



FREEDOM CARE PROJECT

By Keven Tate

It all started six years ago, when I had a personal tragedy in my life, so I decided to hike up to base camp in the Annapurna ranges in Nepal. After the hike, I found an orphanage in Kathmandu and held babies for a week. This was a good way to put life into perspective. The week in the Buddhist Child Home gave me the motivation to contribute something to these children who have so little.

After much reading and introductions to people in the charity game, I met my mentor Douglas MacLagan from the organisation Child Welfare Scheme. Douglas introduced me to the idea of sustainable comprehensive home-based care. Home-based care is a concept that is an alternative to fostering or kinship care, and involves adult carers looking after a small group of orphans in a home-like setting. This kind of care is new to Nepal, and may avoid some of the drawbacks of institutionalised care in an orphanage.

The Freedom Care project is now two years old. We placed six children from the orphanage into their own home with two female carers who live full-time with the children. These two carers were themselves living on the street, so we also consider them to be beneficiaries of the project. It

is important to keep our costs down, and we have been lucky that everyone involved to date has donated their time to us. Other than the salary for the two carers, **our expense ratio is a nice 0%; any charity with an expense ratio of less than 20% is considered to be a good one.**

Children are just so adaptable, and we believe that given love, care, health, good food and education, any child will bloom. Our results so far have been outstanding.

These children still spend time with their friends from the orphanage once a week, and it is easy to see which children come from the Freedom Care project. They are healthier, more self-confident and look happier. The children go to a private school and their school results reflect good progress. Two of the children have placed first in their grades, another took second place, and the other three are continuing to improve every term. One of the boys recently won a national chess competition, and one of the girls won a Nepali dance competition.

We have been profiling the children since before the inception of Freedom Care, and now seek to have a detailed report of the psychological benefits of this project. We are seeking the help of an outcomes evaluator who has experience in intervention research.

Once we have this report we are hoping to scale up this model in Nepal. Because Nepal's society has large class distinctions, the fostering system is failing. We believe that the system we have developed overcomes the problems with fostering in Nepal.

Child Welfare Scheme Hong Kong has adopted our project and provides administrative support, while I do all the fundraising. In 2010 I ran 250 km in six days with 'Race the Planet' across the Atacama Desert in Chile to raise money and awareness. This year, I'm hoping to do the Sahara Desert race, which is also 250 km.

Help support this very worthwhile cause. The 2012 Tung Chung Spring Charity Ball is to be held on April 21 at the SkyCity Marriott Hotel. All proceeds from this event will be donated to the Freedom Care Project. See page 27 for details.

TUNG CHUNG CHARITY BALL

Photos by

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Over 90 people attended the Tung Chung Women's Club (TCWC) charity ball on 21 April and danced the night away to the sounds of DB's band @One. Through the ticket sales, raffle, and silent auction on the night, ball-goers helped to raise more than HK\$60,000 for the children's charity Freedom Care (supported by Child Welfare Scheme). Freedom Care moves Nepalese orphans out of orphanages housing up to 50 children into family-style homes of 6-8 children. To learn more and see how you can help visit <http://freedomcareproject.org/update-feb-2012>.

The TCWC would like to thank all who attended for their generous support of Freedom Care and for making the evening such a success.

