**A helping hand for Indian Orphanage**

Travis Fortnum

Here in Whitby we’re fortunate enough to have access to clean water, hygiene education and proper facilities. At the Cornerstone Children’s Home in Tamil Nadu, India and in third world countries around the world, these basic amenities used to seem like impossible dreams.

Whitby Rotary has made international aid a priority since the early 1970s, when they began raising money to supply the people of Haiti with cattle. So it’s no surprise that the group extended a helping hand to the children’s homes.

At a recent meeting at the Whitby Public Library, Rotarian Ray Richardson talked about changes and improvements the group has aided in making for the 83 orphans and residents of Cornerstone. These include the renovation of the old kitchen and wash station, a necessary upgrade.

“If we can get kids to wash their hands,” Richardson said, “that whole basic sanitation stops about 50 per-cent of diseases. This is so much more important than we know. We take it for granted here because we have it.”

In February, a group of Rotarians travelled to India after two years of fundraising to present the new renovations, led by Narenda Sethi, retired owner of Whitby Optical.

In total, the Rotary clubs of Whitby, Whitby Sunrise, Port Perry and Ajax came together to raise $7000 to make the renovations happen.

In addition, Rotary raised $3000 to install solar powered lamps along some of the paths, which helped to remedy former security concerns in the dark of night.

Rotary hopes to bring even more positive changes to the children of Cornerstone. Members have been hard at work raising funds to supply the home with a new bus after their previous method of transportation broke down.

The total cost of the vehicle would be $30,000, but a local private funder has agreed to match all funds raised up to $15,000.

“Sometimes when you get these things out,” Richardson said, “other people step up, it’s great to see.”

A pig roast early last month aimed to raise money for the project, with Rotary allowing each donor to have a name put onto the bus when it’s purchased. So far, the group has raised over $1200 of the required funds.

As Richardson told the club members, “Rotary is slow sometimes getting things done, but when we do it right we see great success.”

**Travis Fortnum is a student in the Journalism Program at Durham College. You can see more work by local journalism students at chronicle.durhamcollege.ca.**