I saw no unhappy child during our entire time on this visit, no crying, no fighting, no arguing and no unkind words, amazing! The older children take care of and teach the younger ones.

We went to Hermon School and visited the classrooms. The children went wild when they saw us. We visited with the superintendent. The visit was virtually the same as many previous meetings. We went in most of the classrooms. The children waved and called to us in each. I apologized to the teachers, but they seemed to enjoy the visit too. There are no extracurricular activities at Hermon, only classroom work and recess. I would like to see some activity beyond that.

We went to Rayburn College High School and to Rayburn College. We did not visit the classrooms but spent our time there with an assistant principal. Rayburn has a few extracurricular activities such as art club, science club and other comparable clubs. We discussed military training that is associated with schools in India. Many of our kids enter cadet training units that are paramilitary in nature, something like our junior ROTC. Children who hope to become military officers join this activity.

We spent much time reviewing the health care for the kids. They did well during the pandemic. Only one girl had symptoms. When she got sick they tested all the children. Fifteen girls and two boys tested positive. All were isolated, and there was no further spread. The girl with symptoms has recovered well. It is assumed that she was the source of the spread to the other children. No one was able to say how she contracted the disease. All children 12 and older have been vaccinated twice.

It was discovered that the health charts for each child had not been kept current. We directed that charts should be immediately reinstated. Each child must have a health record with vital signs, height, weight, medical history and all standard entries. The children must have annual medical, dental and eye examinations with findings recorded. The children have had remarkably good dental health up to now, but that has changed. For years we saw almost no cavities. The staff reported that children that have come to us recently have had tooth decay. Medical care is covered by the state, but dental care is not. We must upgrade our attention to dental care. We discussed the health care needs with our resident nurses and our pediatrician.

I saw no evidence of any other health problems. The children were clean with clean clothes at all times. The school uniforms are especially clean and neat. The kids are proud to wear them and take good care of them. I saw no evidence of excessive invasion of insects. India is a very hospitable environment for breeding bugs, especially mosquitoes. I saw the usual lizards and ants but no mosquitoes. We all sleep under nets, so the population is protected at night.

We had a very lengthy ceremony honoring the kids from class twelve who had graduated and the kids from class ten who will be going to Rayburn. The kids performed numerous acts, dances and songs. The children do not sing as well as they used to. We do not have the leadership among the kids to teach them new songs and we do not have a choir director to teach them how to sing from the diaphragm. They sing from the throat which produces too much screeching and will eventually hurt their voices. I would like to see if we can get a choir director to go to AP again. The children have never seen many instruments and have not seen sheet music. Their hymnals do not show notes. When we had a choir director visit for two years the results were astounding. In just two weeks three singing groups were organized and performed some difficult songs. The kids can sing well if taught well.

The keynote speaker was the chief of the Paite tribe. He spoke well and was very complimentary of AP. The most popular speaker was Sophia. She told of her experience of growing up at AP and thanked everyone for helping her. Suresh Singh then jumped up and gave a rousing speech about the virtues of AP. Sophia and Suresh put a beautiful stamp on the proceeding.

The children have taken to the computer training program with enthusiasm. They want to learn this skill. They appear to realize that this is a golden opportunity that is not generally available to children in Manipur and want to take advantage of it. We have two tutors that have the necessary expertise and the teaching skills to help the kids. The program is impressive.

The sewing class is going well indeed. The girls in the class spend much time in cutting out patterns and using the sewing machines. The teacher does a good job. The girls have produced many dresses and shirts. Each time they produce a new item of clothing, they show it off. The other kids get an idea what they too can do.

The baking class has not gotten started yet. There are plans in the works for that to begin soon. Siam's wife is planning to begin classes as soon as the room and equipment are in place. She is enthusiastic about this prospect and has plans for its success.

We had a lengthy discussion with Sanga about the danger of pedophilia on our campus. We told him of the training we require of camp counselors and what is required in the US with people who deal closely with children. This is a subject that is not discussed openly in India. Nevertheless, we must make sure that the children are never in danger of any predator. We know they exist in India as well as the US. We impressed on Sanga that we must institute a training program for our staff.

In summary, the kids are doing well. We need to help them further with better recreation equipment and play areas plus repairs to buildings and grounds. We must upgrade our health care and record keeping.

We have graduated 12 young adults into the outside world this year. We will be adding at least 12 new children to AP in January 2023. AP keeps getting better for these children.

### 3. THE PHYSICAL FACILITIES AT ANGELS' PLACE

- Inspection of the buildings and grounds:

The new vocational education building is outstanding. It is new and well arranged. It has an office for Siam, long room with table for 15 computers, flat screen on wall for instruction, a room for screens only, computers and keyboards separate, room for sewing, storage rooms below. There is a large room with ovens and mixer. Siam's wife will teach baking. I spoke to her about her interest in teaching. She is enthusiastic and has a plan. The sewing room needs help. We have five sewing machines; three work; two are broken. We also need two mannequins.

- The boys' dormitory is in good shape. The exterior is in good shape. No apparent need for pointing. One broken glass. Many murals on walls that look nice. The fire extinguisher is no good. We need a new one for each floor. We need to fix up the ground floor for library use. The first floor guestroom needs to be cleaned up, furnished and available for some use. The old meeting room is not employed for its best possible use. What is the plan for it? The lowest floor guest room finally has a functioning water heater. The room is very comfortable. The room dedicated to the library is mostly unused. There are no books for the kids to take out. There is no supervision for use of the few books we have and there is little interest in a library if any. We need Bibles in Paite and English.
- The basketball court is in poor condition. The surface is just a thin coat of cement that has spalled and disintegrated in many places. It must be resurfaced. The backboards have warped and pulled away from their supports. They must be replaced. We need chain nets for the hoops.
- The play area next to the basketball court is in OK condition. The swings and seesaws are working. There is space for nets for volley ball and badminton.
- The soccer field is the same as always. It is a little small but functional. It has a depression in the middle that collects water and is muddy after rain but the kids play through it anyway. The goals are in bad shape and must be replaced. The nets have torn away.
- The multipurpose building is in very good shape. The addition of the fire escape has worked out very well. It is frequently used by the staff and many of the kids. It leads directly along the back of the second floor of the building on to a ramp that accesses the voc-ed building then proceeds out on to the level of the first floor of the boys' dorm. The railing on the stairs will need paint. The dining hall is the same as before and is functional. The kitchen is the same and functional. The wash basins next to the kitchen are functional. The girls' rooms are the same and look fine. The warden's room by the infirmary needs aesthetic improvement but is functional. The infirmary needs work and more



supplies in a secure cabinet. We plan to build a small building next to the infirmary for use by the medical staff and visiting doctor. The kids currently use that area for badminton.

- The entrance driveway is pitted and needs to be smoothed out and repaired. The driveway all the way down past the two main buildings is full of pot holes and needs to be smoothed out. If grading equipment is employed to fix the roads, consider also leveling the soccer field.
- Overall, the grounds look good and attractive. One obvious exception is the house being occupied by Mawi-Pi, our campus nurse. It is uninhabitable. It looks ugly inside and out. It has a leaking roof, gaps in the side walls and a failing floor. It must be razed. Sanga has plans for its replacement.
- The vacant areas have not produced much food. The report is that the soil has little to no nutrients in it to support farming. The land has been farmed out by our preceding owners. We must rely on Siam and the staff to make recommendations of what to do with the vacant land.

#### 4. THE STAFF AT ANGELS' PLACE

The staff at AP is the best we have ever had. Englian Valte, our superintendent, sets an atmosphere of stability and care. He cares for each child almost as his own. He also is firm in keeping his rules and lets the children know what he expects of them. They respond to him very well. He is a treasure and we told him so. We were gratified to learn that he plans to stay at his work for the foreseeable future. We need to take good care of him and keep him as long as possible.

Siam has become a jewel as well. He has taken responsibility for overseeing the entire operation at AP. He is smart and a self-starter. He gets things done quickly and efficiently. Sometimes he has done something before one realizes it needs to be done. He is also very kind and pleasant. He is diplomatic and tactful. For instance, he has dealt with doTerra in a business-like manner and impressed them with his ability. He is happy in his work at AP and has told us he is pleased with working on opportunities with Sanga's business on the next door property, which is too complicated to explain here. He plans to remain in place for the foreseeable future.

We have two nurses on site, MawiPi and Mawi. Mawi is also the warden for the girls' dorm and lives in the building in the room next to the infirmary. Mawi Pi lives in the building just a little inside the gate.

Muanginthang, an AP graduate and now a warden there, is doing a fine job. The rest of the staff are also doing well. They get things done quickly and efficiently. We need to keep them all happy.