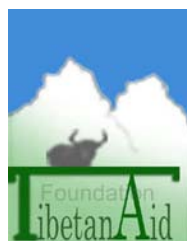




# **TibetanAid Foundation, Inc.**

Annual Report, 2005



[www.TibetanAid.org](http://www.TibetanAid.org)

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## **TAF's accomplishments during 2005**

During 2005, the TAF has concentrated on raising funds for the construction of the ChaZhu Valley Clinic. In the spring of 2005, the ChaZhu Valley community leaders began receiving funds. The following has been accomplished during 2005:

- Construction of the ChaZhu Valley Clinic was completed on October 1, 2005.
- Community leaders met to create policies and guidelines for use of the facility.
- Corinne Collins, TAF Project Manager, visited the ChaZhu Valley from August 6 - 18, 2005
- On October 15, 2005, Jigme Rinpoche, one of the spiritual leaders of the community, led the opening ceremony by blessing the clinic.
- Jigme Rinpoche congratulated Dr. Sonam Ji and Xiaba, the two doctors who have dedicated themselves to serve the ChaZhu Valley community. They reside in a home on the clinic grounds.
- In November, 2005, Dr. Sonam Ji and Xiaba purchased necessary medicines and some basic medical and office equipment for use in the clinic.
- The doctors began treating patients in the ChaZhu Valley Clinic.
- A ChaZhu Valley resident is being trained to be a medical translator (Tibetan/Chinese/English) for the doctors and medically trained visitors who wish to assist the clinic.
- The ChaZhu Valley clinic officially opened to receive patients on January 1, 2006.

### **Current Board of Directors**

**Marqui Bury**

**Jonathan W.Lambert, Ph.D**

**Dorjee Tsewang**

**Corinne Collins, RN, MN, FNP**

**Lisa Luckenbach**

**Robert Feiss, MD**

**Janice Tate**

### **Consultants/Advisors**

**Arthur Braveman**

**David Luckenbach**

**Jack Samarel, CPA**

**Josephine Richey**

**Laurel Miller**

**Nancy McCagney**

**Bob & Betty Gips**

**Don Campbell**

**Joan Nicolason**

**Linda Lambert**

**Lyn Hebenstreit**

**Dolkar Tso**

## History of the TibetanAid Foundation and its mission

The founders of the non-political, non-profit TibetanAid Foundation are young Tibetans who have established themselves in California. Inspired by the contrast between their current opportunities for personal growth, and conditions for those remaining in their homeland, they are determined to improve the quality of life in the communities in which they grew up. Their target is *healthcare* and *health education*. With the help of numerous American friends, they incorporated the TibetanAid Foundation in the state of California on July 13 2004. The TibetanAid Foundation became nonprofit status under the section 501(c)(3) on November 02, 2004.



The TibetanAid Foundation, Inc., is dedicated to raising funds to develop and support sustainable health care and health education in rural Tibetan communities. We believe that our activities directly benefit new and forward-thinking ideas taking root on a community level in rural Tibet.

1. **Sustainable health care clinic:** Our first project is to fund a sustainable health care clinic in the ChaZhu valley, in northeastern Tibet. This health care clinic will serve ten villages. The community groups of ChaZhu Valley will construct the project, and many villagers will volunteer their time to build the clinic.
2. **Staff training:** The TibetanAid Foundation will provide funds to rural Tibetan groups for training health-care workers in modern methods of treatment. The leaders of Tibetan communities will select qualified candidates and oversee their training progress.



3. **Vocational training:** The TibetanAid Foundation will provide funding for qualified students to attend vocational training programs in specializations appropriate to their individual talents. Those qualified students will be required to return to their villages after completion of their training to work in clinics and on community water and sanitation projects. The community leaders or other consultants will determine qualification.

4. **Women's health education:** The TibetanAid Foundation will fund educational programs designed to meet the needs of women in rural villages in regard to family planning, child health, prenatal care, nutrition and personal hygiene. We encourage local community groups to provide these programs in conjunction with the health clinics funded by the TibetanAid Foundation. We anticipate launching this phase by the end of 2006.

5. **Professional participation:** We will cooperate with Tibetan community leaders to invite volunteer doctors and nurses from different countries to participate in on-site training sessions. We will cooperate with established medical assistance organizations like Doctors Without Borders, and International Red Cross, to locate qualified and willing professionals.

6. **Additional clinics:** After the ChaZhu valley clinic is established and staffed, we will begin to plan for the establishment of additional health care clinics in villages presenting the greatest need. This phase is projected to begin early in 2007.





#### **OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED PROJECT:**

The TibetanAid Foundation funded for the construction of the ChaZhu valley clinic. The ChaZhu valley community leaders received the fund. On April 1, 2005, the ChaZhu Valley community started working on the construction of the Clinic. The building of the clinic is completed on October 1, 2005. On October 15, Jigme Rinpoche (spiritual leader of the community) led the opening ceremony by blessing the clinic and he congratulated the two doctors who are dedicated themselves to serve the ChaZhu valley community. In November, the doctors purchased some necessary medicines, some basic medical and office equipment. The community leaders have created policies and guidelines of how to utilize the facility. The ChaZhu Valley clinic officially opened for community service on January 1, 2006 on a limited basis.

Sonam Ji is a dedicated local female doctor has worked in the ChaZhu Valley since 2003. She has treated patients using Chinese medicine, acupuncture, deliver babies in people's homes, and other primary treatments throughout the community. Dr. Sonam Ji has gained great respect from locals, and will make far-reaching contribution to the clinic at ChaZhu Valley.

Sonam Ji's husband, XiaBa, is a certified Tibetan Herbal doctor. Like Sonam Ji, he has also devoted himself to the people of the valley by making Tibetan herbal medicines from locally grown herbs. One of the rooms in the clinic will be solely devoted to the production of Tibetan Herbal Medicines.

Both doctors conduct surveys of certain avoidable diseases in the community. Corinne Collins and Sonam Ji are going to create preventative medicine programs to treat them. The TibetanAid Foundation and its board of directors are very excited that both Dr. Sonam Ji and XiaBa are working in the ChaZhu Valley clinic.



### **THE SURVEY: Geographic Background and Health Care Conditions in rural Tibet**

ChaZhu is located in ChuMa Xiang HuaLong Xian, HaiDong Prefecture of QingHai province, Peoples' Republic of China. HuaLong Xian has a population of 230,000, of which 50,000 are Tibetans. There are five Tibetan counties in HuaLong Xian.

Eastern HuaLong Xian contains four counties: ShiDaCang, ChuMa, JiangYuan and TaJia counties. Although ShiDaCang and ChuMa are not primarily Tibetan counties, 50% of their population is Tibetan. Therefore, there are about 20,000 Tibetans living in eastern HuaLong Xian. Every county in HuaLong Xian has a health care clinic. The clinic is responsible for community health care services. Although economic development has spread throughout the country, it has not benefited health care services in the rural areas of these counties. They are especially lacking in the eastern areas of HuaLong Xian, such as the ChaZhu Valley.

1. The county clinics' conditions are very poor. Most medical doctors do not want to work in rural village clinics. They gravitate to big cities where the living conditions are excellent. Those who are not able to find work in the cities have poor education and little medical training. They live in the rural areas filling positions, and do not have the needed skills to provide services to the communities.
2. Under the "Economic Development Policy" of the Chinese government, most medical doctors come to rural areas to sell their medicine to local people in order to make a profit, rather than to treat or cure any patients.
3. Most patients often do not understand how they got sick, and workers in the clinics are unable to answer their questions. The result is that patients often lose trust in their doctors.
4. Most doctors or health care workers are not Tibetans. Because of language barriers, Tibetan villagers often cannot communicate with doctors or health care workers without translators.

Due to this situation, as well as the fact that these rural villages are far from big cities, modern medical treatments are rarely available to the people. Lack of trained personnel and equipment, poor roads and inadequate transportation hinder timely treatments. Villagers are particularly prone to preventable and treatable diseases such as: Respiratory illness, Malnutrition, Diarrhea, Pneumonia, Ear infection, Birth complications, and Tuberculosis.



## Summary of Health Survey of Three villages Hualong County Summer of 2005

### Total Number of Households: 215

- Households with a married woman of reproductive age: 20.1%
- Households with a pregnant woman: 5.1%
- Households with children under 24 months age: 9.8%
- Households with children 2 –5 years of age: 24.6%
  
- Households with clean drinking water: 39.5%
- Households that usually boil water for drinking: 85.6%
- Distance from house to source of water:
  - less than 15 minutes walk: 39.1%
  - more than 15 minutes walk: 52.6%
  - do not know: 8.4%
  
- Hand washing before handling food: 78%
- Know importance of hand washing: 50.2%
- Human waste disposal:
  - hole enclosed in shelter outside yard: 33.5%
  - hole enclosed in shelter inside yard: 1.9%
  - hole unenclosed outside yard: 9.8%
  - hole unenclosed inside yard: 5.6%
  - open field: 42.3%
  - animal shed: 5.6%
  - mixed with stored fertilizer: 1.4%
- Households with water containers with a clean cover: 49%
- Households with clean cooking and eating utensils: 60.3%
- Households storing food away from small domestic animals: 73.3%
- Households with latrines that appear being used: 30.5%
- Households that keep animals away from food: 73%
- Methods of garbage disposal:
  - open field with designated garbage disposal location: 81.4%
  - open field but no specific location: 18.1%

# Hua Long County ChaZhu Valley chronic disease survey

July – August 2005

	Adai	GongPaoJi	ZhaXiZhuang	AnJiHu	ZhuZhuang	LaGan	MieJia	Total
<b>family#</b>	33	30	63	45	97	64	70	<b>402</b>
<b>population</b>	180	169	384	274	573	350	502	<b>2432</b>
<b>patients</b>	109	93	165	151	206	133	158	<b>1015</b>
<b>male</b>	36	38	68	75	81	58	60	<b>416</b>
<b>female</b>	73	55	97	76	125	75	98	<b>599</b>
<b>Joint Pain</b>	33	31	37	37	58	42	39	<b>277</b>
<b>Stomach</b>	25	13	36	18	37	25	15	<b>169</b>
<b>Hepatitis</b>	19	11	24	18	24	11	17	<b>124</b>
<b>Female</b>	5	6	10	18	14	16	5	<b>74</b>
<b>Bronchitis</b>	7	2	15	13	20	6	20	<b>83</b>
<b>Heart</b>		3	3	6	7	12	15	<b>46</b>
<b>Backpain</b>	3	2	4	8	10	6	1	<b>34</b>
<b>Skin</b>		1	1	2	6	4	3	<b>17</b>
<b>Ear infection</b>						3		<b>3</b>
<b>Fainting</b>			1		3	2	3	<b>9</b>
<b>Osteomyelitis</b>						1	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Epilepsy</b>	1	3	2	4	1	1		<b>12</b>
<b>Diarrhea</b>	1	5	5	1		1	2	<b>15</b>
<b>TB</b>						3	10	<b>13</b>
<b>Nose Bleeding</b>		1	3		1		1	<b>6</b>
<b>Kidney</b>	11	5	8	10	17		6	<b>57</b>
<b>Malnutrition</b>	1	2						<b>3</b>
<b>High BP</b>	3	3	7	4	8			<b>25</b>
<b>Eyes</b>		3	2					<b>5</b>
<b>Pharyngitis</b>		2	3				1	<b>6</b>
<b>Flu</b>			2	2			9	<b>13</b>
<b>Phlebitis</b>			1					<b>1</b>
<b>Diabetes</b>			1				10	<b>11</b>





### **Projected results of clinic project**

1. Primary care for medical treatment of 3,000 or more rural Tibetan people
2. Public health service ( i.e. vaccination, water usage and handling animal/human waste)
3. Prenatal Care
4. Health Education
  - a. Personal hygiene
  - b. Sanitation

These ongoing programs will “empower villagers” to have

1. a greater understanding of the cause of illnesses
2. healthier lives
3. an awareness of the prevention of infectious diseases
4. an opportunity to learn the environment that they live in



## Evaluation Procedures

All projects funded by the TibetanAid Foundation will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. This evaluation process will have two parts:

1. Formative Evaluation (undertaken quarterly) –
  - a. Construction phase
    - Contracts: Field Director's report
    - Financial overview (spreadsheets sent to TAF headquarters in USA)
  - b. Supplying necessary materials & equipment
    - Invoices
    - Field Director's report
  - c. Staffing – Field Directors supervising report
  - d. Services
    - Monthly demographics – Number of persons using the clinic and services used
    - Informal meetings by project director with community leaders

The TibetanAid Foundation will review and follow up on any and all problems that are identified.

2. Summative Evaluation (yearly)
  - a. Review of Quarterly Evaluation reports and actions taken by TAF (in Tibet and in USA)
  - b. Project Director will meet with community leaders for evaluation of program
    - Clinic services
    - Educational services
    - Community services
  - c. Summary report will be written describing year's activities and stating next year's goal; report to be made available to all TAF sponsors and contributors.

The TibetanAid Foundation will use the quarterly and yearly evaluations in

- a. it's planning for the continuation of the existing program, and
- b. replication of the Clinic Program in other rural Tibetan areas.

## OPENING OF THE TIBETANAID FOUNDATION OFFICE IN TIBET/CHINA



Danzhen Rinpoche , a well-respected rinpoche in Qinghai Province, has opened the Tibet/China side of the TibetanAid Foundation to facilitate approval of our health and education projects in Tibet. The TibetanAid Foundation is now registered as a non-profit charitable organization in Tibet/China with Danzhen Rinpoche as the Director. The office will be in the ChaZhu Valley Health Care Clinic, Hualong Prefecture, Qinghai Province.



## **ChaZhu Valley Health Clinic Staff**

### **FNP. Corinne Collins**

FNP. Corinne Collins, TAF Project Manager visited the ChZhu Valley clinic in August, 2005. She found many chronic illnesses and believes that the clinic will greatly benefit the ChaZhu Valley community. Corinne works closely with Dr. Robert Feiss, TAF Medical Director's consultant to assist Dr. Sonam Ji to create preventable programs in the ChaZhu Valley clinic to treat chronic illnesses.

### **Dr. Sonam Ji**

A well-known female Tibetan doctor in ChaZhu Valley is running all the programs in the clinic. Sonam graduated from a Chinese four-year medical school.

### **XiaBa**

XiaBa is the husband of Sonam Ji. He was trained in Tibetan herbal medicine. He works in the clinic and is going to produce Tibetan herbal medicine.

### **Training Translators**

TAF has begun to fund scholarships for training translators, who are able to translate medical terminology in three languages (Tibetan, Chinese and English) to assist visiting western medical professionals.

**Limo Dolma** graduated from one of the Tibetan/Chinese Teaching Colleges. She is fluent in Tibetan & Chinese. Currently she is teaching English in an elementary school. She is our candidate to become TAF's first translator. Currently, TAF is funding her education in an English School in Xining.

## UP COMING HEALTHY COMMUNITY PROJECTS:

- **TRAIN LOCAL HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL.**
  - *Training of a medical translator* fluent in Tibetan, Chinese and English (begun fall 2005)
  - **Training a person to be part of the clinic staff to install and maintain a clean water system** for the valley.
  - *Train one Maternal-Child Health Worker* in each village.
  - *Train one nurse* to become an assistant to Dr. Sonam Ji. This candidate will be trained in a large hospital or vocational training facility.
  
- **TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL & TREATMENT PROGRAM.** Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious disease rampant throughout the Tibetan Plateau; the World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that the incidence among Tibetan rug-weavers is the highest in the world. The disease is found throughout the ChaZhu Valley where the Health Clinic sponsored by the TibetanAid Foundation (TAF) is located. The TAF plans to work diligently to address this manifest health problem.
  
- **SOLAR ENERGY.** The use of clean energy resources, such as solar energy, will make a positive impact on traditional Tibetan life and protect the local environment.
  - *Solar panels* installed in the ChaZhu Valley clinic will be sufficient to provide electricity for all the appliances and equipment in the clinic, including refrigeration for medicines and sterilization of medical utensils.
  - *Solar Water Heat System* will provide sufficient warm/hot water for use at the clinic and for a bathing and a laundry facility for the community.
  - *Solar Cookers* can replace the traditional burning of yak dung, hay and firewood to cook food and boil water.
  - *Solar Greenhouse.* can utilize solar energy to grow medicinal herbs and nutritious vegetables in the clinic's demonstration garden/greenhouse.
  
- **LATRINE PROJECT:** The goal of this three year project is to fund installation of a *latrine system* in every household in the ten villages in the ChaZhu Valley to prevent diseases caused by human waste. TAF seeking assistance to research and develop a system that is effective at the high altitude villages of rural Tibet.
  
- **EDUCATIONAL FACILITY PROJECT IN CHAZHU VALLEY CLINIC.** The doctors (Western, Chinese and Tibetan), nurses, teachers, translators, school kids, monks, nuns and other interested people, will use the facility. Through this facility, we will invite professionals to give seminars and workshops to the clinic personnel, local staff and general public on local environment, health issues, personal hygiene and community sanitation. The facility will consist of Western, Chinese and Tibetan medical books as well as technological support equipment:
  - Medical dictionaries, translations among three languages
  - Books on educational materials regarding personal hygiene, community sanitation, clean drinking water, family planning and other related materials
  - Educational videos, DVD, flyers, newsletters and posters
  - DVD/Video player
  - TV

- **BRING MOUNTAIN SPRING WATER TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD.** The goal of this three year project is to work with families in each village to have clean mountain spring water piped to their home.
- **MOBILE CLINIC.** Vehicles, equipped with basic medical equipment, medicine and a trained staff member, will be created to travel to rural and nomadic areas of Tibet year around.
- **STOVE PROJECT:** To identify and install an especially designed stove with reduced wood-burning feature for a rural community in Tibet. By removing the fire from the ground, sanitation and health will be improved.
- **JINGYUAN VALLEY CLINIC.** The JinYuan Valley is about 30 miles away from the ChaZhu Valley. When complete this project, will serve about 5000 people.





## FUND RAISING

Since all of our projects require some form of financial support, fundraising is one of our most important activities. During the last eighteen months, we have raised \$21,000.00 toward our goal of \$25,000.00. Our primary means of fundraising has been audio-visual presentations by Dorjee Tsewang (*see above image at Krotona institute of Ojai, CA*), the founder and president of the TibetanAid Foundation. These warmly received presentations in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties have covered rural life in Tibet as seen in the ChaZhu Valley. And Dorjee and his wife, Dolkar's, journey from Tibet to Ojai, California.

Now, TAF has applied for grants and hopes to receive more money from corporations by the end of 2005.

If you would like to sponsor a fundraising activity or have any ideas for future fundraising activities, please contact TibetanAid Foundation at 805-646-2704, or through our website [www.tibetanaid.org](http://www.tibetanaid.org).



## TibetanAid Foundation finance

	<u>Jun 1, '04 - Jan 1, 06</u>
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>	
<b>Income</b>	
<b>Contributions Income</b>	
Unrestricted	23,239.83
<b>Total Contributions Income</b>	23,239.83
<b>Grants Income</b>	4,500.00
<b>Total Income</b>	27,739.83
<b>Expense</b>	
Bank Service Charges	128.00
Fees and Permits	930.00
<b>Fundraiser Expense</b>	
Grants Expense	120.00
Meal & Beverage	144.94
Rent	370.00
<b>Total Fundraiser Expense</b>	634.94
Meals & Ent.	50.00
<b>Office Expense</b>	
Equipment	1,153.19
<b>Total Office Expense</b>	1,153.19
Postage and Delivery	161.80
Printing and Reproduction	581.26
Program Expense in Tibet	16,800.00
<b>Total Expense</b>	20,439.19
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	7,300.64
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>7,300.64</b>

### SUMMARY

In conclusion, The TibetanAid Foundation actively seeks to improve the well-being of the people of rural Tibet, through improved healthcare and health education. We thank our grantors and donors for supporting us, to actualize this ongoing commitment to the people of Tibet.

## Collins returns from humanitarian effort

In July 2004 the nonprofit TibetanAid Foundation was founded in Ojai. The mission of the organization is to bring health care and education to underserved Tibetan communities in China and Tibet. On Sunday, TibetanAid Foundation's Corrinne Collins will present a free talk and a slide show about her recent trip to the foundation's first major project — a new medical clinic in the ChaZhu Valley of Tibet. The presentation is at 6:30 p.m. at the Ojai Valley Dharma Center, located in Nordhoff Hall on the corner of Montgomery and Aliso streets. What follows is a firsthand account of Collins' journey to the remote Tibetan plateau. For more information, visit [tibetanaid.org](http://tibetanaid.org).

I flew 16 hours from Los Angeles to Beijing, and then on to Xining, the capital city of Qinghai Province of the Peoples Republic of China. DanZhen Tsering, the construction supervisor for the ChaZhu Valley Clinic, picked me up at the Xining airport and drove me the four hours to the ChaZhu Valley in Hualong County. The Qinghai Province

includes Amdo, the birthplace of the Dalai Lama, and is bordered on the south by the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Both Qinghai and the TAR are on the Tibetan plateau whose valleys are at 12,000 feet with multiple mountain range to 28,000 feet in elevation. The drive was exquisite, with glorious vistas of grass-covered mountains and valleys with sheep, horses, cows and yak grazing on the slopes. When we reached the edge of the valley, DanZhen stopped the car so that we could get out and admire the new clinic — white and sparkling amid the lush green of the wheat and barley fields.

Danzhen has been involved with the project since its inception and says his enthusiasm for the project is matched by that of the villagers. As we got into the car and drove closer to the clinic, I felt my sense of wonderment increase as this absolutely beautiful building, trimmed in Tibetan architectural details, transformed from a vision in the distance into a solid presence: a representation of the joining of the modern sanitized space of healing with the ancient methods of Tibetan medicine.

The next day I spent the whole day in the old clinic — the home of Dr. Sonam Ji and her husband, XiaBa, a Tibetan medicine doctor.



**CORINNE COLLINS, RN, FNP, and Dr. Sonam Ji, seated, discuss a patient.**

During the last week of October, they will be moving into the new clinic after a blessing and inauguration ceremony. I found Dr. Sonam Ji and XiaBa to be very astute in determining whether a patient needed to be treated with Chinese medicine, Tibetan medicine, or Western medicine. The Western-style drugs that they had in their pharmacy were all very good and appropriate for their needs, but the clinic also stocks a variety of Tibetan herbs and Chinese formulas.

When I left the village five days later, I felt even more dedicated to our project and the need to raise funds to provide medicines, health education, improved diagnostic methods, and free medical care to the people of the ChaZhu Valley.

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# Ojai effort reaches Tibetan homeland

By Jay Ford Cullis  
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A traditional blessing is offered in the Tibetan highlands.

ChaZhu Valley of Tibet. Dorjee's wife Dolkar Iso, along with Laurel Miller and other foundation board members, prepared a traditional Tibetan dinner for the guests in honor of the Dalai Lama's birthday.

"Eight years ago we had a dream," Dorjee said of when he first came to the United States. "We said if we were successful, we would share this success with the people of Tibet." The foundation was officially incorporated in California on July 13, 2004, and only one year into what's become an extensive, international effort the group is

Please see Tibet, Page A-3

For years Dorjee Tsewang's goal of giving something back to his Tibetan homeland felt like a dream. But the smile on his face while celebrating the TibetanAid Foundation's first year anniversary last Sunday made it clear that it was a good dream to wake up from.

With donors, volunteers, and friends gathered at The Ojai Retreat, Dorjee presented a slide-show highlighting the foundation's progress through their first year of existence as they've worked to construct and staff a medical facility in the



THIS COMPUTER-GENERATED GRAPHIC shows what the TibetanAid Foundation's medical clinic will look like upon completion.

## Tibet:

(Continued from Page A-1)

well on its way. But while it's been a massive undertaking for the Tibetan couple, it's nothing compared to the journey they made from the snowy Himalayas to the chaparral covered hills of Ojai.

Escaping Tibet at the age of 18, Dorjee braved a grueling 30-day trek across the mountains into northern India where he met his future wife. Attaining visas through American sponsorship, Dorjee and Dolkar met up again in Southern California and married in Ventura County in 1998. Soon Dorjee was hired to a service position at the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa, and the couple moved into a house in the Taormina community where they found themselves with a new group of friends willing to help make the TibetanAid Foundation a reality.

"I have been involved with this family for a year and it has been an incredible treat," said board member Laurel Miller. "They are the most loving, compassionate, capable people I've ever met."

But the thought of giving back to his homeland never left Dorjee's mind, and Sunday's gathering was a chance to celebrate not only the foundation's work, but the budding fruition of that dream.

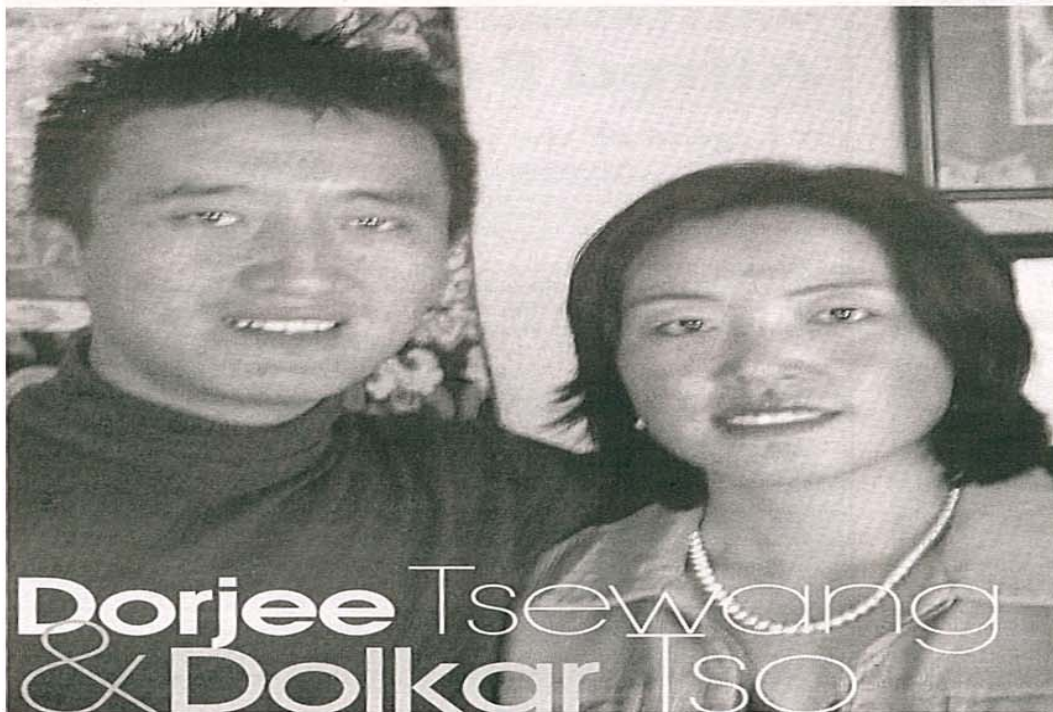
"Everything in Tibet is happening fast — they're excited," Dorjee said. Groundbreaking had been scheduled for June, but because April is a slow month in

village life, ChaZhu Valley villagers set about building the clinic's foundation two months ahead of schedule. On Friday, July 8, Dorjee received a midnight call from Tibet announcing that construction had been completed. While it was a welcome announcement for all involved, Dorjee explained that work is far from finished. "The clinic's done, but it's empty," he said.

What remains is filling the bare shelves with medicines and medical equipment, while also securing doctors and translators to staff the operation. Working tirelessly over the past year, the foundation has made 11 presentations in 12 months all over the state, securing donations and private funding. But \$14,000 remains to be raised to meet the \$25,000 goal necessary to fully staff and supply the two-story, 12-room clinic's operation.

Dorjee said the foundation's second year of existence will see the focus shift toward attaining grant funding. New faces are joining up with the foundation, including Dr. Robert Feiss who is coming on as medical director to assist Corinne Collins, who hopes to travel to the valley as soon as August. And in Tibet, respected Buddhist teacher and lama DanZhen Rinpoche will coordinate the clinic's work on site. "He will be the eyes and ears of the TibetanAid Foundation in Tibet," said Dorjee. Even the Chinese government has helped out, moving boulders and rocks from the construction site as they built a road through the valley.

## C L O S E U P



## TibetanAid Foundation on a Mission

**T**he story of the TibetanAid Foundation, a local nonprofit based out of Ojai, is really the story of two people—husband and wife, Dorjee Tsewang and Dolkar Tso. The couple met while living in the blistering hot heat and uncertain squalor of a refugee camp in India in 1995, both of them having made the excruciating trek, carrying the bare minimum of supplies across the Himalayas out of Tibet and into Nepal, then continuing on to India. Hoping for a better life and dreaming of someday making it to America, they endured sub-zero temperatures, frostbite, snow blindness, elevations over 16,000 feet, border patrols, and constant hunger. The latter was so strong that Dolkar remembers waking one morning, her tongue bloody and sore from chewing imaginary food in her sleep.

During their stay in the illegal camps of India, the couple began to learn English from visiting tourists. Through their language practice they connected with two Santa Barbara couples: Chip and Judy Lukas and Steve and Jeri Harrison, who, through their own limitless generosity and compassion, would eventually make the passage to California a reality for Dorjee and Dolkar.

Arriving in California in 1997, Dolkar began language school in Pasadena while Dorjee enrolled at Ventura College. The couple moved to Ojai shortly thereafter and has been there ever since, living with their two children Kangchen and Norbu, and working together at the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa.

Early last November, Dorjee, with the help of his wife and a few of their neighbors, started the TibetanAid Foundation. The nonprofit, nonpolitical organization works to provide medical care and education in rural Tibetan villages. Their first project is to fund a sustainable health clinic in the Chazhu valley of northeast Tibet. Plagued by unclean water and miserable sanitation issues, the area is a breeding ground for dysentery, tuberculosis, and malnutrition. The nearest medical treatment facility is hours away by sketchy, often closed, mountain roads.

Through a color-soaked, visually stirring slide presentation, Dorjee and Dolkar have been sharing their extraordinary story with local schools, community centers, and churches. Though the events, which Dorjee calls a “community cultural exchange,” are free of charge, donations are collected to help further the work of the foundation. These selfless efforts take up most of the couple’s free time, but it is something they have dreamt of doing ever since they left their homes and families in Tibet more than a decade ago. As Dorjee so humbly put it, “We always think that we are the most fortunate people in the world. . . . We have worked hard and kept determined and focused. Now we want to share our success with the people who need our assistance and support most in our home of Tibet.”

For more information, call 646-2537 or visit [TibetanAid.org](http://TibetanAid.org).

—Ethan Stewart