



Issue 4 - May 2009

Dear fellow members of the TS and TOS around the world,

We hope you are enjoying keeping in touch with what is happening in the TOS internationally. Our international electronic newsletter aims to keep you up to date with organisational developments, to bring you information to inspire your service work within or outside the TOS and to help you get to know TOS members outside your own country.

This fourth issue introduces some of the TOS team in the United Kingdom and shares news of our International Secretary's campaigning on the streets of Paris as well as TOS news from Canada, India, France and Australia. You'll also find information about a web organisation that can put you in touch with human rights campaigns around the globe, an article on the health risks of factory farming, several inspirational items and the first of a series of articles on service, by Mirabai Bush.

Remember that the newsletter is designed to be read while you are connected to the internet.

Please consider sending photographs of your TOS activities and news items that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. We would welcome your contributions, either through your National TOS Director/President/Coordinator/Correspondent or directly to the editors at: carolyn.tosinternational@gmail.com

Meet some of the TOS team in the United Kingdom

The TOS (UK) has been promoting the application of theosophical principles for just over 100 years. Its activities include raising funds, making donations to various causes and individual members helping charities in their own locality. [Read more](#)

TOS news from around the world

Find out about TOS activities in Canada, France, Orissa in India and Brisbane in Australia.

[Read more](#)

What's new on the International TOS website?

The educational sponsorship program in Pakistan is the new [Featured Project](#) on our International TOS website. Read about how this TOS project is providing educational opportunities right through to university for girls and boys living in poverty and turning their lives around. The new [Featured Article](#) is an extract from a talk, *The Spiritual Basis of Service*, given at the International Convention in 2008 by prominent Chennai TOS member, Dr Sunita Maithreya. And of course there are additions to the TOS photo gallery and the Inspiration section. Go to <http://international.theoservice.org>

Health dangers from factory farms

The recent world-wide alert over the possibility of a swine flu pandemic has raised serious questions about the health risks associated with factory farms. [Read more...](#)

Act from the heart

Once we begin to understand the path of action, we still have many practical steps to take in finding our way into appropriate service. We have to begin somewhere. This essay is the first in a series by Mirabai Bush that provides a guide for compassion in action. [Read more](#)

Are you interested in supporting human rights campaigns?

Avaaz.org is a global web movement with a simple democratic mission: to close the gap between the world we have, and the world most people everywhere want. Across the world, most people want stronger protections for the environment, greater respect for human rights, and concerted efforts to end poverty, corruption and war. Avaaz means *Voice* in many Asian, Middle Eastern and Eastern European languages. [Go to Avaaz website](#) (www.avaaz.org)

UN International Days

For information on UN International Days from [June to September](#) 2009.

Sand and stone

Enjoy this short parable about relationships. [Read more](#)

Jasmine

Here is an inspiring story of a dog whose caring makes no distinctions between animal species.

[Read more](#)

Would you like to receive this on-line newsletter automatically?

- a) To sign up, you only have to send a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.
- b) If you do not want to receive future newsletters you can easily unsubscribe. All that is needed is a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Unsubscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.

With best wishes,

Carolyn and Diana

*Diana Dunningham Chapotin is the International Secretary of the TOS and
Carolyn Harrod is the National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia.*

The ideal reward for service is an increased power to love and therefore to serve.

G.S. Arundale

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Meet some of the TOS team in the United Kingdom

The TOS (UK) has been promoting the application of theosophical principles for just over 100 years. Its activities include raising funds, making donations to various causes and individual members helping charities in their own locality.

Since 2007, the TOS (UK) has been encouraging Lodges in the English TS Section to have an ambassador for the TOS. These Ambassadors promote the TOS amongst Lodge members and in general try to raise the profile of the TOS within the Lodge.

We invite you to meet some of their key workers and learn about a few of their service activities.

Maureen Atkinson, Chair, is the unflappable Captain of the Good Ship TOS (UK) steering its course with a steady hand and keen foresight. At her initiative the sixth form girls at Westholme School, Blackburn, Lancashire, have been encouraged to knit teddies. Mrs Pamela Martin, Head of her year, as well as her other duties, teaches knitting and encourages the school to work together for the benefit of others. Maureen goes to the school every year to speak to the girls about the TOS and receive the teddies.



Cornelia Crowther is a dedicated worker of the TOS (UK) flying the flag for the TOS at every opportunity. At meetings held at Theosophical Society headquarters at 50 Gloucester Place, London, Cornelia has a stall of items to sell to raise funds for the TOS. Besides this, she takes items to sell at meetings in other places when Colin Price has been invited to give a talk. In addition, Cornelia organises music concerts to raise funds for the TOS. She is a real gem.



Every organisation needs a good treasurer. The TOS (UK) could not have asked for a better one than Greta Walker. Greta balances the books, collects the membership subscriptions and donations, banks the funds raised and sends out the TOS (UK) donations made each year to the various charities that they support.



Cynthia and Atma Trasi (below) are the National Coordinator and Secretary of the TOS (UK). To the right of them are helpers, Maureen Ford and Ivy Pope.



Every Christmas, TOS (UK) and TS members and friends, especially in the North West Federation of the Theosophical Society in England, fill empty shoe boxes with various items such as toiletries, chocolate, etc. and wrap them up as presents to hand out to the homeless and old people all over the world.

Undoubtedly, the biggest project that the TOS (UK) has taken on is knitting teddies. The scheme was set up by an organisation called Teddies for Tragedies and about twelve years ago, the TOS (UK) adopted this scheme and got members, relatives and friends interested in knitting teddy bears. During this period they have sent some 9,000 teddies abroad. Teddies have been donated from as far afield as the Orkney Islands and even from TS members in Italy!



You will have heard the phrase 'breeding like rabbits' but surely not 'breeding like teddy bears'! Well, that seems to be the case in Cynthia and Atma's home for the last 15 months or so. At present, they have large black plastic bin-bags filled with beautifully knitted colourful teddy bears waiting to be transported to the warehouse from where they will be distributed abroad in third world countries to poor children in hospitals. Doctors who treat children in third world countries are asking for them, as they have found that children who have their own teddy to cuddle in their cots get better quicker than those who don't have one. Each child keeps their own teddy and can take it home, so the doctors need a continual supply.

When you think *TOS (UK)* you tend to also think *teddies*, so it's no surprise that to commemorate the Centenary of the TOS in 2008, they produced bookmarks and a set of colourful A6 size greeting cards in 4 different designs incorporating the teddies. The cards are blank inside for personal messages and are suitable for any occasion. They are being sold as



packs of 4 different cards with envelopes, for £1, to raise money for the various charities that TOS (UK) supports.



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Theosophical Order of Service International Newsletter

TOS news from around the world

TOS in Canada

In April, the Calgary Branch of the TOS in Canada helped out in sorting books and packing boxes of books for an early May book sale to assist Calgary Reads Society, an early literacy initiative that provides support to children in the school setting who are experiencing difficulties in learning to read.

Good spirits, congeniality and a sense of accomplishment made their volunteer efforts a worthwhile experience.

The photo to the right shows, from left to right, Raelyn [redacted], Svetlana Borovko, Lorraine Christensen, Henning Christensen and Kali Readwin (TOS Project Coordinator).

They are outside the CBC Radio headquarters in Calgary which hosted the book packing.



TOS in France

Many TS and TOS members work actively for animal welfare. Here we see the International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin campaigning in the streets of Paris for alternative methods to animal testing.





Over the past 30 years, the TOS in France has given many hundreds of boxes of clothing, toys, books, etc. to French citizens in distress through unemployment etc. TOS President, Michel Chapotin, makes regular deliveries to the needy.

TOS in Orissa, India

The official guests on the dais for the Mahabharat TOS Group's Centenary celebrations. The President, Orissa Region is second from the left (with white sari) and in the centre, the Chief Guest, Sri Muralidhar Chandrakant Bhandare, the Governor of the State of Orissa.

The Mahabharat TOS Group is very active running educational, health and welfare programs for destitute women, helping them toward confidence and economic independence.



The Governor of Orissa inaugurates the Centenary function by formally lighting the lamp.

Deepa Padhi, the energetic and compassionate Secretary of the Mahabharat TOS Group, Orissa Region is on the left in the white sari with black border.

The Governor of Orissa presents Shri Kailash Satpathy with the *Besant Selfless Service Award, 2008* for his personal sacrifice and service to society.





On behalf of the Mahabharat TOS Group, the Governor of Orissa presents a cheque to the Secretary, Indian Red Cross Society for rehabilitation of HIV children.

TOS in Brisbane, Australia

In March the Brisbane TOS Group in Australia held a fabric painting workshop to raise funds to support a literacy home-school in Pakistan. This was a wonderful opportunity for members and friends to share their creativity and support TOS projects.



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Health dangers from factory farms

With the possibility that the world was on the edge of a swine flu pandemic, many questions have recently been asked about the origins of the virus. In an article in *New Scientist*, 29 April 2009, it was reported that:

Local reports in La Gloria (Mexico) blamed pig farms in nearby Perote owned by Granjas Carroll, a subsidiary of US hog giant Smithfield Foods. The farms produce nearly a million pigs a year.

Smithfield Foods, in a statement, insists there are "no clinical signs or symptoms" of swine flu in its pigs or workers in Mexico. That is unsurprising, as the company says it "routinely administers influenza virus vaccination to swine herds and conducts monthly tests for the presence of swine influenza." The company would not tell 'New Scientist' any more about recent tests. USDA researchers say that while vaccination keeps pigs from getting sick, it does not block infection or shedding of the virus.



While Smithfield Corporation, the largest pig producer in the world, denies any connection between their pigs and the outbreak of flu, the WHO has been saying for many years that "a new pandemic is inevitable" and experts from the European Commission and the FAO have cautioned that the rapid move from smallholdings to industrial pig production is in fact increasing the risk of development and transmission of disease epidemics. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warn that scientists still do not know the extent to which infectious compounds produced in factory farms affect human health.

Studies abound of the horrific conditions endured by pigs in concentrated large-scale operations, and the devastating economic impact on small-farmer communities of these huge operations. Smithfield itself has already been fined \$12.6m and is currently under another federal investigation in the US for toxic environmental damage from pig excrement lakes.

These factory farms are places of torture for animals. Thousands of pigs are brutally crammed into dirty warehouses and sprayed with a cocktail of drugs. Sadly, because of increased global meat consumption these factories are rapidly multiplying, and along with them so are the risks to human health.

So there are three good reasons why we should be concerned and speak out against factory farming:

- animal cruelty;
- the impact on small-farmers; and
- the dangers to our health.

Write to your local Minister of Agriculture, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) asking them to investigate the operation of factory farms and to develop regulations for these farms to prevent cruelty to animals and to protect global health.

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First Steps - Act from the Heart by Mirabai Bush

Extracts from Part Two of the book Compassion in Action: Setting Out On the Path of Service (Ram Dass and Mirabai Bush, NY: Bell Tower, 1992) are to appear in the next several issues of our electronic newsletter. This helpful series of essays is prefaced by the following remarks: Once we begin to understand the path of action, we still have many practical steps to take in finding our way into appropriate service. We have to begin somewhere. And often the beginnings are confusing or difficult. Here is a guide into the world of service, a little help on the path, some suggestions to ease the entry, a handbook for compassion in action.

Once we are called by the suffering around us, the path of action encourages us to respond from the deepest, most conscious, best informed, and most intuitive place we know. We listen and question and look for ways that not only relieve the immediate suffering but also go to the root of the problem. We get in touch with who we are inside, and we remember that everyone else is very much like us, longing for basic human needs to be met, for a peaceful and nourishing life, and for love. We remember we all share that great gift, the human heart, and we try to keep it open and act from it.

For many of us wanting to change things, it feels too risky to listen to our hearts. We lean toward the conventional, the sensible, and the efficient, and we miss the opportunity to contribute what is most important about us — our own understanding of what is true and unifying. Of course, we need to be practical also, but only to serve what starts in the heart. This is the source of radical and enduring change. We need to listen for what we know to be true, and do what we love to do.

We may need to think about service in a completely new way if we are to find an opportunity to do something we love. Our first thought may be to use our most expert skill, the thing we do best in our daily work, such as repairing cars, massaging aching bodies, practising law, or negotiating international peace. But sometimes we need to look at our other talents and skills. We often think of these as hobbies, but these activities may be just what we need to perform truly effective service. Maybe we can help heal the world through arranging flowers, writing poetry, or baking bread in a shelter. Why not? The 'serious' methods that have been tried — from the war on poverty to the war in the Gulf — haven't ended the pain; often they have created more. We need to free our minds if we are to find new paths through the dark forest of suffering.

Finding the time and space to do what we love can be difficult; we all already have full lives. So sometimes we have to change our present situation dramatically to make space, and sometimes we fit it into our existing life, especially when that life includes children or others who depend on us. A woman who is a mother, wife, homeowner and therapist sees on television a South African policeman bring his club down hard on a black man's head; the man falls to the ground and people run over to him in panic. She becomes haunted by the image and wonders what she can possibly do about human rights in South Africa. She wants to help, but she may not feel able to add more responsibility to her life. Once she thinks of something she'd like to do, she also has to make sure that it is not going to add so much stress to her life that she gives it up. She may make a better contribution addressing flyers or serving food at a fund-raiser, if she enjoys that, than devising a boycott strategy or traveling to Johannesburg, even if those options are in some ways appealing. It's important to know what each of us loves and yet what each of us can do so that we can find service that is both appropriate and deep enough to be satisfying and renewing.

This exercise may help you to find a means of service that will come from what you do well and love. Sit quietly. Either say out loud or write down the words 'The way I'd really love to help is . . .' Keep it going.

One friend, who had been haunted by thoughts of people living in welfare hotels and on the streets, wrote, 'The way I'd really love to help is to work with homeless mothers, because I know if I were homeless I would be scared and tired. But I don't know how I could be helpful. What I'd really love to do is use my camera to take pictures, but what good would it do? What I'd really love to do is be together as people, not relating to houses but to each other. What I'd really love to do is have fun together because I know that when you are stressed it's hard to have fun, but that doesn't sound right somehow...' These rambling thoughts became a small project, in which, after talking to homeless mothers about what they would want, she taught them to photograph their children. The photographs became a gallery show, which raised public awareness about the issue. To go with the photographs of the children, she created portraits of their mothers. The show was eloquent; people saw the beauty, the humanity, the joy, and the sadness of these families without homes. The young women not only gained treasured photographs of their children but developed the sense of mastery that comes from learning a new skill. And our friend was able to do what she really wanted to do.

Richard Sandler, by contrast, is an accomplished New York journalistic photographer. One of his concerns is the number of homeless people and the number of people walking by them without paying attention. His extraordinary images of these two worlds coexisting inches apart without contact have been shown in a number of galleries. While doing this work, Richard also began to want to do something more and something different, and he began to play the saxophone in a place that needed the healing and had interesting acoustics: the subway, where, as he says, 'people walk around in a bubble of territorial exclusion' that is rarely penetrated. As he acted on this idea, two things happened: the music at times entered the bubbles, surprising and waking people up with its beauty, and the money that was dropped into his saxophone case he dropped into the hands of the homeless who were also hanging around listening. The best response, he said, came from people who weren't asking for it but who clearly needed it. 'The smiles on their faces were something to believe', he said. 'What is this? Who am I? Is this really happening? Is this New York? It was fabulous.' He knew this wasn't changing city policy on low-cost housing or real estate development, but was what felt right for him at the time. And who doesn't understand what healing music can bring into the world?

We need to care more about one another and to ease another's pain, or a great blanket of suffering is going to drift down and cover us in sadness. So start your list. 'The way I'd really love to help is ...'

We are all trying to find what it is that we love to do so that life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our innermost being and reality, so that we feel the rapture of being alive. It's time to get started: to act from the heart, to do what we love with compassion, to walk together down one of those paths that leads home.

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UN International Days from June to September 2009

The United Nations was built on spiritual principles and universal values such as peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, justice, respect, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility. TOS groups will therefore find that many UN designated International Days provide opportunities for promoting the theosophical principles underpinning TOS work as well as networking with similar community groups in supporting relevant UN activities.

June 4: International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression

June 5: World Environment Day (slogan: Kick the Habit! Towards a Low Carbon Economy)

June 12: World Day Against Child Labour

June 17: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

(UN Convention to Combat Desertification)

June 20: UN World Refugee Day

June 26: International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime launched a 3-year campaign on 26 June 2007 with the slogan, "Do drugs control your life? Your life. Your community. No place for drugs." The campaign will focus on illicit drug trafficking in 2009.

Also **International Day in Support of Victims of Torture**

July 5: International Day of Cooperatives

July 11: World Population Day

July 15: World Youth Day

July 17: World Day for International Justice, which commemorates the adoption of the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, the Rome Statute, on July 17, 1998.

August 9: International Day of the World's Indigenous People

Coincides with the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People; 2005-2014.

August 12: International Youth Day

August 17-23: World Water Week

August 23: International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

September 8: International Literacy Day

Coincides with United Nations Literacy Decade (2003 - 2012) "Literacy as Freedom".

September 10: World Suicide Prevention Day

On average, almost 3000 people commit suicide daily.

September 15: International Day of Democracy

September 21: International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations as an annual observance of global non-violence and ceasefire.

September 28: World Heart Day

Cardiovascular diseases, including heart attacks and strokes, are the world's largest killers, claiming 17.5 million lives a year.

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Sand and stone – a parable about relationships

Two friends were walking through the desert. During some point of the journey, they had an argument, and one friend slapped the other one in the face.

The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand, "Today my best friend slapped me in the face."

They kept on walking, until they found an oasis where they decided to take a bath.

The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning, but the friend saved him.

After he recovered from the near drowning, he wrote on a stone: "**TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SAVED MY LIFE.**"

The friend who had both slapped and saved his best friend asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now you write on a stone. Why?"

The friend replied, "When someone hurts us, we should write it down in sand where winds of forgiveness can erase it.

"But when someone does something good for us, we should try to engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it."

Learn to write your hurts in the sand and to carve your benefits in stone.



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Jasmine: an inspiring story of a dog whose caring knows no bounds

In 2003, police in Warwickshire, England, opened a garden shed and found a whimpering, cowering dog. It had been locked in the shed and abandoned. It was dirty and malnourished, and had clearly been abused.

In an act of kindness, the police took the dog, which was a Greyhound female, to the nearby Nuneaton, Warwickshire Wildlife Sanctuary, run by a man named Geoff Grewcock and known as a willing haven for animals abandoned, orphaned or otherwise in need.

Geoff and the other sanctuary staff went to work with two aims, to restore the dog to full health and to win her trust. It took several weeks, but eventually both goals were achieved.

They named her Jasmine, and they started to think about finding her an adoptive home.



Geoff relates one of the early incidents. “We had two puppies that had been abandoned by a nearby railway line. One was a Lakeland Terrier cross and another was a Jack Russell Doberman cross. They were tiny when they arrived at the centre and Jasmine approached them and grabbed one by the scruff of the neck in her mouth and put him on the settee. Then she fetched the other one and sat down with them, cuddling them.”

“But she is like that with all of our animals, even the rabbits. She takes all the stress out of them and it helps them not only to feel close to her but to settle into their new surroundings.”

But Jasmine had other ideas. No-one remembers now how it began, but she started welcoming all animal arrivals at the sanctuary. It wouldn't matter if it was a puppy, a fox cub, a rabbit or any other lost or hurting animal, Jasmine would peer into the box or cage and, where possible, deliver a welcoming lick.





“They are inseparable,” says Geoff. “Bramble walks between her legs and they keep kissing each other. They walk together round the sanctuary. It’s a real treat to see them.”

Jasmine will continue to care for Bramble until she is old enough to be returned to woodland life. When that happens, Jasmine will not be lonely. She will be too busy showering love and affection on the next orphan or victim of abuse.



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“She has done the same with the fox and badger cubs, she licks the rabbits and guinea pigs and even lets the birds perch on the bridge of her nose.”

Jasmine, the timid, abused, deserted waif, became the animal sanctuary's resident surrogate mother, a role for which she might have been born. The list of orphaned and abandoned youngsters she has cared for comprises five fox cubs, four badger cubs, 15 chicks, eight guinea pigs, two stray puppies and 15 rabbits.

And one roe deer fawn. Tiny Bramble, 11 weeks old, was found semi-conscious in a field. Upon arrival at the sanctuary, Jasmine cuddled up to her to keep her warm, and then went into the full foster mum role. Jasmine the greyhound showers Bramble the roe deer with affection and makes sure nothing is matted.



From left, Toby, a stray Lakeland dog; Bramble, orphaned roe deer; Buster, a stray Jack Russell; a dumped rabbit; Sky, an injured barn owl; and Jasmine with a mother’s heart doing best what a caring mother would do...