

Thank You DCI

Lira Chowdhury

Having traveled to Bangladesh numerous times throughout my life, I have seen what devastating effects poverty and disease can have on a population. The sight of overcrowded streets with adults wearing nothing but rags, as well as children so malnourished their skin clings to their bones, left an unforgettable impression that has driven me to start helping people at a young age.

During my senior year of high school, I became involved with **Distressed Children & Infants (DCI) International** by sponsoring a child and played a small role in starting up the Texas chapter over the next couple of years. It was after I went to the University of Texas at Austin that I realized I needed to spread word of this worthy organization.

One of the first things I did was organizing Dr. Hoque's visit to Austin as a guest of the Bengali Students Association. This meeting expanded DCI in Texas even more as people and students came forth to volunteer and contribute to the cause. As a student representative, I edited and wrote documents, volunteered at events, fundraised, and traveled

to several places to reach out and learn more about the organization. Going to New York for the BMANA (Bangladesh Medical association of North America) convention and FOBANA (Federation of Bangladeshi Associations in North America) are just a couple of the trips I took. My key trip was to Bangladesh with Dr. Brian DeBroff, where as a volunteer, I witnessed rural living conditions firsthand. I met a lot of the DCI students and on-site volunteers. Everyone in the Bangladesh DCI office worked hard to make the trip very pleasant. Seeing the DCI children performing what they learned in school—well nourished and wearing nice clothes—reinforced my every belief that our organization is changing lives. However, these children are only a small portion of the population that is *fortunate* to have sponsors. Millions of other children are still in dirty clothes, diseased, malnourished and working instead of going to school. There are no



words to explain the situation, or the looks in the eyes of the families that are desperate for just one meal a day. Just this one trip to Bangladesh proved to me the success of DCI's mission. It is only the beginning, and a new generation of leaders is needed to carry on and extend DCI's help to the millions of other underprivileged children of the world. High school and college students are the most influential group that can make vast differences.

It was these firsthand experiences that set me apart from the rest of the medical school applicants and, not to mention, the excellent recommendation I was awarded for what I have done for DCI. DCI has moved me in such a way that one of my main reasons for becoming a doctor is so I can provide care to those who need it the most, such as the children of Bangladesh. I am beginning my medical school career in July. My time to volunteer will be minimal due to the rigor of the curriculum, but I will continue to do as much as I can. Sponsoring a child for \$12 a month is the easiest thing I can do, all I have to do is not eat out once a month and I can change the life of a child. I encourage each and every person to take out just a little bit of time to think about these children and the way you can help in any power.

Thank you DCI for allowing me the opportunity to fulfill my childhood wish to help these disadvantaged children and for all the support and encouragement during my journey through college and acceptance into medical school.

Lira Chowdhury

DCI Youth Volunteer, Texas

The Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine (TCOM) at the University of North Texas Health Science Center.
Fort Worth, Texas