

Reaching Out To Those In Need

by Daniel Rauk, DDS

A group of ten volunteers from Colorado, Minnesota, Illinois and Missouri traveled to Bapatla, India in December 2010 where they ministered to the lowest caste children in India at REACHOUT School and Orphanage. The team's primary initial focus of this trip was to treat the students' and staff's dental needs. Once those dental needs were

Students welcoming Dr. Rauk upon arrival



determined, we planned to evaluate what other needs the children had that we could help with.

In the first two days, we examined all 300 students and staff to determine the extent of their dental needs. When we started treatment, the ten volunteers were planning to focus their time just on meeting these needs. However, early into the mission, we found there were 3rd year nursing students living at REACHOUT. These three students were eager to observe and help us in any way they could so they could learn modern treatment techniques. While working with us was beneficial to them, it also helped us a great deal in that it allowed the mission team to branch out and assist REACHOUT staff with other needs. Other needs that we accomplished were taking all the children and staff for eye exams and purchasing eye

glasses for 27 who needed them. Daily multivitamin therapy was started to supplement the children's diets. Plans were made for repairs that were needed for the buildings.

The nursing students also acted as our translators with the Telegu speaking students. Having lived together for many years, the REACHOUT students trusted and respected these nursing students so they were better equipped to reassure the other students in their native dialect. These reassurances were invaluable.

Nursing students, Laxmi, Premalatha and Sonita with Dr. Rauk



Nursing students assisting Dr. Rauk

As the dental treatment progressed, we were able to completely turn

over the dental assisting responsibilities to the nursing students. They did a very fine job considering their limited initial knowledge of dental treatment and dental assisting. By the time we left the school, we were able to complete all the dental treatment needed to over 300 students, staff and their families.

While we came to help these children at REACHOUT, we also received so much in return; their love and thanks. We learned a valuable lesson in what children and families in such circumstances truly value in life. It can, and should, give pause to reevaluate our priorities.



If you are interested in learning more about this year's 2010-2011 trip to India, please visit reachingouttoindia.blogspot.com