



The PEAK Program

History

Moved to action during a trip to Nepal in 1999, Bruce and Susan Keenan began sponsoring two orphaned sisters at a squalid state-run orphanage in Kathmandu. Soon they were sponsoring two more children, then four, then eight, and in 2000, Himalayan Children's Charities (HCC) was founded.

HCC was established with the philosophy that every child deserves an education, safety, a loving family, and the opportunity to live a fulfilled life. Our mission is to create paths out of poverty and into leadership for vulnerable children and at-risk youth. We do this through investment in quality education, innovative mentorship, and supportive care.

In 2009, our first group of students began graduating from grade 10. At the time, grade 10 was the end of basic education in Nepal, and it was also when youth aged out of the orphanage system. We realized the importance of continuing to support the youth in our program, who would have otherwise been left to fend for themselves at just 16. To meet our students' evolving needs, we began enrolling them in junior colleges and technical schools, and soon into university.





The “Khushi Ghar” youth home was opened in 2010, and a local Nepali team, including house parents, was hired. The HCC Mentorship curriculums were developed soon after, and supplemental programming was increased to provide access to social-emotional learning, leadership development, life-skills training, academic and career counseling, and internship opportunities. At Khushi Ghar, the nurturing environment and consistent care provided by our long-term house parents, as well as the peer-to-peer support network, create the basis for our family culture. Family forms the foundation for self-image, confidence, and healthy relationships, and we are dedicated to providing this for our students through our unique surrogate family.

In 2016, we opened up the application process for its higher education program, making multiple scholarships available each year to eligible students nationwide. In 2017, our students and graduates established their own non-profit organization to help us run these programs and create sustainable change in their local communities.

As of 2022, 18 HCC students have graduated from university, 5 have gone on to post-graduate degrees, and 40 students are currently enrolled in higher education.





The Program

The PEAK Program provides access to higher education, mentorship, and supportive care to disadvantaged youth in Nepal. Education is a powerful agent of change and driver of development, and higher education has a unique role in helping both individuals and society (USAID 2020). For impoverished youth in Nepal, it can mean the difference between a life of poverty and hardship or one of economic stability and social mobility (Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics).

The PEAK Program provides life-changing opportunities to youth who are motivated to learn and give back to society but have no financial means to continue their higher education. Applications are open nationwide to students who meet entry requirements, and scholarships are awarded annually.

Quality Education: PEAK covers 3-6 years of higher education. Includes full tuition and all education-related fees, such as books and exam fees, and tutoring for college (grades 11-12) and university (four years) or technical school (three years) in Kathmandu.

Supportive Care: PEAK covers all living and personal expenses, including room and board. Housing is provided in HCC's "Khushi Ghar" youth home and nearby Annex apartments. A supportive and caring family culture help to ensure students' success in the classroom and beyond.

Transformative Programming:

Life-Skills and Leadership Training - built on the foundational philosophy of Leaders-Training-Leaders, training provides students with social-emotional learning through workshops and hands-on experience. Students participate in HCC household management activities. They attend courses in communication, team-building, and leadership and learn foreign languages, computer skills, and financial literacy. Students are also required to volunteer at least 5 hours each month in the community.

HCC's Mentorship Program - is designed to foster meaningful peer-to-peer relationships, and guide students into lives of empowerment through nurturing their emotional needs, talents, skills, passion, and self-esteem.

Academic and Career Counseling - services include individual assessment and advising based on student interest and capability, workshops covering professional skills such as resume writing and interviewing, internship support and guidance, and exit planning to help prepare students for life on their own.



Application Process Overview

HCC accepts applications for The PEAK Program throughout the year and the review process and applicant interviews take place every fall. The Program capacity is 40 students and intake is subject to availability. Beginning with the 2025-2026 academic school year, HCC will have the capacity to provide 10 new scholarships annually.

Applicants must submit an application which includes: PEAK Application Form, Personal Statement, Academic Information & Records, and References. Applicants are reviewed by members of the HCC staff in Nepal and the U.S. and the top applicants are interviewed in person the HCC staff in Nepal.

Students are considered based on their motivation to learn, commitment to community service, academic performance and personal need. Priority is given to students from marginalized communities and disadvantaged circumstances including: orphaned or abandoned; low caste (e.g. Dalit); from indigenous groups; grew up in institutionalized care; female; and/or comes from extreme poverty.