

# THE HINDU

Online edition of India's National Newspaper  
Sunday, Oct 31, 2004

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International



### Laughter to help the homeless

By Michael Leidig

VIENNA, OCT. 30. When you are down on your luck, it may be the last thing on your mind. But in Austria doctors know the health value of a good chortle, and are offering homeless people lectures on how to laugh.

The project began in the southern Austrian city of Graz earlier this month, and has been such a success that other disadvantaged groups, including asylum-seekers, are about to be taken on as students.

The courses are conducted by professors such as Leopold Neuhold from the Karl Franzens University in Graz, who has been to four local hostels to deliver a lecture called "laughter is the best medicine."

"This is a fantastic project," he said. "One of the main problems for the homeless is getting a foot back in the door of society ... we hope this programme will be the first step towards achieving that goal."

The project is sponsored by the Austrian magazine, *Megaphon*.

Dr. Neuhold said his first 30 homeless students had learned the importance of humour in the face of adversity, and added: "It demonstrates that education should be open to everyone, including the homeless."

- Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

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