



## MSMF Newsletter

# A Ray of Light



Dr. Chandra receives CNN IBN Senior Citizen of India Award on 2 Dec 2013.

## Our 25th Anniversary Issue

### Message from Chandra Sankurathri

I wish to thank you on behalf of MSMF for your valuable support over the last 25 years. It is hard to believe 25 years have gone by so quickly. During these 25 years we have made tremendous progress in empowering hundreds of thousands of people through the education to rural children, vocational training to rural youth, quality eye care and emergency relief measures at the time of natural disasters. These programmes are gaining strength day by day. We could touch the lives of these people only because of your wonderful support and understanding.

Our mission is not over and we will not rest until we can make a difference in many more lives. We look forward to your continuing support for these programmes. Thank you. With Best Regards, Chandra.

### Srikiran has become a truly state-of-the-art full-service eye hospital with the capacity and ability to do virtually anything - Dr. Peter Kertes.

It has now been thirteen years since I first learned of Dr. Chandra and the remarkable work that he had started and was doing in Kakinada. As an ophthalmologist and retina specialist, I was of course most struck by the strides that were being made reversing treatable blindness and have made multiple visits over the years and watched the Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology grow in leaps and bounds. My most recent visit was in February, 2014 and I came to wonder how much was I really now contributing to what has become a truly state-of-the-art eye hospital.

Although their main focus has always and continues to be cataract surgery now performing over ten thousand sight-restoring cataract surgeries a year, they have become a full-service subspecialty eye hospital with the capacity and ability to do virtually anything that may come their way. I spent the most time with Dr. G. Sandeep Reddy, their retina specialist, operating and seeing patients with him. He is among the most energetic and ambitious young surgeons that I have ever had the pleasure of working with. He is absolutely committed to bringing and delivering the highest quality retina care to the furthest reaches of south India and I have no doubt whatsoever that he has the wherewithal to see this through.

### Thank you for 25 years of support.

In celebrating 25 years of service, we thank all the wonderful people who share Dr. Chandra's vision for education, eye-care and disaster relief. In this 25th year, we express deep gratitude to those who have supported us in this mission and the people with whom we partner on our shared journey. May peace be in your homes, your hearts and your lives. Together we can continue on the path of spirituality and service.

The other observation that encouraged me on this visit and had worried me somewhat on my previous three visits to Srikiran was the succession planning that had been put in place. There is no longer any important element of the enterprise that hinges on any one individual. There is a depth and structure to the organization that leaves no doubt that it is not only sustainable but will grow and endure for generations to come.

*[Dr. Peter Kertes is an Ophthalmologist and Retina Specialist at Sunnybrook Hospital, Toronto.]*

### St. Isidore School reflects on 25 years of association

Congratulations on your 25th Anniversary. Here is a short message of our fortunate involvement with MSMF.

Over the past years the annual Lenten Project at St. Isidore Catholic School has been to raise funds for Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation. The St. Isidore community has been a proud supporter of MSMF. This partnership has strengthened our understanding of our school Board's spiritual message, "By Our Works We Show Our Faith" and what it means to effect positive change to help those who face challenging circumstances. Even small actions can make a difference in the life of others and allow children to have access to an education. Dr. Chandra's inspirational messages and updates, which he would share during his visits to St. Isidore Catholic School, were, and continue to be an inspiration.

*[Karen Wilson is the Principal of St. Isidore Catholic School, Kanata, Ontario.]*

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**“An endeavour that is greater than the sum of its parts” - Ankur Ralhan.**

During the month of August, 2013, my colleague (Joseph Wannacott) and I had the opportunity to visit a remarkable place in South East India called Kakinada. Having only travelled to the states of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in the past, travelling South to Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh on this visit was an eye opening experience. I had heard many times before of the diversity of Indian culture, language and religion but did not realize its magnitude until I was in a state where my mother tongue of Hindi served helpless and my Indian ancestry was no longer so obvious. The people of this region were all together different from those that inhabited the home town of my parents. Their language (Telugu), dress, cuisine, song, dance, occupation, religious traditions, hobbies and interests were at first in my mind “not Indian” and it was only after a period of weeks that I began to understand that the diversity found within India is the diversity of human life itself.

Perhaps for Joseph and I, the aspect of this diversity that was most evident was that of socioeconomic status. As we were travelling to India during a time when the exchange rate for the Indian rupee was plunging, we observed as our dollar stretched to cover all of our needs and wants. In Kakinada, we could purchase clothing for ten percent of the price in Canada, medical text books for just a fifth of the price we were accustomed to in Canada. Indeed, we felt very fortunate and wealthy and wondered how it was possible that poverty could exist in a world of such low prices? What Joseph and I did not realize at that time was that we were just somewhere in the middle of the vast spectrum of financial well being that exists in India. This became apparent to us, however, when we travelled to Mumbai and were unable to gain admission into a dance club on account of our attire and when we saw “Antilia,” the skyscraper that is the residence of Mukesh Ambani (CEO of Reliance Industries).



Ankur Ralhan and Joseph Wannacott of “No Borders” visited Sankurathri Foundation.

These experiences set the stage for our internship as they taught us that India is a world of its own and not a place where everyone is impoverished and starving. As medical students, this knowledge provided us with some humility and compassion when dealing with patients whom we could neither understand nor comprehend the living situation of, as we knew that we were part of the same spectrum of human life.

The shared experience of human life is exactly what is emphasized at Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology and at the K-10 school, Sarada Vidyalayam in the rural part of Kakinada. People of all walks of life arrive daily at the institute, whether by foot or car, from a neighbouring rural community or from the main city centre. These people come because Sankurathri Foundation, through Srikiran, is able to provide state of the art eye care to its patients at an affordable rate. With help from paying patients, the government of Andhra Pradesh, multinational corporations and many individuals and nonprofit organizations in North America, Sankurathri Foundation has been able to combat preventable blindness and provide free education and an opportunity for a brighter future to many impoverished children in this region.

There are many statistics that may be quoted to try and emphasize the success of this endeavour but they are not what will percolate through you when you visit this place. Rather, you will feel an overwhelming amount of positive and focused energy, much as you feel when you watch ants at work building their mound from the clutter of foliage they find on the forest floor. Truly, there is no one person who can explain to you what is happening at Srikiran and Sarada Vidyalayam, just as no one ant could tell you what the finished mound will look like. It is an endeavour that is greater than the sum of its parts and in that sense; it has a life of its own. As a project whose implications are incomprehensible, those that are involved with Sankurathri Foundation, whether as staff or volunteers, do their work very humbly. There are no egos present at this place, as no one can tell you the relative importance of each of the project’s parts. Thus, all parties, be it an ophthalmic surgeon, a technician, a teacher, a receptionist or an administrator treat one another as equals, working towards a common yet indescribable goal to improve the quality of life of others in some way, shape or form.

*[Ankur Ralhan is the Chief Executive Officer of No Borders. He lives in Mount Pearl, Nfld.]*

**“People are drawn to contribute to this caring and humanitarian cause” - Sirisha Dukkupati**

I spent a month volunteering at Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology and Sarada Vidyalayam and the experience was far more inspirational and moving than I could have ever expected. When I first arrived on site I wasn't sure where I would fit in and Dr. Chandra did not make it any easier. He left it up to me to find my own niche. I quickly realized that it often takes being pushed out of one's comfort zone to really excel and I now appreciate the little push.

As a prospective medical school student visiting a non-profit organization that serves a rural population, I expected to find many tasks I could assist with either medical or clerical areas at the hospital. However, I quickly came to realize how well tuned the institute already was and found it difficult to find areas for improvement. Fortunately, at that same time, the school had some room for extra assistance, which provided me with the perfect opportunity to give back to the foundation.

Since arriving, I immediately felt very welcome and at home thanks to the generosity and warm hospitality of not only Dr. Chandra and his sister Hema but also the entire staff. I suppose I shouldn't have been so surprised that when a group of people are drawn to contribute to such a respectable and humanitarian cause such as this one, it's more than likely that all those people will exhibit a similar caring personality. That giving nature was evident to me from day one. I remember my first day going in to observe in the operating room, having never before seen a cataract surgery. I walked up to one of the surgeons and introduced myself and began asking questions about the procedure. Of course, seeing as how it was still one of my first days at the institute and the fact that everyone looks quite indistinguishable in matching scrubs and surgical masks, I had unknowingly walked up to the medical director for the institute, Dr. Avinash Mahindrakar. Based on the care and patience he put into explaining everything



Sirisha Dukkupati working with the students of Srikiran.

on a level suitable to my background, I never would have guessed that he was the one running things. In my experience, such people are seldom found in such higher up positions, but I believe that the fact that the institute was able to get such a genuinely caring individual helps speak for the character of the foundation.

Even when I went along with the outreach camps, the pursuit of excellence was well evident. The two camps that I had the opportunity to attend were both run by government agencies so there were medical teams from all types of specialties. Srikiran always seemed to be the best equipped and on high demand. I'm still impressed by the fact that we would take along our own slit lamp and generator to every camp.

Now, the discipline and organization of the school was extremely impressive. Probably only amplified by my lack of prior experience with an Indian school system, I was especially in awe of the level of respect each of the students had for their teachers. I began teaching spoken English, primarily through various learning games, to all levels of students ranging from 1st to 6th class. Doing so, I was pleasantly surprised the students very manageable. As any other children their age would do, they would certainly voice their opinions on which activities they were more interested in repeating, but in the end, as their teacher - or "Akka" (translates to big sister) as they would fondly refer to me- my word always carried.

In addition, the genuine interest these students had in learning was always blatantly clear through their actions. This was evident in their shy faces as they were corrected in front of their peers, or in their eagerness to answer questions. They would especially light up when they knew they had answered a question correctly. Even as soon as the children learned that I was visiting from the United States, they seized the opportunity to ask questions straying from their syllabus. They seemed to truly appreciate the opportunity to stretch the limits of their English fluency. They were shy in my classes on the first day but when I forced them to speak, they responded eagerly to show off their new confidence. This made my entire trip worthwhile. I made promises that day to come back again, hopefully before any of them have graduated from the high school, and until then, I will stay hopeful that that same confidence will continue to shine.

*[Sirisha Dukkupati is a native of Ottawa, ON and is presently attending school in the United states]*

**Graduating Sarada Students write on their experiences.**

[Editor's note - the stories printed below are written by the students themselves. Only minor editing was done to make reading and understanding easier. The style is different.]

**Simhadri Appala Raju**



I am very lucky to study in this institution. I observed we are much disciplined and well behaved students compared to other schools around us. I could continue the

education through out because of love and affection showered on us by Director Sir (Dr. Chandra) and Madam (Hema) and all

my teachers. Now I will maintain the same attitude where ever I am. I spent my time of 10 years very happily in this institution and learned good habits and discipline under the guidance of Director Sir and Madam. I will be remembering them throughout my life and follow their suggestions. I will visit this lovely place to see my junior students and teachers whenever I feel.

**Tatapudi Sai Kumari**



We have received good books such as all in one, Sakshi and Swami Vivekananda etc. We have witnessed science

**MSMF Fundraising Picnic**  
A fun-filled day to help the needy in rural India



**MSMF Facts**

Kids educated - 2,808  
Eye surgeries - 195,768  
Outpatients: 2,019,605  
Scholarships: 427

[www.msmf.ca](http://www.msmf.ca)  
25th Anniversary

**Saturday, June 21, 2014**  
Andrew Haydon Park

Indian Vegetarian Food: 11am-2pm  
Entertainment: 1:30pm-4pm

Advance Tickets:  
\$50 - Family of four (2 adults, 2 kids)  
\$16 - Adult/senior  
\$12 - Kid (6-12 years)

For advance tickets please contact  
Ms. Lakshmi Vishnubhatla (613) 523-5413/ [info@msmf.ca](mailto:info@msmf.ca)  
Ms. Usha Merchea (613) 843-0757/ [upvali@gmail.com](mailto:upvali@gmail.com)  
Ms. Kauser Simran (613) 859-0881/ [simkauser@gmail.com](mailto:simkauser@gmail.com)  
Tickets at gate: \$20 per senior, adult or kid (6-12 years)

## 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 1990-2014	2014 Jan - 2014 Feb	Statement of Expenses of MSMF (2013)	
			Expenses (To be audited)	2013 Jan-Dec
Out Patients Treated	2,019,605	35,651	Projects	207,672
Surgeries Performed	195,768	2,972	Credit Card Fees	1,600
Vision Centres	6	1	Fundraising	7,201
Eye Screening Camps for Adults	2,003	26	Professional Fees	9,284
Eye screening Camps for Children	984	2	General	4,957
Medical Personnel Trained	349	0	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>240,719</b>
Support Staff Trained	113	0	<b>Support Provided in 2013.</b>	
CME Workshops Conducted	59	1	Sarada Vidyalayam	Approx. \$ 62,000
Children Educated	2,080	0	Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology	Approx. \$ 145,600
Scholarships Provided	427	0		
School Children Screened	320,461	503		

fair. We were taken to sugar factory on an educational tour which helped us a lot to know about.

I felt unhappy when our NS teacher left our school. Apart from that I am very sad to leave this school as I am completing my studies. I am very unlucky to leave this good environment, Director Sir (Dr. Chandra) and Madam (Hema) and my teachers who gave me good education. I will not forget in my life the experiences which I had. I came across many incidents and memories during my 10 years stay in this school which I cannot forget in my life.

I have very good memories during my study in primary schooling like studying under yellow flower tree and in natural breeze. We used to compete to receive prizes from our Madam. I remember teachers who could bare my childhood activities. I learned good hand writing and discipline from this school. I learned English letters from madam and practiced well and felt very happy when madam gave me good remarks.

We were taken to Gandhi Park and some places in Kakinada as a part of educational tour. And we also visited Puttaparthi which is a special auspicious place. I like Nageswari madam among all because she taught me with patience. I learned so many good habits and discipline from this school under the guidance of Director Sir, Madam and teachers. I will be thankful to our Director Sir who gave me good schooling during my 10 years stay.

### Kopisetty Devi Sri.



I studied in this school from 1st class. Madam Nageswari taught me from the beginning, starting with Telugu alphabets. She used to give the stickers

for a student who writes well. In 2nd class we started activity classes in that we learned how to draw the figures by not crossing boundaries.

I am very interested in art. Madam (Hema) taught us Seetharama game. During my study in 3rd class we came to know about Ramayana in activity period. I got scolding from Madam when I could not write Ramayana properly. We used to have home work and I used to do properly. In 6th class I was lazy to do homework in turn Madam was scolding. From 7th class I was perfect in doing homework. During the meeting Madam also told about change in my attitude for which I felt happy.

We were in competition level from 9th class and we were doing hard work. Madam Umamaheswari was facilitated by Director Sir (Dr. Chandra) and during that event we are given caps which we wore and had photographs. We have completed 10th class examination on 15th April 2014. I faced many events and learned many good habits during my stay in school from 2nd class to 10th class. I am proud to say that I am a student of this school and completed my schooling here. I will be always loyal to Director Sir, Madam and to the institution that brought me as a good, literate person.

### New Board Elected for MSMF.

MSMF elected a new board of seven directors in November 2013.

Chandra Sankurathri	President
Rosemary Bickerton	Vice-President
Andre Trepanier	Secretary
Sarma Vishnubhatla	Treasurer, Executive Director
Vikram Sundar	Director
Pierre Barbeau	Director
Allison Haggart	Director
S. Eswar Prasad	Editor & Publisher of Newsletter

### 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 provide 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).