



A Ray of Light

Coping with COVID – 19 in the midst of the turmoil

**Dr. Chandra Sankurathri
President @ Kakinada, India**

In the midst of a tranquil scenario came a disaster, COVID – 19 and changed everything around us forever. We are entering a new normal and hope we can sustain ourselves for some time to adapt to the new normal situation. This has touched everyone, without any barriers and caused havoc in the systems. There are no exceptions, but we are more vulnerable because of the not for profit nature.

When it first arrived in February we thought it will pass like any other flu, but not so and it became a pandemic. Various lockdowns were imposed to curtail the infections, but with very limited effect. Because of the first lockdown in mid March the school, Sarada Vidyalaym was closed abruptly ending the academic year. The schools are still closed and expected to re-open in November with limited hours. The whole academic year is in trouble and the results will be devastating for children’s education, especially in the rural educa-

tion system.

However, we have kept all the teachers on payrolls, engaged them on online classes, and have been paying regularly and on time.

As far as eye care is concerned, Srikan Institute of Ophthalmology has been in dynamic mode and trying to reach out to as many patients as possible. We do not want this pandemic to contribute more to the already burgeoned blindness in the rural areas. So, we have been trying teleophthalmology in order to avoid the patients’ travels during lockdowns. Some times we opened the hospital for limited time taking all the precautions to keep the staff and patients from the chance of cross contaminations. Occasionally, we had to close for a week or ten days as a precaution against spreading the pandemic. This is clearly evident by the recent statistics and this is the lowest performance in the recent times.

As far as financial situation is concerned, our patients and financial resources have dropped down to 10% initially and slowly rising to 40%. Under these conditions we did not want to let any employee go

because for many of them this is the only source of bread and butter. But we have reduced salaries of the doctors and people in the higher salary group (> 300 CAD /month) on a sliding scale. This we have implemented after discussing with them and they all agreed for this plan. Because of this method we could reduce some of the expenses. All these expenses came from our savings for a rainy day. We hope the conditions will improve slowly but surely. But never did we expect the rainy days to last for over seven months!

We are able to survive so far because of God’s grace, our resilient nature and with “ A Ray of Hope for Future” .



Staff Testing and Doing Maintenance Work on Equipment at SF Campus during Covid-19 downtime.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Coping with COVID – 19 in the midst of the turmoil
- **MSMF Scholarship to students to pursue their education beyond High school Diploma in India**
- Fundraiser to Support "Teach for Canada"
- Thank You for a Lifetime of Giving and Loving
- MSMF Sponsored Eye Camps
- The Statistics Speak for Themselves
- Homage to Ms. Michele Dussault -Danis
- Sarada Vidyalayam
- Thank you for Caring

MSMF Scholarship to students to pursue their education beyond High school Diploma in India



Chandra Sankurathri With Scholarship Recipients

MSMF has 60% girl students merit cum need based scholarships were initiated from 2007 by starting the Endowment Fund

MSMF has noticed the need to support some bright students who are from economically weaker section of the community in order to pursue their higher education. In case of family’s economic constraints girl students are the first ones to be neglected which result in their dropout from the education system.

As the school supported by

Fundraiser to Support "Teach for Canada"

Vikram Sundar, Vice President

Overview

MSMF has launched a fundraising campaign on the CanadaHelps.org portal to support "Teach for Canada" with a funding goal of \$5,000.

The campaign ends on **31 December 2020**.

The link to the fundraiser can be found on our website at <https://msmf.ca/fundraiser-to-support-teach-for-canada/>

The Beneficiary - "Teach for Canada"

"Teach For Canada" (TFC) is a non-profit organization that supports student success by recruiting and developing committed educators in partnership with First Nations. TFC is a community-directed organization and work closely with First Nations partners to co-create TFC's programs.

What does Teach for Canada do?

Recruit - TFC recruits teachers based on selection criteria designed by community leaders to ensure they have the skills to succeed in a northern context.

Prepare - Teachers participate in an intensive preparation program focused on First Nations histories, cultures, and culturally-responsive pedagogies.

Support - During their first two years in the North, teachers receive personal and professional support and a peer support network to help them thrive in the classroom and community.

What's New in 2020-2021?

In 2020-21, Teach For Canada is working with First Nations to help northern schools adapt in light of COVID-19. This will include extending professional development and retention supports to principals and local school staff.

By working with northern First Nations to recruit, prepare, and support committed teachers, TFC can begin to make education more

equal.

The Challenge

Education in Canada is a success story. Study after study shows that our public schools are among the best in the world. But high overall quality masks deep inequality. Only 48 percent of First Nations youth living on reserve have a high school diploma. In the North, those numbers are even lower. And, too often, teachers arrive in northern First Nations without the preparation and support they need to succeed—and stay—in the classroom. The twin challenges of teacher supply and turnover compound historical injustice and systemic inequities to produce a statistical education gap between First Nations and non-First Nations communities.

The Right Kind of Teachers

The right kind of teacher can help fill this gap. TFC works with First Nations education leaders, principals, teachers, and many others to recruit and select teachers who have the motivations, aptitude, and fit to be successful in a northern First Nation. Once selected, TFC provides teachers with a 2-3 week community-focused summer preparation program and provide ongoing support during a teacher's minimum two-year teaching commitment in the North. Inspired by the leadership of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action on Education, TFC teachers emphasize a spirit of reciprocal learning in the classroom and community.

Currently, there are 84 TFC teachers and 20 partner First Nations in Northern Ontario and Manitoba. Teachers have launched student councils, coached sports teams, started music programs, led dance classes, developed school websites, hosted radio shows, organized field trips, run outdoor activities, and more. Their inspirational teaching is increasing student attendance, student engagement, and student achievement.

Current Impact

110 Teach for Canada teachers.
20 Northern First Nations.
2000+ First Nations children and

youth.

Please donate and thank you for your generosity!

Thank You for a Lifetime of Giving and Loving

Allison Haggart – Montréal, Québec, Canada –MSMF Board Member 2011 – 2018

Last week, we had to say good-bye to Michelle Danis: mother, wife, sister, friend and ardent, long time devoted supporter of MSMF.

In 2000, Michelle and her husband, André Trépanier, took me in as a boarder during my year of studies as I completed my Bachelor of Education at the University of Ottawa. During my year living with Michelle, we would often have long talks over a hot cup of tea at the kitchen table, and as I listened I came to learn that despite Michelle's busy life as a single mother of two and managing a full-time teaching career, she always made time to give to others. She spoke French and despite her efforts, her



English held fast to her Quebecois accent. On my end, my French was no better, but through mutual friendship and patience, we managed

to communicate enough to understand each other – enough for me to develop a deep affection for Michelle and to learn of the wonders of the Sankurathri Foundation in Kakinada, India.

In the early 1980s, in a west-end suburb of Ottawa, Michelle had become friends with her neighbours. The Sankurathri family lived next door. They shared in friendly neighbourly exchanges as most Canadian neighbours do. Michelle's then 12-year old daughter,

Marike, taught piano to 5-year old Srikiran, and I am certain that Michelle bore witness to this young immigrant family making their way in Canada – Chandra heading off to work every morning, Manjari re-tuning from doing groceries, perhaps planting flowers in the spring-time, shovelling snow from the front step in the winter and eventually, seeing Kiran start kindergarten at the local school.

And in the wake of the 1985 Air India bombing, when this idyllic suburban family life came to a staggering halt, Michelle’s love and commitment to her neighbour, as he mourned the loss of his wife and children, continued for many years to come.

Born on August 25, 1939, Michelle grew up in the French-Canadian town of Dorion, Québec, 45km west of Montreal. The eldest in a family of 5 children, she studied teaching at the *Institute Pédagogique de Montréal* and at the University of Ottawa.

Michelle was one of the founding members of MSMF. From 1996 to 2007, she dedicated herself to the cherished memories of Manjari, Sarada and Srikiran by being an active MSMF board member. Mi-

chelle taught French for the Ottawa Catholic School Board at St. Gregory’s Catholic Elementary School, where they raised funds and sent school supplies to the children at Sarada Vidyalayam. Although Michelle never had the opportunity to travel to India to visit the Sankurathri Foundation in Kakinada, her husband André made the trip and was able to participate in the opening ceremony of the Sarada Vidyalayam high school.

Around 2010, Michele’s diagnosis of fibromyalgia became more prevalent, and she needed to take a step back from her commitments. Her devotion and enthusiasm for her work with MSMF was contagious. When I realized she was not well, I told her that I would gladly continue her work at MSMF. With my teaching background and a love of children, I stepped into her shoes on the MSMF Board of Directors, not quite able to walk her walk, but able to take my own path with the memory of Michelle always in my mind and in my heart.

Last week, in a quaint church in the Quebec countryside, a private service was held to say good-bye to Michelle. The pipes of the church organ played her beloved Bach

concertos, a tribute to a most wonderful person, a way of saying thank you for a lifetime of giving and loving.

MSMF Sponsored Eye Camps

Several eye screening camps were conducted on behalf of MSMF before Covid-19 disrupted the life at Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology.



Eye Screening at Kovvada Village

- Chandrampalem Village,
Out Patients Screened: 136
Cataract Surgeries Performed: 51
- Kovvada Village
Out Patients Screened: 120
Cataract Surgeries Performed: 37
- Krishnavaram Village
Out Patients Screened: 86
Cataract Surgeries Performed: 31
- Tamarada Village
Out Patients Screened: 163
Cataract Surgeries Performed: 58

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 taking care of each other.

Facts Cumulative	Cumulative 1990-2019	Jan-Sep 2020	Statement of Expenses & Support 2019(Audited)
Out Patients Treated	3,328,587	91,560	Expenses audited 2019 (Jan- Dec)
Surgeries Performed	276,239	4,450	Projects \$180,000
Vision Centres	11	0	Professional Fees \$14,841
City Center	2	0	Fundraising \$2,656
Eye Screening Camps for Adults	2,970	19	Credit Card Fees \$2,638
Eye screening Camps for Children	1176	2	General \$905
Medical Personnel Trained	421	1	Advertising, Promotion \$1,426
Support Staff Trained	164	1	Insurance \$1,535
CME Workshops Conducted	65	0	Total (Expenses in 2019) \$204,001
Children Educated	3.279	205	Support Provided in 2019(Audited)
Scholarships Provided	694	0	Sarada Vidyalayam \$103,800
School Children Screened	393,688	917	Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology\$ 76,200
			Total Support \$180,000

MSMF requests your generous support for Education and Eye Care Programs.

**Homage to Ms. Michele Dussault-Danis
Dr.Chandra Sankurathri President**



fulfilled. Michele is a very special person in our lives because of her association with my family before the Air India explosion on 23rd June 1985 and also after that tragic event. She has been associated with the

I have known Michele Dussault - Danis for over 42 years and it is hard to believe that she is no more among us. She was our good neighbor when we were living in Ottawa on Woodfield Drive. She knew my wife, Manjari, children Srikiran and Sarada very well, wanted to visit India with Manjari but her wish wasn't

Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation (MSMF) in Canada since 1989, either directly or indirectly till her last breath. Her commitment and dedication towards MSMF was exemplary and her absence will be an irreplaceable loss for us. She has been a strong supporter for MSMF for many years as one of the Board of Directors

and when she wanted to resign she

brought in her husband, Mr. André Trepazier on to the Board, just to make sure that MSMF is in safe hands. She has also inspired Ms. Allison Haggart to be on the Board for many years. Just two years ago, when I released my autobiography in Ottawa she attended the function in wheel chair! That was her commitment to MSMF for all these years and we are sure to miss her presence.

We were privileged to know her and work with her for many years. We are devastated by the news but pray God that she rests in Peace. We also pray that Andre should have enough strength to continue his life without his loving, affectionate Michele.

Sarada Vidyalayam

MSMF has been supporting the education program since 1995 in order to encourage education to rural poor children in India. The main idea is to encourage children to attend school and thereby to eliminate child laborers and child marriages in this region of Andhra Pradesh, India.



Sarada Vidyalayam Students Performing a Dance on 28th Anniversary Function

Sarada Vidyalayam celebrated 28th anniversary at School Auditorium on 25th of January. Dr. Vinod Mootha from USA attended as a chief guest for this event. On this occasion children were participated with enthusiasm and performed, Dances, Skits, etc.

Thank you for Caring

MSMF is doing well because of your generous financial support, dedicated services from staff and teachers at Sarada Vidyalayam, and doctors and paramedical staff at Srikiran Institute of Ophthalmology.

We pledge that we will continue to provide outstanding support and services, that is possible, to the poor, disadvantaged and the suffering.

Please donate to support our programs financially using one of the following methods:

1. Cheque / Credit Card: Complete the donation form came with this Newsletter, attach a cheque made to MSM For provide details of your credit card information and mail it to MSMF, 23 Mary Drive, Gloucester, ON K1V 1G9, or
2. Do an Interac e-Transfer your donation to info@msmf.ca giving your full address for receiving a tax receipt, or
3. Donate online: Go to <https://msmf.ca/donation-options/>, enter information requested and complete the donation process, or
4. Contribute through United Way Campaigns: either at Workplace or in the Community, or
5. Donate through "Benevity Causes Portal" a workplace giving and matching program, with a social mission to help improve the way charities access and become eligible for Corporate Giving Programs (<https://causes.benevity.org/>), (Please note that some organizations and employers match donations of their employees), or
6. Donate Marketable Securities: please email info@msmf.ca.

MSMF Newsletter, "A Ray of Light", is published twice a year from project reports, and contributions from volunteers. If you have any concerns and comments, please send them to: info@msmf.ca or MSMF, 23 Mary Dr., Gloucester, ONK1V 1G9.

We thank you.

Chandra Sankurathri, Sarma Vishnubhatla, Vikram Sundar, Byatris Kattackal, Badari Kurusetty