

MAY 2013

Volunteers, Supporters, and Team Members Come together to Celebrate a Decade of Visions



On Saturday, March 23rd nearly 200 guests, including 4 Visions board members (pictured above) and 25 past volunteers, came together to celebrate a decade of service, marking the 10-year anniversary of the founding of Visions Global Empowerment. It was an incredible evening and a rare opportunity to reconnect with old friends, supporters, and like-minded individuals who believe in global service work and educational equity. The gala event was held at the Marconi Automotive Museum in Tustin, CA with guests joining us all the way from NC, VA, NY, NorCal, DC, Canada, and India. We were very honored to have as our special guest Pujyasri Mathioli Saraswathy, a revered spiritual leader and founder of the Nandalala Seva Samithi Trust (one of Visions' partner organizations in India). She stressed the importance of service and spoke about the ways in which education can broaden the mind.

Humbled by the support we have received over the years and the compassion of those who have generously helped build the organization into what it has become today, we honored our Visions "rising stars"--those influential, motivated, and service-minded individuals who contributed the most to our organization over the years. The following "rising stars" were honored:

Inspiration

Mrs. Jennifer Graves, *Huntington Beach, CA*

Exceptional Volunteer Leadership

Mrs. Venita Sivamani, *Sacramento, CA*

Volunteer Dedication

Mr. Nanjunda Reddy, *Bangkok, Thailand*
& Ms. Tamara Ackland, *New York, NY*

Exceptional Partner Organization

SAWED Trust & Mr. M.S. Abdaheer (Executive Director), *Dindigul, India*

Philanthropy

Mr. & Mrs. Rohan and Angela Paul, *Charlotte, NC*
Mr. & Mrs. Kandiah and Jayagowri Arulmoli, *Huntington Beach, CA*
Dr. & Mrs. Canagaratnam and Vasundra Pathmarajah, *Lancaster, CA*

Extraordinary Commitment

Mr. & Mrs. W. & B. Harichandran, *Lancaster, CA*

Thanks to the incredible generosity of all our [event sponsors](#) and guests, we were able to raise over \$23,000 to support our after-school programs in Northern & Eastern Sri Lanka and our newly launched Teachers Empowerment Program that will benefit 20 teachers across Sri Lanka and India. To view photos of the event, please use the following link: [Visions 10-Year Gala Photo Gallery](#)

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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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Investing in Tomorrow's Leaders through our Visions Scholarships



Choosing to invest our efforts and resources in stand-out youth with a strong academic record and clear leadership potential, Visions regularly lends scholarship support to students across Sri Lanka and India. Sruthika (featured in the photo above) is one such outstanding student and young leader now attending medical school in Chennai. She has been a Visions Scholarship recipient for the past 2 years, rising from the Sri Lankan refugee camp in India where she grew up to where she is today in medical school. In her own words, she has shared her story with us: *"I am Sruthika. I am a Sri Lankan refugee staying at Pambardam Camp in Krishinagiri district. My parents came to India as refugees during 1990. I have two sisters and a brother. They all are studying. My father is working as a volunteer (his roles is regional coordinator) in OIERR. My mother is a home maker. I completed my schooling in year 2008. From my childhood, my ambition is to become a doctor and to work for my community. We didn't have any general counseling to join MBBS like they have for Indian citizens. And the only way for me to join is through management. But I didn't have such a huge amount. So I waited till 2010 without doing any course and after that I have got a seat in Sri Muthukumaran Medical College without any donation. So I joined in 2010. And now I am really happy that I have successfully completed my 2 years and entered to third year. Now my college is going really well. I have realized my part. And I am trying to work harder and better. These 2 years of college have brought many changes in me. I am really becoming confident and I am really proud to be a medical student. I am studying well and this is evident from the marks I have scored."*



Further recent Visions Scholarship recipients were named this spring, with Visions making commitments to provide a bicycle, computer course fees, mentoring support, and college tuition for the next 2 years. With support from Carnegie Mellon University students who participated in the recent "Social Change Semester" in India that Visions organized on behalf of the university and in partnership with Amizade Global Service Learning, Visions has facilitated a scholarship with support from local nonprofit organizations for Akash and his friend Suraj, both of whom were our caretakers at the ashram where our group stayed for one month in Wardha, Maharashtra. Akash (featured here) just received a bicycle, has started computer classes, and has plans to join the local polytechnic college soon.

We are in need of sponsors for other deserving youth like Sruthika and Akash across both Sri Lanka and India...please consider making a donation to enable us to provide a scholarship to them. We will work with any prospective donors in connecting you to specific youth or ensuring your donation is given for a specific purpose depending on your interests. Please contact us at visionseducation@gmail.com to discuss your options and/or **make a contribution** to our Visions Scholarship Program by clicking here: [Invest in Tomorrow's Leaders](#)

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Stay Connected with Us!

Keep up to date with Visions and all our efforts, events, upcoming trips, and more...

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RAZOO

<http://www.razoo.com/story/Visions-Global-Empowerment>

Final Call for Volunteers to Join us in Sri Lanka or India this Summer!

Looking to be inspired? Consider spending a few weeks volunteering in Sri Lanka or India with us this summer...exploring the culture, experiencing development first-hand, learning about a new place, and giving your time to deserving youth. All volunteers serve as camp counselors at a Visions leadership training, working to encourage creativity, analytical thinking, and personal skills development. Volunteers will also visit and learn from local nonprofits that serve their communities year-round and get to explore some of the immense cultural richness and diversity that South Asia has to offer! To access and download our event flyer, detailed trip appeals, and application form, please visit our website by clicking [HERE](#).

INDIA

Chennai, Madurai, Mahabalipuram, Thiruvannamalai, Pondicherry, & Goa (with optional 3-day Delhi/Taj Mahal add-on)

Saturday, July 20th-Friday, August 2nd (or thru Monday, August 5th with Delhi add-on)

14 days/13 nights (or 17 days/16 nights with Delhi add-on)

Program fee is \$1695/person (\$1995 with Delhi add-on)

**This trip will feature one 5-day youth leadership training at the Arcot Lutheran Church School Project. There is an optional 3-day add-on for those interested in visiting Delhi & the Taj Mahal in Agra.*

SRI LANKA

Colombo, Batticaloa, & Kandy, Sri Lanka

Monday, August 5th-Friday, August 16th

12 days/11 nights

Program fee is \$1200/person

**This trip will feature one 6-day youth leadership training at St. John's Church in Batticaloa.*

Carnegie Mellon University "Social Change Semester" in India

At the end of April, Visions wrapped up the "Social Change Semester" abroad we coordinated on behalf of Carnegie Mellon University and in partnership with Amizade Global Service Learning, both of which are based in Pittsburgh, PA. Ten (10) undergraduate students and two (2) faculty participated in the program, although they were joined locally at times by one (1) CMU alum who lives in India and six (6) students from CMU's Doha campus in Qatar. Their goal for the semester was to learn how to change the world by partnering with those who are already making a difference. For the first month in India, the group was based at Mahatma Gandhi's ashram in Wardha, Maharashtra and volunteered with a rural development organization, the Kamalnayan Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation, to carry forward Gandhi's legacy of service and empowerment.

For the next 6 weeks, the group was based in Chennai where they volunteered their time tutoring disadvantaged youth, conducted individual research for their research papers, and explored much of what South India has to offer. During their time in the south, they also served as volunteers at a 5-day youth leadership training that took place in Thirukovilur, Tamil Nadu. Working with the Arcot Lutheran Church (ALC) School Project, the group trained 50 secondary school students in leadership and life skills, and provided an opportunity for them to learn, express themselves, and have fun. This training represented the 29th Visions leadership & life skills training we have held to-date, with 3 more trainings being planned for this summer.



CMU students & Visions volunteers Tahirah and Lexi pose with their leadership group at the 29th Visions Leadership & Life Skills training in Thirukovilur, India

For Visions, this program was a major step in further developing our accredited volunteer programs and enabling a larger pool of socially minded individuals to have the opportunity to learn and serve abroad. We are open and eager to explore new university partnerships...if you are a faculty or have university connections and would like to suggest or explore a partnership with Visions, please contact us at visionseducation@gmail.com. We would love to coordinate more programs like this!

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PLEASE MAKE A CONTRIBUTION!

We need your help! There are several projects that need funding for 2013, including the Visions Leadership Program, Student Scholarships, and various other educational initiatives. We can only do this important work with your support...education is

key to development and personal growth! 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].

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