



THE JOY OF GIVING

by Swarnima Tapatia

From the moment we arrived at the school for the blind, we knew that it would be a bit challenging to run our activities, get to know the people there, and get everyone settled down. I hadn't expected to see people with other kinds of sicknesses as well, and it made me feel shocked at first, but heartbroken later. We had been planning and looking forward to this trip for more than two weeks, and it was a strange feeling to finally be there trying to implement our ideas.

When we finally did get into action, we divided into pairs and each pair matched up with a group of kids from the school. We introduced ourselves to all the members of our group and asked them their names and age. We played some icebreaker games at first to help them to feel comfortable with us. Next, we ran our activities with them, which we had put a lot of effort into planning. We taught them some English, such as how to say the names of shapes and simple English sentences.

I wondered how much strength, happiness and joyfulness we could

bring to these people's lives in just a few short hours. However, my eyes welled after a while of seeing the pleasure and delight they demonstrated while talking to them and playing a few games with them. Just in the course of about two hours, we brought a bundle of new memories into their lives. They were even more pleased when we distributed candies to them.

Little things, I realized, can end up meaning a lot. When we finally had to leave, I asked them all to share a group photo with me, so that I could cherish all the beautiful memories of being with them. Then I said my goodbyes and I assured them that it had been very fun for me to be with them and told them how much I would miss them. They said, "See you next time," and, "I will miss you," which we had earlier taught them to say in English.

Overall, the experience was very touching. I hugged them one last time and inside my heart, I knew that we would not be able to meet again in the near future. I prayed to God that they have a bright future with loads of



happiness to make up for all the sorrow they have endured. In a just a few hours, I understood that we have so many more advantages and privileges than they could even think of which we take for granted. I remembered that we should be thankful that we are lucky enough to have all the numerous opportunities and luxuries that we have, which we often don't even notice because we are so used to having them.

It was a tough goodbye and I am sure that I will remember those people forever. I thank everyone who regularly works to making such people's lives better and more cheerful. If little trips like these can help them feel a bit better, I want to continue spending time with them in the future. I would encourage everyone to occasionally just go and spend some time with kids who aren't as fortunate as us. It is well worth it and feels great!