

FEBRUARY 2014

Adventure Awaits! Apply Now to Join us Abroad this Summer



The deadline to apply for our summer service learning trips to Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, and India is fast approaching! Please contact us if you plan to apply and let us know if you have any questions or concerns. Looking forward to having you join us this summer for an unforgettable experience!

ETHIOPIA: July 19 - August 3, 2014

Locations: Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Gondar, & Awash, Ethiopia
Program Fee: \$1,700/person

Join us for our first ever volunteer trip to Ethiopia! This trip is focused on Deaf education and empowerment. Knowledge of ASL is helpful, but not required. We will be conducting a summer camp for children and leading exchanges with local universities and deaf associations.

SRI LANKA: August 9 - 24, 2014

Locations: Colombo, Batticaloa, Dambulla, Sigiriya, & Jaffna, Sri Lanka
Program Fee: \$1,800/person

Experience the journey of a lifetime spending time with youth affected by civil war and poverty. The initial days will be spent exploring historical sites and discussing what it means to work in a post-war context. Afterwards, we will conduct leadership trainings in Batticaloa and Jaffna. Join us for this deeply engaging adventure in the fascinating island of Sri Lanka.

INDIA: August 10 - 24, 2014

Locations: Chennai, Thiruvannamalai, Trichy, Thanjavur, & Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, India

Program Fee: \$1,700/person

Get to know the richness of the culture, people, and traditions as we navigate our way through South India, conducting a youth leadership training and children's summer camp for Dalit youth.

If you are interested in joining us abroad this summer on any of our trips in Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, or India, please visit our website for more information: [Visions International Volunteer Program](#). You can access the Volunteer Application & Waiver, trip flyer, funding ideas, volunteer testimonials, and a great deal of other information about our Volunteer Program there.

February '14 Edition

E-Newsletter #23

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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.

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Marie Avilez & Lexi Hernandez



Volunteer Abroad with Visions Global Empowerment

You can also watch short videos about our Volunteer Program on our website by visiting our Video Gallery here: [Short Films - Volunteer Abroad with Visions!](#)

Visions Leadership Academy Students Step Forward as Community Organizers

In June 2013, we launched the long-awaited next phase of our leadership program - the **Visions Leadership Academy**. Our goal is to create a network of motivated youth leaders who are supported to develop and pursue professional goals while building leadership skills and a sense of commitment to community service. Essentially, Visions Leadership Academy students benefit from quarterly leadership trainings (4 per year) and group service visits (3 per year). Visions also provides the youth with material support and advisors for their leadership committee activities. In Sri Lanka, students also attend residential weekend workshops twice a month, which focus on intensive academic support and leadership activities.

We currently have **40 youth in Sri Lanka** and **31 in India** in this program. All 71 students have attended at least one internationally staffed Visions leadership training. Those students who later choose to pursue higher education or other professional development courses will be encouraged to apply for a Visions Scholarship. We believe this long-term commitment to the students in our program is critical. Indeed, Visions believes that an investment in every individual is an investment in our collective future.

Just a few months into this new program, the response of the students has been remarkable. Within a month of launch the Visions Leadership Academy, eight girl students from the Siloam Girls Boarding Home in Thirukovilur, India, organized and implemented a plan to sell paper products in order to assist persons begging outside their boarding home compound. A number of the women at the boarding home also donated locks of their hair to make wigs for cancer patients.

The following month, another group of youth in our academy organized an environmental awareness march, rally, and tree-planting program in which hundreds of community members participated. Our partner organization, the Arcot Luther Church, informs us that other students are also currently planning a service visit to a home for children affected by HIV/AIDS. All of these ideas emanated organically from the students themselves, who surveyed local community needs and are taking action. It is incredible to learn about the energy and motivation of the youth, who are initiating local service work and service-minded causes on their own terms and in their own creative ways. ***This is leadership in practice.***

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Stay Connected with Us!

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

FACEBOOK



TWITTER



Visions students in India held a rally on the importance of protecting the environment and organized a tree planting campaign.

Taking Tamil Resources online: The Noolaham Foundation's e-Library efforts

Visions has established a new partnership with the Noolaham Foundation, a nonprofit charitable organization registered in Sri Lanka, founded to provide enhanced access to information sources and to foster knowledge-based development for the benefit of students and communities in Sri Lanka. The Noolaham Foundation maintains an online digital library, facilitates information preservation programs, provides financial assistance and technical guidance for digitization initiatives, and actively participates in e-learning awareness-raising campaigns. The free internet library maintained by the foundation serves as a learning center, digitizing Tamil-based resources and facilitating an online community with a view to achieving constructive social outcomes. It functions as a repository for various institutions and fulfills the information needs of students, researchers, historians, activists, and the public at-large.

"*Pallikoodam*," an educational initiative of the Noolaham Foundation in partnership with Visions, aims at creating an alternative, community-centered educational system among the Tamil-speaking communities in Sri Lanka. Students from grades 1 to 13 in the primary and secondary educational systems will benefit from this program. One of the central objectives of "*Pallikoodam*" is to combine formal education with vocational education and to promote education as a social good that has the potential to transform our lives and attitudes for the better. We look forward to continuing our support and helping enable thousands of youth across Sri Lanka to access these vital virtual materials.

Great Momentum in Empowering Deaf Youth in Ethiopia

Visions has made much progress since announcing our plans to begin working to empower deaf youth in Ethiopia through education, vocational training, scholarship support, and other assistance. In January 2014, Visions hired a **second deaf teacher** to work with students, teachers, and parents at Yekatit 23 School in Bahir Dar in the Amhara Region. Deaf teachers in Ethiopian schools are extremely rare, and the presence of both teachers is making a huge impact. The children are thrilled to have two deaf teachers working with them on a daily basis in the classroom and after school.

We also **initiated our Scholarship Program in Ethiopia with the first batch of 11 students**. Of this group, we are supporting tuition fees for two students at the Addis Ababa University. Four individuals are receiving vocational training in hair dressing and were provided with the required supplies, equipment, and space to start a small business at the end of their 3-month training programs. One individual was awarded a woodworking machine to develop his own carpentry business. The remaining four young adults were given supplies and a small store in front of the school to sell snacks and basic goods. All of these interventions are enabling deaf youth and young adults to pursue meaningful education and



YOUTUBE



RAZOO

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

employment opportunities that would have otherwise been out of reach.



Our dynamic local Project Coordinator, Ms. Anynaem, has shown extraordinary commitment and talent in evolving Visions programs. On account of our contributions and involvement with the school, she was able to secure a special classroom to be allocated as a **Deaf Resource Room**. She has already mobilized a donation of computers as well, which are in place at the center. Deaf students at the school now have a learning place to call their own, and they have a support network that has never existed before. With your support, we plan to keep the momentum going!

Upcoming Visions Events

DAVIS, CA:

WHAT: "Davis Dheem Tana 2014" - 1st Intercollegiate Classical Indian Dance Showcase on the West Coast

WHEN: Saturday, March 29th; 6:30 - 9:30pm

WHERE: Richard Brunelle Theater, 315 W. 14th Street, Davis, CA

TICKETS: Pre-sale tickets are \$10 for students, \$15 for general admission, and \$30 for VIP (priority seating). At the door, tickets are \$15 for students and \$20 for general admission. You can purchase tickets at daviddheemtana2014.wix.com/dheemtana.

New York City, NY:



WHAT: "NYC Spring Fundraiser: Party for a Cause"

WHEN: Saturday, April 5th; 10:00pm - 3:00am

WHERE: 165 William Street #2, New York City, NY

TICKETS: \$50/person (top shelf open bar all night). Get your tickets online here: <http://visionsglobalempowerment.org/NYCspring2014/>

DRESS: Dress to impress. Gents - Sports coats and jackets preferred. Ladies - Cocktail attire.

The awesome DJ Pup Dawg will be spinning all night at this private loft. All proceeds benefit the Visions Leadership Academy. For more information, please visit our Facebook event page [HERE](#)

Rochester, NY:

WHAT: Rochester Chapter Spring Informational Meeting

WHEN: Monday, April 7th; 6:00 - 8:00pm

WHERE: Room 1924, Shults Center, Nazareth College, Rochester

This is a free event at which we will be sharing our annual service learning trip opportunities with particular focus on our work in Ethiopia with the deaf community. Light snacks will be provided. Donations welcome. For more information, please contact our Rochester Chapter Director Mary Grace Hamme at mhamme1@mail.naz.edu.

Pittsburgh, PA:

SAVE THE DATE: Friday, April 25th

WHAT: Spring 2014 Social Event & Fundraiser (all event details will be announced shortly on our website and on Facebook)

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PLEASE MAKE A CONTRIBUTION!

We need your help! There are several projects that need immediate funding,

including: *Visions Leadership Academy

*After-School Programs

*Student Scholarships

*Teacher Trainings & Support

We can only do this important work with your support. Donations are accepted online through our website OR can be mailed to us. Please make checks out to "Visions". All donations are tax-deductible [tax ID#26-3386678].

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