

Braille Without Borders

Quarterly newsletter 1 -2016



Dear friends and supporters,

The first quarter of 2016 has already past and therefore it is time for the first quarterly newsletter. Here an overview of the highlights of the Braille Without Borders projects in Lhasa and Shigatse. We thank everyone for their continuous support!

Holidays.

The winters in Tibet are cold, well actually very very cold. During this time it is difficult to keep regular life moving and because during this time the Tibetan New Year, Lossar, is celebrated, all schools close for two months. All students return home to their families to celebrate Lossar with their families. At our project we also have several orphans, they stayed in the school in Lhasa and our colleagues made sure that they also had a good time. The school started again on the 1st of March and a new blind student from Kham joined. His name is Kadun and he is 14 years old.

Leadership training

In February, Nyima, our project manager, went to Virginia in the USA for a course in leadership and management. He learned about concepts and practices of social entrepreneurship, management, assessing and responding to consumer/beneficiaries needs, best practices of organizational governance, effective networking, media and marketing strategies, fundraising, conflict mediation and financial management. It was a good experience that helped to improve his skills and to take Braille Without Borders further into the future.

Support

On Women's day, March 8th, several local officers visited the school and donated rice and washing powders. A Chinese donor supported the transportation fees for the students so they could travel home for Lossar and in Jan, all the students got e-book readers from a donor in Beijing. We say thank you to all these supporters.

Voices of students and a colleague

When asked what BWB means to them, we received the following answers from:

Tashi, a boy, student age 16 who joined bwb when he was 12 years old. Before coming to the school I was staying at home doing nothing. For me bwb is like a family where I had a chance to receive not only education, also I had an operation on both of my eyes that helped me to see a little."

Karma Choedron, female, head teacher, age 45. "bwb has opened a new door for many blind people.



Also bwb played an important role for sighted people to learn what blind people are capable of doing and also the understanding that blind people can start families.”

Passang: girl, student, age 12; “I joined bwb when I was 10 years old. Before coming to the school I didn’t know how to dress and also I didn’t have any friends. Now I am very happy at bwb because I have lots of friends and I can now read and write.”

News from the Vocational/Integration/School, Belshung

The 'winter holidays' in Tibet are long. Long for our school, not so long for the parents. Our students and trainees spend over two months back home in their villages during December, January and February. That's the time when our project and the training we give our trainees are put to the test.

With the return of our students and trainees at the beginning of March we received our 'report card' from the parents: a Double AA plus. Without exception, parents and guardians expressed their happiness, gratitude and their pleasant surprise at the growth they had found in their wards: growth in size of course (!) and in skills but also a greater maturity, sociability, ability to communicate and an eagerness to help out at home and in their neighbourhood.

Our staff here are happy of course to receive thankful acknowledgement but are not surprised. They witness this growth in the students over the course of the school year through the daily ups and downs of life's realities.

And yes, life happens

Tashi Putri, a weaving trainee, left us for a new life as bride-to-be in her village of Panam. Pudrun, a trainee in knitting, had to remain at home to help out after her mother's recent passing away. Tashi Droma and Kesang Dorji, both trained in weaving, have found employment: Tashi in a major hotel in Sagya and Kesang in a clinic in his home village of Namling. Dawa, also from Sagya, trained in animal husbandry, has found employment in his home village. Norbu Tsering, trained in knitting, has found employment in a Shigatse clothing outlet. Pema Tsering who was training in knitting but who had a history of cardio issues was called back home by his parents.

Tsering, one of our integration students who was studying in high school, has left us to help his brother, a small business man in their home village of Ngamring. Guru, also one of our integration students, in 'middle school' as it is known here, has decided to end his formal schooling, at the ripe old age of 21 plus ! He is currently volunteering at our Vocational school here, repairing braille printers and helping produce text books in Chinese. Soto, another middle school student, was called home by his parents due to long standing cardio issues and fainting spells.

Still on the health front, Kesang Demba's parents decided to recall him home from primary school while he deals with kidney and urinary issues.

And last but not least, in this saga of Life Happenings, Passang Tenzing, our integration student in the local government primary school, has been accepted as a novice monk in the famed monastery of Gyantse.

On the marketing front, breaking news

The local government has taken steps to open an All-Handicap Handicrafts Emporium, to market products produced by our students --and other handicapped producers, throughout the prefecture. This government marketing project aims to assist marketing of handicap products, locally, nationally and worldwide. All profits will go to the producer(s). More on this as the details are worked out. Stay tuned.

