



Australian T.O.S. Links

December 2010

Right action and service

As I was reading this month's featured article on the International TOS website, I was struck by the importance of our sense of connectedness with all living things. In this article, *Love and Service: Twin Stars of Brotherhood*, Mr S. Sundaram, the General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, highlights the need to focus on positive ethical values in our lives, including living in harmonious relationships with all around us.

This message resonates with the ethical conduct precepts of 'Right Speech', 'Right Action' and 'Right Livelihood' which are part of the Buddhist Eightfold Path.

The Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh said, "The basis of Right Action is to do everything in mindfulness." He teaches several mindfulness practices, including:

- respecting life. In awareness of the suffering caused by destruction of life, we work to protect all living things and this planet that sustains life.
- generosity. We give freely of our time and resources where they are needed, without hoarding things we don't need. We do not exploit other people or resources for our own gain. We act to promote social justice and well-being for everyone.
- loving speech and deep listening. This means avoiding language that causes enmity and discord. Through deep listening to others, we tear down the barriers that separate us.

In this view, moral behaviour flows naturally from mastering one's ego and desires and cultivating loving kindness and compassion.

This is the Path of service described by H.P. Blavatsky in *The Voice of the Silence*; the Path of the Buddhas of Compassion: *'To live to benefit mankind'*.

National TOS 2011 AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the National TOS will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday 20 January 2011 at St John's College, Brisbane. You will notice that the AGM has been listed in the 2011 Convention Program published in the November issue of *Theosophy in Australia*. The TOS thanks the National President of the TS, Dara Tatray, for her thoughtfulness.

Focusing on selfless service to all life

What's in this newsletter

- Right action and service
- National TOS 2011 AGM
- A meditation
- Ideas for service in our communities
- What's new on our Australian TOS web-pages
- National project update
- National TOS contacts
- International TOS activities
- News from around our Australian groups

I'm looking forward to chatting with all of you who are coming to the TS Convention or the TOS AGM in Brisbane. This is always a good opportunity for sharing service ideas, strengthening our TOS network and contributing to national planning.

A meditation

Let my love spread its laughter in all hearts, in every person belonging to every race. Let my love rest in the hearts of flowers, of animals, and of little specks of stardust.

Yogananda

Ideas for service in our communities

When you start planning your group activities for 2011, you might be

inspired by the United Nations themes for the year.



2011 is the **International Year of Forests** and the **International Year of Youth** (12 August 2010 to 11 August 2011). Both these topics are related to focuses of service within the TOS.

The websites for these International Years have lots of suggestions for ways they can be celebrated in our communities. We could have featured speakers, tree planting, education projects about the importance of our forests and invite young TS members to a forum to discuss and plan ways of applying theosophical principles to current issues.

Plan to celebrate Earth Hour 2011

Earth Hour is all about the small changes that everyone is capable of making in their lives and building the Earth Hour ethos into each day's living. Turning the lights off, represents turning the lights on in your mind, and consciously reducing greenhouse emissions. Imagine the result if everyone around the globe switched off their lights for one hour?

Watch the videos of past Earth Hour celebrations and keep in touch with what is happening around the world at <http://www.earthhour.org/>

Show the world you care with one simple action. Plan to join in individually, as a family or with friends on **Saturday 26 March 2011 at 8.30 pm.**

What's new on our Australian TOS web-site

Go to our national TOS website:

<http://australia.theoservice.org> for links to the 2011 International Years, Earth Hour, animal welfare action and new quotations.

Update on our national projects

The SEE Project in India

We have recently received news that our donations to the *Seeing Eyes for Everyone* project organised by the Chennai TOS group has benefited over 1000 people living in poverty who had eye checks this year. We have enabled eye checks to be carried out every month. Our donations provided around 400 pairs of spectacles and enabled 20 people to have cataract eye surgery.



Mr C.V.K. Maithreya, the President of the Chennai TOS group has sent his deepest thanks to Australian TOS and TS members for their support of this project. We would like to express our sincere appreciation of both the Chennai TOS volunteers who organise the eye checks and the Udhi Eye Hospital that provides greatly discounted eye

examinations, spectacles and eye operations.

Literacy home-schools in Pakistan

Thank you for your fundraising efforts again this year. Australian TOS and TS members have enabled four literacy home-schools to operate in Karachi despite the civil unrest and natural disasters that the community has endured this year. Our heartfelt appreciation and best wishes for their continuing safety go to the teachers who conduct the schools in their communities and the Pakistan TOS members who support the teachers.



TOS contact details in 2010

Contact for donations

Ms Janice Scarabottolo
National TOS Treasurer
PO Box 7418
FISHER ACT 2611

Please send donations to the National Projects and other activities of international TOS groups to the National Treasurer. By amalgamating our donations

into one or two electronic funds transfers a year to each international project, we can save several hundred dollars annually. Each individual or group donor is recognised in the email we send to the international project group confirming the funds transfer. Please make cheques out to the *Theosophical Order of Service in Australia*.

Contact for newsletter and materials

Ms Carolyn Harrod
26 Lytham Street
INDOOROOPILLY QLD 4068
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You are invited to send news items, photographs, ideas and comments that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. I would welcome your contributions to our national newsletter. The first edition in 2011 will be published in April.

International TOS news

If you haven't been receiving the **International electronic newsletter**, *in-touch.online*, this is an ideal opportunity to catch up on TOS work around the world because in this issue the International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, summarises our doings over the past year, adding photos and comments as she goes along.

You can access the newsletter via the International TOS website <http://international.theoservice.org> or contact me and I'll email it to you.

The next issue of *in-touch.online* will be published in February 2011.

This month's update to the International TOS website launches our **For Members** section where you'll find updated material to help start new groups. You'll also find news about the success of the Kern Foundation's matching grant initiative to support the Golden Link College in the Philippines and information about the New Zealand and Australian TOS groups' project to send books to the College for its new library. The new article, *Love and Service: Twin Stars of Brotherhood*, is a talk delivered at the Tenth World Congress of the Theosophical Society held in Rome in 2010. Its author is Mr S. Sundaram, the General Secretary of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, based in Varanasi, India.

News from our TOS groups

Sydney

Richard Larkin, President of the Sydney TOS group, reports that they've hosted very interesting monthly talks focusing on comparative spirituality and contemplation, as well as looking at the work of the TOS in places like the Philippines.

In addition, members of the group do voluntary work at the Macintyre Retirement Centre, which was founded by the TOS in the 1950's. A special thanks goes from the Sydney TOS management committee to these members who are putting theosophical principles into practice.

The group has held monthly book sales to raise funds and appreciates the support of the Adyar Library which provided surplus books for sale. Donations were made to the TOS Pakistan Education Fund, HPB Hostel, Sri Narayana Orphanage, Olcott School and Adyar Animal Hospital as well as to various local charities.



Sunshine Coast

The Sunshine Coast TOS Coordinator, Joanna Teazis writes, "Another year has gone and we have had a great time learning not only theosophical theory but also about putting it into action. Young and old, we have talked, studied and walked the talk, sometimes stumbling because things are new or difficult but always picking ourselves up, dusting ourselves off and going on again a little wiser for the journey... and always with loving support."

The group organised a number of fundraising events including karaoke, dance and world music nights where everyone had a lot of fun, food galore (of course) and new talents were discovered. Because friends and community members were invited, these events also forged new connections for the TS. Donations were made to the National TOS Projects as well as to the Olcott School and local charities.



Perth

Gailene Wester, the Coordinator of the Perth TOS Group, reports on a rewarding year of varied activities. TOS members regularly contribute to the work of their TS Branch and the Mt Helena Retreat. One member runs a free yoga class each week with donations going to the TS.

To reach out into the community, some TOS members are helping at a Soup Kitchen. The group collects towels and blankets for animal havens and has been knitting knee rugs for nursing homes, and a high dependency unit at a hostel in a retirement village. Members are also collecting items to go into bags for babies and children going into foster care, some of whom go with nothing.

The group runs a monthly Healing Meditation before the TOS meeting. They have sponsored two speakers, who talked about social welfare issues – women's self-help activities in Afghanistan and human trafficking in Australia. To raise funds, members provided suppers for a donation and one talented member has made beautiful general and Christmas cards for sale.

Donations were given to the Pakistani flood appeal and an Afghani women's craft and literacy skills project. They also supported the SEE project in India, the Golden Link College in the Philippines and the Heart

Babies project in Africa as well as sponsoring a year's teaching in a Pakistan home-literacy school.



Most of the Perth TOS members and some of the rugs that Pam-Meli Witheridge made for the high dependency unit.

Sadly, Val Mazalevskis, who had been the Perth TOS Coordinator for many years, passed on to the higher life during 2010. She will be well-remembered for her dedication and her commitment to service and sharing theosophical ideas through the arts.

Gailene concludes, "We sincerely trust all of us will be able to continue to give selfless service to some of those in need. When we look around us, and see those less well off than ourselves, we have every reason to feel gratitude for all that we have and are able to do."

Canberra

The Coordinator of the Canberra TOS group, Janice Scarabottolo, writes that they start every meeting with a meditation. During the year they have knitted squares for the Wrapped with Love blanket project, collected stamps for the Red Cross, raised funds for the Tanzania Heart Babies project and continued their sponsorship of a student through the Pakistan TOS Educational Sponsorship program.

Brisbane

In Brisbane, the TOS Group also begins its meetings with a meditation for peace.



Some of the Brisbane TOS members

Ms Lynette Muller, the President of the group, reports that they continued to support a local refuge for homeless women by providing groceries and personal items to help women moving from the refuge into supported accommodation. They also provided many volunteer hours to their TS Lodge.

Individually, members helped in residences for people with low mobility, taught English to migrants, provided tutoring and supported animal welfare campaigns.

Members raised funds for the literacy home-schools in Pakistan, a mobility aids project of the TOS in Assam and the Golden Link College in the Philippines as well as for a local charity.

Early in the year one of their long-term members, Jess Sharples, 'passed into peace'. She gladly gave many hours of selfless service and is remembered with great fondness. Lynette also noted that the support provided to the TOS group by the TS Lodge is very much appreciated.

Adelaide

Adelaide TOS members have had an energetic year with two activities in particular that they would like to share with our TOS family. Their Coordinator, Travis James, writes, "The Adelaide TOS decided that to raise some money and to rekindle the social side of the Adelaide TOS we would hold a *Winter Solstice* dinner.

The Dinner was held in June in the TS Lodge hall. Twenty five people came, many bearing delicious vegetarian food. The entertainment was poetry and talks given by a number of people with Vic Gostin acting as MC 'extraordinaire'. It was pleasing to see a number of children come along and become part of the festivities.

We raised \$375 dollars on the night but more importantly we re-energised the social connections. Many have requested we hold another dinner next year.

I'd like to thank all those who brought food and helped serve it. Also a special thanks to Rosane deBats for organising the night and to Sheryl Malone for allowing us to use the hall, for decorating it and supplying the drinks for the night – thanks Sheryl."



"Over the last two years we collected approximately 3,200 used books from primary school libraries for our *Books for the Philippines* project. Whilst last year we

managed to send a grand total of 12 kg, this year we sent 2200 books weighing just over 380 kg. Those books that were not considered to be in a satisfactory condition were selected out and later given to institutions with the remainder being recycled.



Vic Hao Chin from the Golden Link College has emailed back thanking us for our efforts, saying that the books have been distributed to their primary schools and asking if we can send more this year."

(See the International TOS website's Featured Project for photographs of the Golden Link College students excitedly unpacking the books.)

Combined support for Springbrook Centre



Once again members from the Brisbane and Sunshine Coast TOS Groups combined for a weekend working bee at the Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre at Springbrook. A great deal of cleaning and tidying was accomplished, both inside and out. At the same time, we strengthened our friendships through our shared work and mealtime conversations.

A thought to share

Harmony is unity in diversity.

N. Sri Ram

I wish you peace, harmony and spiritual fulfilment, and a New Year filled with happiness and wonderful experiences.

Yours in service,

Carolyn

