

March 1, 2016

Greetings Friends,

2015 year was a very special year for The Howley Foundation, and 2016 is off to a great start.

We are happy to announce The Howley Foundation (THF) has changed its name to US Maher Friends. This transition began several months ago, and is now official. THF's collaboration with other US supporters of Maher was growing so beautifully, and it felt important to change our nonprofit's name to best reflect our mission. Brenda Howley continues in the role of Executive Director, while co-founder Mikaela Keepin is the nonprofit's Director.

In 2015 Sister Lucy, the founder and director of Maher, spent five autumn weeks traveling to 11 states to attend conferences, give talks and meet with donors. Led by USMF, supporters from these 11 states collaborated to organize and orchestrate the tour. The tour was fantastic.

The Howley Foundation's mission has not changed. Since 2012 Maher has been THF's sole beneficiary. US Maher Friends raises funds for Maher and also serves as a conduit for all money going from the US to Maher. We send 100% to Maher and donations are tax-deductible. USMF also spreads awareness about Maher and raises money to support Maher youth in international educational opportunities. Learn more about all of this below in our first newsletter!

Maher continues to astound us with their amazing work, and we continue to be honored to help support their mission. Thanks to all of you for helping to make 2015 so great for USMF. Support of all kinds is greatly appreciated.

Best wishes and many thanks,

Brenda Howley & Mikaela Keepin

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Newsletter #1
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Catherine Willson, Sister Lucy Kurien, Brenda Howley

The Howley Foundation Name Change & 2015 Figures

Brenda Howley founded The Howley Foundation (THF) because she wanted to help children in India. She was inspired to do so after raising her daughter Tanuja who she adopted in Calcutta in 1984. In 2012 Brenda visited Maher and found their children's homes to be her dream incarnated. Brenda then decided Maher would be THF's sole beneficiary. In 2015 Brenda chose to rename THF to best reflect her mission. US Maher Friends (USMF) became the nonprofit's official title in October of 2015.

USMF sent more than \$60,000 to Maher in 2015. This astounding sum was raised by USMF members, and was collected by individuals and foundations using USMF as a conduit for money to go directly to Maher.

USMF sends 100% of what is collected to Maher. We consist of volunteer members and we cover all costs of running our nonprofit independently.

Sister Lucy's 2015 US Visit

Sister Lucy, founder and director of Maher, visited the US from September 16th to October 24th. She was hosted by US Maher Friends in 11 states, speaking to audiences at universities, places of worship, Rotary clubs, retreat centers and more. The impetus of this tour was Sister Lucy being awarded a membership to the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI).

Sister Lucy was invited to apply for the membership by the Clinton Foundation in 2014. The fee for a CGI membership is \$20,000. A complementary membership is a great honor bestowed to a very few leading humanitarians from around the world.

2015 was a very exciting first year for US Maher Friends.



Maher is an interfaith NGO based in Pune, India serving three Indian states. Maher has shelters for women, homes for children and for disabled adults. Maher also conducts extensive grassroots community outreach work focused on education, financial growth and women's rights. Learn more: MaherAshram.org



Sister Heart, The Story of an Indian Nun

This documentary about Sister Lucy's life was released May 2015 in Austria.

When it was learned Sr Lucy had been chosen, we quickly finalized the plans for her to attend the CGI Annual Meeting in New York City, 9/16 – 9/29. Many great connections were made for Maher at the CGI meeting, including with President Bill Clinton, with Bill Gates and with actress Freida Pinto.



During her tour Sister Lucy also attended the 2015 Parliament of World Religion conference in October, in Salt Lake City, UT. Sister Lucy's presentation to Harvard's International Development Student Group, organized by Anusha Pamula, was another highlight of the trip. \$18,000 was raised during the tour, and the resulting contributions are sure to be ongoing.

Sister Heart, the documentary about Sister Lucy's life produced by Roca Film of Austria, was also released in the US on this tour. Sister Heart is a beautiful 70-minute film. Go to usmaherfriends.org to learn how to watch the film for free.

Maher Youth in the US and Europe

Gaus Sayyad: Peace Camp Counselor

All who know Gaus Sayyad know his charisma, exuberance and infallible optimism. These skills were put to excellent use by Gretchen Rowe at her two-week day camp in Seattle, WA in July of 2015. Gaus led the 25 participants of Peace Camp, along with two other counselors, Elizabeth and Emerson. Gaus has lived at Maher since age seven. This trip was his second to the US—he accompanied Sr Lucy on an international tour in 2014.

After counseling at the Peace Camp, Gaus attended the international Power of Hope camp, held at Widby Island, WA. Gaus also attended a Gender Reconciliation International workshop in New Mexico hosted by Cynthia Brix and Will Keepin who are long-time friends and supporters of Maher.



Gaus, left, with Elizabeth, Emerson, Gretchen and campers at Peace Camp

Ravina Kate Studying in the US

Ravina Kate is a young woman who was raised at Maher from age 13. She attended a prestigious international high school in India called the United World College.

Upon completing this program she was granted a full scholarship to Westminster College in Fulton, MO. Ravina began her undergraduate college career in the fall of 2015, and is doing very well there.

Ravina spent her winter break with US Maher Friends Clare Doyle, Jim McGinniss, Mikaela Keepin, Caleb Elder and others in and around Burlington, VT.

Ravina has brought tremendous pride to the Maher family, as she is the first “Maher kid” to study abroad, which has been a dream of Sister Lucy’s for her children for many years.

During her time in Vermont Ravina performed dance, cooked a lot of Indian food, was on a local radio show, took dance and yoga classes, experienced snow for the first time and enjoyed some much deserved relaxation.

One aspect of supporting Maher USMF is committed to is supporting the aspirations of Maher youth, especially where pursuing opportunities for international travel are concerned.



Ravina with her Vermont hosts Clare, Jim and Oakley

Aarti and Amar Study at UWCs

Just as Ravina Kate spent her last two years of high school at a the UWC in Mahindra, India, two Maher youths are currently attending the same program at different campuses. Aarti Sayal and Amar Choudhari both spent last year at the UWC in Mahindra doing a “foundation year.” This program is designed for youth who are great UWC candidates, but who lack the English skills needed to succeed in the academically rigorous program. After spending the year studying English at the UWC Mahindra campus, Aarti was accepted to the UWC in Netherlands, and Amar to the UWC in Germany. Maher and USMF are incredibly proud of Aarti and Amar, and we look forward to the continuation of Maher’s relationship with the UWCs.

Learn about the United World Colleges at UWC.org.

USMF is always looking for more international educational opportunities for Maher youth. We welcome connections and ideas!



Aarti, Amar, Ravina at their 2015 UWC graduation. Ravina received an International Baccoloriate Diploma, and Aarti and Amar received certificates for completing their foundation year course.

Marigold Holiday Express: A Tribute, A Benefit

Burlington, Vermont musician Bob Wagner learned about Maher in 2013 and has met Sister Lucy twice during her US visits. He spent time in India years ago, so has good perspective on the importance of Maher's work. On December 19th Bob presented to Vermont a marvel of a show: He and 17 other local, acclaimed musicians recreated George Harrison's famous 1971 benefit, *Concert for Bangladesh*. The show was a truly special event. The music was amazing, the energy magical, and Ravina Kate opened the show with a beautiful self-choreographed dance. The Holiday event raised \$5,000, 100% for Maher. We at US Maher Friends are grateful to Bob, all of the musicians, to the venue Higher Ground and to the event's sponsors: Hen of the Wood, Lost Nation Brewery and Citizen Cider.



Ravina, dressed to perform at the Marigold Holiday Express benefit show. She gave a fantastic performance of her own choreography.



The Marigold Holiday Express performing on 12/19/15. Bob Wagner is center, on guitar with long hair and a black hat. Notice the beautifully decorated stage including Maher emblem batiks!

We are also very grateful to **Shantala**, a Washington-based Kirtan music group who recently collaborated with Bellingham USMFs on a benefit for Maher. Shantala has done several benefits for Maher.

US Friends Visit Maher

We feel the most rewarding way to be involved with Maher is of course to spend time at Maher homes in India. It's also the best way to fully grasp the breadth and importance of their service. Maher welcomes guests with unparalleled hospitality, making our stay with them comfortable, meaningful and fun.



Sister Lucy and Hira, Maher's President, with Mikaela, Erica and Zekai of Vermont

In early 2015 Alex Gramps of Seattle spent three months at Maher, her third trip there. Darcy Cunningham and Deborah Adele of Maine spent November At Maher. Their trip included a journey to the northern state of Jharkhand, where Maher has a children's home and grassroots village projects.

Now in early 2016, Gretchen Rowe and Elizabeth Keyser (Seattle), Sherry Helmke (Chicago), Katie Norman, Karen Norman and Jacob Norman (Illinois), Mikaela Keepin, Caleb Elder, Catherine Willson, Erica Westling and Zekai Lewin (Vermont) are spending time at Maher. Eight year-old Zekai is the first child from the US to visit Maher.



Gretchen Rowe and friends at Maher



Alex Gramps celebrating Holi festival with Maher friends

Three students from Bennington College in Vermont also did their 2016 January field work term at Maher. Sabina, Maria and Diane were the third group of Bennington College students to spend time at Maher.

Maher Youth Train as Gender Reconciliation Facilitators

Cynthia Brix, Will Keepin and Patrick Fischer of Gender Reconciliation International (GRI) were at Maher for the 19th Maher anniversary celebration, then went to Bangalore to conduct a five-day Gender Reconciliation workshop and facilitator training, which four Maher young adults completed. Cynthia and Will have been supporters of Maher since 2003. Learn more about their important work here: GenderReconciliationInternational.org. Punam Saxena, Sayli Londhe, Gaus Sayyad and Mangesh Pol all had wonderful feedback to give about their experience in the training, and plans are underway to begin GRI workshops with Maher staff and youth.

Plans for 2016

USMF is very pleased with the outcome of our first official year, and we look forward to seeing what 2016 will bring. We will certainly be working hard to support Maher's work, as we believe very strongly in its value. Some things we're looking forward to in the coming year are:

- **Supporting the creation of a Maher home in Calcutta:** Brenda Howley's daughter Tanuja was adopted from Calcutta, a city in the northern Indian state of West Bengal. It is Brenda and Tanuja's dream to help more children from Calcutta, and Maher has agreed to setup a home for children there. Land has been secured for the home, so in 2016 USMF will raise money to purchase the land and to fund the building of a home.
- **Bringing youth to attend camps at the United World College in New Mexico:** We hope this will be our third year bringing youth to attend the amazing international summer camp, the Global Leadership Forum. The UWC USA has offered full scholarships to two Maher youths each year since 2013 and USMF raises the funds for their travel. (Sadly some have not been able to go due to the difficulty of obtaining Visas). USMF expects to find out soon if the scholarships will be offered again.
- **Gaus to Peace Camp:** Gaus will be returning to be a counselor at Peace Camp 2016, for 4 weeks in July-August. We'll see what else the trip will bring for him!

- **Maher's 19th anniversary:** Sister Lucy founded Maher on February 2nd, 1997 so this year marked their 19th year of service. There was a big party and celebration, with beautiful performances by talented Maher youth and of course a big, delicious feast open to all. February 2nd of 2017 will be the biggest celebration Maher has seen to date—their 20th anniversary!
- **Sister Lucy to accept the Indian Government's Nari Shakti Award:** On March 8th, International Women's Day, Maher centers will be busy holding women's rights rallies and awareness programs. Meanwhile, **Sister Lucy will be in Delhi to accept a national award for excellence in advancing women's empowerment!** The Nari Shakti Puraskars (Women Power Awards) will be presented by President Pranab Mukherjee. This annual award is a huge honor in India and is sure to help Maher become even more visible as a leading NGO in humanitarian activism. Sister Lucy insists the award belongs to the staff of Maher who work with such heart-filled, tireless effort to help their sisters and brothers Rise to New Life. Congratulations, Maher!
- **Website expansion and more:** We're pleased with our new website, usmaherfriends.org, and we plan to continue to add content and features. Go there now to check it out and to donate! 100% of your contribution will go straight to Maher. Stay tuned as we continue to grow our nonprofit. Contact us to get involved! Thank you to all our supporters, and most importantly to our dear friends at Maher. Thousands of people are safer, stronger, happier and empowered because of your efforts. We applaud you with deep gratitude and awe.



usmaherfriends.org

Check out our new site!

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