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OCT 2021, VOL.38

# DCCWConnect



## Re-starting the Vocational Training Programme

Autumn colours shone bright at Delhi Council for Child Welfare with the re-opening of the Vocational Training Program across all our centres. We welcomed our girls who had been eagerly waiting to get back to their learning sessions. All this was done keeping in mind and following the standard operating procedures of Covid-19 as given by the government.

Besides the already registered and continuing beneficiaries, many new enquiries and student enrollments started. To quote many “we are fed up with online learning, we wanted classroom contact with our instructors, colleagues and friends to get the real essence of enjoying learning. Practical and physical classes are a must for real learning”. Very well said by the beneficiaries. DCCW has ensured that all instructors and support team members are fully vaccinated for their own and others’ safety.

All classes started with a bang and by the end of the month we had an enrollment of 442 students. It truly appears that classroom learning is very important.

Besides this, the girls at the Janakpuri centre attended a very informative session on personal health and hygiene, organized by Arpan Prayas. The girls cleared their queries with the two doctors holding the session.

Further, Aadar Foundation which supports PALNA, did a tree plantation drive at Trilokpuri, in which the local MLA also participated.



## Spotlight - Sydney Shalini Lewis (in her own words)

Fourteen years ago, I called PALNA home, and my name was Shubra. I was dropped off at PALNA on October 15, 2005, which became my birthday. On June 6, 2006, I was adopted by my parents. They gifted me the name Sydney Shalini Lewis, but everybody calls me Shalini. My mom is Naila Mathis Lewis who is half-Indian and was raised in Arkansas, USA. My dad is Peter Lewis who is from Indiana, USA. I am currently living in California as a 16-year-old. I attend the local high school as a tenth grader and my interests include tennis, skiing, and travelling. Every year I fly home to India and visit my Godmother, Shalini Bhupal, who facilitated my adoption.

After my parents got married my mom had talked about adopting a child from India, because of her Indian heritage. The road was not easy for my parents to adopt me. It took them two years even with help from lawyers, my Godmother and Mr. DK Beri, may he rest in peace. When my parents were first trying to adopt, it was very difficult because there were tensions between America and India due to a recent bombing. My parents persevered with the help of Shalini Bhupal, my namesake and Auntie, and Mr. Beri. My parents were able to secure a meeting with the director of PALNA.

After meeting my parents, it was evident that I was going to be their daughter. They loved me at first sight. My parents told me that when they first saw me, I was wearing a Snoopy hat and Spooky was my mom's favourite character growing up. The doctor in India said to my parents, "You need to know, she chose you. Many other Indian parents wanted her, but she rejected them and was not easy to handle until you two came along. So just remember, she knows what she wants at this young age already. You have a very bright child." My parents say it was a lengthy process but after two years and a lot of determination, they were finally able to fly me to my forever home in Santa Barbara, California.

The first day I arrived in America, I met my guardian angel. I had fallen asleep while my parents were unloading the luggage. I was woken by a wet slobbery nose and was kissed by a 125-pound field Labrador named Montana. Montana was my protector, my friend, and my angel. It was a slow transition to acclimatise to the lifestyle of my new home, but Montana was always leading the way. I didn't have to communicate with him using words, we had our own language. After two years I finally adapted to the American lifestyle and language. The first time I comprehended English was when I was driving with my mom to Montessori school, and I shouted the word "BUS". In India, 'bus' means stop, so my mom had stopped the car only to realize that I was pointing to an American yellow school bus. My fluency in Hindi was fading as I mastered the English language.

Although my memories of my time at PALNA aren't clear, I know I was well cared for. You made sure that I was well fed, potty-trained, and loved. You always had a person assigned to me, my ayah in lavender clothing, as my parents have told me. I was never alone, even when I was sleeping. One memory that I do have was how cared for I was by the doctor. Every visit, he would give me a roti and carry me everywhere. Because of the care I received, I realise how important it is to care for all people in need. I have a special place in my heart for those who feel like they don't belong, such as migrants, stray animals, and displaced children. I have recently worked with a non-profit organization called Storyteller, a local organization that provides education and support to homeless children. I read to them, teach them proper spelling, and make them feel appreciated.

As I approach my 17th year, I have become more curious about my Indian heritage, and I feel the need to give back to the home that gave me a second chance. One idea I would like to implement is connecting to boys and girls who are now in there. Either through zoom, WhatsApp, or even letter writing. I would like to mentor some of the children just as I was mentored when I came to the USA. I can use my skills of reading, writing, or learning English as my second language. Another idea I had was using my resources in the United States, to create a fund or to collect items of need such as clothing, medical, educational materials or help with a specialized music teaching. Also, since the crisis in India due to the Covid Pandemic, maybe you are in need of PPE supplies. I am willing to help in any way that you see fit.

God bless.

Sydney Shalini Lewis





## Quarterly Updates

**Special needs children:** Overcoming disability and showcasing their skills, DCCW restarted the Diwali diya making activity with our special needs children at Sultanpuri. Many orders for the same have started coming in. It is a delight to see how these school integrated children adhere to Covid-19 protocols while at the centre. This activity has had a setback for the past eighteen months on account of the pandemic. Just this small initiative has revitalized their mental and physical faculties. Further the income earned gives them a wonderful feeling of self-worth. DCCW is just a channel to help mainstream these children.



**Educational sponsorship:** Support for underprivileged children who are beneficiaries of our Educational Sponsorship Programme which was held up on account of the second wave of the pandemic was disbursed in August over fifteen days, in line with the government order of parents submitting the required documents and collecting the stipend and stationery items. Further for their overall development and growth, students of Classes XI and XII attended an online counselling and guidance session on professional courses available and how to prepare for examinations. The goal was to help them identify their strength areas and interests and enable them to choose a career option based on their skills. Various stream-based career options were discussed with the students.

A session on adolescent health and mental hygiene was also held, which covered adolescent health problems, how to avoid over-thinking, positive effects of physical exercises, as well as Covid related issues effecting the children. Since the 12th graders would be now looking to enter college, DCCW has shortlisted some students who are eligible for a one-time sponsorship for their course.

**PALNA:** As always, PALNA has been bubbling with energy and activity. To further the greenery of PALNA, Aadar Foundation and Arpan Prayas have planted several trees in the Palna garden. PALNA children were seen enjoying a Magic Show with games prior to the birthday celebrations of cake-cutting along with other goodies which they relish. The most awaited part is the return gift for each of them, facilitated by Aadar Foundation. Independence Day and Janamashtami were also celebrated with great enthusiasm.



All Covid-19 protocols are strictly followed and adhered to, which is what is the trump card of Palna being Covid-19 free. With the slowing of the pandemic and easing of restrictions the courts too have started physical sessions. Palna has seen many little ones fly out of the nest to their forever loving homes.

**Annual General Meeting:** The DCCW AGM for 2020-21 was held on 22nd September 2021 on zoom. A summary report on all the programmes was presented by the Secretary, Mr Asheesh Vadera. The financial report and outlook for the coming year were presented by the Treasurer, Mr Ishwinder Singh. Tributes were paid to Mrs Sudha Gupta, a long-time Executive Committee Member and past-President of DCCW, who passed away in November 2020. The Annual Report for 2020-21 has been posted on our website.

**DCCW featured on GiveIndia Blog:** In September, **Sruthy Natarajan** of **GiveIndia** interviewed DCCW Director, **Dr Sandhya Bhalla**, and this was on its blog. Some excerpts here. (Click to read full interview)

**GI: How has Covid-19 impacted Delhi Council for Child Welfare?**

**SB:** For an NGO like ours, which works only with children, this impacted all our activities. All of a sudden, we could not run most of our programmes. All our outreach centres across Delhi had to be closed. We also had to let go some staff as we could not foresee running our orthopaedic programme as well as our day-care and rehab programme for special needs children. Only our Educational sponsorship programme could be continued in a modified way. However, PALNA, our home for abandoned children continued as before. But the impact has been felt deeply here too as overall donations have come down.



**GI: Tell us about a few of your newfound hobbies that you discovered during the lockdown?** **SB:** My favourite pastime was gardening, something I had not done earlier, but I realized messing your hands with soil was most soothing. The kids and I were all charged up planting plants in pots and the playground. Each one trying to prove that what they did was better than others. They even put their names against the plants and ensured that they water them every day.

**GI: What are the three big lessons that you learnt from the little children at DCCW?**

**SB:** The children of DCCW have given me a new perspective on happiness and contentment, support with empathy, sharing and concern. I have seen the impact of small gestures that we often take for granted. A child's smile can make a big difference and the love and trust that they bestow on all of us is something amazing.

As we live in a rat race, to be at par, we are always wanting something. But what these little children teach us through their actions and words should make us pause and rethink about our lives and what we do. The way they relate to you as their own, is a feeling you can only experience, rather than put in words. It is amazing how they are concerned and care about the special needs children with them.

## Donors Speak

Your messages and words of support keep our morale and spirits high. We thank you all.

**Ritu D'Souza:** We appreciate the work you do to care for and rehabilitate children in need. Many thanks!

**Kamal Gupta:** God Bless all the Souls and these kids. May they shine in the world.

**Manju Thapa:** Keep doing the good work as always. Sending my love and prayers to all Palna family. Stay Safe.

**Pankaj Kumar:** Thank you so much. I had visited DCCW before COVID-19 pandemic and it was a great experience. Would like to visit again for donations in kind. Thank you.

All donations to Delhi Council for Child Welfare get tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income tax act of India. To donate, do visit our website <https://dccw.org/donate.php>

Delhi Council for Child Welfare (DCCW) is a Registered NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), established in 1952 to care for children who had been displaced during the riots that took place after the partition of India. Since its inception over 50 years ago, DCCW has grown, its services expanding and diversifying to keep pace with the changing needs of Delhi's less fortunate children. Today, DCCW provides a range of services for underprivileged children living in and around Delhi.



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