

# Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation

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## FUN AT METRO ZOO



Hello, my name is Pardeep Kaur and I'm in the fourth grade. I am writing about a trip that the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation organized to the Metro Toronto Zoo on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002. 130 children and adults went on this trip. My experience at this trip was great. I met many other people of all different ages. We arrived at the zoo at 10am and from there we were sorted into two big groups - one group left on their own and the others went with the tour guide. I was with the tour guide, and we saw many animals such as: lions, cheetahs, elephants, gorillas, and many others. My most favorite animal was the gorilla, "Charlie" was the biggest one of all. I also saw one gorilla that was pregnant and a newborn gorilla that was with her mother. It was very fascinating to see the gorillas because they all reacted differently to human beings. I remember one started playing a game with me, and it was very funny. After we saw the gorillas we had lunch. Then we got into our groups and our group leaders took us to see other animals. We also got to ride on camels, which was nice, but the bad thing was that they smelled really bad. After this we started to head out to the front gates and before we left, we all had ice cream. I made lots of new friends on this trip too. I really liked this trip and hope the foundation continues to have more events like these for children where we can go out and have fun.

## TORONTO WIDE RUN

Some might say that for a group of kids who have run from Toronto to Ottawa, a distance of over 500Kms, running from Scarborough to Oakville, a distance of 100Kms, is not much of a challenge... well, okay, maybe they're right, but, really, it's the kids who would be better able to answer this question! Well, besides the distance itself, there are a couple of other things that made the run from Toronto to Oakville on July 7, 2002, somewhat different than the run to Ottawa. For example, we had over a hundred youth and volunteers for the Toronto Wide run, rather than only 50 kids; 2 buses and numerous volunteer vehicles, rather than only one coach and three volunteer vehicles. On top of everything else, we had to complete the run in 10 hours, including stops at 9 different gurdwaras of Toronto with a maximum of 20 to 30 minute stays. In case, some of you may have not already realized, it was definitely a challenge for the youth, and a very long day indeed.

**FUNDS COLLECTED FROM BOTH CHARITY RUNS THIS SUMMER**

**\$ 35,634**

**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO DONATED SO GENEROUSLY**



However, as always, the children and youth of the GGSCF, ages 4 and over, once again pulled off a successful relay run-a-thon, sweating and gasping on a hot sweltering summer day in the streets of Toronto. As one of the volunteers said on the day, "sometimes going from Scarborough to Oakville in a car seems like a long drive to some", but these kids managed to run this long distance without any A/C cars, and with very few breaks. Why did they do it? Because they all realize the importance of the cause for which they are running... to help their brothers and sisters around the world who need their support in order to survive and live healthy lives. A statement was made by the foundation at each of the Gurdwaras visited and the Sangat. Scotiabank Manager Julie McLaughlin from the Speers Road Branch presented medals to the participants. Most of the Gurdwaras also donated generously to our cause. We are very thankful for all of their support, and hope that they will continue to offer us their well wishes along the long journey the GGSCF has in front of it.

## 24Hour RUN - Tajinder Kaur



This year, the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation held two run-a-thons in two consecutive months. If the Toronto Wide Run wasn't enough of a challenge, the children and youth organized a second, and even more challenging and unique 24-hour relay run-a-thon that was held from August 17-18, 2002 in the Guru Gobind Singh Ji Stadium. Anyone who was present at the stadium either participating or supporting this event was witness to the extreme efforts of the organizers, and the runners throughout the 24-hour period, which started at 11:40am on August 17, and was completed at 11:40am on August 18. Another unique thing about this event was

that runners were not only children and youth, but also adults and seniors. It was definitely a sight to see. Even at 10pm at night, the stadium was full of around two hundred people walking, running, and doing kirtan and simran under the stars, and carrying out the run overnight. The cumulative distance covered by everyone running and walking was over 4500kms. The organizers did an excellent job at making sure that everyone had plenty of energy throughout the run, as there were plenty of drinks, snacks and pizza available for us to eat.



There was quite a bit of media coverage, which was really good for all the participants. Before the actual run, the event was advertised through most Punjabi radio/television programs, Mississauga News, and Brampton Guardian. The organizers had the opportunity of being on Sur Sagar Radio a few times before, during, and after the event. On the day the much of the media come out, such as City TV, Rogers, Mississauga News, Panj Pani, Sanj Savera, and Sur Sagar who showed the run live on television many times throughout the 24 hours. The GGSCF would like to thank everyone for promoting this event and making it a great success and hope that everyone continues to support us in the future.

## SENIORS VISITED BY CHILDREN



On May 26th 2002, some 25 Brampton and Mississauga children with the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation visited the King Nursing Home in Bolton. The children told jokes, played games, did some craft work and also sang for the seniors at the home. Jaspreet Kaur who arranged the event said it was a rewarding experience for both the seniors and the children. The reason we did this is for children to spend time with those who sometimes lack the day to day contact with young people and also for seniors to share their life experiences with those who are still learning.

## SCOTIABANK CORPORATE SPONSORS

The GGSCF would like to acknowledge the on going support of Scotiabank the first time being in 1999 when the children organized a run from Toronto to Ottawa. Their help means that all the pledges that the children collect go towards helping other children rather than towards the organizing expense of the events. This year was another first in that Scotiabank agreed to sponsor both charity runs organized by the GGSCF.



Manager of Westwood Mall Scotiabank branch, Nahed Daudi and his team inspired the children at the start of the 24 hour run at the Guru Gobind Singh stadium at Dixie Gurdawara on August 17, 2002. The Scotiabank Team also presented a cheque for \$5000 to the children.

## FUND RAISING EVENTS FOR RUNS



The organizers of the Youngs Sport Club Tournament and the Can Sikh Tournament allowed the GGSCF to have a booth to help collect change and help serve food to the spectators. The money went to the two charity runs the GGSCF organized over the summer. Children also got to meet MP Gurbax Malhi.



A number of car washes were held during the year both at Scarborough Gurdawara and Dixie Gurdawara by children to help collect money for needy children.



The children's soccer club in Scarborough "Gusikh United" under the direction of Sidd and BA raised over \$1000 with car washes in Scarborough alone. The kids also got to meet MP Dan McTague.

Anyone who has been involved in any type of Fundraising, for any event or charity, knows that it's not always an easy task. The Foundation is fortunate to have the support of many individuals, and media that have always offered their assistance in meeting the financial targets for our events. One such supporter is Sur Sagar

Radio and its listeners, who have always been there for the Foundation every time we have needed them. On June 29th, eight children and youth of the Foundation were at the studios of Sur Sagar Radio from 9pm to 11pm to take part in a 2-hr radio-thon to raise money for the Toronto Wide Relay Run that was held on July 7th. The show was hosted by Jagdish Singh Grewal, who encouraged the listeners to call in and contribute towards the target of \$10,000. The children and youth informed the listeners about the Foundation, and its cause of helping children in third world countries. They also spoke about the individual children that are being supported by the foundation, and read out letters that have been received from these children. Generous listeners called in with pledges.



## CN TOWER STAIR CLIMB

Toronto's CN tower has become the trademark of Toronto, and the Annual CN Tower Climb has become the trademark for the World Wildlife Fund, as part of the Earth Week. On Saturday April 20, 2002, along with hundreds of Torontonians, the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation once again took part in this annual event that leaves everyone huffing and puffing by the end. This year we had a total of 158 participants starting at the age of 4 years, all of who made it to the top of the CN Tower!

The event was organized by Taranpreet Kaur Chadha of Scarborough, and Tajinder Kaur of Mississauga, Ontario. Thanks to these two, and various dedicated and helpful volunteers and parents, the event was a great success as always. Altogether, we raised over \$4,000 for the World Wildlife Fund, and also had a lot of fun. Of course, what's the fun of climbing the CN Tower without a little friendly competition?



After the event, all participants gathered at Scarborough Gurdwara, and trophies were given out to the youngest boy (4y), and the youngest girl climber (4y), as well as the first, second, and third fastest boy and girl under the age of 18. A trophy was also awarded to the fastest overall climber who was Paul Singh, 13 years of age, and made it to the top in just a little over thirteen minutes. Not all of us had fast times, regardless however, we are all winners in this event, as it is not a simple accomplishment to achieve, and most of all, we have all contributed towards the great cause of helping to save our planet, our home!

## SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

In December 2001, a law was passed in Ontario, that the month of May would be celebrated as the South Asian Heritage Month. On May 2, 2002, the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation was invited to a Dinner Gala at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, which was held to celebrate and launch the inaugural year of the

South Asian Heritage Month. The evening was hosted by Suhana Marchand of CBC, and included speeches by Political Leaders, organizers of the South Asian Heritage Foundation, and musical entertainment. At the dinner, where close to two thousand people were present, recognition awards were also given out to four individuals, and one organization. The GGSCF was privileged and honored to be the only organization to have received this award and to have been recognized by the South Asian Heritage Foundation for its work.

## SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES

In July of this year the Board of the GGSCF approved the sponsorship of five more children through a new organization, SOS Children's Villages. The organization is registered in Canada with a head office in Ottawa. It was founded in 1949 by Hermann Gmeiner and has operated in Canada since 1969. It provides assistance to 49,000 children in the world through 423 villages in 131 countries. The SOS Children's Villages is based on four principles:

- SOS Parent – a SOS mother who lives with 5 to 10 children under her care and is the primary source of love and security
- Brother and Sisters – children grow up together as brothers and sisters, natural siblings are not separated
- House – each SOS family has a house that they can call a home
- Village – each 12 to 15 houses forms a village that builds bridges with the neighbourhood for the children.

The organization focuses on long term care. The Board has chosen SOS Children's Villages as its objectives align with those of the GGSCF. We will keep you informed of progress with the work with SOS Children's Villages in the future.

## EVOLUTION OF GGSCF

As reported in the last issue the GGSCF became a registered charity under its own name earlier this year. Previously the work carried out by the children and youth were through Gursikh Sabha Canada (Scarborough Gurdawara). For this reason many individuals associate the foundation with Scarborough Gurdawara where as children and youth from across Ajax, Brampton, Etobicoke, Markham, Mississauga, Montreal, Richmond Hill, Scarborough and Toronto actually take part in organizing events for other children under the GGSCF motto "...children helping children...".

The question being asked by many is (including the present Gurdawara committee) why does the GGSCF have to be separate from Scarborough Gurdawara. This is a difficult question as the present committee is very supportive of the GGSCF and its work. However this has not always been the case. Previously there was little support, the children were locked out and stopped from doing some events and even announcing some events was refused. Managing accounts was a problem as children had difficulty to get some basic things done, this was frustrating and many children and youth chose to discontinue activities. Also one youth involved with the GGSCF was filed court papers. The acquisition was that the activities of the GGSCF were improper and threatened the charitable status of the Gurdawara. The case also primarily focused on the legitimacy of the general body meeting in February 2000 but the other treats were frightening to youth and parents who quite understandably do not want to subject their children to such activities. Much of the case involves Gurdawara politics into which the GGSCF was dragged in. The case was defended by the present administration of the Gurdawara but at a huge cost in lawyer fees.

On the more positive side the GGSCF having its own charitable status also puts a lot more responsibility on the children and youth. The challenge is to grow a foundation that is in keeping with vision of the GGSCF, that being:

*"A Foundation run by children/youth with a vision to help other children meet their basic needs and add meaning to their lives and to carry out the work in the spirit of the teachings of Sikh Gurus"*

The GGSCF believes the Gurdwaras are great institution, started by our Gurus for the teaching of Sikhism to the children and youth, a place to learn Gurbani, kirtan and sewa. The GGSCF would like to work with the Gurdwaras but also retain it's independence so that it can pursue it's own goals rather than be left (as experienced recently) at the mercy of changing Gurdawara committees and all the associated issues/problems than occur within such a system.

## MEGA CARNIVAL

Children, parents, youth, and adults were all having fun at the Mega Carnival that was organized with the support of G.S. United Soccer, Gursikh Sabha Canada, and the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation. On a very hot summer day of Saturday, July 27th, everyone cooled off with, well, with whatever suited him or her! The carnival had tons of activities for everyone that included, face painting, body mehndi, soccer target practice, jumping castles, a gladiator pit, and the very much anticipated Dunking Machine!



All games, music and of-course, lots of food, made for a fun filled day, all day! To top it off, the organizers even went out of their way, to have special guests arrive at the carnival and entertain the public. Yes, believe it or not, we saw Batman and Darth Vader at the carnival, and even did some dancing with them. Must say though, it must have been hard for them to cool off in their outfits! Well even if the heat was getting to them, the Clown definitely managed to lighten the mood

making everyone laugh and play! And well if that didn't help, there was always the Dunking Machine - well almost everyone enjoyed seeing the Uncle ji's get dunked in the cold water on a hot summer day! All in all, it was definitely a great day for everyone to come out and enjoy themselves, and spend time with their families and friends. On behalf of the GGSCF, congratulations to the organizers, Sidd and BA, for a successful carnival, and we look forward to enjoying another carnival next year!

## BHAGAT PURAN SINGH PARK

On August 25, 2002 there was a Nagar Kirtan at Scarborough Gurdawara and the official opening of Bhagat Puran Singh Park. Since the land was purchased in May of this year sewadars have been working to regrade, fence and landscape the area into a park that can be used by children and youth for sports activities. The sewadars under the direction of Ajmer Singh Sidhu and Jagdip Singh Sidhu carried out planting and built a gazebo for the sangat. The park was named after Bhagat Puran Singh by the Gurdawara committee after receiving suggestions from the sangat



Ujagar Singh Sidhu unveiled the sign to the park and the Panj Piara officially cut the ribbon at the end of the Nagar Kirtan. Bibi Abnash Kaur who is the 's representative in Canada was also present at the ceremonies and was presented with a sapora. The GGSCF provided signs on the gazebo about Bhagat Puran Singh for visitors to read and also has a display and video documentary about the life and work of Bhagat Puran Singh the founder of

At the recent summer camp attended by 158, the participants were asked who Bhagat Puran Singh Ji was and only 2 knew. It shows a great gap in the education of our children and youth. Maybe it is most appropriate to name the park under Bhagat Puran Singh as it will at least make them familiar with the name and hopefully some will seek to find out who he was.

Bhagat Puran Singh was born in 1905 and although he was not born a Sikh, he chose this path when he was fed and given shelter at a Gurdawara. His life changed when he met a spastic boy who did not have the use of his legs. Bhagat Puran Singh carried him on his back where ever he went for the next 14 years, he was in fact the legs of the boy who he later named Piara Singh. At the time of the partition of India in 1947 he was displaced with millions of other refugees from Lahore now in Pakistan to Amritsar in India. There on the railway station he saw the plight of thousands of refugees who had no one. They were the abandoned women, children, the old, the insane and the crippled. He started on the roadside a camp where everyone was welcome and given whatever assistance they needed. This may be getting food for them from the local Gurdwaras, washing the old and changing their clothes, carrying the sick to hospital for treatment, or just bathing and cremating the bodies of the dead. This was the birth of the Pingalwara Society that we know of today. Pingalwara means home of the crippled. For the rest of his life Bhagat Puran Singh helped those in poverty. He was seen roaming the streets of Amritsar where he would pick up the crippled and the insane that needed help and a place to stay. To the end he had no processions choosing to live with those he served. In 1992 he left this world but his spirit continues in the institution he created.

## EDITOR - Inderpal Kaur Wig

This year, the Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation has accomplished quite a few important tasks. It is not the events that I speak of, as I am confident they will only improve in success through time. This year, I am happy to say that the foundation is beginning to see growth in the number of participants and organizers from all around Toronto that have become involved in many of the events. The GGSCF has a mission of establishing something that our elders lack - UNITY. It is such a simple thing, and such an enormous part of Sikhism, and the teachings of our Gurus, yet our elders fail to not only practice it themselves, but they also fail to recognize it. The Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation does not exist in a geographical location, but in the hearts of each and everyone who believes in it, in its vision, and in its cause. We only hope that it grows and spreads its vision across the globe, without any obstructions caused by its geographical location.

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