



# SOWHOPE NEWSLETTER

*"Where there is despair, let me sow hope." - Francis of Assisi*

MISSION STATEMENT: "TO INSPIRE WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD BY PROMOTING WELLNESS, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES."

SPRING/SUMMER - 2008

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## New Years Generosity

Your 2007 holiday season generosity raised \$30,000 to fund three of the ten projects that SowHope is focusing on in 2008.

The \$5,000 **AIDS Prevention and Sex Education Training Project in Egypt** will result in 2,000 young women in rural areas being educated about AIDS prevention, family planning, female health, and healthy self-esteem issues. Over the next year, a gynecologist and her husband, a counselor, will travel the countryside to share their knowledge, materials, and a meal at conferences with these women.

The \$5,000 **Literacy Project in India** will reach 150 women and give them the opportunity to gain up through a 5<sup>th</sup> grade education level in reading, writing and mathematics. This Literacy project provides these women with the knowledge needed to further their economic status and avoid such pitfalls as signing contracts that they cannot read.

The **Bangladesh Micro Loan Project** obtained the second phase funding of \$20,000 to help 800 women start or improve their small entrepreneurial businesses. The loans will be used to purchase seeds for farming, a loom for weaving, sewing machine for garment making, tools for their small business, or livestock. They attend weekly educational meetings as part of a support group while they build their homes and pay back their loans.

**This three-year project, when completed, will have served 2,400 women.** The joy of this program is that the loans are paid off over time and then those funds are made available as loans to other women. In this way, many more women's lives will be touched by the generosity of our donors.

We hope you will take a few minutes to look at our website and see the other projects that you could support during this year. Your care and donations touch many lives and make a profound difference.

**Meet Neherun Begum**, a 40 year old woman from Bangladesh and one of our micro loan recipients. She has led a very difficult life. In 1981, Neherun's parents paid a dowry for her to marry a man named Abdul. Her father-in-law suddenly decided to kick both Neherun and Abdul out of his house. They were hopeless and suffered great hardship. Neherun became even more disappointed in 1988 when she gave birth to a daughter they named Lucky, knowing this would only add to their financial misery.



**Neherun** and Abdul learned the weaving trade but there was no work for them. Abdul became a day laborer and earned a \$30 monthly salary. They became penniless for the second time in 2004, after paying the dowry for their daughter to marry. Lucky had a son in 2006. Now all five of them live together. Their combined monthly expenses are about \$90.

Neherun was chosen to be part of the micro loan group supported by SowHope and was given a \$75 loan last year. She invested the money by purchasing bamboo and cane to make furniture. She and Abdul are able to earn \$60-75 per month from selling the furniture. Her son-in-law earns \$30 a month as a day laborer. With any left over money, Neherun is slowly expanding her furniture business and is giving back to her community for she is dedicated to teaching other destitute women the weaving business. Neherun's future, as well as others, has never looked brighter.

## Fantastic Photos, Food & Fun



SowHope's First Photo Exhibit – *"Beauty and the Burden – Women of the Third World"* – was a rousing success! On March 14<sup>th</sup>, about 150 people gathered in downtown Grand Rapids. Guests enjoyed viewing 26 photos from 14 photographers around the world, depicting the beauty and the struggles of women in the developing world. The evening included live jazz music, great food, and an inspiring message from SowHope's founder, Mary Dailey Brown. With an outpouring of generosity from those in attendance, over \$20,000 was raised! THANK YOU for investing in HOPE to be sown around the world!

A special thanks goes out to the event's sponsors, Alan & Marney Salmon, Craig & Bonnie Conley, and Paul & Leisa Snow. Photos are for sale on our website, [www.sowhope.org](http://www.sowhope.org).

## The TERMS Are Changing



Third World is a term used to denote nations with the smallest UN Human Development Index in the world, also known as developing countries. A newly emerging term to describe these areas is the *Majority World*. This is an apt description. Of the world's 6.7 billion people, the *global majority* (5.5 billion people) live in less developed nations. Over half of the world's population struggles to survive on less than \$2 a day.

## Women's Expo



To celebrate **International Women's Day** on March 8, SowHope hosted a booth at the Grand Rapids Women's Expo for three days. We talked to many interested women, gave away six thousand emory boards, and made new friends. If you would like to have our booth on display for your group, organization, church, club, or business. Please contact SowHope to make arrangements.

## Congratulations!

Our heartfelt congratulations to Julie Johnston, the winner of the Egyptian necklace and bracelet give-away at the Women's Expo.



## FaceBook.com

Familiar with the social networking phenomenon? We are! Millions of people of all ages access their pages on Facebook daily. This is a great way to be in touch with friends and prospective friends. If you're a facebook user, be a friend, join our group.

## A Time to Sow Hope...

If you would like to host a breakfast, luncheon, or dinner where we can **present Sowhope**, please call 616-433-1575.

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