

# Empower the Children



Fall 2014



Sultana



Aman



Madhurima



Ruksa

## Rosalie's Message

Dear Friends,

Whenever I need to refresh my sense of well being, I return to the *Botanical Gardens of Kolkata*. How I wish the teeming slums that millions call 'home' could be transformed into such a beautiful oasis. However, when I observe with another eye, there *is* a special kind of garden that blossoms within these impossible conditions. I am speaking about **Empower The Children** students who, with education and support, sprout up quickly and soak up ideas, enabling them to create a life beyond the poverty that has gripped their families for generations.



After 12 years of nurturing previously unschooled children, **ETC** now has one college graduate working in hotel management and three other students pursuing higher education, with many others enrolled in vocational training programs. As you can imagine, this is the beginning of a wonderful new phase for **ETC**—the culmination of our efforts to help our students realize their life's potential.

It is painful for us to imagine even one child begging or reduced to doing menial labor for his/her entire life. Like a flower planted in fallow ground, a child without an education is doomed to wither. So we must continue to till the soil in order to meet the challenges of students who wish to pursue higher education. Your continued support and generosity have always provided the elements that are crucial to our students' successes. Please join us in *watching our garden grow*.

Love,

Rosalie



# MADHURIMA

Some tiny delicate flowers, though buffeted by winds and rain, survive to color the landscape with their fragile beauty. Madhurima Banerjee has been through many such storms but has shown her steadfastness in becoming a tenacious flower in ETC's garden.

Madhurima's father, who worked as a clerk in the West Bengal Civil Service, passed away when she was only nine years of age. She still remembers her father as a man of principle—honest, responsible and always striving to be a good human being. When she was forced to drop out of Class 4 because her mother could no longer afford school fees, she felt uprooted and depressed. Thanks to ETC Director Champa Sarkar's guidance and ETC's School Sponsorship Program, Madhurima was able to complete Classes 5 to 12.

Madhurima then entered Surendranath College as an English Literature major; in July 2013, she became *ETC's second college graduate* and *first postgraduate student* at Indira Gandhi National Open University. Her goal is to work as an administrator in the West Bengal Civil Service, as her father did many years before.

Throughout her years of study, Madhurima always found time to assist her mother who prepared food for hostel boarders. When her mother was diagnosed with kidney failure, storm clouds gathered once more. Madhurima served not only as chief support during her mother's seven-month hospital confinement and dialysis treatment, she also became a tutor and sole breadwinner of the family while at the same time studying for final exams.

Today, Madhurima regards Champa Sarkar as her mentor, the person who has kept her rooted during her formative years. Madhurima has become a lovely perennial in ETC's garden, ready to teach others to blossom—rain or shine—no matter what storms may blow their way.



## Tutoring "Round the Clock"

**2003...**When **Shelley Chatterjee** realized that government-schooled students needed support to boost their skills and maintain good grades, **ETC** opened a tutorial center in Dankuni, a large town just a short train ride from bustling downtown Kolkata.

**2005...**Word of mouth soon resulted in increased enrollment necessitating morning/afternoon sessions. The two sessions were soon overflowing with students.

**2014...**The Center now provides "round the clock" instruction for as many as 120 students in three sessions, five days a week to further encourage students to attend classes and maintain good grades.

Special thanks to **ETC's** six dedicated teachers who tutor all subjects from K-10. As students reach maturity, some have enrolled in university. Ruksa Khatoon, who took advantage of the Center's support, now attends Raja Parimohan College. A "round of applause" for **ETC Director Shelley Chatterjee** who supervises **Dankuni 1, 2, & 3** and **INSPIRES ALL!**





# Busy Bees At Home

Gruenert Center Catholic Charities in Paterson, NJ provides vocational training for persons with disabilities.



ETC Board Member Margaret Wallace employs Gruenert Center workers to prepare hundreds of appeals and newsletters mailed to ETC donors around the world. Every April and September they look forward to the job so that ETC friends can read the latest news about the kids in Kolkata. Some of these workers shared their thoughts on why they enjoy doing this work.

**Gary Knissel**.... "I have seen programs about Kolkata on the TV. I feel sad when I see families that are not able to stay together. I feel proud that the work I do helps to raise money for ETC kids so they can have food, medicine and live a better life. I am also happy that the children are getting an education, thanks to ETC."



**Debbie Hunter**.... "Working on the mailings makes me happy because ETC gives the children a safe place to go to everyday." **Susan Tureaud** .... "I would like the children to know that I love them and hope they are happy when they learn things at school. I am also glad to be able to help with the mailings."



## Recipe for Success

### ETC Cultural Exchange Bookmarks

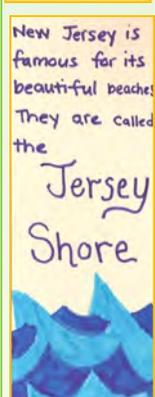
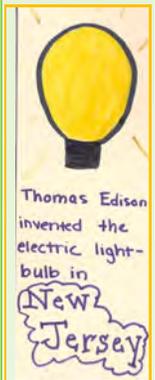
#### Ingredients:

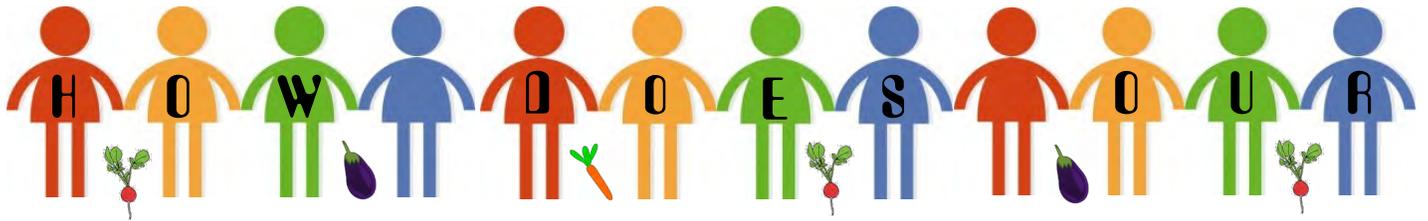
- 1 friendly Jackson, New Jersey Librarian
- 100 Enthusiastic Teenagers
- A Heaping TBSP. of Curiosity
- 1 Large Bowlful of Cultural Facts
- 143 Unique and Creative Bookmark Ideas
- A Potpourri of Art Supplies and Colors
- 15 Hours of Cutting and Decorating
- Oodles and Oodles of Love



Rosalie's presentation at the local library in Jackson made a big hit with a group of teenage volunteers. After learning about ETC's Cultural Exchange Program, they offered to make a contribution. Several months later, 143 colorful and informational bookmarks about the USA arrived, each one illustrating an important fact about the country. These bookmarks not only impart information in a fun and clever way but make it easy to learn!

These Jackson teens love helping others, especially children, and were very excited at becoming New Jersey *ambassadors* to kids in Kolkata. ETC students send their love and thank all of their new friends for "cooking up" so many good ideas.





## Empowering The Children....

### Learning and Experiencing How Things Grow!

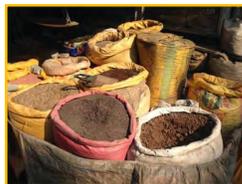
Urban gardens are common in Kolkata. One could find vegetables growing in planting pots and troughs atop rooftops, in alleyways and in every conceivable space.



When Róisín Ni Faolain arrived from Ireland, she offered to design a children's garden that would grace the patio of Preyrona School.



Choosing the Soil Composition



Selecting the Seeds



Planting the Garden



Róisín enlisted the help of students who painted the pots, selected the soil, and planted the seeds.

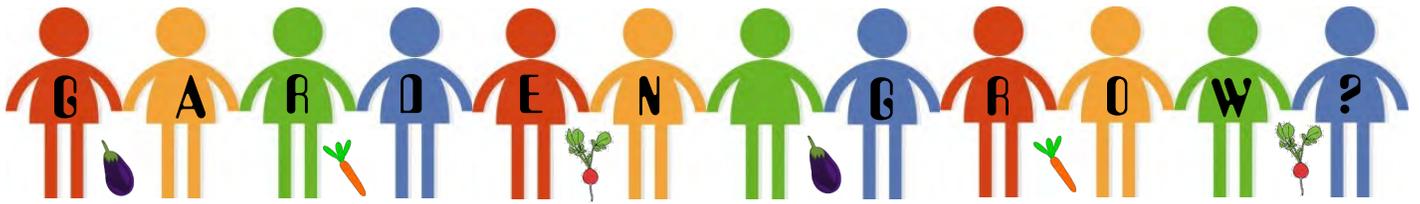


Patio Trough

When the shoots grew big enough, they were transferred to the newly installed cement troughs on the patio.

*As I look out to my garden  
I feel a sense of pride  
It really is a lovely room  
Except it is outside.*





## Come Visit Our Garden



Bountiful thanks to all of the teachers who helped Roisin, Ashit, and Reena to bring the 'joy of growing a garden' to ETC's children.



A school trip to Madhu and Gautam's sumptuous rooftop garden is proof that nature's beauty can co-exist with Kolkata's crowded streets down below.



Lots of loving hands created the garden mural that graces the walls of Preyrna 3 School, bringing the garden indoors while newly-planted seedlings flourish in the garden troughs on the patio.



Mango

Aubergine

Green Beans

Capsicum

Chiles

Pumpkin

Tomatoes

Marigolds

Guava



"I have found my niche...my love of art, nature and humanitarian work have come together in finding ways to raise awareness of the beauty and creativity which are always inherent in nature. After working in the polluted city of Kolkata for two years, I came to realize that the solutions to poverty have to come from a grassroots level. By providing a more holistic approach in educating children of the poor, I have begun to see the seeds of my dreams grow and come to fruition. I look forward to seeing ETC's garden grow in years to come."

*Roisin Ni Faolain*



# How Does ETC's Garden Grow?

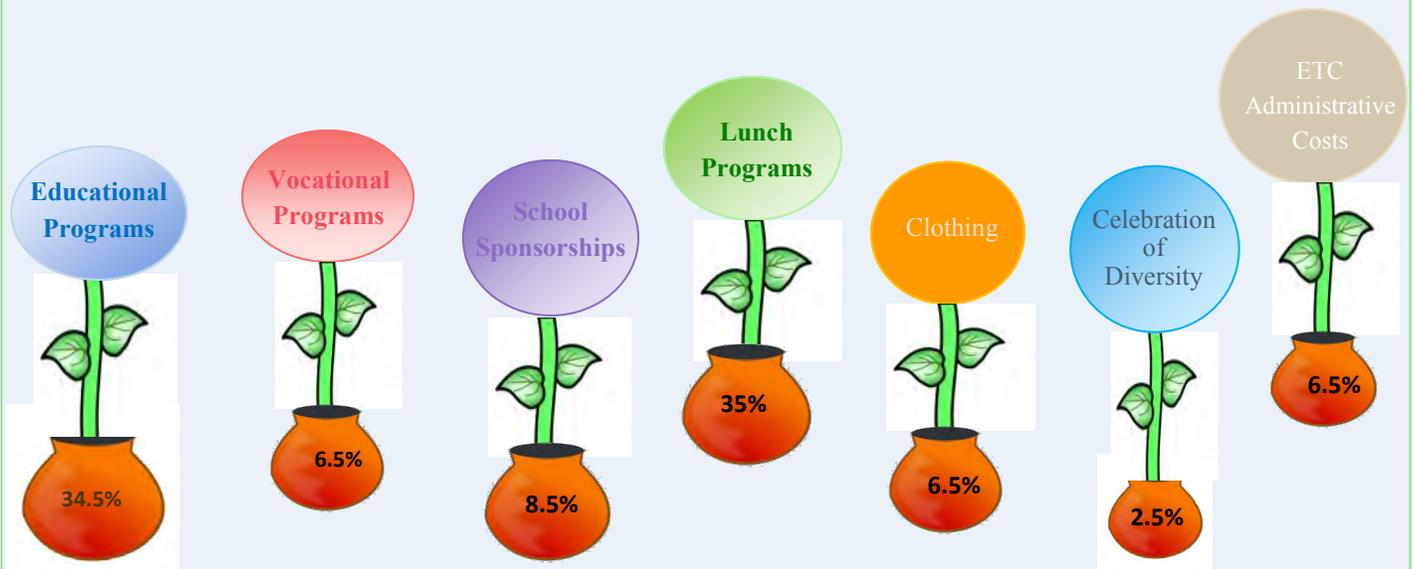


We have been fortunate! Since 2002 we have always been able to meet our budget through fundraisers, appeals and special donations, thanks to ETC's very dedicated and generous contributors. Each year ETC board members must evaluate how every dollar, every euro, every pound is spent in order to cover the breadth of our programs. It is even more important to sharpen our pencils now that our mature students, who wish to gain a real foothold in securing their futures, seek higher education. Please review the flower pot chart below which indicates that almost 50% of the budget is spent on educational and vocational programs followed by our popular lunch programs and other services that support our student population.



If you have ever cultivated a garden, you are aware there is always uncertainty....unpredictable weather conditions, soil depletion, garden pests, to name a few. Our garden, too, is unpredictable....an ever growing student population, need for more teachers, expanding lunch programs, increase in food prices, and ongoing support for our college-age students. And yet, every year we sow our seeds and watch them grow. We can only imagine that you are as proud of our Kolkata students as we are. Each new year brings fresh challenges but the end result is nothing short of a miracle. Thanks to you, our steadfast friends, our garden continues to flourish!

## Through Your Generous Donations





*“May you always walk in sunshine.”*

**Special Bouquets** to **Sinead** and **Donncha O’Faolain** who hail from Galway, Ireland, a long way from the slums of Kolkata. However, during the past eight years, they have closed the distance gap by forming a close alliance with **Empower The Children** and several other non-profit organizations during their frequent visits to Kolkata.

Determined to help, Sinead and Donncha weather Ireland’s cold and rainy climate, displaying boards and photographs outside of local supermarkets, ever grateful for the extraordinary generosity of Galway shoppers. Christmas caroling and table games are two of their favorite fundraising activities. “We are always rewarded by the warm reception we receive from **ETC** students,” say Sinead and Donncha. And to our dear friends in Galway, **ETC** adds... “Thanks for bringing the Irish spirit of generosity, humor and caring to the children of Kolkata.”

**Special Bouquets** to **Ash Mukherjee**, a loyal supporter of **Empower The Children**. Ash is a retired engineer who makes his home between New Jersey and Florida. However, his strong ties to his roots in Kolkata became evident after he read a small byline in an Indian newspaper in 2002 announcing **ETC’s** first Indian Festival fundraiser. Ash immediately contacted Rosalie and offered to help. For the past 12 years, his loving support and contributions have earned him a place in the hearts of **ETC** kids.



Most recently, four hard-of-hearing students at Preyrana 3 School, ages 3—8, were recipients of a Speech Trainer, an amplification device, donated by Ash. Through this device, the younger boys learn the Bengali and English alphabets while the older boys concentrate on reading, writing, mathematics and drawing. Historically, special needs children were kept at home, but these boys are now transported to school by very determined parents who have seen real progress with the Speech Trainer. For example, Sourav must take a bus and auto-rickshaw and yet has never missed a day of school, no mean feat during monsoon season. Akash, who has made steady progress, is now enrolled in both morning classes at a Christian school and afternoon classes at P3, riding to school on his father’s bicycle.



Ash’s friendship, dedication and attention have become invaluable to our Special Needs program. His world travels take him far and wide but we look forward to his annual visit to Kolkata in order to show Ash the incredible difference he has made at **Empower The Children**.



*“If you want to touch the past, touch a rock.  
If you want to touch the present, touch a flower.  
If you want to touch the future, touch a life.”  
~Author Unknown*



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**E = encourage**

**M = motivate**

**P = protect**

**O = opportunity**

**W = wisdom**

**E = educate**

**R = rejoice**

**THE CHILDREN**



# “POWERING UP” Empower The Children’s 2014 Lunch Programs



Preyrona 1, 2 and 3 Schools  
Atmaraksha, Nehru Colony and  
Nevidita Preschools  
BBD and Khamargachi Schools

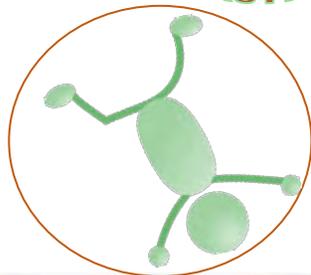
## Help Feed Our Children

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 50.00
- \_\_\_\_\_ € 38.00
- \_\_\_\_\_ £ 32.00
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 100.00
- \_\_\_\_\_ € 76.00
- \_\_\_\_\_ £ 64.00

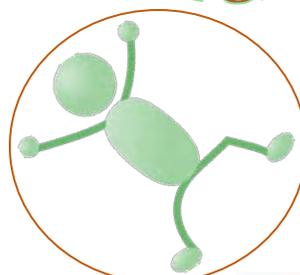
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