



## MSMF Newsletter

# A Ray of Light

Education \* Eye Care \* Disaster Relief



**Bridal Procession - Painting by Ravi Prabhakar,(6) and Lokeswari(8), Students of Sarada Vidyalayam.**

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## Helping Hands Project by Girl Guides of Canada Features MSMF work in an award winning presentation.

On May 1, 2011 weekend, Girl Guides of Canada held an event called Nite Trek at Clearwater, B.C. As a part of this programme, 75 trekkers, aged 11 to 18 years of age, hiked 8 km and completed 10 challenges after dark. The theme this year was "Helping Hands which supports Guiding's worldwide theme of girl empowerment". As a part of the activity, each team of 3 trekkers was given a short summary of an international charity. They each made a poster and then had 5 minutes to make a presentation for funding around fire and hot chocolate half way through the trek.

The top 4 presentations were presented at the closing ceremonies and Mary Lester, Area Co-Commissioner for Thompson Nicola Area Girl Guides said that the presentation on MSMF was one of the winning presentations. She said that the team was given information on Sankurathri Foundation's work on removing cataracts and they were very moved by the huge effect such a small donation can have on someone's life. A cheque for \$50 was also presented to MSMF.

Thanking the Commissioner, Dr. S. Eswar Prasad, Secretary of MSMF wrote and said that "The donation would bring back eye sight, dignity and livelihood to a family in India. We are very gratified that a team of young girls chose to support our foundation".

## Sarada Vidyalayam Celebrates Nineteenth Anniversary.



The school, Sarada Vidyalayam, celebrated its 19th anniversary with several activities that included, sports, drawing, elocution (formal speaking), essay

writing competitions and cultural activities. The occasion provided an opportunity for all the children and teachers to display their talents. The winners were awarded prizes on that day. Dr. Kishore Kumar, Revenue Divisional Officer, was the chief guest and gave a very inspiring speech to the children on how to compete and excel in life.

A total of 43 educational scholarships were also awarded that day. Among them

19 were from Asha Jyoti, a volunteer based non-profit organization in Toronto. Mrs. Michelle Mukerji scholarship from Ottawa was given to a female student to pursue Engineering. The rest of the scholarships were given by MSMF and SF.

The school now has 152 students. All the final year students have successfully completed their High school examination. Among 10 students, 4 passed with A1 grade (>91% marks) and the other six received an A grade (82 % to 90%). The highest average mark this year is 578/600, which is an improvement over last year. All the students graduated from the school are continuing their higher education.

## Information and Awareness Event in Sudbury, Ontario



**Neville Hewage**

The International Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Law and The Centre for Research in Social Justice and Policy, Laurentian University organized Information and awareness event at the J. N. Desmarais Library, Laurentian university, Sudbury, Ontario on September 13, 2011. Main objective of the event is to explore possible options to establish long-term partnership with Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology. Srikan hospital is well known teaching hospital in India providing training for doctors and nurses and ophthalmic technicians. Srikan train their own staff and hospital is well popular among rural community.

Emily Donato, Director of School of Nursing, Laurentian University, Natalie Chevalier, Professor of North Eastern Ontario Collaborative Nursing program (NEOCNP) of the Cambrian College, Dr. Henri Pallard, Director, International Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Law and many medical practitioners in Sudbury participated for the event. The event was well attended and well known psychiatrist Dr. Rayudu Koka delivered the welcome speech. He highly commended Dr. Chandra's humanitarian relief work in India and requested everyone to support and visit Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology. Dr. Chandrasekhar Sankurathri also addressed the gathering

and provided latest updates of the project.

The Laurentian University Nursing program and NEOCP program of Cambrian College is highly interested in developing collaborative medical and cross cultural training program with Srikan. The project will explore possible options to enhance medical training for Canadian students. This program will help to enhance mutual benefits for both institutes in Canada and India.

(Neville Hewage is a Researcher at the International Centre for Interdisciplinary law, Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ont.)

### Visit Report by Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe, University of Ottawa Eye Institute.



**Dr. Lapointe**

Dr. Marie Louise Lapointe, MD, FRCS(c), Ophthalmologist with University of Ottawa Eye Institute visited Sankurathri Foundation in summer this year. The mandate of her most recent visit was to evaluate the following

areas: Clinics, OR, Ophthalmologists and the resident visits.

Dr. Lapointe said that during her visit the clinics were running very well, thanks to the very devoted staff. Having absorbed the basic principles of visual rehab, they were doing a great job prescribing aids. Srikan is so impressive when it comes to demonstrating SICS. It is a beautiful, inexpensive, fast surgery that is ideal for a country where there is a backlog of patients blind from cataracts. During the last part of her stay she met representatives from Aravind, another large hospital in Southern India that provides eye care. "They chose to partner with Srikan because Srikan has the same philosophy of health care delivery," said Dr. Lapointe. She also made several recommendations for improved care. Thanking Dr. Lapointe for her observations, Dr. Chandra said that since the report has been written, many changes have already happened, especially the operational and clinical matters. He said that all the recommendations will be taken care of in due course.

### Admiration for Dr. Chandra and his vision of building a better community by caring for the less fortunate is immeasurable - A report.

Over the spring break of this year, I had an opportunity to visit Sarada School near the city of Kakinada in the state of Andhra Pradesh of India. I was accompanying a good friend of mine, Bahman, who has been a supporter of MSMF for a few years. From Rajahmundry we drove past

rice fields, banana plantations, warehouses, processing plants and a number of poultry farms to reach our dear friend and host Dr. Chandra at the MSMF compound. I was beginning to understand why Andhra Pradesh has its reputation for its fertile land; It was impossible to see even one plot of unplanted soil, and here the soil bears crop three times per year! As this was our first trip to India, we were both glued to the windows in order to absorb as much as we could.

The city of Kakinada-a bustling port city of over half a million. Steps away from the hustle in the city, the educational haven that Dr. Chandra has created for the children of five neighbouring villages at the Sarada School has become even more relevant now.

The funding of the Sarada schools and the Srikan Hospital, all of the programming, philosophy, curriculum, staffing and the management of the school have all been meticulously set to provide the high standards that all of MSMF supporters are so proud of. As I have experienced in my own teaching in Vancouver, small class sizes, specialist teachers and student engagement are paramount in a successful education, and all three hit me at the same time as soon I set my foot on the grounds of Sarada School. Classes are built for and house 10-20 students. Teachers, elementary or secondary, are specialist in their subjects and passionate about what and who they teach. And, the kids seemed to be in school willingly and happily!

The latter was the most interesting to me; I have mostly taught at public schools in Vancouver and have had more than my share of students who think of school as an adult conspiracy against children. Yet, the kids at Sarada would go to class with the heaviest of school bags, as there are no lockers to keep things in enthused about what their day is going to be like. The elementary students and their teachers have no chairs or desks, yet they all have enough energy throughout the day to jump off the concrete floors to smile and greet you with their loudest and most emphatic voice.

On my first day, I was passing by the elementary school when the second graders caught my eyes. They were sitting outside on the sand, in a square grid with perfect formation, singing under the supervision of their teacher, and shaded lovingly by one of the grand mango trees that remains on the grounds of the compound. I approached them with my camera fearing of breaking the concentration of the event which seemed very delicate and too precious to interrupt. To my pleasant surprise not even one student looked up to see who I was or what I was doing there. They

carried on singing their hymn which I later learned was a lesson in the local language of Telugu through poetry and music.

I moved on and reached the backside of the school where I had a view of one of the other classes in session. Here the first graders were sitting on the glassy concrete, busy working through exercises looking serious and focused. The room was decorated with children's work and the only technology I could see was a chalk board on one end of the room. The quiet members of the class were getting up from time to time to approach their teacher who was sitting at a corner of the room answering their questions. Some noticed me taking pictures through the window and looked up and smiled. They were working hard on their math and what they were writing on were little chalk boards on one side and their notebooks on the other. Once they were happy that their solution on the chalk board was good, they'd confirm it with the teacher and then record it in their notebook.

That observation gave the idea of teaching a Math lesson to the high school classes at Sarada. I cleared it with Chandra, who was quite accommodating and was happy to know that I was interested in teaching a class.

The high school building was just as well laid out as the primary school with shiny concrete floors. The students were in their afternoon mode of sitting on the floor of the long corridor. Lining, in formation again, along the walls and in the centre, they were doing the assigned exercises of the day. Some looked up with curiosity and smiles, most carried on with their work as if no time can be wasted. The walls were painted in the school colours of creamy browns and beige. Here, the classrooms had benches that reminded me of my own school years in Iran with a difference; everything was so clean and tidy that doing anything would seem to mess things up. I found the math class and had a quick chat with the very inviting and accommodating teacher, Adinarayana.

The bell, which was an old fashioned school house bell on a chain, was rung by one of the teachers and the students ran to their respective classes. The class that I was in (the math class) was quickly filled up with boys and girls of grade 9 and to my great delight the students sat in their planned seats with arms crossed behind their back and eyes closed, meditating or just contemplating on what they were about to start - I have been doing that exercise with my classes since I returned to Vancouver. The young math teacher, Adinarayana, taught a lesson on truth tables, which was closely followed by everyone in class. The attention to detail



and commitment to following the rules were amongst the first things you'd notice about these young men and women. This, as it was explained to me, has always been the major theme at Sarada. Discipline and attention to detail is taught from grade one. From morning assemblies, where everyone lines up and sings prayers in unison to lunch rituals of perfection in presentation of the food and the renewal of the vows before eating, children of Sarada learn that through following the rules and traditions of learning success is possible. A deep sense of community hovers over MSMF. Later that evening I went out to sit on the porch where I noticed quite a few of the high school students were in front of the Dr. Chandra's house with their books and backpacks. And, this was a daily happening; students would leave their books behind at the end of the school day, they'd go home to do their chores and come back to get help from their math and language teachers under the street light in front of Dr. Chandra's house and away from busy/noisy home environment. They were there every night till 9:30-10:00 pm along with their teacher, with Chandra going out, from time to time, to help out.

These children, though coming from a very poor background and mostly uneducated families, are very well cared for. It is apparent in their behaviour and it is apparent in their relationship with the adults at Sarada. It is not a forced show of respect that one notices at Sarada but a deep reverence. Here, students realize what opportunity has been given to them and know the value of a good secondary education in their future lives. Graduates of the Sarada regularly dropped in to remind them of that as well as pay respect to Dr. Chandra and Hema (Chandra's sister and the Head Mistress of Sarada School).

After we had gotten more familiar with the surroundings and went for walks along the narrow paved roads that snaked through rice fields and orchards of mango and cashew nut trees. Our morning walks to the nearby villages was not only refreshing, it also provided us with a view of where Sarada students come from. The villages were small and we started thinking about how MSMF has given this area and its residents a new lease on life. In a place where young and old walk or cycle for miles with a few coconuts or a bunch of bananas in a hope of earning the cost of the day's meal children just like the ones we saw in the village can now hope of becoming professionals. And, thanks to Dr. Chandra this is not just a dream anymore. Graduates of Sarada are now graduating from engineering and IT universities in the nearby cities. Scholarships are being awarded to these

children, celebrating their hard work and their dedication to their chosen field of studies. Sounds pretty farfetched, but when I met these smart, hopeful, and young men and women who are full of desire to achieve even more it was very easy to see what a deep impact Dr. Chandra and his tireless work has had on these communities of mainly farm workers.

A young Pediatric Ophthalmology assistant at MSMF's Sirkiran Institute of Ophthalmology named Usha played tour guide for us for an afternoon. Usha, who has a very warm and endearing way of conversing, told us all about what we were seeing along the way, as well as the history of the area. She also explained to us that she is, by working at MSMF, is building up her experience and her background in order to enter the medical school at Kakinada; Something that would have been deemed impossible few years ago. The hospitality and sense of humour all along the way as well as treatment of us as one their own was absolutely unforgettable.

We had ridden the bus with the little ones on the last few evenings and had formed a bit of bond with them by chit chatting and showing their own pictures to them. I loved to wave goodbye to them when their parents were receiving them and they would reciprocate. On our last day at MSMF I wanted to take more pictures of them and say a last goodbye. They were their usual best and realized that we were leaving. They came around us and had a few group pictures with me and Bahman. The students made their way to their classes and as I was trying to control my emotions Dr. Chandra directed our attention toward two of the first graders who had stayed behind. They were there to see us off and give us our parting gifts, which they had made themselves. Tears were running down my cheeks as they gave us hugs to send us off. We left knowing that they will be just fine under the tender shades of the old mango grove. They will grow up healthy and intelligent, valuing the lives of the people around them.

I have since waken from my short dreamlike journey to India, but my fond memories of our six day trip to Kakinada are going to stay with me for a long time; and, my admiration for Dr. Chandra and his vision of building a better community by caring for the less fortunate will remain immeasurable. Dr. Chandra has managed to turn his personal tragedy into a communal triumph. His love and affection not only extends to the children of Sarada, he has also cared for 1.6 million inhabitants of the surrounding areas through free eye care. Chandra and Hema treated us like their younger brothers while we were their guests at

MSMF; I hope that I always feel their boundless love.

(Masoud Habibian is a teacher and lives in Vancouver, BC.)

### **Progress Report from Sankurathri Foundation - Dr. Chandra Sankurathri.**

#### **Sarada Vidyalayam**

The school was closed for summer holidays from April 24<sup>th</sup> and reopened on June 13<sup>th</sup>. The new admissions for the next academic year are completed and a total of 152 children are in school. We have appointed five new teachers this year, some to replace those left. In the vocational school, 13 students are undergoing training and 10 of them are women. Dr. Venkatesh Mannar, President, Micronutrient Initiatives, Ottawa, Canada was here this summer for the first time along with his sister, Dr. Purna Shankar who is also a nutritionist. Dr. Mannar was instrumental in supplying the double fortified salt to be used in the food preparations for the school children. The local community medicine department is also conducting a study about the effect of this salt on the children's health by some performance indicators. In general, after using this salt the children look better and healthier.

#### **Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology**

During this period we have initiated diabetes retinopathy screening outside the base hospital. So far we have tried three such screening camps, two in Peddapuram vision center and one for employees of a big corporation in Kakinada, Coramandal fertilizers unit managed by Murugappa group. At these meetings we organize an awareness meeting about eye, diabetes and diabetic retinopathy. This is followed by screening all the people for vision, intraocular pressure and Fundus examination and photos of the Fundus in case of any problem. Srikiran anniversary was celebrated on January 22nd and the theme for this year is "see your impact". On this day all the people involved in organizing the community outreach programs were recognized.

Mr. Tilak Shankar, Management Solutions, Chennai, India was at the Foundation to prepare an evaluation report on Srikiran and to make recommendations about the sustainability of the eye care programs. This report will help us to plan for the future of Srikiran.

International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) Capacity Building Grant Fund Committee (CBGF) from Madurai has arrived for three day visit to study the present strength of Srikiran with a mission to make it sustainable eye care provider in the region. Their initial impressions were recorded in a letter to Dr. Chandra and said, "Indeed a very fruitful visit to

## The Statistics Speak for Themselves

The statistics below provide a glimpse of what we have been able to achieve with the support of our funding partners and volunteers. Donors and volunteers are very important partners in what we do. It is essentially people empowering people.

Facts	Cumulative 1990-2011	2011 Jan - 2011 Oct	Statement of Expenses of MSMF (2010 and 2011) Expenses	2011 Jan-Oct	2010
Out Patients Treated	1,707,622	85,230	Projects	142,328	210,426
Surgeries Performed	170,697	6,458	Credit Card Fees	1,193	1,235
Vision Centers	5	0	Fundraising	7,459	7,640
Eye Screening Camps for Adults	1,715	114	Professional Fees	5,650	4,725
Eye screening Camps for Children	932	25	General	337	935
Medical Personnel Trained	325	5	<b>TOTAL</b>	156,967	224,961
Support Staff Trained	99	4	<b>Support Provided in 2011.</b>		
CME Workshops Conducted	54	3	Sarada Vidyalayam	Approx. \$ 28,000	
Children Educated	1,778	158	Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology	Approx. \$114,000	
Scholarships Provided	284	43			
School Children Screened	299,128	7,893			

For detailed information on 2010 expenses, please follow the link:  
<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/ebci/haip/srch/basicsearchresult-eng.action?s=registered&k=Manjari+Sankurathri+Memorial+Foundation&b=true&p=1&f=25#pageControl>

Srikan hospital. Our hats off to you team for the great work you are doing in the semi-urban area to deliver eye care to the needy. We were really impressed with the systems followed in your institution and the discipline of the medical team in clinical work. The visit to eye camp was also a good experience and the quality examination in the camp has to be appreciated. We are sure in the future Srikan will become a self sufficient organization and will work independently to eradicate needless blindness in Godavari districts"

World sight day was celebrated on October 13th with special events to raise awareness among the public about the importance of the eye sight. On that day many special events were organized by conducting free eye camps at rural areas, eye examinations to Government employees, displaying banners in the city and by print media.

### A Full Schedule for Chandra this Summer in Canada.



Dr. Chandra

Dr. Chandra was in Canada this summer for a month starting 8th September 2011. His stay here was filled with public engagement sessions in Canada and US, fundraising events at several locations and media interviews.

An event in St. John's Nfld included a session at McDonald Drive Junior High School, media interview with CBC and a presentation at Memorial University.

A private dinner/fundraiser was hosted by Goutam Shaw and Geeta Chowdhury at their home in Ottawa for Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation (MSMF) over the Thanksgiving weekend. About 90 guests including interim federal Liberal leader Bob Rae and his wife, Arlene Perly



Guests with Chandra at the Ottawa Fundraising dinner

India disaster in 2005 and worked with the victims' relatives. Rae met Dr. Chandra through his former chief of staff, Jaideep Mukerji, now the managing director of Angus Reid Public Opinion. Mr. Balabrahmanandam Madaparathi, a MSMF Board Member, also took a very active role in organizing the dinner.

A meeting with a core fundraising group was held in Toronto. This meeting was organized by Mr. Rajan and Mrs. Sonia Arora of Toronto. Fundraising through potential endowments was discussed and several suggestions were made for making the programmes sustainable. The endowment campaign was also the subject of meetings held in Vancouver and Ottawa. Dr. Chandra identified the following capital items that the hospital needs in the next few years and if you are interested in participating in the funding or endowment programme, please write to Dr. Sarma Vishnubhatla at [info@msmf.ca](mailto:info@msmf.ca) for further information.

1. Van for Mobile Medical Team,
2. Phacoemulsifier.
3. YAG Laser.
4. B-Scan.
5. Nonmydriatic Fundus Camera.
6. Operating Microscope with CCTV Camera.
7. Solar LED Lighting for the yard.

"A Ray of Light" is the Newsletter of MSMF and is published in spring and fall of each year. The newsletter is edited (from contributions) by Dr. S. Eswar Prasad <[seprasad@bell.net](mailto:seprasad@bell.net)>. He lives in Collingwood, Ontario.

Rae and CBC correspondent, Terry Milewski.

Mr. Rae conducted a federal investigation into the Air

India disaster in 2005 and worked with the victims' relatives. Rae met Dr. Chandra through his former chief of staff, Jaideep Mukerji, now the managing director of Angus Reid Public Opinion. Mr. Balabrahmanandam Madaparathi, a MSMF Board Member, also took a very active role in organizing the dinner.

## Thank you for Caring

We are very grateful to you for supporting MSMF and its programs in eye care, education and disaster relief. We would not have achieved this level of success in eye care and education programs without your generous support. In these difficult economic times, your continued support is more than ever needed and appreciated. MSMF remains dedicated to providing the most outstanding service and care possible.

You can donate to MSMF in three ways: with a cheque or credit card information sent directly in mail to MSMF, online through ([www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org)), and through the United Way campaign. Some organizations and employers match donations of their employees.

A Ray of Light, is published by MSMF twice a year from contributions and reports sent by its volunteers. Please send your comments or suggestions to [info@msmf.ca](mailto:info@msmf.ca) or call us.

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).