



Reaching the Poorest of the Poor

Reaching the poorest is an enormous challenge in community development everywhere. They are the most immersed in a daily struggle for survival, and lack the luxury of looking ahead to next week let alone next month. They are often landless and without assets to draw on in times of need. Poverty, religious ideology and the dominant culture have often convinced them that they deserve their lot.

Those who usually capture benefits offered by development projects have some

extra time. For the poorest, the benefits are so intangible as to be out of their reach. Working with extremely poor people without simply offering handouts is very difficult, for benefits must be immediate, but also not generate dependency and lower self esteem.

In the past two years, ETC has actively taken on this challenge. About 10% of the population in the ETC rural project area is extremely poor. These people are almost exclusively low-caste Hindus who are landless and known as "untouchables". This derogatory term refers to the ritual cleansing a higher caste person must undergo if touched by them. They live separately, working as metal workers, making beautiful copper and brass pots, or sewing much of the colorful local clothing.

The commitment of ETC's Nepal Director, Mira Rana, to assist this population sets the tone and perspective for ETC's work. "I don't believe in the caste system," she says. "Although I come from a high caste family, I married a lower caste man against my parent's wishes. This experience taught me a lot about valuing people for who they are, not for the social circumstances they are born into. I believe that in order to solve problems in Nepal we must dismantle the caste system."

ETC's program with this group operates in much the same way as the women's groups, but differs slightly. Rather than literacy classes followed by training and

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Metal worker

A metal worker (traditionally considered "untouchable").

income generation, income generation runs concurrently with literacy. Since a large percentage of this group's children do not go to school, we offer scholarships for school expenses.

Mira and field coordinator, Prabha Upreti, have been pleased with the progress to date, and five more groups are being formed. Due to the increased work involved, we are asking for \$500 per group instead of the usual \$350. Do get in touch if you or a group of your friends or colleagues are interested in supporting this work.

ETC Receives Margaret Mead 2001 Award

In September, ETC was chosen as the first recipient of the prestigious Margaret Mead 2001 Award for "community-based creativity relevant to the new century". The award, commemorating the centennial of Mead's birth in 2001, is given to organizations which reflect Mead's famous words, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world."

ETC was nominated for the award by Dr. Ernestine McHugh, a University of Rochester anthropologist who conducts research in Nepal. Dr. McHugh explains why she felt ETC was appropriate for this award: "When I got the letter inviting me to nominate an organization, it was immediately clear to me that ETC was a perfect fit. The Institute for Intercultural Studies, founded by Mead in 1944, wanted an organization that embodied the difference individuals can make across cultures. Pamela Carson's initiative to help street children in Kathmandu has led to an organization built on the contributions of many different individuals. ETC works from powerful collaborative relationships which grow out of people's needs."

Carol Chapman, ETC Board President, said, "We are very honored and proud to have been chosen. It validates the hard work of our wonderful Nepalese staff, our volunteers, and our staff here in Ithaca. We turn to the tasks ahead with renewed determination. I am grateful for the commitment of my fellow board members, and of our volunteers and supporters around the world. They recognize in ETC something special which allows them to give the best of themselves."

In their own words .

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A recent letter from an ETC women's group to its sponsor the Empower Nepal Foundation; translated by Krishna Pradhan

Dear helper:

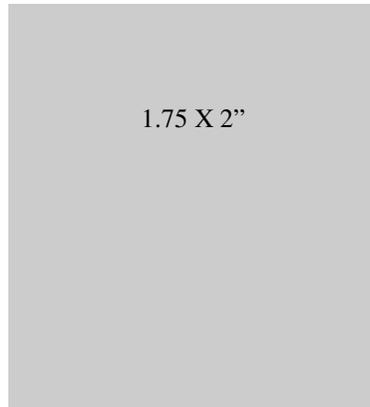
Thanks a lot on behalf of the 18 members of our Milijuli women's group. Regards! Remembrance!

You helped us open our eyes and gain knowledge... We are now able to write this letter after taking literacy classes. We can keep the accounts of the group by ourselves. We have Rs. 12,642 in our possession. We have put in smokeless stoves which have made it very easy for us to cook and protected us from the smoke. We have invested in goats, chickens, buffaloes, manure and little shops. With the profits, we have been able to buy pens and notebooks for the children. We have made a book: "Upalabdhi" (Achievement).

You have helped a suffering people move ahead and thus you have earned merit. We will send you a letter again. Bye!

Educational Successes

ETC has been fortunate to be in the press quite a bit lately - the San Francisco Chronicle (October 15), the Ithaca Journal (October 29), Whole Earth Magazine (September 99) and the Rising Nepal in Kathmandu (August 23). The Rising Nepal article, by Prakash Dahal, who evaluated ETC's work for the Nepali government in July, is excerpted below (the English has been corrected to improve readability).



Dayawoti Neupane

"Struggle for education has no end. A century ago, Booker T. Washington, the black Negro educator, fought an unremitting, heart-rending battle to get educated, and his success story was sung around the globe.

"There are many Booker T. Washingtons in Nepal now, and there may be more in the making; Guru Tamang of Bhalche, became the first boy ever in his area to pass the School Leaving Certificate. The villagers are ecstatic and the elders still swell in pride narrating the story of his success.

"Until then, education hardly made any sense to Bhalche residents. Guru Tamang, the strong-willed lad, thought differently. One night he set out for Betrawati where he met a local tavern keeper on the look out for cheap labor. A bargain was struck - the boy agreed to all kinds of chores

on the condition he could enroll in school.

"The young lad followed the agreement, but the tavern keeper didn't. As the boy's dream was about to be shattered, Educate the Children, a non-governmental organization, learned about him. ETC's Brilliant Student Scholarship Program was the silver lining among the dark clouds for Guru Tamang. He received a scholarship, passed with top marks and now goes on to college. He says, "I tell my story to everyone without any fear or hesitation. It may help many to drive forward despite hardships."

"Sanhili never knew her own name until she joined ETC's Literacy Class for the poorest of the poor women. Discriminated against and deprived of education at her maternal home, she was married off at an early age. After marriage, women in the rural hills cannot even imagine going to school. She was called Sanhili which means third daughter. No one knew for sure what her real name was.

"In the literacy class women learned to write their full names, but she was not able to, so the teacher asked her to find out her real name. This led her to her grandfather's place, where the old man remembered her name. It was Dayawati. Her happiness knew no bounds. For her, finding out her name was much greater than any other academic achievement.

"Says Dayawati, 'Education has a miraculous power in it.' Sanhili's happiness in finding Dayawati may be greater than that of any university graduate. And Guru Tamang's success story is not only a matter of happiness for him, but for many like him. Great efforts aren't needed to achieve extreme happiness...the bottom line is that our country should come out with an approach where no one has to suffer for the lack of education."

Mira Singh Rana Visits the United States

ETC’s Nepal Director, Mira Singh Rana, came to the U.S. in October for the first time. She was invited by Berniece and Pat Patterson to speak on educational challenges in the 21st century at the State of the World Forum in San Francisco in early October. After ten days in the Bay Area, where she met with ETC supporters and the press, she traveled to Ithaca, speaking at Cornell University, Rotary Clubs, and meeting the ETC Board, local press and supporters.

Her visit was a tremendous success. Mira’s commitment to ETC’s work in Nepal is contagious, and she inspired all she met to deepen their involvement with ETC. To share a little of the flavor of her visit, we include parts of the speech she gave to 500 delegates at the State of the World Forum entitled *“Education in the Twenty First Century: a developing country’s perspective”*:

“On the eve of the twenty-first century, as the fast growth of global communications and technology creates access to extensive information and resources, let us stop and think for a few minutes about the status of education in the world.

“I assume that all of you have at least secondary level education, if not college or university. It therefore may be difficult for you to believe that today, one hundred and twenty-five million children in the world, the majority being girls, are still deprived of basic schooling. In fact, in some countries, such as mine, literacy is still perceived by most as an unreachable goal. And as technology continues to advance, the education gap between developed and underdeveloped countries expands at an incredible rate.

Let us focus on Nepal as an example. There are two primary problems regarding improving education. The first is a perception problem: people who are under educated, or whose culture does not value education, do not appreciate the necessity of schooling. The second is a more material problem: when children are depended upon

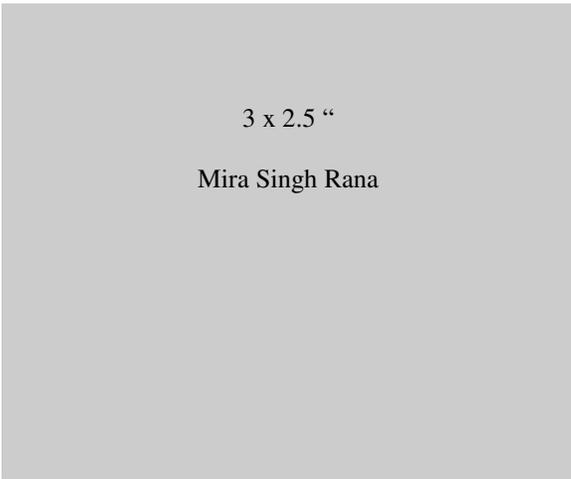
for the accomplishment of major household tasks, sending them to school not only is not a priority, but can be seen as an obstacle to survival.

Improving education, therefore, is complex. Improving the quality and access to schooling is absolutely necessary. But communicating and promoting the value of education to parents, and especially to mothers, is just as important, and a very challenging task.

The first step in overcoming these problems is awareness raising. Promoting literacy through focus groups, discussions, adult literacy classes and other means can help women understand the benefits of education. The second step is providing greater support to women, making them more autonomous and less dependent on their children’s help.

Only then can we really focus on the third step, which is to improve the school system. Facilities, trained educators and school supplies might seem basic, but there is still a major shortage of such things in developing countries. So ask yourself this question: how can we think of globalization and world unification when such a tremendous gap

in basic education levels remains between countries? How can we avoid further segmentation of nations and societies if we cannot bridge that gap? The answer lies in participation and cooperation: using our own capabilities to help others surmount their obstacles. And in working together to come up with appropriate solutions to specific issues, rather than trying to apply ready-made answers to any problem. Of course, we cannot expect this to be an immediate move, but rather a gradual one. And every one of us has a responsibility to contribute to bridging the education gap in order to reach the twenty-first century’s full potential.



Mira Singh Rana

ETC Welcomes New Board Members

Karen Knudson is a retired midwife who was instrumental in forming the first birthing center in Pittsburgh, PA. She worked with ETC as the coordinator for the Major Gifts Campaign launch party in Ithaca in May 1999.

Donovan Russell is the former Peace Corps Director in Nepal. He has been involved in international development work in Africa and Asia for over 20 years.

Krishna Bahadur Napit is a Humphrey Fellow at Cornell University who holds a Ph. D. in Agricultural Economics from Virginia Polytechnic Institute. He has worked as a Natural Resources Economist for USAID/Nepal.

Laurie Vasily is a former Peace Corps/Nepal volunteer who spent four years working as a teacher and teacher trainer. She is currently a PhD candidate in Education at Cornell, with research interests in adult learning, international development and gender.

Our Friends in Japan

In 1992, a group of Japanese housewives met with the abbot of Sogenji Zen Temple in Okayama, Japan to hear about Educate the Children. The women live in the neighborhood adjoining the temple and wanted more community involvement. The abbot, Shodo Harada Roshi, knew Pamela Carson, ETC's founder, and she remains his student to this day. He was impressed with her work in Nepal and asked the women if they would like to help with ETC's efforts. They responded enthusiastically and Friends in Japan (FiJ) was formed.

Kunitomi-san, corresponding secretary for the group, has been amazed at the changes the work has brought: *"Not only has it empowered and transformed women in the rural Nepal, it has also transformed and broadened the lives of FiJ members."* Many of the women are housewives, who had devoted their lives to their children, many of whom are now grown up and leaving home.

The women have poured themselves into the project, learning many new skills and raising much-needed money for the women's project. They have funded activities such as village school improvements, kindergarten start-ups, salaries for trainers and field staff, women's groups, toilet construction, and agricultural training.

Chi-san, a nun at Sogenji temple originally from the U.S., has provided support to the group since its inception. She comments, "When I came to Japan thirty years ago, I was fresh from the women's liberation movement's front lines and when I saw how women were openly treated as second class citizens, I was horrified.

"It has been so exciting for me to see these same women discover their creativity and individuality outside their home as well as inside. I am constantly amazed at their energy and

bright willingness to throw themselves wholeheartedly into doing even one more project, making one more penny for their unseen but deeply loved friends in Nepal. With this same energy they are also yearning to experience Zen practice which unites them with their Buddhist friends in Nepal and is yet another way of building world Peace in an even deeper interior way."

In May, 1999, Pamela had the opportunity to visit Sogenji again. The



Pamela Carson's visit to Japan in 1999

women showed her the crafts they make to sell at their annual bazaar held every August, which has become a tradition in Okayama, attracting about 700 people. Pamela presented a slide show on ETC's work to the group, so that they were able to see first hand the impact of their fund-raising. Many of the FiJ members were surprised at how poor the area is and how simply the people live. The slides connected them more directly to the project area, making their fund-raising efforts feel more relevant and heightening their commitment even more.

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This year's bazaar on August 3rd netted more funds than any of the

Gifts Campaign Underway!

In May, ETC launched its first ever Major Gifts Campaign. We are pleased to announce that we have raised \$85,000 so far towards our goal of \$200,000. The campaign was launched at a party just outside Boston. The evening was a great success with Pamela Carson showing slides about ETC's work in Nepal, and Board member Susan Hangen (who comes from Boston) and Executive Director Linda Farthing were also present. Our next event was a party in Ithaca, at which Board member Roy Coats showed slides of his and Alma Coats' trip to the ETC projects. In June, we sent out brochures and Board members called many of our supporters by phone for contributions.

The campaign got a huge boost in September when long-time supporter, Phyllis Wynn, made a contribution representing 12% of the total goal. Phyllis and June Jenkins Petersen also sent letters to many friends encouraging support. Phyllis writes:

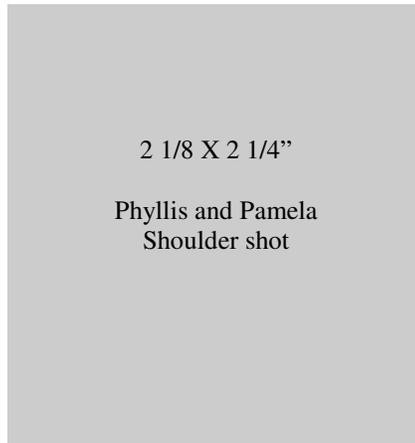
"Choosing to sponsor a little girl, Bimala Lama, in Nepal brought me into contact with Pamela Carson in 1991. We corresponded, chatted on the phone, and Pamela came several times to Wilmington to sell her Nepali crafts. On my second trip to Nepal in 1997, Pamela was there on her annual visit. For a week I was able to see and be a small part of ETC's activities in Kathmandu. I had the exhilarating experience of meeting the Baluwater women's group, which I sponsor, and seeing Bimala again. Meeting Barbara Cook and Freema Hillman, two marvelous women who share their time and talents with ETC, was another highlight. How fortunate ETC is to have Sajani Amatya and Mira Rana in Nepal helping to make all the good work possible.

"It never entered my mind when I agreed to sponsor a child that my life would be so enriched by the experience. Not only have I seen Bimala grow, but I have also seen Pamela's dream evolve into not just helping urban children, but bringing education to the villages. Pamela and her work brought to me a world I never would have known, and introduced me to people that I am honored to have met. It is to thank her for all she has given me and many others that I give this gift."

Nancy Solomon and Liz Stone held a party in honor of Pamela for ETC in Hyannisport on August 17th. Board members Tika Gurung and Susan Hangen, who were on holiday nearby, presented the ETC slide show. ETC cannot thank Nancy and Liz enough for organizing this event.

On November 15th in Kathmandu, Joyce Tapper held an ETC party at the Norbulinka Hotel for foreigners living in Kathmandu and the ETC Nepal staff.

Thank you everyone, including the many volunteers in Ithaca, Hyannisport, Kathmandu and Boston, who are helping to make the campaign a success!



Phyllis Wynn with Pamela in
Wilmington Delaware

2 1/8 X 2 1/4"

Phyllis and Pamela
Shoulder shot

New Curriculum Project

Our commitment to children's education has led to a project directed at teaching children in western countries about the issues faced by countries like Nepal. The curriculum is directed at Grade 9 students and is in coordination with the South Asia program at Cornell, local teachers, a group of committed students and former Board member, anthropology professor, **Dr. Kath March**.

The three-class package introduces Nepal and development issues to students through role plays, readings, and film. Our goal is to increase awareness of development issues, Nepal and the work of ETC throughout central New York, but we hope to make the curriculum available to students between ages 12 and 14 anywhere.

Our sincere thanks to students **Carol D'Souza, Leslie Finneran, Jen Banks, Jasse Tanner and Karen Freedman**, and to the Teachers Advisory Committee, **Colleen Ledley, Gwen Curtis, Laurie Vassily, Nancy Hatch**

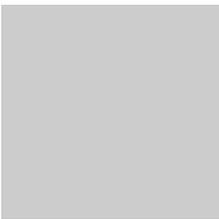
Volunteer Notes

Thanks to Spring 99 volunteers in Nepal: **Tracy Powers, Anton Vahcic and Chris Roberts.**



Tracy Powers wrote to us in July:

"Thank you again for letting me have one of the best experiences of my life. I truly learned more about Nepal and myself than I thought I would."



Carol D'Souza began work as a volunteer in Ithaca last September as a senior in Economics at Cornell. She coordinated the curriculum project through the summer. She writes: *"As I look for employment in non-profits, I have come to realize how valuable my experience with ETC has been. Developing a grant proposal and working collaboratively coordinating the project developed my writing, fundraising, and leadership skills. Above all, I had fun with it. It provided a pleasant transition between college life and the real world. I am extremely grateful to you for the help and guidance you gave me."*

Thank you Carol and good luck in the future!

Reminiscences of an ETC Nepal Volunteer

by Chris Robert I was a volunteer teaching English in a Nepali school for three months. Doesn't sound like much. But so many months later, it has me reflecting on those things I brought home with me and what I left behind. The larger world becomes less theoretical – it comes alive – when a foreign volunteer steps into a Nepali classroom. Likewise, a volunteer can better relate to the majority of the world's population after living among Nepalis for a while.

And when a volunteer is placed in a school with ETC-sponsored students, he or she can act as a sort of big brother or big sister. A volunteer's impact is by no means vast or sweeping. Volunteers often feel they are personally getting far more out of the experience than Nepalis do. But the impact is there, a little here and a little there. I'm glad I kept a journal. It helped give me perspective. And now it reminds me of those times so quickly slipping into my past . . .

"The sun has yet to rise, but surely it's time to meet a new day. I can't *sleep* any more because I itch too much. And besides, I'd just straighten out again and get yet another layer of bites on my face and feet. This blanket is too short and it's too hot for it anyway. Surely it's time to get up. I sit up and the others leap on my cue. We see each other's miserable, bitten faces and instantly explode in laughter. Once the mirth subsides, Mr. K.C. looks at me and says solemnly, "Tonight they will come again to bite us." Then a smile and, "What to do?" I smile and shrug a carefree "What to do?" right back. He laughs, clearly pleased that I've come so far"

Contentment . . . even in the face of whatever life throws your way. I enjoyed my trip to Nepal's Terai region even though the mosquitoes did come again. I was brought up in North America, where discontentment is far more often the rule. It was nice being taught how to be content for a change.

Rote education: always memorizing the Right Answer. Generations doing things precisely as those before them did. Suddenly all those TESOL books I read, that ETC volunteer handbook, they made sense. Rarely had I learned anything more abruptly or more clearly. I dedicated the remainder of my lessons to those geared towards individual thinking, questions with many answers, creativity. I became convinced the future development of Nepal depended on it.

"Ask me anything, anything at all, and I will do my very best to answer honestly," I tell the students. "Why do you Americans have blue eyes? And you're so tall." A tricky question! Suddenly they're all paying attention. Exhilarated, feeling I have a chance to teach them something very new, I send one kid for the globe. I talk about how not so long ago we in the USA didn't have airplanes, or even boats, how people lived in isolation from the rest of the world. I went on and on, excitedly hopping from exhibit to blackboard. And they listened!

A few kids in one of the Class Four groups just hated me because I am American. One of them got me from left field one day: "Is the United States attacking someone again?" Nepalese have no call to go around attacking anyone nowadays. Doesn't seem they can even relate to the concept. I have a hard enough time understanding it myself and I'm one of those bloodthirsty Americans. I spent most of that period talking about war, trying to explain. I was really trying to figure it out myself.

One of the biggest challenges was maintaining order in the classroom. For me, Teacher Without Stick, I couldn't get a break. Every now and again guilt would have some effect. I'd talk about how much of hard-earned money I was spending to be there teaching them. They'd behave for a bit. But then I'd slip up – forget to hit someone, for instance – and they were distracted and anarchistic once again.

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In honor of their guides a group of mountaineers who attempted to climb Mira Peak in November, 1998 gave a special donation to ETC. The donation, which has provided literacy training to 200 women in Thulogaun and Dandagaun, honors the following guides: **Lakpa Rita Sherpa, Tshering Dorjee Sherpa,**

Honor to Guides

Nima Tshering Sherpa, Renjee Sherpa, Pasang Sona Sherpa, Chaptien Sherpa, Ang Chhu Sherpa, Ang Dawa, Lhak Phutti Sherpini, Lamu Doma Sherpini, Migma Lamu Sherpini, Nima Doma Sherpini, Jetha Magar, Shila Rai, Shamer Sherpa, Pasang Sherpa. Thank you so much climbers! Thanks also to **Jiban Ghimire** of **Sherpa Shangri-la Treks and Expeditions** who organized the trip in Nepal.

Other Special Gifts

In memory of his mother, **Rose Baskind Kohl, Dan Kohl** made a \$5,000 contribution to ETC schools. A plaque will be placed on a school in both English and Nepali which reads: "In memory of Rose Baskind Kohl who believed the importance of educating children". Thanks Danny! If you are interested in this kind of memorial for a family member, please contact the ETC office.

In July, ETC received a grant for chulo ventilated stoves from the **Earth Preservation Fund**, run by **Journeys International**, a tour company based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. They will also place links to the ETC website on theirs. Journeys runs trips in 45 countries and can be contacted at 1-800-255-8735 or www.journeys-intl.com

Wish List

If anyone reasonably close to Ithaca (or coming here) has any of the following which they could donate to ETC, **we would be very grateful.**

- sturdy collapsible tables
- paper cutter
- light table
- screen (for slides)
- slide projector
- Pentium 133 or better computer
- digital camera
- scanner (it is a wish list after all!)

Staff Notes

Welcome to new Nepal staff **Sita Ram Basnet, Til Rupa Sabehang, Chandra Kala Rai, Tek Narayan Shrestha, Bishu Karki, Bhim Nath Neupane, Sanjeeta Gurung** and **Gayatri Lamichhane.**

Congratulations to **Bimal Tamang**, office assistant *extraordinaire* and his wife on the birth of their baby girl!

Best of luck to **Bisnu Gurung**, former Women's Development Coordinator, who has moved to Belgium. with her family.

ETC welcomes **Susanna Pearce**, former volunteer, board member, Interim Director and consultant to the post of **Associate Director** in the Ithaca office.

Dhanyabad - Thank You . . .

- **Ganu Pradhan** who volunteered in the Ithaca office during the summer!
- **Leslie Eliet, Lesley Finneran, Lindsay Dozoretz, Asha Napit** and **Darby Wallace.** It makes such a difference to have your help!
- **Danny Fox** for washing all those dishes at the Ithaca party!
- **Bryan and Janet Marler**, sponsors, for donating a desk and file cabinets.
- **Sue Thompson**, community sponsor and a speech and presentation expert, who reviewed and critiqued ETC's slide show.
- **Linda Hartley** of Women and Financial Development in New York City for fundraising advice and leads.
- **Bread and Circus Market** for donating food to our Boston party.
- **Caroline De Bie** who is helping in Nepal with distribution of the pre-primary books and the November 15th Kathmandu party.
- **Jim Hillman** who has gathered and distributed warm jackets for children in the ETC project area and beyond.
- **Diane Mailey** who helped with Mira's visit to California, and who is constantly looking for ways to connect ETC to funding sources.
- Cornell workstudies **Jen Banks** and **Olga Petryniak** for research assistance.
- **Ben Kohl** and **Art Lustgarten** who both worked as volunteers in the Major Gifts campaign phone-a-thon.
- A special thanks to **Chris Robert** who visited us on his cross country journey and assisted with our computer challenges. He is currently helping to update our webpage.
- Last but most definitely not least, many many thanks to **Ruth Dilger-Williams** who has been in the ETC office since July. Ruth's commitment, good humor and enthusiasm for ETC is a daily inspiration and we have very much enjoyed having her help in fiddling with our endlessly problematic computers, recruiting volunteers, sorting out the private sponsorship program and performing countless other tasks. Thank you Ruth!



Executive Director: Linda Farthing
Associate Director: Susanna Pearce
Office Manager: Suzanne Cullen
Program Coordinator: Ruth Williams

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Friends in Japan

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goods. It was a big culture shock for them to realize that in another Asian country, people cannot go to school or that they live without the fundamental necessities which we Japanese take for granted."

Takahashi-san, who is chairwoman of FiJ and Okuyama-san, who is coordinator of the bazaar project, worked with almost 70 volunteers. Takahashi-san says, "It is both rewarding and fulfilling to work for people and not for money. I have never done any volunteer activities before. Now whenever I hear the news of Nepal, I am ready to share their excite-

ment or sorrow. The more I learn about the present condition of the people in Nepal, the stronger my commitment."

"Each year we get more volunteers, more customers, and more publicity, which means that people are really inspired with what we are doing. I am so glad I found such a good way to use my time and energy and that Sogenji has offered this opportunity."

ETC so appreciates and admires the commitment, talents and ingenuity of these women!

Reminiscences of a ETC Nepal Volunteer

(continued from page 6)

"Song and dance. Sweet, simple companionship. Love for your neighbor, your co-worker. On the Nepali New Year's Eve, I was privileged to find myself included in a small, impromptu celebration. It warms me to this day to think back to that evening, to how lucky I was to be a part of it. Every discomfort endured was made up for in that single evening. I found myself wishing that song and dance was as integral a part of my upbringing.

Now I'm home. I see how much I got from the whole experience. (After all, I filled four journals in three months.) I figure Nepal got something too. (A few students are probably terrorizing their teachers with "some questions have more than one answer" as I write this!) Today, I can't recommend the experience enough - anytime I find someone interested in trading a little teaching for a whole lot of learning.