

Introduction “Every child deserves a chance in life” is the driving force behind the *Alpha Children’s Home* (ACH), an orphanage located in Guyana, a small “third-world” country in South America. I strongly believe in ACH’s motto of providing every child with an opportunity to grow and materialize his or her dreams. As a safe haven to 29 abandoned youngsters ranging from infancy to age 21, ACH aims to nurture and care for vulnerable children of the villages. It is most critical for these vulnerable children to be in a home-like environment so they can realize their capabilities and aspirations. Solely supported from donations, ACH is in great need of support. I know this to be true because during my recent trip to Guyana, I had the opportunity to visit the orphanage and saw first-hand the need. The purpose of my endeavor is twofold: 1) to foster a safer and more sanitary environment at ACH and 2) to promote good hygiene habits for the village children.

Statement of Need The economic disparity in Guyana is well known, and most conspicuous in the villages. Orphans and vulnerable children can be seen roaming the streets barefoot, hungry, and drinking water from the muddy trenches, which leads to sickness and weakened spirits. Founded in 1991 by Pastor Lucius Bruyning and his wife Ester Bruyning, ACH’s mission “is to provide a safe haven where (vulnerable) children can call home, where their spiritual, physical, emotional and physiological needs are met in order to prepare them to become productive members of society.”¹ However, the infrastructure of ACH needs to be updated to achieve these goals, especially in regards to a more adequate and sanitized environment for the children. The goal of my project is to: **1) renovate the water filtration system to provide clean, safe drinking and washing water; 2) create a laundry area by acquiring a washing machine and by building cabinetry for organization and 3) to implement a sanitation/hygiene workshop to promote good health and good hygiene habits.** Peace can only be achieved through access to a healthy environment. It is especially significant for youngsters to grow up in a sanitary environment and develop good living habits because better health and wellness will lead to development and growth in the destitute villages.² This project will make a difference in the living conditions of these children by eliminating conflict and providing a cleaner structure for the children of the home.

Qualifications I was born in Guyana but my family migrated to the United States when I was three years old. Since then I have traveled back to Guyana several times and am familiar with the villages and the work of the orphanage. Thus, I will not encounter a language barrier or cultural barriers. Additionally, I possess valuable leadership skills as a result of my prior community service and volunteer experiences. During high school, I started a Literacy program in Schenectady, NY. I worked with Barnes & Nobles and the Schenectady County Public Library to offer reading workshops to youngsters around the community.

Partnerships ACH has confirmed that they are much in need of the assistance to be offered. Pastor Lucius, a well-respected and motivational leader in the community, has confirmed that local villagers will volunteer their labor. Contractor S. Jagmohan Nabbi in Guyana has agreed to oversee this community endeavor at a hugely discounted fee. The Shree Ram Mandir, a Hindu church in Schenectady, NY has agreed to host an event to raise money to purchase sanitary supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and towels. Also, Dr. Pachu Kumar, a pediatrician at Ellis Hospital, has agreed to assist me in designing a hygiene and sanitation maintenance guide – a simple “How To” that I will use during the hygiene workshop.

¹ www.alphaschildren.org. December, 2012.

² World Health Organization. www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/hygiene/en/ December, 2012.

Goals/ Implementation Strategies

Goal	How to accomplish goal
<p>1. Replace existing drainage pipes that need to be updated and install 3 new faucets in each sink along with a water filter installed in each sink. Replace the hot water tank (ACH recently raised funds to purchase a brand new hot water tank.)</p>	<p>1a. ACH has agreed to secure volunteers within the village to help with labor and contractor Nabbi will oversee the same along with his team of 5 men whom are all skilled in plumbing and electrical work. (3 men are certified in plumbing.)</p>
<p>2. Create a functional laundry area by providing ACH with a washer machine and by building cabinetry for storage of sanitary products.</p>	<p>2a. Acquire washer machine in Guyana. The laundry area will be located in a small room adjacent to the bathroom where there is existing water connection. 2b.Volunteers and the children at ACH will help with the painting and building of cabinetry.</p>
<p>3. Promote Hygiene and sanitation by implementing a workshop.</p>	<p>3a. Using the “How To” guide created with the assistance of Dr. Kumar, I will discuss good hygiene and living habits. 3b. Engage the children in creating “hygiene rules” to be more conspicuous around ACH (i.e. “wash hands before eating”; “wash hands after using the bathroom”; “brush teeth before going to bed and in the morning”</p>

Anticipated Timeline of Events In March, I will organize a fundraising event with the Shree Ram Mandir (a Hindu church in Schenectady, NY) and the money raised will be used to purchase sanitary supplies. In early April, I will meet with Dr. Kumar to create a chart on how to maintain good hygiene habits. During the week of July 28th, I will fly out to Guyana. During my first week in Guyana, I will meet with Pastor Lucius and his wife, the children at ACH and volunteers for the project as well as the workmen to discuss our goals and strategies. Also during the first week we will start working on the water filtration system. Based on conversations with Pastor Lucius, this may take up to 2 weeks. Afterwards, during Week 4, we will start working on the laundry area, which will take one week. During this time, I will engage the older children in helping to paint the walls and create cabinetry along with the assistance of community volunteers. During Week 5, I will hold hygiene workshops at ACH and engage the children in fostering good hygiene habits by creating posters of “good living rules” to be displayed throughout ACH. During the final days, I will evaluate living changes and impact of the updated water filtration system, laundry facility, and assess the impact of the hygiene workshop.

Project Sustainability Renovating the water filtration system so that the children of ACH have access to clean drinking and washing water is essential as it will benefit the children in the short term and long term. The local water authority in Guyana will annually inspect the filtration system to ensure sustainability. Promoting good living habits and hygiene will be assessed by the caretakers of ACH.

Potential conflicts I have recognized potential conflicts that may occur: 1) shortage of village volunteers; 2) renovating the water filtration system may take longer than the anticipated time; 3) too little money is raised to purchase hygienic items from the fundraiser and 4) Renovating the filtration system may cost more than anticipated. To address the first challenge, I would seek support from family friends from nearby villages. To address the second challenge, I have ensured that there is flexibility in the timeline. To address the third challenge, family friends and my family have offered to donate hygienic items as well as trying to raise funds individually. To address the last challenge, purchasing a washer machine will be a lower priority compared to addressing the filtration system.

Conclusion A sanitary environment is essential to achieve ACH’s goals of eliminating the spread of germs and sickness. In an orphanage that is home to youngsters of various ages, this endeavor to promote clean living is crucial as it sets the foundation for good health that is essential to the community’s development, growth and peace.