



# Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation

(A Registered Canadian Charity – BN 89002 4995 RR0001)

**Spring Issue**

**MSMF Newsletter**

**June 2004**

## *Vision is everything!*

To improve the quality of life of rural poor, what do we do, and where do we start? After investigating over a two year period around Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh, India, Dr. Chandra Sankurathri decided on two initiatives: start a primary school for children, which will have a long term impact on the community, and prevent blindness, which will have an immediate outcome.

### *Sarada Vidyalayam*

The upper primary school, with instruction in grades one to seven began in 1992. To maintain their physical well being, the children are immunized, and milk and midday meals are provided. In the past 12 years, Sarada has provided education free of cost to over a 1,000 students. More than 40 of them are currently enrolled in High Schools and Junior Colleges. To augment their education and to improve their employment opportunities and job skills, a vocational training program is currently in the planning stages.

### *Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology*

With major support from Dr. V. K. Raju, Ophthalmologist from Morgantown West Virginia, USA, Srikan was established in 1993. During the past 11 years, the growth has been phenomenal. With its well organized and very effective outreach program, Srikan has been providing excellent quality eye care to over three million people from that region. The new building, which is completed and currently being occupied, is providing facilities for the development of a large tertiary care eye hospital very much needed in this region. Poor villagers no longer will have to travel hundreds of kilometers to big urban centers, where they cannot afford the services and do not feel comfortable in that setting.

The 2003 statistics of Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology are impressive: number of out-reach camps 175, number of outpatients 40,073, number of (cataract, glaucoma and other) surgeries 11,719. For children below 16 years of age, number of outpatients 2,180, and number of surgeries performed 158.

The CIDA funded projects of Help the Aged Canada and MSMF are responsible for the steady growth of Srikan. The projects' Canadian Volunteer program is successful in developing links with institutions such as the University of Ottawa Eye Institute in Ottawa, and Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Center in Toronto.

### *St. Gregory Catholic School*

Michelle Danis, Member, MSMF Board of Directors

For the 12<sup>th</sup> consecutive year St. Gregory Catholic School, Ottawa, has directed their Lenten collection to MSMF to support Sarada Vidyalayam. The friendship between the two schools continues to grow strong. With yearly visits and video presentations by members of MSMF, the students and staff of St. Gregory are able to follow up on the progress achieved at Sarada Vidyalayam. Their continuing support is a testimony to the outstanding accomplishments of Sarada. We are grateful for this unique friendship and yearly support to the rural education project of MSMF in India.

### *A Fundraising Performance for MSMF*

#### *Steps and Echoes*

#### *Manohar Performing Arts of Canada*

*Saturday, November 15, 2003 7:30 pm*

*Pantages Playhouse Theatre, Winnipeg, Manitoba*

Of the many events we had in 2003 for raising awareness and funds, the Dance Program, Steps and Echoes, is outstanding, thanks to Dr. Ganga Dakshinamurthy, the Company Coordinator, and Mr. Rao Atmuri, a very dedicated volunteer for MSMF.

Steps and Echoes is an historical dance drama comprising of a number of linked dances in both Kathak and Bharatanatyam styles, embedded in evocative poetry and dialog in English. The dance movement revolves around classical and contemporary Hindustani and Carnatic Music specially composed in India. The performance by a team of 18 accomplished dancers attracted a full house of audience.

Dr. Chandra Sankurathri, Founder of MSMF, was present on the occasion to appreciate the performance and to thank Dr. Ganga Dakshinamurthy, Members of Manohar Performing Arts of Canada, Mr. Rao Atmuri and all of the volunteers, and those who have attended the program and generously supported the humanitarian cause of MSMF.

### *Awareness & Funds raising events in 2003*

Multicultural Festival in Brockville, ON, Annual Picnic in Ottawa, ON, and Canada Day Celebrations in Peterborough, ON;

The Canadian Ophthalmological Society meeting in Halifax, NS, and Rotary Club presentations in Collingwood, ON, and Etobicoke, ON; and

MSMF Volunteer Appreciation dinner in Ottawa.

***Trip to Sankurathri Foundation, Kakinada***

Krishna Gupta, Member, MSMF Board of Directors

My wife Kamlesh and I were in India last winter and the highlight of our trip was the visit to Kakinada. The journey by road from Rajahmundry took a couple of hours but the scenery was very beautiful with paddy fields and palm trees most of the way. The eye hospital, Sriikiran Institute of Ophthalmology, is very well known in the area and getting there was no problem at all.

The eye hospital, Sriikiran Institute of Ophthalmology, and the school, Sarada Vidyalam, are both located close to each other in the same campus. The weather at that time was very pleasant. We had the honour of staying with Chandra Sekhar Sankurathri. There were also other visiting physicians from the USA staying with him at that time. They are Dr. David Knox from Baltimore, Dr. Linda Lawrence from Kansas City, and Dr. V. K. Raju from Morgantown. There was a conference arranged at the Institute on January 18 on "Ocular Inflammation" with a very informative presentation by Dr. Knox. It was very easy to follow him and a non-medical person like me could also benefit from it. He explained how problems in different parts of the body like lungs, stomach and even teeth could affect the eyes. The conference was well attended with many doctors and students working at Sriikiran Institute as well. Dr. Knox is a retired person but his capacity to work is really amazing and he is very actively involved in research and clinical work even after his retirement.



The new extension to the Institute was almost ready except for some finishing touches like paint, etc. The extension will greatly enhance the capacity to treat new patients and many more people will be able to benefit as outpatients as well as from expanded surgical facilities.

Visiting the school, Sarada Vidyalayam, was also a very enriching experience. The school was closed for Makar Sankrant holiday but Hema Sankurathri (Chandra's sister), who manages the school, was kind enough to show

us around. The handicraft done by the students was very interesting and innovative. The students had made some beautiful pictures and art using very simple materials, which showed their creativity and imagination.

The campus, which has many trees, a plant nursery, and flower, vegetable, and fruit gardens, is very attractively laid out and maintained by an able gardener.

All in all, my visit to Kakinada was very enjoyable and a great learning experience and I am looking forward to a longer stay next time and doing some real work there.

***Blindness Prevention – Eye Camps***

In January and February of 2004, we had four eye camps sponsored – two by Dr. M. R. Parameswaran of Winnipeg, Manitoba, one by the Telugu Literary Society of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and one by the Rotary Club of Etobicoke, Ontario.

The two eye camps conducted for Dr. Parameswaran were one in the village of Isukapalli and the other in Sambamurthy Nagar, a slum area in Kakinada.

In the Isukapally camp, a total of 167 were screened and 56 were identified for cataract surgery, 16 of them for both eyes. They were taken to the Institute on the same day and surgeries were performed with intra-ocular lens implants on a total of 72 eyes.

The other eye camp in Sambamurthy Nagar, attracted 321 people out of which 48 were identified ready for cataract surgery. Among them 13 needed cataract extractions from both eyes. Thus a total of 61 surgeries with intra-ocular lens implants were done.

The eye camp sponsored by the Telugu Literary Society of Manitoba took place in Kumarapriyam village. A total of 230 people arrived at the camp, many walked and others came by bullock carts. They were all examined and 69 were identified for cataract surgery, and 14 among them in both eyes. At the Institute a total of 83 cataract extractions with intra-ocular lens implants were performed.

The Rotary Club sponsored Eye Camp took place in Peddapuram town exclusively for the Riksha drivers. Out of an estimated 150 Riksha drivers, 101 utilized this opportunity to have their eyes examined. Out of them, 65 were diagnosed having refractive errors, and although 19 were advised to undergo cataract surgeries, only 12 consented for the surgery. Three out of the 12 had cataract in both eyes. Therefore, a total of 15 cataract surgeries were performed. The surgeries were done with intra-ocular lens implantation. The 12 who had cataract surgeries, the 65 who were diagnosed with refractive errors, and the remaining 24, all received proper eye wear equipped with photo gray lenses.

**A VISIT TO SRIKIRAN**

Dr David J. Addison

In late November and early December 2003 as wintry weather was beginning to settle in at home in Ottawa I was enjoying the pleasant late autumnal weather of Andhra Pradesh and an unforgettable visit to the Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology.

From a personal viewpoint it was one of the most memorable and pleasant experiences of my life. It had been almost sixty years since I had left my native land and the yearning to see India again had always been with me. For me it was a real homecoming and like all homecomings charged with rekindled memories and newly generated impressions that keep coming to mind long after the event. Many of these impressions are essentially personal and of no interest to the readers of this newsletter, but some impressions may be of interest to readers who have not had the pleasure of visiting Srikiran but have become aware of the good work that is going on there and have been involved in one way or another in supporting that good work.

My mission, which was supported by funding from Help the Aged Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and MSMF was to assess the teaching programs and facilities already in place at Srikiran and, with my experience of having been the director of the residency training program in ophthalmology in Ottawa, to evaluate the potential for developing a similar program at Srikiran. I spent much of my time observing, asking questions, and generally finding out as much as I could about Srikiran, but also about how other training programs in India operate, a process that is still ongoing for me. While there I presented a number of lectures to the professional staff on ocular pathology which had been my particular subspecialty interest for the past thirty-five years and was also invited to give a lecture to the staff of the Departments of Pathology and Ophthalmology at the Rangaraya Medical College in Kakinada.

Of the many strong impressions from the visit a few really stand out. One that began almost immediately and was constantly reinforced was the remarkable sense of enthusiasm for and commitment to the concept of Srikiran of anyone associated with the Institute, however peripherally. When I arrived in Chennai on my way to Kakinada I was met at the airport by Murali and Anand who both work in Chennai but have a strong sense of identification with Srikiran and an enthusiasm for the work that is being done there. I am truly grateful to them for their kindness in greeting me and making my reintroduction to my native land so welcoming and so trouble free.

I had been told by several of my colleagues who had previously visited Srikiran about its extremely efficient high standard of cataract surgery. Despite being prepared, to actually witness all the different stages from the outreach screenings in the villages, the transportation of patients to the Institute, their pre-operative processing and preparation, and the actual surgery to the post-operative care was very impressive. At every level those involved displayed a professional enthusiasm and pride in the quality of their work in addition to their obvious skill. In talking to some of them this strong sense of commitment to a truly worthwhile endeavour was very apparent. There was an almost universal willingness to go beyond the strict confines of assigned duties and to help in whatever way was of benefit to the greater good of the organisation and the greater welfare of the patients. This admirable selfless approach is heartening to observe especially when contrasted with some of the more self-interested cynicism that one often sees in our own health care environment.

One of the really striking and lasting impressions I have is of the contrast between the hustle and bustle, the squalor, and the seeming chaos one encounters in the nearby town of Kakinada and the relative tranquility, orderliness, and cleanliness of the Srikiran compound. The clean, tidy, and polite children at the Sarada Vidyalayam school within the compound, with their obvious enthusiasm for their studies and their cheerful camaraderie, contribute to the atmosphere of being in a haven where so much real good is being done. Much of this impressive atmosphere radiates from Dr Chandra Sankurathi whose vision, integrity, commitment, and humanity impress all who come in contact with him.

I feel very fortunate to have had the experience of living with and getting to know Chandra and his sister Hema. I am also grateful to Drs. Madhavi, Thulasi and Rau as well as Madhu, Naren and all the others at Srikiran for their many kindnesses and for allowing themselves to be subjected to my sometimes tedious questioning.

I was particularly fortunate to see Srikiran at a turning point. The new building, which was nearing completion, was at a stage where it was easy to see how much careful thought had gone into its planning and also to envision the tremendous potential it offers for further development of the important role that Srikiran plays. When one considers the amazing achievements since Srikiran was founded a few short years ago one cannot help but be filled with enthusiasm for the staff's ability to build on their existing strengths, thereby ensuring a very bright future for Srikiran. I certainly look forward to being associated with this exciting and worthwhile project and the outstanding people involved with it in the years ahead.

*News from Kakinada ...***New Construction**

It has been a very busy year. The new hospital building construction has been completed and is now being occupied. The computer and communications systems are working normally. The operating theatres are relocated into the new building. Also, the paid and non-paid patient wards. The new canteen building, equipped with steam boilers and cookers, has been completed also and is being used now.

**Sarada Vidyalayam**

On November 14, the students of Sarada Vidyalayam celebrated Children's Day with cultural activities. The students were awarded prizes, uniforms, and school bags.

On February 21, the school celebrated its 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary and on that occasion chief guest, Mrs. K. Rajyalakshmi, a generous donor and supporter of the school, addressed the students, staff, parents, and invited guests.

All 12 grade seven students successfully completed their public examination in the first class. The highest and lowest scores are 89% and 70%, respectively. To enter into grade eight, they all wrote entrance examinations to join in the prestigious Gurukula Schools. They are awaiting results.

After summer, the school is reopened and new students into grade one are being selected now.

**Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology**

The construction of the new hospital building is finished in February and occupation began in March, is going on smoothly.

The Help the Aged Canada (HTAC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded project, "Progressive Elimination of Avoidable Blindness", is completed at the end of December 2003. During the project lifetime, in 137 camps 33,260 were screened and 10,045 received cataract surgeries, 2,316 glaucoma surgeries and treatments. Eight junior ophthalmologists and 60 ophthalmic assistants were trained, and 219 ophthalmologists from the region participated in the ten workshops conducted. In the Canadian volunteer program, three ophthalmologists and one nurse manager, all from the University of Ottawa Eye Institute, visited Srikiran under this project. This project is a huge success.

Another HTAC – CIDA Project, "Blindness Prevention Program and Sustainability", started in January 2003 is being implemented currently and progressing well. Under this program, Dr. Peter Kertes, Retina Specialist, from Sunnybrook and Women's College Health

Sciences Center in Toronto, visited Srikiran in February. This is his second visit to Srikiran in two years.

The MSMF – CIDA funded project, "Childhood Blindness Program", will be completed by the end of December 2004. Under this project a large number of school children, from rural, urban and semi-urban regions, are screened for eye ailments and provided with suitable treatments. By the end of December 2003, 68,443 students from 305 schools were screened. A quick observation is that while students from rural areas suffer more from vitamin A deficiency, students from urban areas have more refractive error problems.

**Administrator**

Mr. Madhu Kutumbaka is the Administrator of Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology since 1993, the year the Institute was started.

Madhu will be attending a conference organized by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness in Dubai from September 20 to 24. The agency is attempting to formulate policies and action plans to combat preventable and curable blindness in the world.

From September 27, Madhu will be enrolling in a Masters Degree program in Community Health, offered by London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The academic year is from Sept 2004 to Sept 2005. The course is intended for people working in Community Eye Care.

**Visitors to Sankurathri Foundation, Kakinada**

Canada	USA
Dr. David Addison	Dr. Kjell Dahlen
Dr. Peter Kertes	Dr. David Knox
Mr. Nizar Mawani	Dr. Linda Lawrence
Mrs. Shashi & Dr. Eswar Prasad	Dr. V. K. Raju
Mrs. Kamlesh & Mr. Krishna Gupta	Mr. C. Somayajulu
Mrs. Lakshmi & Dr. K. Ram Murthy	

**United Way**

We are happy to inform you that now you can direct your United Way contributions to Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation, registration no. BN 89002 4995 RR0001. If you chose to direct any of your United Way contributions to MSMF, please let us know.

**Appeal for your support ...**

*We urge you to support generously our education, eye care and disaster relief programs. Donations to MSMF qualify for tax credits in Canada. Donations to our partner organization, Eye Foundation of America (1460 Anderson Avenue, Morgantown, WV, 26505), qualify for tax exemption in the USA.*

**Thank You.**

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