

Below the picture: Martha Förch in the Protestant parish hall in Rieden. Many supporters of the Shoshana association have come to listen to the founder. Roswitha and Werner Oehrle warmly welcome her.

## Helping people to help themselves

**Donation project** 23 years ago, Martha Förch from Tüngental founded the India aid association Shoshana. She now lives in the USA. *By Sonja Alexa Vollmann*

Martha Förch stands in the entrance area of the parish hall in Rieden and welcomes her guests. Hands are shaken, hugs are distributed. The hostess knows everyone here, only some names have escaped her by now. Thirteen years ago, the native of Tüngental moved to the USA, to the homeland of her late husband. Once a year, usually in early spring, Martha Förch comes to Hohenlohe. Here she has many friends and acquaintances, especially many supporters for her club Shoshana. It was founded by the former Christ-bearer sister in 2000. Together with its Indian partner Bindu, the association has set up sewing centers. Helping people to help themselves is the path Shoshana takes. Young women learn to sew in order to earn their own money. They have also created health clinics where slum dwellers receive free treatment. In photos and films, Martha Förch shows exactly what this looks like on site. For the German viewer, it seems strange and yet cheerful that the people there sit around the treatment table and watch how the blood pressure is measured and the administration of medication is explained to the others.

In many photos, the 77-year-old German can be seen surrounded by women who show her clothes. How she watches treatments, shows a child something on her mobile phone or visits people in the slum. She is an ever-smiling woman, dressed in colored dresses, her light hair in a ponytail. The initiator of the project seems almost a little shy, just don't be the center of attention. The trained nurse would rather draw blood herself than just watch.

***"I am adorned like a Pentecost."***

**Dual citizenship** On this Sunday afternoon in the community centre in Rieden, there is a 77-year-old woman who is as approachable as on an afternoon with friends, even though she has long since left the German environment. She has dual citizenship, loves the USA, her house with a large plot of land, their friendly neighbors and has no problem with Donald Trump either. "If I didn't talk to my neighbors in English, I'd think I'd be in Germany." There is no American accent in her language. She tells funny stories without wanting to be funny. "I'm decorated like a Pentecost," she says of an award she has endured. She was awarded a medal in India as a "woman who has achieved something". "They couldn't have chosen a better one like you," says a woman in the audience. Martha Förch wants to convey to her protégés: "Become proud Indians again! Help yourselves." In addition to training as seamstresses, the Shoshana association has now also started a computer course. You have to keep up with the times, soon even in India, self-sewn clothes will no longer be cheap. Martha Förch thanks her German donors. Most of them have been with us from the very beginning, and once a year they are informed about the developments. Reliably and faithfully, they maintain their willingness to donate – and their friendship with the emigrated, self-sacrificing, Swabian Christian.

**Emigrated Hohenloheri Martha** Förch comes from Tüngental. After school, she trained as a nurse at the Diak Hospital in Hall. In 1968 she joined the Order of the Sisterhood of Christ the Bearer.

**She traveled** to South America and Asia and worked in charities, including a kindergarten in India. In 2000, she left the sisters and founded the Shoshana Association. Two years later, she met her husband, Bob Kaszer, an American, with whom she moved to Pennsylvania in 2011, where she still lives today. A year later, in 2012, her husband passed away.

**Info** Interesting facts about the aid association can be found at [www.shoshana.org](http://www.shoshana.org)