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

Can you remember back to November 2008 when we published our first international TOS electronic newsletter as an initiative to help TS and TOS members keep in touch with what was happening in the TOS worldwide? You have responded most positively to this venture and so, on our first anniversary we look forward to a second year of bringing you news and ideas for service.



In this issue our International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin shares her annual report. (We guarantee you won't find it boring!) You'll read about TOS activities in Australia, France, India, Italy and Portugal and find invitations to join social and animal welfare campaigns. Mirabai Bush's short article challenges us to focus on small acts of service and the information on three UN International Days in early 2010 gives ideas for service activities within our communities. We finish with an endearing story of cross-species cooperation from the animal kingdom.

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

International TOS Annual Report to September 30, 2009

"The dearest wish of TOS members is to support the TS as a place where social action as spiritual practice is valued and actively nurtured," writes our International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin. Read more

TOS news from around the world

Find out about recent TOS activities in Australia, France, India, Italy and Portugal. Read more

Join the campaign against Zimbabwe's blood diamonds

Social action group, Avaaz, recently reported that Zimbabwean dictator, Robert Mugabe has brutally seized control of his country's diamond fields and is using the profits to finance a vicious political militia. Avaaz is calling for concerned people to join their campaign and sign an electronic petition on their website.

Read more

What's new on the International TOS website?

Did you know that theosophists developed a healing technique that is now used in many countries? You'll find the story of Therapeutic Touch in the new Featured Article. The work of the new TOS group in Finland is shared in the Featured Project. There are also additions to the TOS photo gallery and the Inspiration section. Go to http://international.theoservice.org

Start small!

When we start small, we are more likely to remember that not only is it okay to be ourselves but in fact that is the most important thing. Small service is true service...

This essay is the third in a series by Mirabai Bush that provides a guide for compassion in action. Read more

Campaign to release Vietnam's bile-farmed bears

Animals Asia Foundation is asking compassionate people world-wide to support their campaign for the release of Vietnam's bears illegally confined for bile-milking. Read more

UN International Days for community activities

We feature three International Days:

January 2 World March for Peace and Non-violence

February 20 World Day of Social Justice March 8 International Women's Day

For information and ideas for activities in which TOS groups could engage Read more

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An endearing story of a pining tigress who lovingly reared another species

This is the story of a tigress who became depressed after her cubs died. However, when introduced to five orphan piglets she reared them as her own. Read more

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

- 1. To sign up, just send a message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' as the "Subject:". Please only do this once unless you change your address. You will be kept on the mailing list until you ask to be removed from it. For any later messages you may wish to send to us, please use some other subject name. Please also advise where you are located and what TOS group you are associated with if any.
- 2. 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.

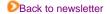
With best wishes, Carolyn and Diana

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

Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved by understanding. Albert Einstein

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TOS Annual Report to 30 September 2009



Diana Dunningham Chapotin, TOS International Secretary

The dearest wish of TOS members is to support the TS as a place where social action as spiritual practice is valued and actively nurtured. To facilitate unselfish aid to those in distress (including animals and the planet itself) and the inner transformation of the server that this requires is the two-fold purpose of the TOS.

The TOS does not see its role as peripheral to the work of spreading Theosophical teachings nor does it see itself as simply duplicating the work of other humanitarian groups. The TOS exists to show the world that Theosophy has much light to shed on contemporary issues of concern and can help people find meaning in suffering. It aims to demonstrate that service grounded in spirituality can engender far-reaching good in the world. It labours to recognise and support

Theosophists in their 'giving dharma'.

This year started on an upbeat note: The TOS in Nairobi generously sent to TOS National Directors around the world complimentary first day covers of the stamp issued by the Kenyan government in recognition of our hundred years of service. The Kenyans held a packed commemorative function on November 17, 2008 with a group of dancers to welcome the VIPs in attendance. The Minister for Gender and Children's Affairs and the Postmaster General planted a TOS centennial tree.

We have moved into our second century of work with vigour and enthusiasm. The Plan of Action prepared a year ago by Dorothy Bell after consultation with the members is proving valuable in guiding the organisation's work. The two-monthly electronic newsletter and the website that were the first items of the Plan to be developed have generated a significant increase in interest in our work. The TOS in Tanzania, coordinated by Mrs Deepa Kapur, is now collaborating actively with us, and we are corresponding with fledgling groups in Portugal, Finland, Mexico and Hungary. A TOS start-up package, updated and expanded by Ananya Rajan, will shortly be available on our website. A very practical and helpful 15-page booklet entitled *Helping the Dying* has been written by Mrs Nelda Samarel and will be distributed internationally gratis in 2010.

As part of our Plan of Action, members are beginning to support local United Nations projects. The Spanish-language coordinator of the TOS, Fernando Pérez Martin, has put out a series of short newsletters encouraging them in this worthwhile work. Since we intend to expand our participation a little in this area, Mrs Lorraine Christensen, national director of the TOS in Canada, has agreed to coordinate efforts.

The team of workers at international level is growing steadily. The bright faces of thirteen volunteers are now featured on the TOS website with their roles outlined. Two of them, Geoffrey and Carolyn Harrod, work particularly hard producing our newsletter and regularly updating the website.

International support of TOS projects in developing countries is growing. The TOS in the USA is promoting and contributing again to the international matching grant programme it initiated last year with the kind help of the Kern Foundation in support of the Golden Link School, a theosophically oriented educational establishment from kindergarten to secondary level, in the Philippines.

The Theosophical Order of Service Foundation in the Philippines has extended this school this year by opening a modest college department. The government-approved college includes a course on Theosophy in its curriculum. We extend congratulations to Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr and his colleagues for this undertaking and wish them every success.

International cooperation is taking still other forms. In the past ten years, the TOS in England has organised the knitting of over 8,000 teddies for children in hospital. It recently sent the pattern for the teddies to the TOS in Italy and members there have produced dozens of teddies in their turn. Our Italian sisters, in collaboration with sister organisations, are now sending big batches to the TOS in Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania for the Heart Babies project supported by the local TOS. Members in England and New Zealand are helping with the purchase of travel kits for the children being flown to India for surgery. All this happy collaboration across borders and oceans is heart-warming!

Mr Birendra L. Bhattacharyya continues to work outstandingly hard as National Director of the TOS in India. He spends several months every year crisscrossing the country in support of over one hundred local TOS groups. Birendra visits our TOS schools, coaching classes, pre-primary learning centres (called Balwadi Schools), boarding establishments for the blind and for orphans, medical dispensaries as well as naturopathy, acupressure, ayurvedic treatment, yoga therapy and pranic healing centres. In visiting local groups as a special guest, Birendra formally presents educational materials and mobility aids to the needy, he congratulates workers receiving awards for outstanding service to the community, and takes time to meet with the recipients of aid themselves. He distributes school uniforms, student kits, garments, study material, cooked food, scholarships to meritorious students, prizes to essay and elocution contest winners, and relief materials during natural disasters. He inaugurates self-help projects, inaugurates new groups (nine this year) and presides as often as possible at zonal and regional conferences (two new TOS regions added this year). Finally, he spearheads efforts in times of national disaster, this year helping to organise emergency relief and reconstruction in the wake of cyclone Aila in coastal West Bengal. Mr Bhattacharyya's 20 regional secretaries and their local teams are to be congratulated on all they accomplish.

Not the least of all this within India are two new projects (amongst many new ones). Seeing Eyes for Everyone (SEE) is supervised by Dr Sunita and C.V.K. Maithreya for the TOS in Chennai. It covers sight checks, glasses and operations when necessary for thousands of children and slum dwellers. This work is being funded in part by the TOS in Australia and France. The second innovative project is a fully fledged Dental Care Unit opened in July by the TOS Deepti Group in the Delhi region for economically disadvantaged children of Noida and surrounding rural areas.

The TOS in Pakistan continues to run extensive and varied educational activities in Karachi for needy citizens in spite of turbulent and worrying political circumstances. A new programme is about to start, of free medical treatment for mothers and children living in the depressed areas around TOS HQ. The team of volunteer doctors and nurses is already in place.

For display on TS branch information tables, the TOS in Spain has created a beautiful colour poster inviting people to join in TOS activities. Each year a special TOS weekend is organised to discuss progress within the TOS and make plans for the coming year. A Peace Meditation

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project was launched this year for all Spanish speaking countries. It has been warmly received.

More detailed news of activities undertaken by TOS members is available on our website where each country has its own national page.

Service takes many forms. There is direct, hands-on action like distributing food to the poor. There is advocacy work to achieve the system-wide changes necessary to end hunger. There is self-purification so that our social action is as effective as possible. There is education on the spiritual principles that can gradually transform society. All these forms of service have their place within the TOS. None is superior to another. TOS members find great joy in a multi-level, balanced approach to making Theosophy a positive force in the world.

The TOS places the utmost importance on a harmonious working relationship with the TS. It is active in 28 countries and aspires to become of greater and greater support to the TS in making the teachings of Theosophy of transformative value in the world.

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TOS news from around the world -

1. France-India 2. Italy 3. Portugal 4. Australia

1. The French Connection - the TOS in France and India

Since about 2002, the TOS in France has been sponsoring the education of 22 students in Orai, a relatively small city located between Kanpur and Jhansi in the province of Uttar Pradesh, in northern India. As we reported partially in an earlier newsletter, the devoted local TOS representative, Mr Krishnan Lal Gupta, in addition to paying for the children's school fees and books through the sponsorships, organises after-school coaching classes every day, special events conveying theosophical values and ideals and weekly cricket matches

These photos bring news of the special events that took place in October.



Swami Nityanand, a member of the Orai Lodge of the TS, addresses the children on the occasion of Annie Besant's birthday.



Swami Nityanandji also gives the children lessons in Vipassana meditation.



A kit of educational material is offered by Brother K.L. Gupta to a student on the occasion of Diwali, the festival of light, in October.



A student participates in the ceremony paying homage to the memory of Dr Besant.

2. TOS in Italy

In the last issue of our newsletter, we reported on the batches of teddies the members of the TOS in Italy are knitting and sending off to the TOS in Tanzania to comfort children hospitalised in India for heart surgery.

In order to keep up with the twenty to thirty teddies needed each month (!), our Italian sisters are now reaching out to other associations, encouraging them to create knitting teams. In addition to TOS teams in Milan and Rome, there is a new team in the city of Forlì made up of members of the Giordano Bruno branch of the Associazione Mazziniana Italiana (a non-profit group educating against despotism and fascism) and of the Banca del Tempo di Forlì, a 'time barter' group. We see them here on the local news page of a national newspaper II Resto del Carlino.

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Newspaper clipping of the Forlì group with their teddies

3. TOS in Portugal

The TOS Group in Lisbon, composed of members of different branches of the Theosophical Society, recently visited the association 'Focinhos e Bigodes' ('Muzzles and Whiskers') which cares for abandoned dogs. The TOS has been helping the association with donations to pay for veterinary treatments, food and other items. Much more help is needed and welcomed!

Check out the Portugal page on the TOS International website for more information.



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4. TOS in Brisbane, Australia



Sharing ideas during the Peaceful Living seminar

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To celebrate the International Day of Peace, the Brisbane TOS group conducted a free seminar on Peaceful Living with two focuses - Approaches to meditation and Building peaceful relationships.

The morning session provided an opportunity for participants to try various ways of developing inner peace through contemplation and meditation.

Following lunch, participants enthusiastically joined in exploring ways of enhancing the important relationships in our lives.

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Join the campaign against Zimbabwe's blood diamonds

Social action group, Avaaz, recently reported that Zimbabwean dictator, Robert Mugabe has brutally seized control of his country's diamond fields and is using the profits to finance a vicious political militia

Avaaz is calling for concerned people to join their campaign and sign an electronic petition on their website at http://www.avaaz.org/en/diamonds_for_love_not_hate

All diamond-producing countries know that their profits are dependent on the brand reputation of diamonds, and that increasing awareness of 'blood diamonds' threatens that brand. A massive global petition will show them that the diamond-buying public is demanding action.





Zimbabwe's diamonds used to be mined by local people. However, in the last several months, Mugabe's thugs have brutally taken over, murdering up to 200 civilians. An international investigation in July found "horrific violence against civilians".

The profits from these 'blood diamonds' are being used to finance a political militia that has already killed thousands of Zimbabweans, and threatens the fragile unity government in the country. Letting Mugabe keep these diamonds could finance a whole new war.

All of us are learning the ways in which our decisions about what we buy and do can affect the lives of our fellow human beings half a world away. If you buy diamond jewellery, ask where the diamond was mined and refuse to buy diamonds from countries that trade them in violence.

'Blood diamonds' really are tainted with a history of brutality and suffering!

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Start small

by Mirabai Bush

In this issue, we publish a further extract from Mirabai Bush's advice in *Compassion in Action: Setting Out On the Path of Service* (Ram Dass and Mirabai Bush, NY: Bell Tower, 1992). Her series of essays is prefaced with 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.

Small service is true service ... The daisy, by the shadow that it casts, Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun. William*

It is becoming harder and harder to escape painful social realities such as hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, and drug abuse. If all we read is the daily newspaper, we still learn more than we have ever before known about the complex and long-lasting causes of poverty and prejudice. It has become easy to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the suffering and apathetic about the possibility of change. As long as we see suffering as an 'issue' or a monolithic social problem, such as homelessness, hunger or AIDS, we will find it difficult to act. The enormity of the suffering leaves us feeling dwarfed and powerless. And even a single person's pain may seem too big if we think of taking it on by ourselves.

Yet each of us can do something. Walking three miles to work won't heal the whole ozone layer, but it is something one person can do. And although we each can't do everything, together we can make a difference. Each of these bignesses is made up of many small parts. Individual people, sometimes working in groups. Individual moments. It is like the AIDS quilt, stitched together by the NAMES project. Each patch is small, personal, and hand-made. Each one reflects the person who made it and their friend, lover or child who died of AIDS. Each patch is different: sweet, sophisticated, loving, stylish, outrageous. Together they make an immense blanket of love, care, sadness and beauty.

Each small act is part of a great fabric. The AIDS quilt doesn't replace the need for government responsibility — it points to it. And it is interesting that the big problems are exactly the ones that may find their solutions in small, creative, offbeat, unlikely ideas.

There are opportunities everywhere. A hospice worker adjusts a patient's pillow, a taxidriver at the end of her shift drives a pregnant woman to the hospital, a shelter 'family' stands in a circle of silence before their meal, a development worker in Mexico keeps extra blankets in her apartment for visiting refugees. The small things carry a message of caring. They say that each one of us matters.

Amnesty International recruits volunteers to write letters to prisoners of conscience. It seems a small thing to do. A Moroccan prisoner wrote back: 'For us the letter is the outside, the forbidden! It increases hope to see, some day in the future, unknown strands, the world of our imperfect dreams, the world of the living.'

High school student Asha Nadkarni volunteered to 'visit mentally retarded adults in a state institution on their birthdays. She would take each patient a cupcake and a balloon. She reported, 'Meeting these people was discovering a purity found in most children and envied by most adults. . . . Perhaps the touch of someone young brightened their day. Maybe they went to bed at night a little happier than the night before.'

Small is, in fact, beautiful. Human-scale undertakings based on common sense are the most likely to succeed. As E.F. Schumacher said, 'Small-scale operations... are always less likely to be harmful than large scale ones. There is wisdom in smallness even if only on account of the smallness and patchiness of human knowledge.'

When Joanne Eccher and friends started the Hunger Hotline in Boston, their ambitious goals were to 'get different legislation passed and do advocacy work with food pantries and soup kitchens and do litigation work to raise welfare benefits and get food stamps expanded'. But when they met with the people in the community, they found that 'the first thing they wanted was rats and cockroaches out of their pantries. And the next thing they wanted was better food at their meals. And then vans and transportation. And I remember thinking, vans and transportation. We're just contributing to the charitable aspect. But after some time we realized that people's basic human needs had to be met and trust had to be established before they could begin to ask why they were in such a situation. We had to start with the small things before we could deal with the bigger issues.'

When we act, we can see our feelings of powerlessness dissolve. When we start small, we are more likely to remember that not only is it okay to be ourselves but in fact that is the most important thing. Start small, and give yourself a chance to find out. Begin alone, or begin with others, but keep it simple. And remember the words of Margaret Mead, who said, 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.'

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Campaign to release Vietnam's bile-farmed bears

Animals Asia Foundation is asking compassionate people world-wide to support their campaign for the release of Vietnam's bears illegally confined for bile-milking.



In September 2007, 80 bears in Vietnam were identified for confiscation into the care of Animals Asia Foundation. In the intervening two years, and despite constant urging from Animals Asia, the Vietnam government has released only ONE bear into the care of their sanctuary in Tam Dao National Park.

The remaining 79 bears are still confined to their cages, in the hands of the same owners who have used and abused them for many years.

They remain with owners who continue to:

- extract bile, openly flouting Vietnam laws prohibiting the practice
- break both national and international law by selling bile to tourists who transport it overseas
- cause the bears horrendous fear, suffering and pain on a daily basis in the extraction process.

And still, the Vietnam government refuses to implement its own laws. It refuses to act to save these bears from deprivation, starvation and agonising death from disease and despair.

Animals Asia invites you to join their letter-writing campaign and help urge the Vietnamese government to honour its commitment to end bear bile farming in Vietnam.

They need your help to convince the Vietnam government to enforce the law and release these bears into our care, and invite you to join their campaign and send Animals Asia your letter for presentation to the government.

A sample letter is below. Animals Asia need original emails and letters to prove that there is widespread international support for their campaign. You can send your letter by email to Animals Asia at info@animalsasia.org or mail it to your nearest Animals

You'll find more information on their website at http://www.animalsasia.org

SAMPLE LETTER

The Honourable Prime Minister The Socialist Republic of Vietnam Mr Nguyen Tan Dung

Dear Honourable Prime Minister,

I would like to congratulate the Vietnamese Government on your endeavours to help Vietnam's endangered species of Asiatic black bear, and for working in partnership with Animals Asia Foundation to close down bear farms across Vietnam and confiscate illegally-held bears. In September 2007, 80 illegally-held bears were identified on farms in Quang Ninh Province. Under Vietnamese law they should be confiscated and transferred into the care of a suitable bear rescue centre, such as the one established by the Central Forest Protection Department and Animals Asia Foundation in Tam Dao National Park. I am concerned to hear that so far only one of these 80 bears has been confiscated and the other 79 are still being held illegally on these farms. I also understand that these farms continue to extract bear bile illegally and sell the bile to overseas tourists, which is a clear contravention of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of which Vietnam has been a signatory since 1994. Illegal bear bile extraction was captured by Vietnam TV1 and shown on national TV in early June 2009.

The Vietnam Bear Rescue Centre in Tam Dao National Park has the capacity to receive the 79 bears and Animals Asia has signed an agreement to look after these bears, on behalf of the Vietnamese Government, for the rest of their natural lives. Animals Asia has committed staff and funds and is prepared to take full responsibility for the bears' veterinary treatment and ongoing management. The Vietnam rescue centre has taken in 29 bears to date and it is ready to take the 79 bears from these farms.

OR YOU CAN WRITE YOUR OWN LETTER AND EMAIL IT TO ANIMALS ASIA.

Points to include in personal letters:

- Bear farming and the extraction of bear bile is illegal in Vietnam.
- There are currently 79 bears held illegally on farms in Quang Ninh province.
- The bear farmers continue to extract bile illegally from these bears and sell it to tourists.
- Under Vietnamese law, these bears should be confiscated.
- Animals Asia Foundation has a rescue centre in Tam Dao National Park, which is ready and waiting to receive these 79 bears.
- Animals Asia will provide veterinary care and a sanctuary for the bears for the rest of their lives.

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I understand the Central Forest Protection Department in Hanoi has been enormously helpful in encouraging the confiscation of these bears and working with Animals Asia in the construction of the sanctuary which has been developed to hold at least 200 confiscated bears. Following widespread international publicity of the plight of these 79 bears, all of whom are clearly held in violation of the laws of your country, I write to ask that you order they be confiscated and transferred into the care of Animals Asia's Moon Bear Rescue Centre in Tam Dao National Park.

Yours sincerely,







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UN International Days for community activities

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.

In our first six electronic newsletters we listed a large number of International Days and Weeks that could provide opportunities for partnership activities within our communities. These continue to be relevant in late 2009 and 2010.

As we start a new cycle of newsletters, we intend featuring just a few International Days in each issue and providing more detailed information and ideas for activities in which TOS groups could engage.

We feature three International Days in this issue.

World March for Peace and Non-Violence January 2

The first ever World March for peace and non-violence has started and will culminate in a series of local activities at the beginning of January 2010. This 90-day march is travelling the world asking for the end of wars, the dismantling of nuclear weapons and for an end to all forms of violence (physical, economic, racial, religious, cultural, sexual and psychological). It encompasses Oceania and East Asia, Continental Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas, covering 160,000 kilometres.

You can follow the progress of the march on its website at http://www.theworldmarch.org/ It is expected that 1 million participants will join the march, with 10 million virtual participants via the website.

Look out for information about what is happening in your local community. If there are no activities to join, your TOS group might be interested in initiating an event to draw together the many people who want a world characterised by peace and non-violence. A candle-lit vigil for peace, a meditation for world peace, an informal event with craft workshops promoting peace or a peace picnic are possibilities. The website -

http://internationaldayofpeace.org/your_peace_day.html has many ideas from which to draw.

February 20 World Day of Social **Justice**

What are the social justice issues in your community? Are there other groups with which you could join to promote awareness of the issues and to explore options for addressing them?

World Day of Social Justice was celebrated for the first time in 2009. It provides an opportunity for all of us to say that a safer, more secure and ultimately more prosperous world is possible, if emphasis is placed on social justice - poverty eradication, promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.



March 8 **International Women's Day**

International Women's Day is a day of global celebration - an opportunity to recognise the many different contributions that women make to our communities and the progress that has been made in many countries to give women equal rights and opportunities as citizens. There is no room for complacency, however, as women continue to face inequity on many fronts.

The International Women's Day website at http://www.internationalwomensday.com/ has information on events around the world, articles, statistics and ideas about equity issues you could promote within your own community.

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Tiger-piglets

In a zoo in California , a mother tiger gave birth to a rare set of triplet tiger cubs. Unfortunately, due to complications in the pregnancy, the cubs were born prematurely and due to their tiny size, they died shortly after birth.

The mother tiger after recovering from the delivery, suddenly started to decline in health, although physically she was fine. The veterinarians felt that the loss of her litter had caused the tigress to fall into a depression. The doctors decided that if the tigress could surrogate another mother's cubs, perhaps she would improve.

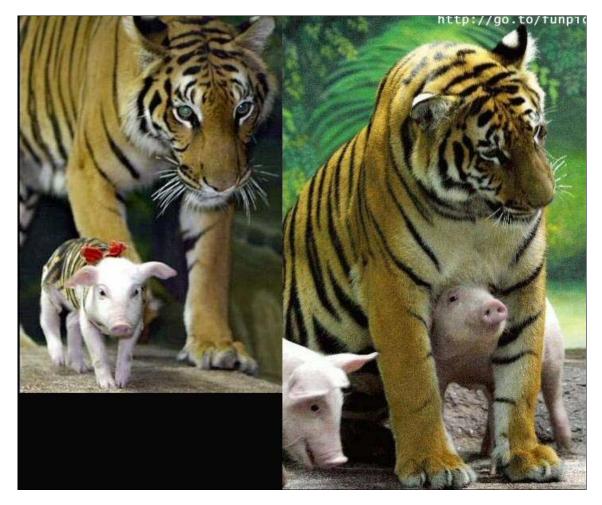
After checking with many other zoos across the country, the depressing news was that there were no tiger cubs of the right age to introduce to the mourning mother. The veterinarians decided to try something that had never been tried in a zoo environment. Sometimes a mother of one species will take on the care of a different species. The only 'orphans' that $\overset{\cdot}{\text{could}}$ be found quickly, were a litter of weanling pigs. The zoo keepers and vets wrapped the piglets in tiger skin and placed the babies around the mother tiger. Would they become cubs or pork chops?? Take a look...







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Now, please tell me one more time? Why can't the rest of the world get along??

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