

Dr. Bonnie Jean Butler visited the Tibetan Children's Village in Mysore India to which is home to many children in the Children Sponsorship Program. Below are excerpts from an article published in the 2002-2003 UCC calendar.

"I've been involved in charity work my entire life," she (Dr. Bonnie Jean Butler) writes. "I thought I knew poor. I didn't. Streets and sidewalks were covered with bodies sleeping, families sleeping, because they were so poor. I saw an incredibly hard-working society. Women walked miles for a pail of water from a river, carried on their heads back to their families. Many times this same water contains so much bacteria, it contributes to the very high infant mortality rate. It broke my heart, then and now."

When Bonnie Jean .... arrived at Tibetan Children's Village ..., the seeming chaos ... in the streets of India changed. The children wore uniforms. The buildings were run-down but clean and the staff was attentive to the children.

Dr. Butler states "In a country where there is such extreme poverty, the Tibetans created a community of destitute and orphan refugees using donated "waste land" front the Indian government. They created a school through grade 12, medical and administrative buildings, soccer fields, basketball courts and a small playground in good condition. They sign over the front of the school read, "Others before Self,; and I have absolutely no doubt that it is more than a motto. There is a lot of love, with discipline and structure, with an emphasis on what is best for the children."

Bonnie Jean met Tenzin, who despite his shyness, stayed with her throughout the day. She learned he had ten or maybe 11 brothers and sisters and came from an impoverished family. When the headmaster said that Tenzin was on the "mischievous" side of life" Bonnie Jean quickly responded by saying "That's our boy!" Through the day, she noticed that all of the staff knew his name, and the Tibetan Children's Village extended extraordinary care to each child. This child sponsorship program was indeed making a difference.

In a speech to those involved in the child sponsorship program, Dr. Bonnie Jean Butler stated "You have empowered (these children) to have opportunities others in India will never know. You got (them) off the streets. You gave (them) food and shelter. You have (them) love and support. We are so blessed to see how each one of us has the ability to change a life and empower others."