



MSMF Newsletter

# A Ray of Light

Education \* Eye Care \* Disaster Relief



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MSMF work is recognized at a public engagement session

## Celebrating Twenty Years

MSMF organized a public engagement session in Ottawa on 31 May 2009. The event featured guests and speakers from funding agencies such as CIDA, Help the Aged Canada and the University of Ottawa Eye Institute. The event held in the Centrepointe Chambers had Mr. Pierre Poilievre, MP for Nepean-Carleton, as the Chief Guest. Mr. Jaideep Mukerji, Vice President at Angus-Reid Strategies, was the MC.

“The valuable assistance provided to thousands of destitute people in India for so many years by Chandra, Sarma and MSMF volunteers is truly a source of inspiration and I feel truly privileged to have worked with them for the past fifteen years”, said Pierre Barbeau, Executive Director, Help The Aged Canada (retired in August 2009).

“The sense of innovation and unflinching search by Dr. Chandra, his staff and members of the foundation for ways and means to reach out further to more and more of the population of this huge district of 50 million people is more than impressive” said Roderick Haney, retired from CIDA in June 2009. “Dr Chandra deepened his commitment to the community by opening a new secondary school combining academic with technical education” he said. “The quality of MSMF proposals for the establishment of Vision Centres, the Outreach Program and the Public Education for Blindness Prevention were such that the review board had no difficulty in approving them” said Yves

Morneau, of CIDA. His report is included on another page in this Newsletter. Another speaker from CIDA (retired), currently consultant to the Department of Canadian Heritage, Francoise Mailhot, spoke about the dedication, efficiency and intelligence with which MSMF executed the projects to ensure that they grow solidly.

Speaking on the partnership between the University of Ottawa Eye Institute (UOEL) and the Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology (SIO), Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe said, “the partnership was originally created to assist SIO to become a centre of excellence and for professional development. Over the years of this partnership, we have contributed much to SIO but also we had much to learn from them” she said. “The techniques used in India were very cost effective and quick and allows them to perform up to 200 surgeries a day”. A more detailed report of Dr. Lapointe follows later in this Newsletter under Volunteer Reports. Dr. Chandra addressed the group and said that in addition to providing quality eye care, the foundation is providing primary, secondary and vocational educations. He also discussed the challenges that need to be addressed.



**Dr. Chandra Sankurathri and Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe**



**“The partnership is a mutually beneficial one. We send specialists to teach and the residents to do electives and learn. They learn not only about SICS but international ophthalmology and cultural diversity.”**

*Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe*

**Volunteer Reports**

**Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe  
Ottawa Eye Institute (UOEI)**

Since 2008, The University of Ottawa Eye Institute (UOEI) and Sri Kiran Institute of Ophthalmology (SIO) have established a partnership agreement. The agreement stipulates that the UOEI will assist SIO in becoming a center of excellence outside the field of cataract surgery. This will be achieved through a structured program consisting of the following: a) setting a center for professional development, b) setting up a computer library to find best practice patterns, c) sending regular specialists in different disciplines for continuing medical education, d) an exchange program in which residents will visit SIO for three week electives to learn about International Ophthalmology i.e. learn about diseases affecting the developing world and become proficient in Small Incision Cataract Surgery SICS, an excellent surgical technique that we currently do not use.

We feel that we can teach our Indian colleagues a number of techniques we use here but also at the same time, we have much to learn from them. The backlog of cataract blindness is still a huge problem in India due to the vast population, poverty, malnutrition and the latitude. The best method or technique to address this problem is not our technique of cataract extraction by phaco-

emulsification, but by their own SICS. These are the reasons why this is effective.

It is a truly humbling experience to watch our Indian colleagues operate for a full day and give back normal vision to 200 blind human beings. We do a very expensive procedure for a small improvement. At Sri Kiran it is a life altering change. We have so much more to learn and share from this partnership and not just in ophthalmology.

The partnership is a mutually beneficial one. We send specialists to teach and the residents to do electives and learn. They learn not only about SICS but international ophthalmology and cultural diversity.

	Phaco (Canada)	SICS (India)
Cost per Eye	\$3,000	\$50
OR Time	20 min	2 min
Pre-op VA	20 min	50 min
Max Sx/Day	20	250

**Joanna Southwell, Anglican Parish of Salt Spring Island**

The Anglican Parish of Salt Spring Island hosted a memorable dinner for Dr Chandra in June. Chandra has been a regular visitor for seven years. With each visit more and more people have had the opportunity to learn about MSMF and islanders have responded generously in support of an organization that has touched their hearts.

More than 80 dinner guests attended this year’s event that featured an East Indian menu. A crew of enthusiastic cooks from the parish prepared the food and the church hall was filled to capacity. There were a few surprises in store for the evening. Several unexpected but very welcome guests accompanied Dr Chandra on his visit.

Cedric Monteiro, the CBC producer who spear headed the making of A Ray of Light, came with his family. Terry Milewski, recently appointed senior correspondent in the CBC Ottawa Office, together with a cameraman captured the evening on film. During the evening, Chandra gave a succinct update on the progress being made by MSMF in Andhra Pradesh.

Terry Milewski followed with an account of his first hand experience with the foundation while he was working on the documentary film, A Ray of Light. Terry spoke of how Cedric and he had been investigating and filming the destruction caused by the tsunami off the east coast of India and since they were near Kakinada they decided to visit Dr Chandra. The visit resulted in the award-winning documentary which was aired on CBC News: Correspondent. It also led to a personal commitment by Terry to support the work of MSMF.

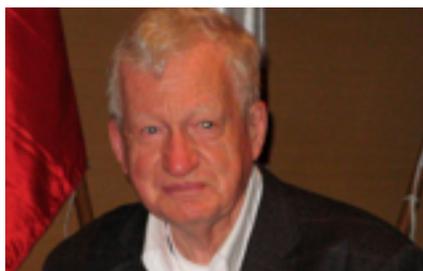
As the dinner came to a close a challenging offer came that an anonymous donor would match all funds donated by Salt Springers up to the end

of July 31. The final amount raised on the island amounted to \$9,062.47 and with the matching donation the total gift to MSMF ended up at \$18,124.94.

A few days after this wonderful evening Dr Chandra's visit to Salt Spring appeared on CBC's The National in a segment on Canadian heroes entitled Making Canada Proud. Now the challenge to all of us is to spread the message further afield. This should not be difficult when people learn that in this organization overhead costs are minimal and every dollar goes a long way to making a substantial difference in the lives of those who live in poverty in rural Andhra Pradesh.

**Yves Morneau**

For five years, between 1999 and my retirement in November 2004 from CIDA, I had the great privilege to work very closely with Dr Sarma Vishnubhatla and Dr Chanda Sankurathri of the Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation (MSMF).



**Yves Morneau**

As CIDA Programme Manager, I was responsible for a certain number of non-governmental organizations which regularly applied for special grants from the NGO Project Facility, one of the sections of CIDA's Partnership Branch.

MSMF was one of the organizations I dealt with regularly. Three-year proposals were put forwards on behalf of the Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology of Kakinada. The quality of the proposals

for the establishment of the Vision Centres, the outreach program and the public education for blindness prevention were such that the review board recommended every time their approval.

Reading their bi-annual reports, I felt as if I had been there many times, despite the fact that I could not travel to the site. The results achieved in providing accessible and affordable eye care to the needy of the rural area would astonish anyone. Results-based management methods, as promoted and imposed by CIDA, were adhered to very carefully. I could with full confidence, allow the release of the money that had been budgeted for these projects as I knew that thousands of elderly poor and destitute people were recovering their eyesight and therefore becoming again active citizens in their communities.

As it had been suggested by the review board, always concerned with the viability of the projects, Dr Chandra was able to obtain extra funding from the Indian government for the cataract operations and for the training of local eye-technicians, another accomplishment.

I am delighted to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr Chandra and his team for their great achievement in the field of preventable blindness. These projects constitute the highlight of my last five years in CIDA.

**News from Kakinada**

**Sarada Vidyalayam**

Sarada Vidyalayam is doing extremely well with no drop outs in the high school as compared to 62% nationally in India. In addition, many of the children continuing on to higher education. The children are well focused and are pursuing subjects such as Mechanical Engineering and Genetics. The school presently has 165 students

enrolled and this number consists of 73 boys and 92 girls.

**Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology**

Srikiran Institute continues to do what it is good at - cataract surgeries and outreach. The numbers for 2009 so far stand as follows.

Category	Number
Total Patients Screened	64,529
Adult O/P	14,991
Children O/P	6,114
Number of Camps	89

**Vocational School**

Chandra recently announced a forthcoming event, inauguration of the vocational school in Kakinada. "This has been a great achievement in a very short duration. We want to celebrate this event most fittingly by participation of as many Canadians as possible." said Chandra. He also said that the original date of 7 November 2009 for the inauguration has been now postponed to Friday, 27 November, 2009, to allow for more participation from Canada. He hopes many will make a note of this change and attend the function and make it a great success.



**Pierre Barbeau**



### **Awareness and Fundraising**

Seven communities welcomed Chandra this summer for awareness and fundraising events. "In addition to the wonderful hospitality that we experience, these visits are always interesting, inspiring and generate ever increasing enthusiasm in MSMF", said Chandra. "The achievements in the past twenty years are a testimony to this enthusiasm", he said.

Sudbury welcomed Chandra for the first time. Niranjan Vijay, who organized the meeting said that Sudbury is home to many kindhearted and diverse individuals. Close to 75 people attended the presentation and approximately \$7,000 was raised. The annual MSMF picnic in Ottawa this year was the largest, attracting about 600 people to the event. The event featured multi-cultural programs and delicious food, thanks to the large dedicated volunteer group. The Montreal event organized by Rubina Rangwala and Vijaya Rao Aourpally attracted about 200 people and featured multi-cultural dances and Indian snacks.

Three events took place in the west. The Anglican Parish of Salt Spring Island hosted a memorable fundraiser dinner for Chandra. Please see the detailed report by Joanna Southwell, Chair of the Outreach, in the volunteer report section. The other visits included Calgary (Maharashtra Seva Samithi, Gujarathi Mandal and Andhra Association), Edmonton (Univeristy of Alberta) and Nanaimo.



**In sudbury with the Vijay Family**

### **Pierre Barbeau**

#### **Executive Director - Help the Aged Canada (retired)**

A major benefit for me of being involved with numerous charitable organizations for so many years is to occasionally come across individuals who have sacrificed so much of themselves to help the poor that they stand out in a society that equates success with the acquisition of money, public recognition and power. It is always so encouraging to meet people like Chandra and Sarma who have identified with the pain and suffering of people living in extreme poverty in India and who are rolling up their sleeves to do everything they can to assist them. It is very challenging work - work that is often difficult and frustrating and requires individuals with a great deal of resolve and courage. The rewards for these major efforts are not tangible in the traditional sense of financial gain; rather they come in the form of heartfelt gratitude from the poor who have benefited and a profound realization that their lives will be significantly improved as a direct result of the intervention that you and your organization have provided.

The valuable assistance provided to thousands of destitute people in India for so many years by Chandra, Sarma and MSMF volunteers is truly a source of inspiration and I feel privileged to have worked closely with them for the past fifteen years. It is humbling to think that the largest sports stadium in the world could not begin to accommodate all of the eye care patients they have treated! My warmest congratulations to all MSMF volunteers.

## **THANK YOU FOR CARING**

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family Happy Holidays. Your continuing support to MSMF, for Eye Care, Education and Disaster Relief, is more critical now than ever before in order to maintain current activities and support new initiatives. You can donate to MSMF in three ways: with a cheque or credit card information sent directly in mail to MSMF, online through CanadaHelps, [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org), and through the United Way campaign. Some Organizations and Employers match donations of their employees. If you need more information, please call us at 613 523 5413, or visit our website, [www.msmf.ca](http://www.msmf.ca). Our mailing address is: MSMF, 23 Mary Dr., Gloucester, ON, K1V 1G9, Canada. Email address: [info@msmf.ca](mailto:info@msmf.ca).

**Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation (MSMF), a registered charity (BN 89002 4995 RR 0001) in Canada ([www.cra.gc.ca/charities](http://www.cra.gc.ca/charities)), is dedicated to promote rural community development in India through Education and Vocational Training, Health Care and Disaster Relief.**