

Newsletter

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Message from the Principal

Kuzuzangpola! First of all let me wish you first a very Happy New Year - 2016, which as per Bhutanese Astrology corresponds to Fire Male Monkey Year.

As always, it is indeed a great pleasure for me to present you this newsletter spanning the entire second half of 2015. First and foremost, I am certain that as you read through these pages, you will notice the unfaltering commitment of two of our main supporters - Mario Fontana and Koenraad Foulon who again took huge effort to be at CTAS this year besides their already busy schedules. We were equally happy to welcome Lynne Fourie who accompanied Mr. Koenraad during their visit in November. We would also like to thank Lam and Anh for supporting our girls students' education for this year as well.



Asides from the normal and scheduled activities, this part of the year saw a few new developments that are noteworthy for the school's sustainability in the future. First and foremost, our alumni came together for the second time who were, above anything else, concerned about the school's sustainability. Secondly, through the support of Capital Group Companies and Mr. Koenraad Foulon, an authentic furniture business unit was established while its new showroom is opened at Kawangjangsa through the support of Choki family.

A fruitful international exchange visit was made again, generously sponsored by Alan and Patricia Bickell, comprising of 3 students, a teacher and myself to Switzerland from 24 August - 11 September 2015. The visit was a huge success and our sincere gratitude extends to Mr. Mario Fontana and Arianne Moser for making the trip as relevant as possible for us and the school.

Finally, it was a proud moment for the school, when one of our students, Sonam Tshering from the 6th level - painting, bagged the second prize in the 12th National Skills Competition organized by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources.

With this, may I present you our Winter 2015 newsletter and thank each and every one of you for your generous and continued support to our school.

With best wishes,

Sonam Choki

Parents- Teacher meeting

The second half of CTAS Parents'-Teacher meeting was held on 15th August 2015. The main purpose of the meeting is to share and discuss the mission of the school, disciplinary related problems, the preservation of culture, drop outs and improvement of the school etc.

At the meeting, the parents supported the steps that have been taken for the betterment of the school and the students. They also thanked the school and the donors from outside Bhutan for their full support and wish them long lives.



Visit to Switzerland from 24th Aug – 11th Sept 2015

The Principal, one teacher and three students (2 boys and 1 girl) from Choki Traditional Art School (CTAS) visited Switzerland from 24th Aug till 9th Sept 2015. We would like to thank Mario Fontana and the Fontana Foundation for the organization of this trip. We are also very grateful to Alan and Patricia Bickell for sponsoring it and to Arianne Moser and her family for letting all of us stay at her place and also for her active role in coordinating this wonderful two weeks for us.

We participated in an art workshop with Dominique, Annemarie, Mahroo and Gian in their Atelier in Schmerikon, a lithography workshop in Zurich, visited the wood carving school in Brienz and the BERNINA sewing machine company. In Bonstetten we visited the local school and had lots of meetings and excursions, including a trip to the Jungfrauoch and a get together with well-wishers of the school.

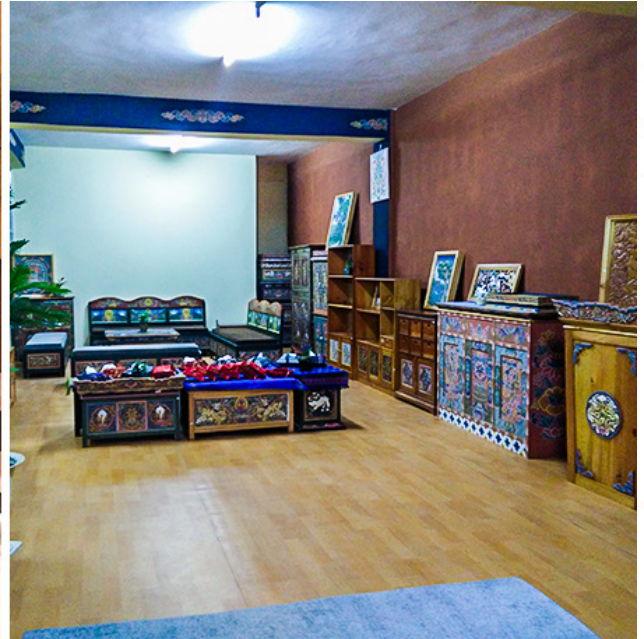
The objective of the visit was to see new approaches in collaboration and to learn outside CTAS and at the same time to understand and appreciate other cultures, values that will inspire our creativity and generate new ideas. In addition, the objective was also to expose the teacher and students to new sites and ideas and thus achieve excellence.



Authentic Furniture Business to help support revenue for CTAS

The school would like to thank Capital Group Companies and Mr. Koenraad for providing the support to launch the furniture business at our school. The main purpose of this furniture business is to help produce raw materials for our wood carving class, to be more diversified and innovative in the production of our wood products. This will allow us to generate additional income to support the sustainability of the school.

The Authentic Furniture Showroom was located at CTAS but because of its location away from the main town we had very few local visitors. From 25th September 2015 coinciding with Thimphu Festival the showroom was moved to the Choki Khangzang building, ground floor at Kawangjangsa near the Folk Heritage Museum in Thimphu. We would like to thank the Choki family for providing this space to the school free of charge.



School Picnic

This year the annual school picnic was held on 24th October 2015 at Chari Monastery north of the Thimphu valley. The staff and their families and the Choki families joined the school picnic. This is one event we all look forward to share and be together. It's also the one event when staff and students come along to prepare different dishes and play a variety of games together. The day ended with the Tashi labay dance and Tashi Tshekpā prayers for continuous peace and happiness.



Mr Mario Fontana's visit to CTAS

Mr. Mario Fontana, Fontana Foundation and Mr. Kurt visited our school for the second time on 14th November 2015. During his visit, he visited all the classrooms, the furniture production and the showroom.

After lunch Mr. Mario met with the CTAS safety team and teachers. He made valuable suggestions for the improvement of the safety at school and the work of the team. We would like to thank Mr Mario for his guidance and support to our school.



Visit of Mrs Linda and her friends

On the 15th November 2015, Mrs. Linda and thirteen of her friends from different parts of America visited our school. The main purpose for their visit at CTAS was to meet with students and to see their work. The group offered lunch to all staff and students.

During lunch the students and staff had the opportunity to sit with the guests, which lead to interesting discussions and a big boost for their self-confidence.

We thank Mrs. Linda and all her friends for the wonderful lunch and for the good experience we had together.



CTAS 2nd Alumni meeting

The second Alumni gathering was held on 21st November 2015 at our Multi Purpose Hall (MPH). 24 former students attended the meeting with our teachers, staffs and 11 students graduating in 2015. The discussions centered around the roles and responsibilities, issues and challenges of the alumni, alumni volunteer services and the sharing of experiences and knowledge with the school, the election of the new chairman and vice chairman for 2016, contributions to the school sustainability fund etc.

During the meeting our school founder Dasho Choki Dorji thanked all the Alumni for their active roles and support of our school. Dasho also awarded the letter of appreciation to those members who contributed to our school sustainability fund.

A daylong meeting ended with lunch and a photo session.



A way forward: Sustainability

The long term sustainability of CTAS is a major concern for the school, the Choki family as well as many well wishers who visited the school. The current experience reveals that it will be difficult to achieve sustainability for a long time, unless some changes are made. It is very difficult to finance the school from the student's class and practical work alone.

Currently while we have a good number of supporters and foundations supporting the school, it is timely that we come up with solutions to address the long-term challenges. The school is very grateful to all the generous supporters for their unprecedented support. With future funding uncertainties and to lessen the burden of all the well wishers and sponsors, it is timely that a workable solution be put in place.

Therefore, after a lot of deliberation within the family, staff and Alumni, we came up with the possible and viable strategy to establish a sustainable fund for the school, without disturbing the existing arrangements/system.

Therefore, the school together with the Alumni, have opened a sustainable fund account to begin this journey toward sustainability. We aim to generate Nu. 50,00,000 (\$ 81,967) by the end of 2020. We would like to thank all the supporters who believe in this mission.

Account summary: (on page 6)

Account Summary (contd/- from previous page):

Sl.No	From	Cash received in 2014	Cash received in 2015	Total in Nu.
1	Alumni contribution	1200	14350	15550
2	Bank Interest - BNB	323	19,341	19664
3	Lama Kuba Rimpoche	60000	60,000	120000
4	Sophie & friends	42500	-	42500
5	Boonserm guest	6000	-	6000
6	Donation from Choki.Org C/o Casey Hartnett	-	378,438	378438
7	CTAS/Sale outside-Choki.Org/2015	-	228,083	228083
8	Ronald Wixman, Nikolai Serban & Melissa Holtz	-	25,200	25200
9	Riter Traff, R C Traff	-	9,600	9600
10	Gabrielle Halcrow	-	12,200	12200
11	Sonam Jurmi CTAS Alumni donation	-	25,200	25200
12	Mimi Gingold & Susan Richardson. (Apa David daughter friend visit)	-	5,530	5530
13	Mrs. Phyllis and Rick	-	6,100	6100
14	Gerdina and Erwin Kessler. C/o Ama Jennifer	-	6,720	6720
15	Misc Donation	-	3,000	3000
	TOTAL	110023	793,762	903785

Total Fund received for CTAS Sustainability collected in Nu.

903,785

\$ 14,122

(1 USD = Nu.64)

Lopen Kuenzang (Embroidery teacher) shares his Delhi exchange experience

Lopen Kuenzang, our embroidery teacher from CTAS participated in Craft Exchange Programme on Embroidery Crafts and Cane & Bamboo & other Natural Fibres during India International Trade Fair (IITF), which was held for the duration from 14th – 27th November, 2015 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Lopen and on behalf of the school we would like to thank Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India and Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts (APIC), Bhutan for giving this opportunity to our school to be part of this great event.



The IITF is the biggest showcase of fair in New Delhi, the capital city of India. It

is a multi-product exhibition which has wide range of products on display and services with an aim to share the techniques, designs, patterns, processing, finishing etc. between the craft persons from various countries.

“By participating in such events I have come to understand different techniques and new ideas on how to produce quality art work. Further the interaction with many people from different part of the world helped me to learn and appreciate different cultural aspects. The knowledge and exposure that I have received will help me to transfer it to my students back at the school”

Final year study tour

This year the study tour for the 11 graduating students was held from 1st till 10th December 2015. From the early morning at around 7.30 am with the marching ceremony they departed from the school campus. The 10 day tour included a visit to all relevant institutes and organization in Thimphu, five dzongkhags namely Bumthang, Trongsa, wangdiphodrang, Punakha and Paro were also covered during their visit.

During their tour, students visited many important lhakhangs, dzongs, monasteries, parks, arts and crafts etc. They also got an opportunity to meet and interact with senior qualified artists and craftsmen in the Kingdom. The main purpose of the study tour is to explore and learn the significance of these arts and appreciate the values it holds in the life of many Bhutanese and the Country.



Annual Driglam Namzha presentation

This year's Annual Driglam Namzha (Strict code of traditional manner and etiquette) presentation was observed by the eminent Driglam Lopen Gangkar Wangdi, a retired national senior teacher for Driglam Namzha. During the presentation our school founder Dasho Choki Dorji, Principal, Vice Principal, teachers and staff witnessed the presentation on 11th December 2015.

A question and answer session on the meaning and usefulness of Driglam Namzha was held followed by a demonstration based on the conduct of body, mind and speech. Lopen Gangkar also stressed the importance of wearing kabney and rachu, of table manners and the importance of the Marchang ceremony.

During the presentation, Lopen Gangkar observed, made suggestions for improvements and gave feedback to the students. They were taught the traditional manners and ways of conduct which are very useful in their daily life. Such interactions help our students to understand and appreciate the values that our forefathers followed; it has also helped our students to apply the same etiquette in their daily life and keep these traditions alive.



The 12th National Skills Competition

The Department of Occupational Standards (DOS), Ministry of Labour and Human Resources conducted the 12th National Skills Competition from 4th till 6th November, 2015 at the Technical Training Institute-Rangjung, Trashigang. The Competition was held in the following trades: Furniture Making, Power Tiller Repairing, Masonry, Patra, Tshemdru and Lhadri.

Nine students from CTAS participated in the National competition. Sonam Tshering from 6th level Painting took the 2nd position while the others received certificates of Competency with scores above 70%.

Choki Nima from 3rd level Patra/wood carving, one of the participants from CTAS, said that the competition was very interesting and very competitive. He learned a lot by participating. He also said that he got the opportunity to meet many different people. "It is a great opportunity to participate and compete with students from other Zorig Institutions and senior artists, he said.

We would like to thank DOS, MoLHR for the opportunity given to our school and our students.



Mr. Koenraad and Lynne's Visits

On 18th December 2015, Mr Koenraad Foulon accompanied by Ms Lynne visited CTAS. It was a great privilege for all the students and staffs to meet them again in Bhutan. The school hosted a small reception at the campus to welcome our distinguish guest to CTAS with the marchang ceremony (offering wine to the divine sprits), National Anthem and the students singing the CTAS song (a song and prayer dedicated to all our supporters and friends).

In the principal address, she thanked Mr Koenraad for his continuous unwavering support extended to the school. Mr Koenraad and Lynne later visited the classrooms and interacted with the students. He also visited our Furniture production room and exhibition hall.

A short cultural program showcasing the traditional Bhutanese folk dances, mask dance, modern dances etc. were performed by the students. Once again all the CTAS family would like to thank Mr Koenraad and Lynne for their second visit at CTAS and for their continued support of our school.



Graduation Night



This year the graduation farewell dinner was held on 18th December 2015, at 6 PM on the school assembly ground. The school hosted a simple reception to welcome Mr Koenraad and Ms Lynne, the Choki family, Alumni, 11 graduating students and their parents and guardians.

The graduation farewell night program is a special program to make the graduating students feel self-confident and grateful. The whole idea of the farewell is to bring together all the important people and celebrate the success. The graduating students provided the dinner to the CTAS family as part of their expression of gratitude while the event was organised by the upcoming graduating students as a token of their appreciation. The Alumni also participated in the event and contributed to the farewell dinner expenses.

This event has helped strengthen the bond between our ex-students and the current students. In Mr Koenraad's address he introduced the concept in art called 'gravitas'. Mr. Koenraad said "on an individual level, gravitas requires each of you to not only follow the rigorous artistic practices developed at CTAS but to also put something of yourself into your work to create, in turn, something that your community, those around you, will interpret and appreciate. On the community level your artistic

creations render homage to the principles of your Buddhist religion. They contribute to the beauty, the cultural integrity and importantly the historical preservation of your culture, and indeed your country”

He also stated that the students are privileged to receive their education, and that they have worked hard for it. The dinner in appreciation of their equally hard-working teachers and for their dedicated and forward-looking administrators of CTAS, is a first good step towards giving back. Now, as individual artists, their role beyond CTAS is to continue to perfect their talents, to use them with pride and dignity in their work, in effect to develop that ‘gravitas’ that he spoke about earlier. For an artist who strives for sensitivity becomes different from the rest. And as students express themselves through their work they will give back to their communities for the benefit and happiness of all.

We thank Mr. Koenraad for sharing his words of wisdom and for providing guidance to our graduating students and the CTAS family.



Kezang Melam's story

Kezang Molam, a CTAS graduate student (year 2015), from the Patra section is from the Village of Jabana under Paro Dzongkhag from a family of 6 siblings. His father's name is Nidup and his mother's Yeshim. He went to school till 4th grade. Both his parents are farmers and work in the field. His family did not have the financial means to send him to school, which is why he joined CTAS.

At CTAS he took up sculpturing (Jingzo) for two years. Because of the very low number of students the course was closed. He joined the carving class. He learned a lot. Going to school was like the light that shines in the dark. He can't believe that he successfully completed his five years of studies.

He remembers the first day when his father accompanied him to school and told him that this is the place where he should work hard and become somebody in life. He confessed that in the beginning he didn't have any friends and felt lonely and sad. However his father's



advice made him strong. Today, as he stands here, he has many friends that he didn't know before.

Today, he feels very fortunate to be surrounded by many good people. He thanks Dasho Choki Dorji and his families, teachers, staffs and all the supporters of the school for giving him and his friends the opportunity to study at the school. All the graduating students were full of joy and excitement and did not realize how fast the time passed.

Once again he thanks the Principal, the teachers, Dasho Choki, friends and all the supporters for providing light in his life. He prays for good health, happiness and a long life.

Namgay shares her experiences

My name is Namgay Zam. I graduated from CTAS last year in the art of Embroidery. I am from Kabesa, Thimphu. I am 21 years old. I have a single parent, my mother Tandin Wangmo. I have 2 brothers and 1 sister. I went to school only up to 4th grade and joined CTAS because my mother could not pay for further schooling.

When I first joined CTAS I was not sure how I would perform and eventually secure my livelihood. Today standing here after completing the full 5-year program, I am confident that I will find a good job. I am currently working under one of the best teachers at Chubachu, Thimphu. With all the knowledge and skills that



I have acquired at the school, I stand out as a person full of confidence and am ready to take on new tasks and to be a productive citizen. I am content and very fortunate to have joined this school and, apart from earning my livelihood, I will also be contributing to the preservation and promotion of our art and culture, which is fundamental in promoting Gross National Happiness, a development goal of our country.

I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart all our teachers, staff, all our supporters and particularly Mr. Koenraad and Leila for giving us this opportunity to study at this school without which I would not be the person that I am today. Thank you everyone and we will always remember your kindness and good times we enjoy at this school.

An Alumnus shares his story



Yeshe Dorji is one of the successful graduate students from the wood carving section. He graduated in 2013. Yeshe is from Ugyenchholing village, Tang Geog under Bhumthang district. His mother is a single parent. He is the eldest of six siblings.

Yeshe studied till class ten and was unable to qualify. He joined this school in 2009. His cousin had told him about CTAS. He does not come from a wealthy family. In the first year at CTAS he felt homesick because this was the first time away from his parent and in a boarding school. After weeks and months he got used to his new life and comfortable with his situation.

He is currently working as one of the staff at Choki Handicrafts,

Thimphu and says that working during his off hours he can generate additional income for his family.

He would like to thank all supporters, Dashi Choki Dorji, the principal, teachers and all his friends who have helped him become a proud and happy person. Lastly he would like to advise his younger friends to work hard and not to leave the school early. Completing the full program offers the students better opportunities, also in terms of monetary benefits. He advises all students at CTAS to have patience and complete the program successfully. He wishes them all the best.



**Wishing you a
Happy New Year 2016 -
The Year of Fire Male Monkey**

TO SUPPORT US, PLEASE CONTACT US AT THE
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