

ViSiONS

G L O B A L

Education. Empowerment. Entrepreneurship.

JANUARY 2012

Volunteer with Visions in Sri Lanka or India This Summer!

*Check out Our New Visions VIDEO Highlighting Our
Leadership Program*



Are you looking for a meaningful experience that will enrich both your life and the lives of disadvantaged youth in South Asia who have a passion for learning? Then spend two weeks volunteering in India or Sri Lanka this summer with us, exploring the culture, experiencing development first-hand, and giving your time to deserving youth. We invite you to take advantage of this unique opportunity to explore, have fun, and make a difference. For our 10th year running, we are hosting summer volunteer trips to conduct youth leadership trainings. In very exciting news, our first trip is actually an accredited program, which means students can now earn academic credits for volunteering abroad with us! This is also the first year since 2006 that we are returning to Sri Lanka with a full group, which is a huge step for us! For more information, please visit our NEW Visions

January '12 Edition

Issue #14

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with us! This is also the first year since 2006 that we are returning to Sri Lanka with a full group, which is a huge step for us! For more information, please visit our NEW Visions website at www.VisionsGlobalEmpowerment.org, where you can download the event flyer, detailed appeal, and application & waiver. To apply, simply fill out the application form and send it back to us with a \$50 application fee; first come first serve. Hope you can join us!

INDIA Special Volunteer Trip 2012: *Chennai, Madurai, Dindigul, Mahabalipuram, Thiruvannamalai, & Pondicherry-Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry, India*

Monday, June 18th-Sunday, July 8th

21 days/20 nights

Program fee: Apply directly to Amizade

**This trip is being organized in partnership with Amizade Global Service Learning. Interested applicants must apply directly through Amizade. Students can earn 6 academic credits from West Virginia University! This trip will feature one 7-day youth leadership training. Full details of this trip, including itinerary and academic descriptions, are available on the Amizade website at www.amizade.org.*

INDIA Volunteer Trip 2012: *Chennai, Madurai, Dindigul, & Bangalore-Tamil Nadu & Karnataka, India*

Tuesday, July 10th-Monday, July 23rd

14 days/13 nights

Program fee: \$1,250/person

**This trip will feature one 7-day youth leadership training.*

SRI LANKA Volunteer Trip 2012: *Colombo, Batticaloa, & Kandy, Sri Lanka*

Saturday, August 4th-Thursday, August 23rd

20 days/19 nights

Program fee: \$1,595/person

**This trip will feature one 7-day youth leadership training in Batticaloa and one 6-day youth leadership training in Colombo. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in both trainings, but can choose to participate in either training of their choice as well. In that case, the program fee will be adjusted accordingly.*

Establishing Music & Computer Rooms at St. John's College-Jaffna

In Memory of Dr. Rex T. Arulananthan

Visions Chapters

We invite you to get involved with one of our many Visions Chapters today or start your own. Please feel free to contact any of the following individuals if you are interested in joining.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA:

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In a tribute to the late Dr. Rex T. Arulanathan who passed away last year, his loving and dedicated family made a significant contribution to his alma mater--St. John's College in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, which he attended from 1939-1951. Through a very generous gift of \$35,000 from his family, the school is now able to build and develop a computer room and music room in his memory. The first installment of funds has already been sent, and all equipment has already been purchased, including the computers and musical equipment. Programs for both were initiated in early January of this year, marking a quick turn-around, as the school was eager to move forward with establishing both programs for the benefit of the students.

Rex T. Arulanathan was born in Uduvil to Edward & Nagamma Thambimuthu on Jan. 14th, 1932. His father died in 1939 of typhoid, at which time Rex started schooling at St John's. His widowed mother found it difficult to raise all the 6 children living on Somasundram Lane in Chundikuli, so moved back to her home town of Udupitty. Rex & his brothers T. Vivekanathan (who was a head prefect) and T. Paramanathan were boarded at St. Johns and continued their studies. Rex & his brother Paramanathan went to Colombo Medical College where he graduated in 1961 and worked at government hospitals across the island. He started as a Medical Officer in Galle and retired as a Regional Director of Health Services in Ratnapura. His siblings left the country when the civil unrest started, but he was determined to serve the people in the North & East. He was grateful to St. John's College for providing him with an excellent education and building in him a strong character. His Principal, the late J.T. Arulanathan's son Dr. Pararasan, was one of his good friends. Rex and his wife eventually immigrated to New Zealand in 1995, where he passed away on October 7th, 2010. He would have celebrated his 80th birthday this January 14th.

Leading the effort to honor her father is Mrs. Angela Paul who was born in Kayts but lived most of her childhood in the Eastern Province and left the country after finishing her A/L exams. Much credit is due to Angela and her husband Rohan, along with their entire family, for making the computer and music rooms a reality and helping to sustain the high academic integrity of St. John's College. Certainly it is a great tribute to a man who gave so much of himself to his country.

**Projects Update
from Sri Lanka & India**



Visions provided its continued support to the Church of the American Ceylon Mission (CACM) to support the after-school centers in Karadiyanaaru and Vaharai that have been running for a year now. Visions also sponsored a youth leadership program for 21 war-affected youth (9 boys, 12 girls) from the Vanni at St. John's Church in Uranee, Batticaloa from December 12-17, 2011. The training was conducted by the **Third Eye theatre group**. The training **used drama, painting, poetry, songs, and games**. These were used separately and also in integrated forms. On the last day, a training activity was held at the seashore by the lighthouse, both to provide some glimpse of Batticaloa beyond the training centre and to stimulate their creativity by using naturally found 'waste' materials for artistic work. It was an incredibly powerful and empowering experience for the attendees, one in which they were free to express themselves, be creative, and in many ways continue the healing process together. Visions is planning to support several more such trainings in various locations in Sri Lanka this year.

Visions also gave a gift of \$1,000 to support the Women's Education and Research Centre (WERC) in Sri Lanka for a **women's trishaw drivers empowerment project**. WERC had already provided training to a group of marginalized women who simply needed the vehicles to be able to create a sustainable livelihood for themselves. These women will pay back the cost of their trishaws from their earnings over time, so that more women may benefit in the future.



Steady progress on the construction of the 9,600 sq. ft. SAWED Trust **tribal boarding school** in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India continues to progress nicely. The roofing of the main building was completed earlier this month. Now attention is on the interiors and the finishing, which are due to be complete by the first week of April 2012. SAWED plans to open the school later this year. Visions is proud to be able to renew our commitment to SAWED and help support the development of the school in 2012.

Finally, the second installment of \$50,000 was sent in January to the Nandalala Seva Samithi Trust for the benefit of the **Jayalakshmi Ramachandran Scholarship Fund** to benefit disadvantaged youth seeking support for higher education in India who otherwise lack the means. This fund now stands at \$100,000, the interest of which will be paid out annually to selected recipients, ensuring the long-term sustainability of maintaining this scholarship program.

Upcoming Events

Toronto: Saturday, February 18, 2012

"BALLIN' 4 BOOKS" - SPONSORED BY TAMILCULTURE.CA

WHAT: 4-on-4 Basketball Tournament

TIME: 9:30am until 4:30pm

WHERE: Stephen Leacock Collegiate Institute, 2450 Birchmount Road, Scarborough, ON

TEAMS MUST REGISTER IN ADVANCE:

<http://www.planetreg.com/E15224923169>

Are you ready for some friendly competition? Come show off your skills at Visions Toronto charity four-on-four basketball tournament! Sign up before February 3rd, 2012 and take advantage of our Early Bird Special! It's only \$100 per team (max 6 players). Price goes up to \$120 after February 3rd. All teams guaranteed 4 games - all games officiated. Players must be 18 years of age to participate. 1st & 2nd Place Prizes! Snack bar on site.

Montreal: Thursday, February 23, 2012

WHEN: 6:30-8:00pm on February 23rd

WHERE: Ganesh Party Palace, 300 Boulevard Marcel-Laurin, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

WHAT: Info Session for Prospective Volunteers & Young Leaders

Are you a student/young professional looking to give back?

Do YOU want to make a difference in your home country?

Do you LOVE working with children?

Are you looking to TRAVEL and volunteer in Sri Lanka/India?

Are you looking to spruce up your CV?

We'll look no further. We present to you the first and only organization of its kind in Montreal. Many of us first generation Sri Lankans in Montreal, have had the privilege of living in Canada without a care in the world. It is our duty to give back to the soil that supported our ancestors, our parents. Now here is your opportunity. Come out and explore the plethora of both domestic and international opportunities for you to get involved and give back to our home land. Bring your friends and family! Drinks and refreshments will be served. Contact Montreal Chapter Coordinator Ganeya at ganeya@live.ca for more information.

Past Events

Toronto, Dallas, Edmonton, Beaumont, and Los Angeles Events Keep the Momentum Going!

For the second year running, the Visions Toronto Chapter held a **"Bowling 4 The Arts"** event that drew in more than 100 people and raised \$1,200 for the Third Eye art & empowerment training for war-displaced youth, which was held in December. The team is gearing up for their next big event in February.

The Texas Chapter of Visions also held its **2nd Annual Visions Benefit Bowling Event** in Beaumont, Texas on Thursday, January 3rd. The team, lead by Nitya Kumar, raised \$1,000 towards supporting the tribal school construction project currently underway in Dindigul, Tami Nadu, India!

The Visions **Edmonton Chapter** holds its first two events in December as well, the first of which was an introductory dinner party hosted by our Board member Shyamala Nagendran and featuring a presentation by our Edmonton Chapter Coordinator Branawan Gowrishankar. Given the high interest amongst those who attended, this initial event was followed by a youth-specific dinner event on December 30th. The team brainstormed ideas for how to build the Edmonton Chapter and get more involved in Visions' work. We're excited to see what all they accomplish this year!

In Davis, CA a team of 10 Visions volunteers put on a truly impressive campus-wide **"cultureSHOCK" show** that featured all sorts of student talent, including a capella groups, dance teams, cultural groups (Hawaiian, Chinese, South Asian, etc.), and more. Thanks to the generosity of a number of local businesses a number of great raffle prizes were raffled off. Dinner was provided by a campus restaurant, which donated 20% of its proceeds to Visions. And a beautiful donation tree served a spark upon entering the performance hall. Congrats to Chapter Coordinator Venita Katir and her incredible team for putting together such a wonderful event that drew in close to 300 audience members and participants. Thanks to their efforts, \$3,650 was raised to support the SCOPE Children's Learning Centres in India and the Visions Scholarship Program.

Featuring the beautiful short films made by Jeff Warden (Lonely Tree Productions) who accompanied the Visions volunteer team in India and Sri Lanka this summer to capture the work of the organization and our partners, the Los Angeles Chapter of Visions held a special **film screening** event and social mixer in West Hollywood. About 30 people attended and around \$600 was collected. This event also marked the official launch of the 2012 summer volunteer opportunities.

Finally, our first ever event in Dallas took place on December 26th at the Times Ten Cellars winery. This **"Music & Story Night"**, inspired by the Hockaday Class of 1998, featured special performances by alumni Caroline Murphy & Desiree Lyle and a presentation by Visions Secretary Katherine Redington. It was an evening of great music, performance, wine, and conversation, which introduced Visions and its work (especially with serving underprivileged girls) to a new audience. The team raised \$540 for the Visions Scholarship Program in the process.

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www.VisionsForTheFuture.org

PLEASE DONATE:

Donations are accepted online through our website OR can be mailed to the above address. Make checks out to 'VISIONS'. All donations are tax-deductible [Tax ID#26-3386678].

We need your help--there are several projects which need funding, including the Visions Leadership Program, Scholarship Program, and various other educational initiatives. We can only do this important work with your support. Education is key to development & success.

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