



(Left) Siddhartha boys accept trophy; (right top) interschool elocution contest participants pose with award.

Siddhartha clinches trophy 3rd year in a row

by Nawang Phuntsog

Siddhartha School students participated in the annual inter-school sports meet on 25 May 2016.

Conducted by the department of District Youth Service and Sports, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Leh (LAHDC), the event's primary guest was the Chief Executive Counselor of LAHDC Leh.

In Handball, the boys' final match was played between

the Siddhartha School and the Army Public School, in which Siddhartha won the match by scoring 8-0 goals.

The girls' handball final match was played between Siddhartha and the Moravian Mission School Leh. Siddhartha won 2-0, marking a milestone in the history of the school, as the girls' team won three years consecutively in this category.

In the girls' 4*100 meter relay, Siddhartha bagged

third position.

In the boys' discus throw event, Stanzin Namgyal received third position. Last year, Stanzin Namgyal and Chemet Yontan were selected for the Leh district team and played state level handball tournaments.

Sports instructor of Siddhartha Mr. Tharvan Lal contributed to the school's success by training the students in practices and making them physically fit for the event.

Students rank 2nd in Interschool Elocution Contest

by Nawang Phuntsog

Siddhartha students Padma Lazes of Class 6, Stanzin Chosyang of Class 7 and Padma Angmo of Class 8 were awarded 2nd place in the Interschool Bhoti Elocution Contest on 2 July 2016.

Conducted by the Lamdon School in collaboration with The Culture Academy Leh, the elocution contest aimed to raise awareness about preserving linguistic culture

among Ladakh's young generation. Students from various schools in Leh and its surrounding area participated in the contest as well.

In the contest, Lazes recited a poem discussing summer in Ladakh, while Angmo presented a short mono-act based on morals and having good character. Chosyang delivered a speech impersonating His Eminence the 19th Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, who spoke to the people of

Ladakh regarding the area's education and development in the early nineties.

Bhoti teachers Geshe Thupten Phuntsok and Gen Kunzang Namgail worked with the students in preparation for the event.

School Director Geshe Tsewang, founder Khen Rinpoche, and all supporters of the Siddhartha School congratulated the students on their achievement upon their success.

Alum mounts Everest, breaks world record



Courtesy of Tashi Laskit

A graduate from Siddhartha High School Stok and the Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School Leh, Tashi Laskit became a part of the first-ever all-girls cadet team that successfully climbed the peak of Mount Everest, marking the expedition a world record. Laskit discusses her experience, along with the obstacles she faced, in the following interview.

Q: How did your interest in mountaineering initiate?

A: Mountains have always been very close to me. When I was younger, my siblings and I would take our herds for grazing in the mountains, so climbing has been a part of my life since childhood.

Q: Why did you decided to climb Mount Everest?

A: When I was in Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School Leh, I got the chance to join NCC, the National Cadet Corps. There I got the opportunity to go on a mountaineering course. This was my first step towards the expedition, but I had never expected that I would be able to achieve such a milestone in the short period of time since.

Q: How were you trained for the experience?

A: I received training from various mountaineering expeditions. I did my basic course in Darjeeling through NCC. After that, we were given training by Dev-Baba in Manali. In Uttarakhand, we were trained by Trishul, and in the winter we were given winter training at the Siachen Glaciers for three weeks.

Q: What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome those challenges?

A: The most difficult challenge for me was the team selection process for the expedition. There were 100 cadets, and only 10 of us were to be selected. I was chosen in the end because I worked hard. Another challenge took place during our mountaineering course at Khombo Ice Fall. It took 9 hours for us to cross it, but we were fully equipped and well trained, so we were able to succeed.

Q: Did the journey change your perspective on anything in your life?

A: This expedition really changed my perspective towards facing challenges. Before the training, there were times when I thought about giving up, but our instructor always encouraged us to build self confidence. That's why I was able to complete this expedition.

Q: Do you have any messages for Ladakhi youth, especially girls, regarding facing challenges?

A: The only thing I would like to share with Ladakhi youth is that apart from regular studies, one must participate in co-curricular activities. Try to know your interests and choose the right field where you think you would fit. There will be challenges and difficulties, but nothing is impossible if you dream of it and head out to achieve it. As IMPOSSIBLE itself says: I M POSSIBLE.



Courtesy of Tashi Laskit

Message from Founder Khen Rinpoche

"The learning system here at Siddhartha is meant to change the students for the better. Children here should serve as a model to others in Ladakh, exemplifying the teaching skills and learning skills we value.

It is important to learn from each other and love each other, with older students taking younger kids under their wings and younger students learning to respect their elders. We want this to happen to bring about a change in the school, the area, and all of Ladakh."

Message from Director Geshe Tsewang

"The education we receive here is not only meant for ourselves. It is important to help others; whether or not you ultimately get a good education, our main goal should always be to benefit others. It is very important to keep a good heart and have the motivation to become a good human being. We need love and compassion in this world, so I ask the children here to continue to develop their kind and compassionate sides, both now and after they graduate Siddhartha, so that we can all take a step towards world peace."

OPINIONS & EDITORIALS

Executive Director Laura Kozaitis says

This has been a busy and exciting year for the Siddhartha School Project. I am especially encouraged by the terrific work being done by the Siddhartha School Alumni to help the school. For example, this newspaper is under the leadership of Nawang Phuntsog, Siddhartha class of 2011 and 3rd year journalism student at University of Delhi, in collaboration with US volunteer Yeewen New.

When our supporters in the USA see such efforts by the graduates and students to lift up the school and contribute in meaningful ways, they are so happy graduates do valuable activities such as organizing class field trips and gathering interviews for the Siddhartha Speaks newspaper. So many of our graduates are doing well in degree colleges in India and the USA. It is very encouraging for our current students to reconnect with the alumni in the summer and hear your experiences and get your advice. When you volunteer at the school, you are showing the children in school now that you care about them and their success, that when you join Siddhartha School you become part of a lifelong family that helps one another succeed at every stage of life.

Principal Norhla

It is indeed a matter of great pleasure to know that some graduated students of Siddhartha School and volunteers from the United States have worked for this newsletter, focusing on the events and achievements that took place in the school and the ones conducted by the graduate students.

During your short period of holiday, you all made marvelous contributions aimed at bringing about close relationships between the students in the school and the alumni who pursue their further studies in different parts of India and abroad. Activities such as organizing interaction sessions and field trips to DIHAR and the Ladakh Heart Foundation made our students excited and allowed them to learn many good things. I congratulate all the initiators and the editorial members for publishing the newsletter.

A Message from the Editors

Dear Reader,

Life is full of ups and downs, but it can be meaningful to face it and make something good from it. For that, one needs to be selfless and a true applicator of "Others before Self". A simple Buddhist monk from a small village of Ladakh called Stok was in the United States, and after struggling a lot in his life, he thought of helping his own community. Because of his love for children, he decided to start a school in which those children can obtain a better education in their own motherland. With the help of supporters from foreign countries, he started a school in Stok and named it the Siddhartha School. That is how Siddhartha High School was founded in the year 1995. And the founder is none other than the current abbot of Tashi Lhunpo monastery, Khen Rinpoche Kachen Lobzang Tsetan. His vision of Siddhartha High School was so broad that he thought of uplifting the younger generation of Ladakh by educating and preserving the native cultural and linguistic identity.

This year, for the first time in

the history of Siddhartha School Stok, there was a gathering of alumni at the school for volunteering purposes in the months of May, June, and July. Several alumni gathered and performed various sessions with the students like career counseling, interaction sessions, surrounding study, field trips, etc. The prime purpose was to have good interactions with the students, to share our own experiences with them, and to build strong relations with the school after graduating. It was quite successful and we are looking to do more in the future as well. It was all due to the helping hands of our supporters and the graduates who had sacrificed their time to make this event successful and productive for the students of Siddhartha. Also there are some individuals without whom we weren't able to conduct such events this year, especially Principal Mr. Norlha Ngodup, Laura Kozaitis, Gen Kunzang Namgyal, Mrs. Tsering Dolker(Sr.) and the staff over there. I also thank Aunty Nilza and Ladol for those delicious lunches.

This newsletter is an initiative to highlight various por-

tions of Siddhartha School, especially its achievements and the events that happened this summer, organized by alumni. The School's Executive Director Laura Kozaitis and a volunteer from the United States Yeewen New played vital roles in bringing this newsletter in front of the readers. Several newsletters have been published before, but this one is bit different as compare to the earlier ones.

It was such a nice experience working with Yeewen. She is a nice and smart girl. Her creative designing skills made our tasks easier to come to the conclusion. Being one of the editors for this newsletter, I got such a nice platform where I got to learn a lot and got the opportunity to work in groups and dealing with people. Team work is the main requirement of every organization and we had good team work throughout these days. Welcoming this newsletter, I would like to thank each and every one who was there with us this year, and we will look forward for more things in the coming days.

Nawang Phuntsog

Dear Reader,

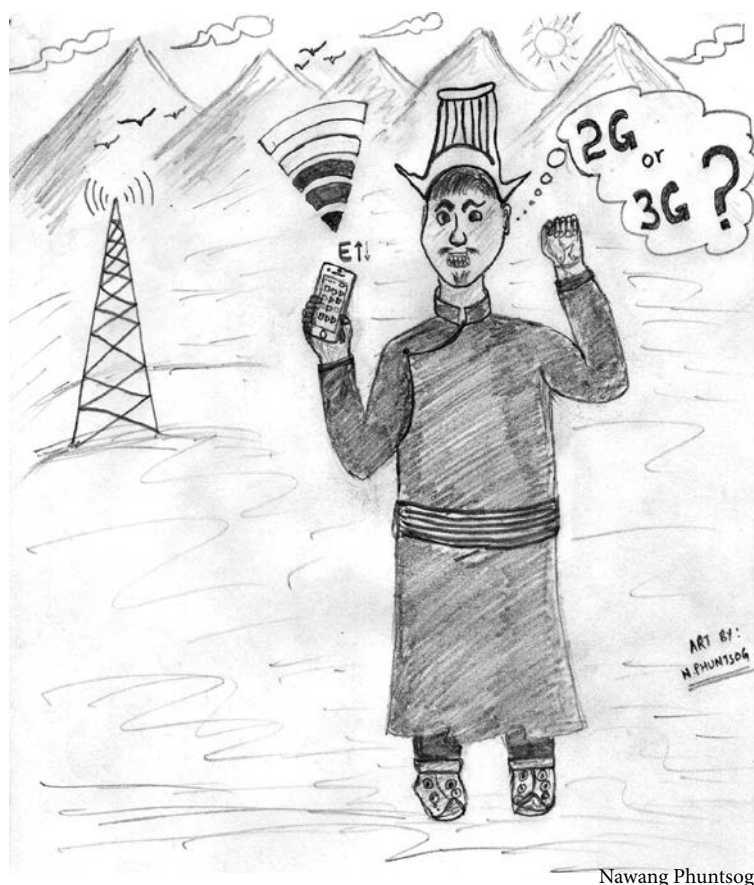
Welcome to the first issue of Siddhartha Speaks! In these pages, you will find stories, artwork, and articles written about and by the vibrant individuals in the Siddhartha School community. You will see the school through the eyes of its students, parents, and teachers, from an interview with the girl who climbed Mount Everest to student accounts about what it's like to live in the school's youth hostel.

As one of the editors for this newspaper, I have had the privilege of working with an incredibly talented group of Siddhartha alumni, including the ever-dedicated and resourceful Nawang Phuntsog.

Unlike the alumni, however, I did not have years of experience at the school. While the graduates came back to reconnect with their school, I arrived at Siddhartha as the volunteer from the United States; as someone new, and as someone who had never even set foot in India, let alone Stok. Experience in publication production was something I had from editing my own school's weekly paper in New York, but adapting to this beautiful community in the mountains was something I at first did not know how to do. When Executive Director Laura Kozaitis asked me to help edit and design a newsletter from scratch, I started off disoriented and uncertain – after all, how could I produce a paper about the heart and soul of a school I knew so little about?

In the end, however, I could not have imagined a better way to get acquainted with Siddhartha than to create a paper highlighting the people and events that form its community. I hope that reading this issue deepens your understanding of the Siddhartha School and its wonderful group of students, teachers, and administrators in the same way that producing it did for me.

Yeewen New



Nawang Phuntsog



Kunga Rabgyais



Padma Dolker

An educational trip to DIHAR (FRL)

by Sonam Angmo, Class 9

Life is a gift from god. Life, for many people, is often sad. However, the happiest day in my life was 28 June, 2016, the day of our field trip to the Defense Institute of High Altitude Research (DIHAR). Education is like an ocean without limits. Knowledge gained from books alone is not enough for a student. Education can be taught through different ways, and one such way is through experiencing educational trips. At DIHAR, the Siddhartha School alumni volunteering at the school for the summer planned one such educational field trip.

DIHAR is a world research center. In its earlier days, it was known as the Field Research Laboratory (FRL). Nowadays, it is more commonly known as DIHAR. It was first established to supply fresh vegetables for the Indian army and to fulfill the needs of local citizens. My first impression was that it was such a neat and clean place surrounded by big trees, all around.

First, we saw the vegetation part of the center. There were different types of vegetables,

such as the cabbage family, onion family, cucurbits family etc. There were also different vegetables normally unsuitable in this climatic condition, but these plants have survived through adjusted temperatures and several other effective methods of cultivation.

DIHAR has extraordinary facilities. During the trip, we learned some key information (for example, how to produce seeds). We also witnessed an animal section, where we saw the stables for ponies. After that, we saw a flock of sheep and also cows, chickens, and goats.

One other part of the facilities was the section where medicinal plants were cultivated, a sight I had never seen before.

Through that trip, I learned many new things and gained lots of information. I also understood that going on a field trip is a necessary part of learning, rather than studying from books only.

Finally, I would like to say a warm thank you to our alumni for conducting such an informative and educative event and trip for us.



GROW Mr. Tamchos, technical officer at DIHAR, instructs Siddhartha students about agriculture.

“This trip was different from our regular activities at school. Sometime it’s good to visit new places apart from regular classes. It refreshes our minds.”

- Phuntsog Dolker ‘A’, Class 10

“My main intention is to do some practical works through the means of plantation. I have lacked knowledge but I am glad to gain more knowledge which I have witnessed through this field trip.”

- Sonam Chuskit, Class 10

“I haven’t seen red cabbage in my life! I was surprised when I saw it at DIHAR.”

- Deachen Angmo, Class 10

“Educational tour is an important thing in a student’s life. Through this one can learn so many new things.”

- Sonam Angmo ‘B’, Class 9

“This trip was amazing and I enjoyed it very much. That day was one of the happiest days of my life.”

- Stanzin Diskit, Class 9

“It was an amazing trip for me because I came to know about various farming skills and how different vegetables are being cultivated.”

- Stanzin Namgyal, Class 10

“Studying outdoors is interesting and unique. I got to know about various vegetables and flowers which I have never seen before.”

- Tsewang Yangzes, Class 10

“The process in which seedlings are covered with black polythene to protect from growing weeds and yield is called Mulching.”

- Tundup Tsering

“I was amazed to see a huge pumpkin! There was no pumpkin cultivation in Ladakh before, but DIHAR had provided new facilities to grow pumpkin in Ladakh as well.”

- Zangskit Palmo, Class 9

“Ladakh is a suitable place for seed production and its growth. It is because the temperature here does help a little bit for cultivating seeds as normally it takes several years for the production in other areas.”

- Stanzin Yadol, Class 7

First inter-house cultural show held at Siddhartha

Siddhartha conducted its first ever inter-house cultural show contest on the 22nd of July 2016.

Founding director Khen Rinpoche inaugurated the show with the lighting of the butter lamp.

The show was then divided into three types of events, starting off with the group song contest and followed by the duet song and group dance competitions.

Each house performed various traditional Ladakhi songs and dances. Some songs were based on nature and the seasons, while others expressed happiness and unity in diversity. One song was dedicated to Khen Rinpoche himself.

Three representatives from the Cultural Academy of Ladakh judged the competition. After the show, two of the judges announced their feedback to the students and showed their appreciation for the performances, highlighting the importance of preserving native traditional cultures.

Several eminent guests were also present at the contest, including Kilkhang Rinpoche, school supporter Carrie New and her two daughters, Mr. Ishey Tundup, and Mrs. Sophie Langri.

The Kushinagar House ultimately won the competition. Prizes and awards were distributed at the end after school director Geshe Tsewang thanked the guests and supporters, presenting them with the school’s memorandum for their presence and contributions.



DISCOVER (Top) students and alumni pose for a group photo at DIHAR; (bottom) students learn about cultivation in the research center’s facilities.

“DIHAR is that place where different types of flora and fauna are kept. Some are very difficult to find in the whole of Ladakh.”

- Sonam Spalzes, Class 10

Siddhartha School Perspectives



(Top left) Hostel students and staff member pose in the girls' room; (top right) Rigzen Angmo, a hostel student pictured; (bottom left) Dechen Angmo, a day school student pictured; (bottom center) Year 3 students in their classroom; (bottom right) Mrs. Tsering Dolkar teaches her students mathematics.

The experiences of a day school student

Interview by Tsewang Chuskit

My name is Dechen Angmo. I study in the 10th grade, and I am from Stok. I have been in Siddhartha School since nursery school.

The most exciting part about my school is that I see my friends' everyday, and together we learn new things from our teachers. I am also very happy with our music class.

I am very happy to say that I see lot of improvements over the years in Siddhartha's education. I see a lot of our teachers teaching practically or from outside resources, rather than teaching only from books. For example, we sometimes are assigned projects for our classes, not only exams. To teach students to

think beyond bookish knowledge helps students and builds our confidence. My favorite teacher is Sir Phuntsok, our math teacher, because whenever we have problems with math he understands it and goes through it very well.

In terms of what our school could add, I wish to have a dance class and a dance teacher, because whenever we have a culture program, we have to look for someone outside from our school to teach us to dance. I also feel like our school should have more activities and competitions between each house.

After I graduate, I will choose my "stream." Since my childhood, I have always dreamed of becoming a doctor. I think by becoming a

doctor, I will be able to help Ladakhi people.

In terms of what ways Siddhartha staff might be able to help me make my choice after Year 10, having more career counseling would help. It would be nice if all the teachers would share their experiences with their careers because they have gone through every step.

I want to stay in touch with my school because I will never forget my lovely teachers. It is because of them that I am here today. I like how this year, our graduates are coming back to school and spending their time here, and coming up with a newsletter for the school. I feel that after graduating from here, I will also work with them.

Life as a hostel student

Interview by Stanzin Angmo

I am Rigzen Angmo, an eighth grade student at the Siddhartha School. I have been studying at Siddhartha for the last eleven years and have been staying at the hostel for the last three. I am from the village of Saspol, which is about sixty kilometers away from Leh.

I hold the top position every year in my class. Every day, I wake up at six in the morning (four to five when there are exams), and I go on a morning walk around the campus with my hostel mates. Then, I study for a while and help the little kids get ready for school. After that, I put on my uniform, get ready for school, and go to the dining hall to eat breakfast. I leave for school with my hostel mates at around 8:30 am.

I enjoy living in the hostel among friends and school-mates. It would be really helpful if we could get one more teacher there who can help us study and answer our questions. My favorite teacher is Madam Rinchen Angmo. She understands my problems and struggles, and I feel very comfortable sharing my thoughts with her. She is more than a teacher to me. She is a good friend.

My goal in life is to become a child's specialist because there are very few of them in Ladakh, and I think that children need care and love during their youth. I want to help them receive such nurturing so that they can lead healthy and normal lives.

The thing I like most about Siddhartha is that besides giving a good academic education, the school provides many extra curricular activities, which give opportunities for students like me to

improve our public speaking skills and build up our confidence levels.

In these eleven years, I have seen many improvements in the school (for example, new toilets, a library, computer lab and water facility etc). We are very thankful to Khen Rinpoche and the Siddhartha family for making the school a beautiful place where one can find everything they want to learn.

As a hosteller, these changes made a big difference, especially the water facilities. Earlier on, we had to have water tankers come in twice a week in order to bring the water in and out. Now, there are taps outside and in the kitchens, allowing for the cooks to more efficiently make food and for the students to more easily wash clothes. Additionally, the new computer lab has internet access, so that students can do research projects.

At the hostel, the older kids have to take responsibility of little ones who are not old enough to take on their own responsibilities. Each of us are assigned to one younger child to wash their clothes, comb their hair in the morning, polish their shoes, and help them to do school work. We are, in a way, mothers to them. I think this is a great way to learn kindness and compassion, but sometimes it is hard for me, because I also have my own schoolwork to do.

When I leave for my home during vacations, I love to see my parents and grandparents, because I miss them a lot when I am at the hostel. However, I have learned many things from living in the hostel, like how to live happily together with other students and how to maintain discipline.

A Siddhartha education: through the eyes of a parent

Lobzang Tsering, father of two sons who attended the Siddhartha School, shares his perspective on Siddhartha's education as a parent.

Interview by Padma Dolker

Julley, I am Lobzang Tsering, father of Mutup Tsewang and Stanzin Chosyang. My son Mutup graduated last year with good academic standing, while Chosyang is currently in Class 7 this year.

I have sent both of my sons to the Siddhartha School for many reasons, primarily because it is not only an institution that offers high quality education for its students,

but because it is also a family.

The main thing I like about this school is its educational focus on our own native culture and linguistic identity, in addition to other academic areas.

All the staff members and students place a heavy emphasis on Buddhist philosophy and learn it with active participation; it is this alone that makes Siddhartha perhaps bit unique from other schools in Ladakh. My younger son is very concerned about Buddhist culture, and I am very proud of him for it.

Additionally, the Siddhartha School is not a commer-

cial school like some other institutions. It is completely charitable and aims to give advanced and quality education to children who belong to a range of economic and regional backgrounds – Siddhartha students come from all over Ladakh. The location of the school itself in Stok is rather far from potentially unfavorable conditions in the city area, allowing our kids to further thrive.

Lastly, I would like to thank Siddhartha's founding director Khen Rinpoche Lobzang Tsetan and the school staff team. You have really made this school one of the best schools in the whole of Ladakh.



SIDDHARTHA SCHOOL

(Top) Lobzang Tsering and his son, Stanzin Chosyang of Year 7, pose in front of the Siddhartha School; (bottom) students file into the main school building.

A LOOK THROUGH THE TEACHER LENS

Socio-emotional learning brought to Siddhartha

by Yeewen New

Canadian instructor Sophie Langri believes that merely focusing on a student's acquisition of knowledge and grades is not enough in a 21st century education. According to Langri, socio-emotional learning (SEL) is a type of teaching that aims to help children understand their emotions, practice empathy, and flourish so they can become individuals who use their learning to positively impact the community around them. SEL is not a specific program, but rather a framework in which programs can be developed.

For the past few weeks, Langri has been implementing what she calls "Phase 1" of SEL at the Siddhartha School. This includes assessing the needs of the school and teaching the foundations of emotional literacy to instructors and students. Upon completing Phase 1 this year, Langri will work with Siddhartha teachers to develop a curriculum specif-

ically tailored to the school's students, producing material that is appropriate for the needs of the Siddhartha community.

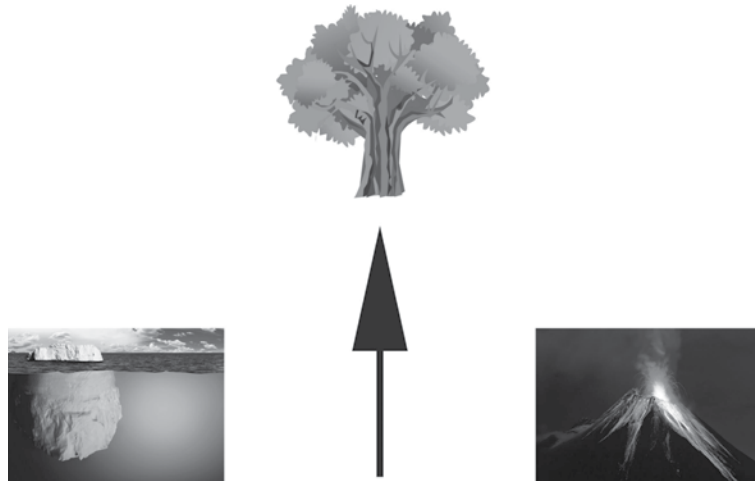
Langri has been working with administrators and teachers in socio-emotional training sessions three times a week to develop greater socio-emotional understanding among school instructors before they develop a SEL program for the students. These training sessions involve exploring what Langri calls the "five components of socio-emotional learning," which range from understanding one's own emotions to being attuned to how others are feeling.

"What's important to understand is that adults are the models here," Langri said. "The teacher has to be able to recognize when the opportunity arises to help children connect with their emotions." Once integrated into academic curricula, SEL has the potential to manifest in various forms and can be taught in any of the subjects in school.

While working with the teachers, Langri has also been visiting classes to implement basic socio-emotional learning among students. Langri has led sessions with classes ranging from the nursery section to Year 10 students. In these sessions, she introduces the concept of SEL and helps students identify their own emotions, using visual charts such as an "emotional temperature" thermometer to engage the students in discussing their feelings. With older students, Langri also begins to explain the relationship between feelings and the brain.

Langri anticipates that the biggest challenge in her work will be convincing adults to stray from the traditionally linear methods of teaching core subjects to incorporate SEL. However, the response she has received so far among both students and adults has been positive, and Langri looks forward to continuing working with them.

Have you checked your emotional temperature today?



FEEL Siddhartha students measure their "emotional temperature" and identify their feelings with instructor Sophie Langri.



TEACH Mathematics teacher Mrs. Tsering Dolkar helps a kindergarten student with schoolwork.

Spotlight on Mrs. Tsering Dolkar

Interview by Stanzin Angmo

I am Tsering Dolkar, a junior Mathematics teacher at the Siddhartha School, where I have been teaching for the last twenty years. I am from the village of Alchi, but I am currently staying at Choglamsar, which is closer to the school. I joined the school in the year 1996. I came to know about Khen Rinpoche's vision and his service to his community helping less fortunate sections of society by educating the younger generation. As I am from a similar background and have faced the same difficulties during my childhood, I became interested in helping because I did not want the coming generation to face such circumstances. As is such, I immediately joined the Siddhartha School and began doing my best to uplift such children to get both a modern and moral education.

Most importantly, teaching in the environment here gives me the happiness that I have always wanted in my life. In the last 20 years of teaching at Siddhartha School, I have developed love and determination towards my students and most importantly, I have improved my teaching skills. When I was a novice, I used to get irritated and frustrated with the students, but as time passed I learned that being a

teacher is not just a job where one works for the salary; it is an act of kindness where one educates the budding flowers of Ladakh to show them the path towards their dreams.

The thing I cherish most about Siddhartha is its unique vision and mission. Our school provides excellent education to children from poor families who cannot afford to go to good schools. In Siddhartha, we provide good financial aid to these children to support them to get the same education others receive.

Another thing is the school's concern towards Buddhist philosophy through the means of dialectics, which enlighten a child's mind and makes him or her more creative.

In my opinion, the most important quality a teacher should have is that he or she has to be a good role model to his students and should have the patience to deal with all kinds of students. Besides teaching at Siddhartha, I voluntarily teach the housewives from my colony. I teach how to read and write Bhoti to those who never got the chance to go to school. It makes me more comfortable and satisfied with my profession. I have never worked for solely a salary, as my profession gives me happiness. Siddhartha has truly become a major part of my life.

Q&A with Bodhi teacher Geshe Thupten Phuntsok

Interview by Tsewang Chuskit

In the following interview, Geshe Thupten Phuntsok explains his history and the value of a good Buddhist education.

Q: Tell us about yourself.

A: I have been working at the Siddhartha School for four years now. I first heard about the School through a teacher of mine in South India; he informed me that Khen Rinpoche and Geshe Konchok Wangdu needed a teacher in Ladakh.

At the time, I refused the offer, believing that I had neither the aim nor the confidence to become a teacher. One week later, however, my teacher convinced me to go to the school for a year to try things out. Now, I feel fortunate to have had this offer, as I see myself advancing a Bodhi Literature education in not only the students, but myself as well.

Q: Why did you choose to become a monk?

A: I never thought about becoming a monk when I was younger, though I would act like a monk whenever I played with my friends.

Later on, my parents told me of a teacher from CIBS (Central Institute for Buddhist Studies) who could help children on the path to become monks if I so wished. I decided to attend CIBS for two years, though then I was just a typical kid roaming around the Leh markets without a deep interest in learning.

At that time, the monks of Ladakh were not receiving proper monastic education. Many of them went to south India for further studies, so my parents and teachers decided to send me to Drepung for further education, where I stayed for 20 years.

Q: How important is teaching

Buddhist philosophy in school?

A: Teaching Buddhist philosophy is vital in education. As His Holiness says, one does not need to be Buddhist to learn Buddhism, and that every human being should learn its philosophy to maintain a good heart.

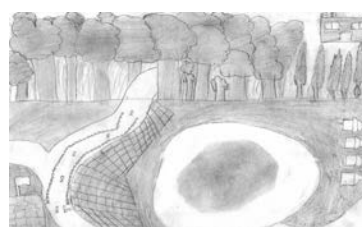
If every school had a Buddhism class, young children in Ladakh would develop with peace and compassion.

Q: Why do most of the modern students pursue careers in Science, Arts, and Engineering, but not in Buddhist Studies?

A: Kids nowadays do not study Buddhism as much, perhaps because they don't understand Buddhism very well during their childhood. In our society, parents maintain the stereotypical view that in choosing a career in Bodhi literature

GESHE continued on page 7

Surrounding Study at Stok Village



On 25th June, the junior students of Years 5 and 6 were taken on an off-campus surrounding study trip at Stok village. It was the second of the activities scheduled by Siddhartha alumni this year. The journey started from school, with students walking from the main road towards the Buddha statue in the village. Upon reaching the destination, students were grouped to participate in activities, including interviewing local people.

Around lunch time, we headed to an orchard near the royal palace to eat. There, the students and alumni played games and relaxed together. As we headed back to the school after lunch, the students were assigned to collect as many different kinds of pebbles as they could. Once in their classrooms again, students were tasked to draw black and white sketches of something that had stood out to them during the trip.

Photography by Nawang Phuntsog

Sketches by Stanzin Yangdon Class 6, Tsewang Namgail Class 5, Stanzin Chuskit (B) Class 6, Sonam Chosdon Class 5, Stanzin Chozang Class 6, Sonam Chuskit (A) Class 6, Rigzen Namgail Class 6

A trip to the Ladakh Heart Foundation

by Stanzin-Dolma, Year 8

I went on a trip to the Ladakh Heart Foundation on 8 July with my classmates. I gained much knowledge from the trip. I felt really inspired by the Lady Ganga video, which featured a woman who was diagnosed and later passed away from cervical cancer. This woman then spread her story around the world to raise awareness about the importance of early detection and continued check-ups to secure our lives.

Upon watching the video, I realized that any internal pain or external pain that we experience must be reported to a doctor so that we can get a good treatment. It is important to often go to get a check up and to never be too shy to share how we feel to others. It is shyness that has the potential to lead to big problems.



Photo from Nawang Phuntsog



Photo from Nawang Phuntsog

“I was so impressed with the documentary titled LADY GANGA, on a cervical cancer patient. It was so emotional and heart touching.”

- Tundup Namgail, Class 8

“Gen Chosgyal lay talked about helping needy people, and I have thought to help such people in future. I got inspired from his words.”

- Rigzin Angchuk, Class 8

“I have never seen an operation theatre or labour rooms in a hospital before. But because of this field trip I got to witness these things.”

- Padma Tharchin, Class 8

The Heroes Elevate Empathy Project

By Isaac Gergen

The Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO) collaborated with the global 'Heroes Elevate Empathy Project' initiated by Khen Rinpoche and George Kozaitis, age 11. Isaac Gergen, LAMO's Art Officer, discusses working with Ladakhi students in the workshop that focused on exploring heroes and their attributes. The workshop led to an exhibition that included the work made at LAMO as well as a curated selection of those made at the other project venues, including Siddhartha School in 2015. The exhibition was inaugurated by GesheTsewang and ran from 16th - 30th July 2016

Heroes elevate empathy. When we were given the project to work on I started thinking: "what would make sense in Ladakh?" If we do the same thing that they did in the United States, it wouldn't make that much sense as the ideas of heroes here is very different. So I thought of how to make it meaningful for everybody, and I did come up with a suitable workshop outline.

The first part [of the process] was introducing the heroes, what a hero means, the characteristics of a hero, etc. The students came up with different ideas; for example, heroes need to be caring, sympathetic and patient. After that, we listed different heroes that were known to us, in particular local heroes, heroes from India. There were also everyday heroes like Mother, firefighters, Army and Police personnel.

The next step was developing a hero from the students' own minds. When we think of a hero, what characteristics will we give them? One of the things that happens with a hero is that they have problem or a circumstance. Another element is the way in which that person deals with that circumstance. The kids were amazing! They came up with names, ages, what the problems were, and how they overcome the problem.

The second day of the workshop we started with art. We also watched a film featuring a hero and his protagonist part, how the characters and the hero story are built up and how he overcomes his problems, etc. The hero does not necessarily start out strong, but he develops.

After that, we looked at the portraiture aspect, examining different techniques of making portraits and focusing on the basic guidelines. Then we had live drawings, which means looking at a model and then drawing in a short interval. These are advanced techniques, but the kids could do it.

The third day started with 'still live drawing,' in which students were taught to figure out the relationships between angles, different points, and how to draw in perspectives. They learned about the art elements, touching upon all the different aspects of basic art.

We asked students if the heroes would be portrayed differently given the workshop, titled "hero elevates empathy." It was amazing to witness their responses. They came up with things such as where the hero lives without drawing the hero, including the way in which the environment of a hero speaks about him or her.

The fourth day was a unique experience for us, as we did an interesting task. We made the masks of all the heroes and had a conversation understanding the hero and acting like your hero. For that we threw some problems or issues and tried to discuss and solve it out through mutual talks. That was a very good and interactive activity. Students actively participated and highlighted many features. Then, for the next several days, we worked on their final drawings before they painted their final portraits. (Isaac Gergen is the Arts Officer for Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation)



RECITE Bodhi teacher Geshe Thupton Phuntsok educates students about dialectics (left).

Alumni counsel students about careers

by Nawang Phuntsog

On 23 June 2016, the Siddhartha School Alumni organised a career counselling event for the students of Siddhartha. Introducing the sessions during the morning assembly, the graduates then followed up by counselling each grade according to their level of understanding.

The alumni facilitated interaction sessions with younger classes, while grades with older students participated in a special career counselling

program involving visual presentations and alumni talks about different career choices. Graduates urged juniors to become involved in extra curricular activities and explore their interests outside of the academic realm.

Alumni also discussed choosing the right career based off of one's interests and abilities. They shared their own experiences to both inform current students and warn them against their past mistakes.

Grade 10 students were giv-

en special counselling due to their impending board examinations, where the graduates emphasised the importance of time management and paper presentation during these examinations.

Students found the interaction sessions informative. "It was such a nice initiative by our ex-students and we got to learn many new things," Kunzang Diskit, an eighth grade student, said. "I got to know about the various career options after school that I was unaware of before."

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their kids won't be able to partake in the modern world. People think that by learning Bodhi literature, one won't be able to obtain a government job with a good salary. This is a wrong way of thinking, as they shouldn't just think of temporary happiness; rather, they should look to become good, helpful human beings.

Every Ladakhi kid should consider Bodhi literature as a part of him or her. Ladakhi people should understand that Buddhism does not merely consist of meditating or praying; rather, it is way a to pure our minds and hearts.

Q: What are the careers in Buddhist studies after becoming a monk or nun?

A: After studying Buddhism or Bodhi literature, one should not think about salary or benefits. Rather, he should aim to help needy people and pass his knowledge to student interested in Buddhism. If one is willing to bring peace and compassion to his society, there are opportunities to help, so long as one has the commitment and passion to do so.

Q: How does learning Buddhist philosophy through dialectics help modern students in school?

A: It has been four years since I've taught my students Buddhist dialectics, and I have noticed that students who pay more attention to Buddhist debates have better ways of critically thinking about a topic in comparison to other students.

While performing dialectics, one must sharpen his mind, and one has to think and experiment each line of debate with his mind. Buddhist debates helps with not only Bodhi studies, but with every other academic subject as well.

Q: Do you have any advice for today's young people?

A: When you go out to study, you will meet different kinds of people - the ones who pay more attention to education, and the ones who do not. It is one's own responsibility to be with those who are good in their studies and kind in their natures.

Never forget the way your parents worked hard to pay for your education. Every day, your parents dream about fulfilling every need of yours, so you should not waste your time on unnecessary things. If you do not study well after all the hard work your parents have put in for you and you disappoint them, then you will receive the consequences through karma. Ultimately, try your best to be a good human being and, above all, help others.

Alumni Experiences

Graduates share their stories and perspectives post-Siddhartha School

Nawang Phuntsog, Class of 2011, finds path in journalism

Life during my childhood was something unforgettable and exciting. The day I joined the Siddhartha School as an infant, I stepped into my second home. I stayed at Siddhartha for 11 years and met many new faces and learned new things. Though I faced many challenges, the Siddhartha family members provided support in shaping the futures of children like myself. I studied at the school until eighth grade before joining SOS TCV School Ladakh to learn the Tibetan language. I completed 10th grade there, then studied non-medical studies with the Tibetan language at SOS TCV Bylakuppe. I enjoyed the environment over there and remember it fondly. However, I faced difficulties in my studies because I was unhappy with my stream selection. I reevaluated myself and chose Media studies according to my interests and abilities after high school. As of now, I am in my final year of Journalism (Hons.) at the University of Delhi.

Life after school was the biggest challenge I've faced in my life. During my time at Siddhartha and SOS TCV, I did not have many responsibilities; when I started my college life later on, however, I had to do everything for myself with no one there to guide me.

Life at college is both more challenging and exciting. One needs to involve oneself more over there. I applied to the college myself, rented a room close by, and arranged

crocery and household materials. I cooked my own food and covered my own academics. Through my experiences, I knew that one had to have the determination to handle one's own situation.

During the summer holidays, I would visit my hometown. I also frequently visited the Siddhartha School and volunteered there, as the School has played an important role in my life. This particular year, we had a special gathering of Siddhartha School Alumni for the first time. We graduates conducted several events and maintained good relationships with the students over there. There were volunteers from the United States who joined us. It was productive, and I hope all the students benefited as the alumni shared their experiences with them and interacted to solve their queries. We hope to continue such events every year and will come up with more effective initiatives in the years to come.

Friends of Siddhartha are always there, through every up and down. Be it sponsoring a child or helping in fulfilling the school's materialistic needs, Siddhartha School's supporters have done and are still doing a marvelous job in making Siddhartha what it is now. It is because of their support and the efforts of Khen Rinpoche and his team at the Siddhartha School Project that the school is able to give a modern as well as moral education to the young generation of Ladakh.



TOGETHER AGAIN Siddhartha school alumni pose during their reunion trip to Pangong Lake in July, marking one of the first graduate reunions of the school. Photo from Nawang Phuntsog

Stanzin Paljor '14 dedicates life to Buddhism

My name is Stanzin Paljor, and I am a Siddhartha School alumna currently studying as a Buddhist monk at the Drepung Gomang Monastic University in South India. My life at Siddhartha was pretty nice and memorable. I first attended Siddhartha in the year 2000 and spent 11 years of my childhood there. Though I was quite naughty during my childhood, I excelled in my academics. I have plenty of memorable moments with my friends, teachers, and staff members over there. Our teachers were really nice and caring. When I was in Nursery class, our teacher Late Mam Padma Lhadol would make us perform on the stage. I still remember the day I ran from the stage before my performance, and she tried to convince me to stay by offering me a lollipop. She was really an ideal teacher for all of us, and we all miss her a lot.

The Siddhartha School is like a family – all of the teachers and students are very close to one other, unlike some other schools. Khen Rinpoche made a great effort to educate Ladakhi children to make them good human beings. I personally salute the courage and determination that turned Siddhartha School into one of the best schools in Ladakh.

My life changed when I chose to be a monk. I wasn't forced by anyone to do so, as I made my own decision to join a monastic university and to spend my life over there avoiding the life of common people. It's been six years since I decided to be a monk, and I have totally changed my lifestyle for the better.

At the university, we had to study Buddhist philosophy by practising dialectics and memorising spiritual texts. Our education system

strays from the traditional ways – we do have to complete normal schooling until eighth grade, but after that we have to study the vast philosophical texts. These texts we have to learn from our teachers, usually elder, qualified monks, before practicing among our fellow mates with dialectics. A dialectic is a form of discussion where one person questions a topic and the counter fellow has to answer it correctly. Our studies consist of level-by-level grades; one must complete each level with good qualifications in order to become a master later. If one has the ability and determination, then he can be a Geshe Lharam (Doctorate Degree in Buddhist Philosophy). As a saying goes in Tibetan, "If anyone has the courage, determination, and knowledge, then there is no permanent holder of the mighty Golden Throne."

A school changed for the better

by Kunga Rabgyais '11

The 13 years I spent at the Siddhartha School were fabulous. Though the school, having just been founded, faced some difficulties when I first began attending, it has gradually changed for the better over time. Nowadays, resources such as digital smart classes, computer classes, water facilities, and music, sports, and literary activities enrich the students' lives. I am glad to witness the positive progress and advancement the school

has undergone. The changes happening at Siddhartha are all due to the efforts of Khen Rinpoche and the school's supporters.

As for myself, I am currently completing my studies in the Humanities at Jammu University. I will graduate this year.

One thing I've noticed upon graduating from Siddhartha and entering the real world is the lack of counselling we'd received regarding our career choices. While our teachers had guided us, the lack of resources at the time

made it difficult to perform adequate research. Now, however, there are several technological resources at the school, allowing students to obtain the information they search for. This year, several other alumni and I volunteered at the school, offering career counselling sessions for our juniors. We hope that these sessions will alleviate the stress and make the difficult choices we had faced during our time in school a little less challenging to make.



REUNION Alumni pose in front of the Siddhartha High School building. Photo from Nawang Phuntsog

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