



CASA News and Views Cochise County Newsletter

July/August 2015 Features

CASA Coordinator
Abby Dodge

CASA Support Staff
Lisette Borbon

Phone: 432-7521
Fax: 432-7247

www.casaofarizona.com



Co-Editors: Abby Dodge, LuRue Troyer
 Published by LuRue Troyer
troyer1234@gmail.com

Coordinator's Comments 2

July Calendar 4

August Calendar 5

Volunteers of the Month 6

BrainyQuotes 9

CCCC Flyer 11

Kudos 12

From the Manual 13
 Tips for Writing Effective Court Reports

Articles

Letter to a Child 7
 by Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Support Group Meeting 8

Submitting Your Court Report 9
 by Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Case Plan Recommendations 10
 by Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Utilizing Support Services 11
 by Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Useful Tidbits 12
 by Mary Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Around the World in 94 Days: Pt 2 15
 by LuRue Troyer, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Coordinator's Comments



Abby Dodge

As I'm sure you're all already aware, CASA of Cochise County has officially moved to our temporary home within the old high school in Bisbee. The old high school is located at 100 Clawson Ave in old Bisbee. We are tucked away in the Housing Authority office located on the first floor.

Thank you all for bearing with us throughout

the move. To put in perspective how much packing was involved, this is how many boxes it took to pack our files alone.



I apologize if any of you had difficulty reaching us during the move. We had a couple days without computers or phones, but everything is operational

now. Lissete sent out an email with our new direct numbers, but here they are in case you missed it:

Abby: 520-432-8818

Lissete: 520-432-8831

CASA Program: 520-432-7521

Fax: 520-432-7247

I hope that each of you will stop in and see us at our new location. We are much closer to the courthouse now, so you are welcome to stop in before or after a hearing.

I wanted to remind everyone of a document that you each signed when you became a CASA. I have included the text of the document below:

As part of my reporting function to the Arizona CASA Program, I understand that on the last day of each calendar month for each case and/or project to which I am assigned, I must:

1. *Submit completed contact log/journals to the county program office in the time line required.*

~Continued on next page

Coordinator's Comments

2. **Call or meet in person** at least monthly with the county coordinator to discuss my case.

3. When I leave the program, I understand all case files, contact logs, Resource Guide, ID badge, and other information related to the Arizona CASA program **must be returned** to the county program office.

I understand that this reporting function is integral to the success of the advocacy work, both for testimony and for administrative accountability.

I understand that providing these records in a timely manner is one of the roles and responsibilities of a CASA.

First, I wanted to thank all of you for your dedication to getting your contact logs turned in monthly. I know that contact logs aren't the most exciting thing in the world, trust me. I still have to fill one out each month and I struggle to get it

submitted in time. So I really appreciate you all making the effort to get those logs completed and submitted each month.

Second, I wanted to remind each of you that you agreed to call or meet in person at least monthly with the county coordinator to discuss your case. You can also send me an update through Secure Upload or via email, as long as you leave out identifying information. I'm currently only receiving monthly updates from a few of you. Although I do read the

disclosures that come in for each of your cases, I realize that it is not always an accurate assessment of what is happening in a case. I will be better able to support you if I know what is going on with your case, what issues/difficulties you are having, and how you are doing personally. Those of you who are checking in with me monthly already, thank you!

As always, thanks for all that you do!



July 2015						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7 Julia M. 	8	9	10 Cathy: Court Report Due for F case.	11 Cheer Up the Lonely Day
12	13 Embrace Your Geekness Day	15	15	16	17	18
19 National Raspberry Cake Day	20	21	22 Susan S. 	23 Tracy: Court Report Due for A case.	24	25
26	27	28 National Milk Chocolate Day	29	30 Juanita: Court Report Due for B case.	31	

Created by Lissete Borbon, CASA Support

August 2015						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Save the Date! For a Volunteer BBQ We don't have the full details yet but more information will follow!</p>						1
2 Friendship Day	3 Patti: Court Report Due for IH	4 US Coast Guard Day	5	6 Ned: Court Report Due for LE	7	8 SAVE THE DATE SEE ABOVE ↑
9 Book Lover's Day	10 Patti: Court Report due for SA	11	12 Middle Child's Day	13	14	15 Relaxation Day!
16 Tell a Joke Day	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25 Krista O. 	26 National Dog Day	27 <u>Krista</u> : Court Report Due for TK <u>Darcy</u> : Court Report Due for JS	28	29 More Herbs Less Salt Day
30 Toasted Marshmallow Day	31					

Created by Lissete Borbon, CASA Support

May 2015

I am pleased to announce the CASA of the Month for May 2015 is Krista Ochs!

We chose Krista as CASA of the Month for May due to her tireless advocacy for her CASA child.

For those who don't know Krista, she works full-time (more than full-time in my opinion) for General Dynamics as well as being adjunct faculty for NAU and University of Arizona.

Krista has done a phenomenal job of balancing her work and CASA responsibilities, even when her case had an FCRB meeting, a Case Plan Staffing, and an emergency CFT crammed into two consecutive days.

Krista was an integral part of ensuring that her CASA child found a (soon-to-be) permanent home. I'm sure that you have all read the email that she wrote sharing the good news!



Volunteers of the Month!

June 2015

I want to announce our CASA of the Month for June 2015...Mary Jacobs!

For those of you who don't know Mary Jacobs, she is the Assistant City Manager for Sierra Vista, which I assume keeps her incredibly busy. However, she does a wonderful job of balancing her professional responsibilities, her personal life, and her volunteer commitments.

Mary recently requested to be assigned to represent a young lady she had represented previously, even though the case reopened in Pima County. Although the young lady is residing in Tucson and all of the court hearings will occur in Tucson, Mary is finding a way to make it work!

Mary has also found the time to attend two very beneficial training events that were offered in June: the Adverse Childhood Experiences and Self-Care training and the training by DCS covering the Adoption Subsidy Program and the Young Adult Program. Both of these trainings contained valuable information that can only build upon Mary's strong advocacy skills.

Finally, Mary does a wonderful job of keeping me informed on the goings on of her case and any issues/concerns that she has. This makes it easier for me to continue to support her throughout her advocacy efforts.

Thank you, Mary, for all your hard work!

Letter to a Child

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

My oldest CASA kid has been a part of my life for 15 years. I was her godmother, I stood up for her at her wedding, I was her birth coach, and I am part of her extended family. She had a mother who withheld her love from her children, so my CASA kid did not learn what a normal childhood was like. When she is parenting her own daughter, she sometimes needs advice. She called me the other day to tell me her daughter was texting on her cell phone at a time she was not supposed to be using it. When the child was confronted about texting, she did not tell the truth, and Joy and her husband were very upset. Even more upsetting was when the child told her mother that she was sure her mother didn't love her. Joy called me in tears, and after she told me the steps she and her husband had taken, I assured her that she and her husband had done the right thing. She was the one who was attacked because she is the disciplinarian in the family. I wrote this letter to Brooke to share examples of her mother's love.



Brooke, you are 9 years old now, and I first met you when your mom showed me your sonogram. It was the first picture of you and, quite frankly, there was not much to see. But your mother loved that picture. She played it every day, sometimes several times a day. I think she loved you from the moment she knew you were coming, and she thought the tiny little being in the sonogram was absolutely perfect.

Your mother read everything about what a mother should do to give her baby the best start, and she did all the things she was supposed to do. She took all the classes for expectant mothers, and the day you were born, she was absolutely radiant with joy. When you were born, she was so proud that the test that measured how healthy you were was a 9. And a nine is indeed a marvelous score.

When you were baptized, your mother asked all of her friends to be godparents. I believe there were 7 of us. The priest put his foot down and told her only two could be godparents, so Greta and John are your

"legal" godparents, and the rest of us are moral godparents.

As you grew and developed, your mom read all the latest books on raising a baby, then a toddler, and then a child. She did not have the background to know what to do, so she did what the child experts suggested, and she asked friends she trusted for advice. I have experienced all the stages of you growing up because your mom would call me whenever she had a question.

At every stage, she has been so proud of you. When you learned your shapes and colors, she cheered. When you learned your letters, she cheered. When you were potty trained, she was thrilled. She was proud of each and every accomplishment. I know this because she would tell me over and over about every wonderful thing you did.

When you were in day care, she checked constantly to be sure you were getting the very best of care. When you started school, she went to school so often that everyone knew her, and she volunteered in your class whenever there was an activity. She always had a conference with the teacher if there was an issue, and she stood up for you when

~Continued on next page

Letter to a Child (Continued)

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

something needed to be changed.

She looked at every single assignment you did. You were an excellent student, and she praised your successes. If there was a blip and you had a wee bit of difficulty with something, she was right there to support you.

Your birthday parties were amazing. Your mom would dream up the perfect party for you and your friends and transform the house with beautiful decorations. Your friends were always welcome, and they still are.

Two of the most important jobs of a parent are to be a role model and a teacher. Your mom has done a great job. Any girl could learn to be a wonderful woman just from watching your mom.

She has always loved you enough to teach you right from wrong, and this love includes gently correcting you when you need it. Kids, especially girls, sometimes get carried away

with what they want, and sometimes they do what they want even if it is not what they should be doing. It is up to the parent to correct this behavior. I know your mom loves you enough to discipline you when you need it, just as you will discipline your daughter/son when the time comes.

Sometimes your mom feels bad when she has to do this, but I tell her she has to be a responsible parent in order for you to learn to make wise choices. It would be so much easier for her to let you get away with things, but that would be bad parenting. You are lucky to have a mother who cares enough to always guide you in the right direction. Being a mom is a big job, and you are so lucky to have a mom who will always love you and be there for you.

Take care,

Mary

Support Group

Our CASA support group was formed to give every CASA an opportunity to get to know each other and to share our concerns about our cases. **We meet the second Tuesday of the Month from 10-12.** If you want to come but cannot meet at this time, please let Abby know because our meeting time can be flexible. CASAs who attend get 2 training hours.

At our last meeting, we met at Lynn Vanderdasson's. She has a beautiful house, and Abby made delicious peanut/chocolate bars. Bless her, because I forgot my lunch.

Our topics are anything the attendees want to discuss. New cases, cases that are about to be dismissed, and cases with problems were shared. One topic that we had not discussed before was changing age groups. Some CASAs find that a certain age group is a permanent, perfect match, but sometimes a change might be beneficial. We agreed that working with a different age group might be a good idea.

Each age group (babies and toddlers, elementary, middle school and high school) presents unique experiences, and it can be very stimulating to work with a different developmental age. It is very exciting to realize that a CASA can enter a whole new world just by working with a different age group. Making a difference in the life of a child is an awesome, rewarding, and humbling experience. If you feel it is time for you to advocate for a different age group, **go for it!!!!**

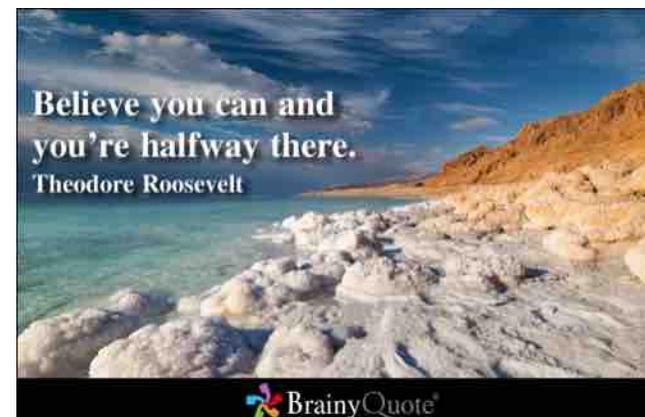
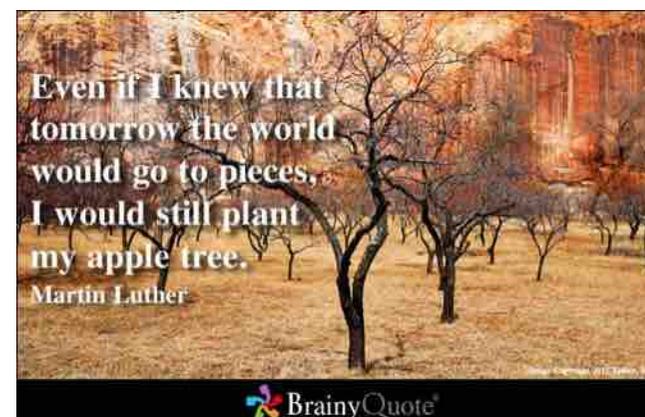
Submitting Your Court Report

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

When it is time to submit my court report, I have discovered that there is an element that can be very crucial. This element is timing. Sometimes the issues to be resolved are controversial and consensus has not been reached. When this happens, I find it is very important to prepare my recommendations very carefully in order to persuade the team to make similar recommendations. Once my report is finally written and I have done all I can to advocate for the interests of my child, **I submit it early**. My report will be one of the first, if not the first, to be submitted. My goal in doing this is to share my conclusions with the team in the hope that other team members might consider making similar recommendations.

In politics this technique is called the bandwagon technique. But court hearings are not a political area. The decisions that are made will affect the life of a child and these decisions must be fact-based and result in achieving the best interests of the

child. Even if my early report does not influence the other members of the team, it was worth a try, and if my recommendations are not in line with the other recommendations, I still must speak up for my child's interests. Sometimes it is scary to be the only voice that recommends to return/not to return to a parent, but as a CASA I am sworn to speak up for the best interests of my child, and once in a great while that means speaking up for a course of action that is not what is favored by other members of the team. The final decision is the one the judge makes, and my unbiased input is part of the facts that the judge will consider.



Case Plan Recommendations

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

Every CASA court report includes the DCS case plan and any concurrent plan. There is also a section to discuss reasonable efforts by DCS. Almost always DCS has made reasonable efforts, and the CASA will document any instances where reasonable efforts were not made.

In rare instances, the CASA may disagree with the case plan. What to do?? The CASA must present supporting evidence that shows the need for a different plan or a need for a delay in implementing the current plan. If the case plan is reunification, the parent needs to be doing the following: engaging in required services (mandated drug tests, attending supervised visitations, counseling and parenting classes), making an effort to be able to provide for the child's basic needs, and severing connections with individuals who, for various reasons, should not be around the child.

If a parent who has been testing negative suddenly tests positive, this may indicate that the parent is not yet ready to successfully parent the child. This should be documented and reported. It is possible for a case to be just about ready for reunification, and the parent suddenly falls apart. It doesn't happen often, but if it does happen on your watch, you need to document your concerns and give the judge your honest recommendation based on your findings. If you have reason (hard facts) to believe that the DCS case plan is not appropriate, you must tell the judge this and recommend delaying reunification or even considering a concurrent case plan.

Occasionally, I have gotten all geared up to write my court report and realized I am not quite sure what the exact case plan is. This is a fatal flaw if it is not corrected, so I email/call my DCS case manager and ask. This definitely exposes my ignorance, but there is no getting around it. If I don't get a reply, I email

again, and I will call Sylvia Bankson (administrative secretary—224-5888) and ask if she can locate my elusive case manager. That usually works, but one way or another, red-faced or not, I find out the exact case plan. Then once I have listed all my factual information, I am ready to support or recommend changes to the case plan.

You are the CASA. You are the voice of the child. The CASA is the only independent unit in the case, and the CASA's sole purpose is to advocate for the best interests of the child. The CASA has no other mandate. ***Do not hesitate to use your voice when you are certain you are advocating for the best interests of your child.***

Utilizing Support Services

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

In our last newsletter, I wrote an article on Brad Thayer. He is the Behavioral Health Clinical Coordinator for the Southeast Region of Arizona. His job is to serve as the bridge between DCS and the behavioral health care system. In this capacity he provides technical support to resolve issues, and he is asked to come in to bring a different perspective when a case gets stuck or contentious.

Usually DCS or Behavioral Health will be the agencies to contact Brad, but it is perfectly possible for a CASA to do this. Bud Dragoo, one of our CASAs, had been to Brad's CASA training and contacted him to help out with a case.

During the CASA training that Brad conducted, he offered to assist in determining whether the behavioral services being provided were appropriate for the child. Bud asked Brad after the training to determine for us whether an appropriate psychiatrist was treating our young man, whether services were in the correct intervals and whether the child's prescribed medications were correct. Brad agreed to help the team.

Brad attended a CFT (by phone) where the

team was discussing a possible new placement and services. The topics we covered were services, direct support, counseling, and phasing in the placement. Brad is familiar with many of the individuals who provide service, and he was able to provide insight into the training and background of the counselor and to a lesser extent direct support and family support staff. It is critical to find the best match for each child, and Brad's knowledge was useful in making an informed decision. We were interested in a therapist who had training in trauma-based therapy, and Brad was able to recommend a therapist.

Bud Dragoo took the initiative in contacting Brad Thayer. Brad has worked with our team in an advisory capacity ever since. Our case is now back on track thanks to a CASA volunteer who went to a training where he learned that it is possible for a CASA to ask the behavioral health clinical coordinator to come on board and work with our team in selecting the behavioral health services that best suit the needs of our young man.

CCCC



Cochise County Council for CASA

is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to the unmet needs of abused neglected and abandoned children in the CASA of Cochise County Program. The primary focus is to ensure that educational progress of CASA children through tutoring and scholarships. In addition the council provides clothing, toys and personal items.

If your CASA child/youth has an unmet need, consider the Cochise County Council for CASA to help!!

Call your CASA Coordinator
at 432-7521 **OR**

Send an email to
Adodge@courts.az.gov

Useful Tidbits

by Mary C. Blanchard, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

It is common courtesy to disclose to DCS any new information that is going to be in your court report. That way every player knows what is going to happen, and everyone has access to the same information. A CASA should never, ever surprise the other team members with facts that have not been shared. We are part of a team. ***Never ever blindside a member of your team.***

I keep notes on what happens at CFTs, and I send a copy to the team and to my child's lawyer. It is very important to make sure the child's lawyer knows everything you know. Then when something serious comes along, something that might even require that a motion be filed to bring the matter before the judge, my child's lawyer already knows what is going on, and it may very well be possible to enlist his/her help. A CASA cannot file a motion, but a lawyer

can. Convince the lawyer to file the motion, and the judge will read the motion and make a ruling.

Court reports are due 10 workdays before the court hearing. If additional critical information becomes available after the report is submitted, we can write an addendum to inform the judge about this new information. In every case where I have had to write an addendum, I have been extremely worried about the outcome of the case. Sometimes I can't sleep I get so upset, but looking back on these cases, I should have reminded myself that what is bothering me is that my case is quickly going south, and the judge needs to know this. The solution is to ***write an addendum***. Then continue to work to get the case back on track. Share your concerns in detail when you "say a few words in court."

Kudos



Ned Letto

FCRB 5/6/15

The Board acknowledges the Court Appointed Special Advocate for his involvement in D and J's lives and for being a support for them.

FCRB 5/6/15

The Board acknowledges the CASA for his involvement in N's life and his dedication to N's well-being.



From the Manual

Tips for Writing Effective Court Reports

Do...

- Feel confident to write your own court report.
- Check with your supervisor regarding a date for submitting the report. A particular time frame is required for several reasons:
 - The coordinator may ask you to do some additional research or documentation.
 - The coordinator needs time to edit the report and talk with you about any clarifications.
 - The coordinator may have other court reports to edit, and each one takes time to process appropriately.
 - Copies need to be made and forwarded to appropriate parties.

Note: *If case activity occurs after you have submitted your report, consult with your supervisor, who will assist you in bringing any new information to the court.*

- Update all of your contacts and relevant information prior to writing the report.
- Make sure all the names, titles, quotes and dates are correct.
- Make use of email, but keep the child's last name and other identifying information about anyone involved in the case out of email transmissions.

- Notify the child protection caseworker about important developments or recommendations that are bound to cause surprise or controversy.
- Be thoughtful about your questions to gather the most comprehensive, accurate information.
- Include only factual statements and take out any subjective words in the assessment section (i.e., "I believe," "I want," "I think").
- Use the local CASA/GAL program's approved court report template.
- Write in simple, straightforward language, addressing only relevant topics. Make sure all the major headings are covered.
- Be concise and very specific. Feel free to bullet-point.
- Ensure that all of your recommendations are child-focused.
- Support all of your recommendations with corresponding information in the status section.
- Address the appropriateness of the child's placement in your recommendations.
- Present other recommendations in the order the corresponding facts appear in the status section.

~Continued on next page

From the Manual

(Continued)

Do not...

- Assume that your supervisor is more prepared to write your court report than you are.
- Neglect to update your contacts and other information before writing your report.
- Consider a phone call to the child protection caseworker to be sufficient information for writing the court report.
- Include judgmental or opinionated comments.
- Forget to edit. Be sure to look for any errors before submitting it to your supervisor.
- List the foster parents by name.
- Be inconsistent with names and titles. If “mom” is used in one section, refer to her that way throughout the report; do not use both “mom” and “biological mother.”
- Try to impress the court with extraneous information or legal jargon.
- Make recommendations that are outside the scope of the hearing.
- Recommend services or other actions already ordered by the court.
- Feel that you must always agree with the child protection agency or other parties.
- Be shy about letting the court know something important about the child or the case.

Remember...

1. **Court report writing begins when you are first assigned a**

case. Accurate notes with quotes and dates are essential for good court report writing.

2. **Do not assume the reader knows the information you know.**
3. **The body of reports** (background information, child’s section, parent’s section) should be factual.
4. You will be given an opportunity in the report to share your thoughts when you write the concerns/assessments and recommendations.
5. **The report should be uniform and flow from section to section.** Your facts, assessments, and recommendations should be consistent with one another.
6. **Incidents should be reported in chronological order of occurrences.** This makes the report easier to understand.
7. **Use quotes whenever possible.** When not using direct quotes, information stated in reports should be attributed to someone. For example, the foster mother reports that...
8. **Stay clear of value system wording,** for example, the house was very dirty. Describe the conditions instead.
9. **Sentences should be concise and clear.** Rule of thumb: If a sentence or paragraph does not make sense the first time you read it, it probably needs to be rephrased.
10. **Reports should include all necessary information but be succinct and concise.** Adhere to any page limitations.
11. **You are under time constraints.** CASA/GAL programs and the courts have time lines.

Around the World in 94 Days - Part 2

by LuRue Troyer, Cochise County CASA Volunteer

From Tanzania to **India**

There was some excitement at the Dar es Salaam airport when an official asked to see our immunization cards, which neither of us had. Montana is not allowed to take a yellow fever shot due to a medical condition and my shot was seriously out-of-date. Apparently travelers going to India from Tanzania are required to show proof of immunization. We had already successfully passed through the health line when **arriving** at Dar es Salaam to prove that we did not have ebola, now we were having trouble **leaving**.

The official looked for others to help us, eyeing us now and then as if wishing we would suddenly disappear as we were nervously watching our boarding time evaporating. He finally got an Air India agent, who happened to mention that the immunization was an absolute requirement for flying into Delhi. I immediately said that we weren't flying into Delhi, but into Chennai. With an enormous look of relief on his face, he said, "OK, I can get you your boarding passes!"

Going through immigration in Chennai, I saw the posters requiring the yellow fever immunization records, so I suspect that the

rule is countrywide. The agent was probably just hoping that immigration would be less vigilant in Chennai and saw it as a way to get the problem of "us" out of his life. It worked... we passed through with no problem.

We were the only Westerners on the flight. It was rather like being on a movie set, with the women supplying the color with their Tanzanian dresses, their Indian churidars and salwars, or the Muslim women wearing hijabs or burkas, with only their eyes showing. During our layover in Oman, we also passed through concourses with men strolling along, wearing thawbs and headdresses (ghutra and igal). Much as we would have loved to take photos, we made ourselves as inconspicuous as possible. Never having been to that part of the world, it felt a bit surreal to me.



We arrived in Chennai (formerly Madras) very early Sunday morning. The Global Volunteer team leader Stephen was there to meet us. We weren't difficult to spot, either, as we emerged from Arrivals. As he drove us through city traffic for an hour, he commented on the construction of ongoing mass transit projects we could see while telling us that the traffic we were seeing was nothing since it was a Sunday morning. Just wait until Monday! And for the next four weeks, we did learn just what traffic in India really means. It is not for the faint of heart! We almost got transition whiplash from rural Tanzania to inner city India.

The weather was definitely warmer, too. In Tanzania we had been at some altitude, with the temperature holding pretty much at a steady 68 degrees F. The thermometer wasn't that much higher in Chennai, but now we were on the coast, so the humidity factored in.

We pulled up in front of a gate just a block off a main thoroughfare and learned that we were at the "guest house", operated by Global Volunteers. It is a former residence in a residential neighborhood, with two floors and a terrace. Once again we would be sleeping under a mosquito net and taking malaria prophylactic, though we were told that malaria was not very prevalent there; dengue fever was more of a concern.

~Continued on next page

Around the World in 94 Days - Part 2 (Continued)

I'm happy to report that neither Montana nor I got any of the dreaded diseases that concerned friends had warned us about. In fact,



neither of us were sick at all during the whole trip except for a cold I caught from a fellow volunteer in Tanzania, then later in China Montana missed two days with an unexplained fever. Not only were we careful about what we ate and drank, but Global Volunteers takes great care to keep facilities safe...in India, that meant rinsing all dishes & silverware in boiling water with bleach.

One side note: In India we had air conditioning available in our room. While I am a desert rat who loves the heat, Montana is more normal, so she did want the AC on at night, though she kept it fairly warm. Even then, I had to break out the down quilt I had brought for use in China. No blankets provided...only a sheet. And it turned out I didn't need it in China, so I had packed my down comforter for steamy India!

The service programs in India are two weeks long and continuous except for six

weeks during the hottest part of the summer. For the first two weeks, there were three others on the team: a couple and a man, all of whom were returning from previous years. The couple left, but the man stayed an extra week. The final week Montana and I were the only volunteers.

The set-up in India is unusual in that the team leader's family lives in the same house, so it was more like being guests in their home. Stephen's wife Sheeba said that she rarely saw her husband when he traveled back and forth to work from dawn until late at night. She and their son (now 6 years old) had lived, as is the custom, with Stephen's parents. They finally made the decision to move into a small room on the terrace and enjoy family life with the volunteers. Sheeba apparently loves the arrangement as it is a diversion for her and she has learned very good English from the experience. They also speak English with their son.



All meals were prepared by a cook who

came in daily or by Sheeba, and then we ate family style. After the evening meal, we volunteers did the dishes. For foodies, it is a tremendous opportunity to sample an extremely wide variety of Indian dishes. For a meat-and-potatoes gal like myself, it is an opportunity to lose weight (I lost 14 pounds during the trip for which I am grateful!) The food was wonderfully prepared and drew raves from the other volunteers, but almost everything is highly spiced, so there wasn't much to tempt me.



I had been to India in 1999 and our volunteer program at that time was a 4-hour train ride out of Delhi. I made the very erroneous assumption that all of India spoke Hindi. Wow! Was I wrong!! This time I learned that northern India is considered very different from southern India. In Chennai and throughout much of southern India, Tamil is the prevailing language. The characters look more like Middle Eastern letters. Our hosts in 1999 were Hindu; these were not. True, there were Hindus living in the neighborhood as were Muslims, but our team leader's family is strongly Catholic. The schools where we taught were also Catholic. I have since learned that India has over 100 major

~Continued on next page

Around the World in 94 Days - Part 2 (Continued)

languages.

The women in the areas where we traveled and worked all dressed in traditional clothing...some saris (especially the teachers at the schools), but mostly churidars, two piece outfits with very wide pants tied at the waist with a string and a long tunic top. Very occasionally one might see a woman in western clothing, but it was



usually a young woman and even then it looked out of place. As in most countries, the men wear jeans & T-shirts, but it was not unusual to see men, particularly older men, wear lungis, a type of sarong that can be pulled up between the legs and tucked into the waist.

Most Indian women have very beautiful long black hair, sometimes worn in a braid and almost always adorned with a small garland of fresh flowers which are sold every evening at small sidewalk stands. Imagine the surprise of the hairstylist, then, when a

Western woman with almost no hair at all came into her shop asking for a haircut! Though I love “heat” in general, humidity and I do not get along very well. My head sweats at the slightest movement, and my hair provides the perfect strands for drops of perspiration to run like faucets.

Our volunteer work in Chennai was basically two different programs. During the mornings, we scattered out to different schools, though Montana and I always worked as a team. She and I requested and got 9- and 10-yr-olds...



Standards 4 and 5. We worked for three weeks at one school, so the children got to know us quite well. For five days during national testing, we went to another school for Standards 1, 2, and 3. We did basically the same activities, but simplified them.

It took a bit of trial and error before we learned what worked and what didn't. Global Volunteers provides a manual with suggestions for each country and we adapted activities from the book and from a

cabinet of materials left from previous teams. We used a variety of approaches that would use listening skills, speaking skills, and always, if we could, games and songs that would involve the entire class at once, such as Simon Says, and charades in which the class would guess what one student was doing. Since Global Volunteers has been in these schools before, the students taught us songs that they had learned from previous teams.

Montana's interest lies in film-making, so with the teachers' consent, we made short “movies” each week of the classes chanting short excerpts from such works as Dr. Seuss' “Green Eggs and Ham”. The children loved to see themselves on Montana's computer.

The afternoons were devoted to planning for the following day's activities, then at 5:00pm we assembled to walk to SEAM—Southeast Asian Mission. SEAM is home to about 35 children, who have no parents or whose parents cannot keep them at home. The



~Continued on next page

Around the World in 94 Days - Part 2 (Continued)

children range in age from 6 to 18 and capture the hearts of all who work there. SEAM is the host organization for Global Volunteers in India. From 5:00pm to 7:00pm



or so we interacted with the kids in many different ways...singing & dancing, activities, games, reading. Though few spoke more



than a few words of English, volumes can be said through actions, laughing, and playing

games. The team leader's family is very involved with SEAM, acting as surrogate parents when they are there...maintaining a firm but loving hand on all that energy.

The walk through the neighborhoods to get back and forth between the guest house and SEAM was always an experience. Sheeba was very cautious as she warned us that pedestrians have no rights at all. She thrust

out the "mom arm" when she saw an approaching motorbike or bicycle that was so quiet we weren't hearing it. We navigated through the neighborhood packs of street dogs that didn't pay any attention to us, but were very territorial with strays from the neighboring "hoods".

We gave a wide berth to the wandering cows, which were munching on leftover produce thrown out onto the streets. We think they had owners somewhere but were never quite sure. A couple of times we were pleasantly surprised to pass a very colorful



ceremony in a Hindu temple that was usually closed up, but still very ornate on the outside. Darkness had always fallen by the time we walked back,



so the flower vendors had set up shop on several street corners under the lights. In fact, several

shops seemed to be more active than they had been during the daylight hours.



Our weekends were full of visits to interesting places, often in the company of our team leaders. There were ancient carvings that defy description, flower and vegetable markets



that were eye-popping, ancient temples, and women wading in their saris at beaches. We

spent one weekend in the resort town of Pondicherry (now called Puducherry) where "The Life of Pi" was filmed.

There were too many experiences to relate; suffice to say that India is a bombardment to one's senses. It is too much to really take in. Montana and I both have such a sense of amazement of all we saw and admiration for those with whom we interacted.

India must be "experienced", not "seen"!

The following link is a 4.5-minute video made by Montana of our time in India.

https://youtu.be/8_5mOkYkZok

Part 3 of the trip...China...will appear in a future issue of the newsletter.