



JANUARY 2010

Progress on the Kalagam Visions Learning Centre (KVLC) Continues

Nearly two years ago, Visions invited Mrs. Duraiswamy of Saiva Mangaiyar Kalagam to attend an inaugural ceremony in Pasadena, California, where we announced the launch of the \$400,000 Kalagam-Visions Learning Center project. It took more than one year to navigate the intricate procedures and bureaucracy required to get permission for undertaking the construction project at the Saiva Mangaiyar Vidyalayam school in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Finally, after persistent efforts of the Kalagam, and with Visions providing guidance and assistance throughout, the ground-breaking ceremony took place in April 2009.

Today, we are nine months into construction and making steady progress on construction of the four-story building. Amuthalingam Mathimahan is an engineering graduate recruited by Visions. On a weekly basis, he emails reports indicating details of weekly construction progress and attendance of the site workers. Through this regular communication and assurance from the Kalagam President, Mrs. Duraiswamy, we are confident that construction of the KVLC will be achieved as scheduled for mid-2010!



In the next several months, Visions and Kalagam will engage in planning discussions

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Volunteer in India in 2010!

It's that time of year again...Visions holding 2 Leadership trainings in **So India** this summer, and you are invited to volunteer! This is now Visions' **8th** year of running this program, for which over 85 international volunteers have volunteered their time abroad. For those of you who have volunteered with us before, you know how meaningful and insightful these trips can be. For those of you who have not volunteered with us, we invite you to take advantage of this unique opportunity to explore, have fun, and make a difference in the lives of many underprivileged young people from disadvantaged communities. Trip dates are tentatively planned for Jul 30th - Aug 18th. Interested applicants should email mpathmar@yahoo.com.

In the next several months, Visions and Kalagam will engage in planning discussions regarding activities to be implemented in the KVLC following completion of the construction. It is planned that the new facilities will include a multimedia room, computer lab, activity rooms, lecture halls, and student offices. Students and teachers of Saiva Mangaiyar Vidyalayam, including four-hundred Internally Displaced children and orphans from North East Sri Lanka who attend the school, are eagerly awaiting their chance to participate in enhanced educational opportunities.

As we work to develop these programs and plan for long-term development of the KVLC, Visions will continue to provide technical assistance towards this end. We have a vision of building the KVLC into a Center of Excellence for English, IT, and Leadership. Thousands of current and future students of Saiva Mangaiyar Vidyalayam will inspire a new generation of young people in our fast changing global community. Please help us make this vision a reality by contributing your support for the KVLC. In addition to appealing to well wishers of this Hindu Ladies College, we are especially keen to reach out to Alumni of Saiva Mangaiyar Vidyalayam. Please visit our website for further information and to make a direct donation through PayPal.

Visions Sri Lankan Volunteer Trainees Assist with KVLC

Kalaivani Kamalanathan and Selvaratnam Kaninthan, two Internally Displaced individuals living in Colombo, have found renewed inspiration for achieving their dreams of one day becoming Construction Site Supervisors. Over the past 6 months, Kalaivani and Kaninthan have been working as Visions Volunteer Trainees, participating in KVLC weekly site supervision meetings and assisting in the supervision of KVLC construction.

Kalaivani, who completed her G.C.E. A/L exam from Manipay Ladies College in Jaffna in 2001 is keen to improve her English skills. This training opportunity has allowed her to gain new experiences, yet she hopes for further assistance to boost her confidence for obtaining a stable job in the near future. Kaninthan, also originally from Jaffna, has obtained a certificate and diploma in Civil Engineering in addition to completing his A/L exam. Visions is proud of these two young individuals, who are working hard to build their skills and find their place in a competitive, challenging market. They can be reached at kkvaani@yahoo.com and kaninthan@hotmail.com.



Greg Taylor Buie Joins the Visions Board of Directors



In 2004, Greg Taylor Buie attended second annual Visions camp held Jaffna, Sri Lanka. He was just entering his 3rd year as an undergraduate student at UC San Diego studying Political Science, and the orphaned youth he met through the Visions program altered his life forever. Over the next few years, Greg's endless enthusiasm and steadfast determination helped to fundamentally change the organizational course of Visions. Between 2006 to 2009, Greg served as the Visions Director, during which his efforts aided Visions to become incorporated as a non-profit. Among many achievements, he expanded Visions to 2 new countries, directed 15 Leadership Trainings and enriched the Visions curriculum. In late 2009, Greg's role with the non-profit IMH compelled him to resign as the Visions Director, while soon after, he accepted an invitation to join the Visions Board of Directors. Visions is very excited to benefit from Greg's continued involvement with Visions in his new capacity as CFO of the Board.

English Books Donated to Jaffna Schools

For the 2nd year in a row, students Esperanza High School located in

US Visions Volunteers Inspire Youth in Southern India

In July & August of 2009, Visions completed four Leadership Trainings in Tamil Nadu, India, reaching 150 young University level women and 130 high school students. The first 2 trainings were held at Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Arts & Science for Women in Perambalur and the second batch of 2 trainings took place in two government high schools in Theni and Dindigul Districts with low income, underprivileged youth. The high school trainings were conducted by a team of 8 international Visions volunteers lead by Visions Director, Greg Buie, and a team of local volunteers lead by Social Action & Women's Educational Development (SAWED) Trust Director, M.S. Abdaheer.



Having developed the Visions curriculum over 7 years, volunteers used practical training methods to help youth build leadership and life skills such as time management, planning, communication skills, and team-building. In addition, volunteers made presentations on a range of topics including human rights, health & hygiene, and environmental protection. Overall, the whole experience was incredibly charged with creativity, positive energy, rich memories, and valuable insights.

Visions is grateful to all the volunteers, SAWED, school staff and community members who made the training a success. Tamara Ackland, Anjana Pathmarajah, Nanju Reddy, Meera Pathmarajah and Rieyaz Yaz were among the returning Visions volunteers at the Theni and Dindigul trainings. They were joined by first time volunteers Venita Katir, Kari Dietrich and Krishan Sutharshana.

Partner Feature: Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development (CORD) - Sri Lanka

CORD Sri Lanka is the service wing of Chimaya Mission Sri Lanka, established in the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami. Its mission is to facilitate integrated, sustainable

Anaheim, CA, held a book drive collecting close to 8,000 English books. This commendable effort was led by Mignotae Kebede. After two rounds of book sorting, **2,800** titles were deemed suitable for shipment to Sri Lanka, and these were sent to our partner organization in Sri Lanka, Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development (CORD) in Dec. 2009.

Thiviya Nadesakumaran of South Brunswick, NJ, undertook a similar initiative at her high school, resulting in a collection of **1,300** books. The books were received by CORD in Dec. 2009, and have already been distributed to schools in Jaffna. Congratulations Mignotae and Thiviya for your exemplar leadership and commitment!

Thank You

The Visions Board of Directors extends a heartfelt expression of gratitude to Visions donors and volunteers. Without you, none of our work would be possible! In the coming months, we will be working on refining our organizational vision and mission statements, program objectives, website and long-term strategic plan. We commit to keeping you informed of our progress and hope that you will continue to invest in our Vision of uplifting and empowering youth and teachers in South Asia! Thank you once again for your support.

Order Your Visions T-Shirts Today

You can now order yourself a beautiful, trendy, custom-printed Visions t-shirt to benefit our Visions Leadership Education Program at the same time. Both men's and women's t-shirts designed exclusively for Visions and printed on high quality Alternative Apparel shirts are now available. You can order your shirts online via ShopModerne.com for just \$20 by clicking the link here: [\[ORDER YOUR VISIONS T-SHIRT TODAY!\]](#). All orders will be shipped to you right away. Now you can look good and support a very worthy cause.

social help programs in local communities through processes of self-empowerment and enrichment. CORD believes in harnessing human resources to enable the poor to transform their lives through programs driven by their own initiative.

Visions initiated a new partnership with CORD Sri Lanka in 2009, following a compelling and sincere appeal to the diaspora to help IDPs and children in North East, Sri Lanka, made by the organization's Director, Gowrie Mahenthiran. There was an immediate synergy and connection forged between Visions and CORD Sri Lanka, and momentum stepped up when then Visions Director, Greg Buie, held several consultative meetings with CORD's top management to assist the organization's website development and marketing.

Visions looks forward to deepening our relationship with CORD and undertaking joint educational projects in the near future. Visit www.cordsrilanka.org to learn more about CORD's fantastic efforts.

Columbia University Students Launch a Visions Volunteer Chapter!

Between September and December 2009, a group of graduate students from Teacher's College Columbia University and the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University got together to begin work on revitalizing the Visions website and to facilitate a Strategic Planning process for Visions. A majority of these students are pursuing Masters Degrees in International Development, and found an exciting opportunity to volunteer with Visions, which allows them to apply what they are learning through readings and coursework in the practical setting of non-profit organizational development. During the 2009 fall semester, the group met every week and made great progress. New and inspiring mission and vision statements were drafted; a business plan was created; several elements of a soon-to-be launched new website were designed; and a survey was set up for former program participants to gather information on the volunteer experience and assess how Visions can better reach out to potential volunteers. The group is also currently in the process of planning several fundraisers.

We are excited about the progress we've made and are extremely grateful to all volunteers for their time and valuable contributions. In particular, we would like to recognize Katherine Reddington, Kate Munro, Ellen Frierson, Anjana Pathmarajah, Joseph Levitan, Sarah Jaffe, Kelly Dougherty, Natasha Myles, and Thomas Rains for their commendable efforts!



We need YOUR support!

Please consider making a donation to Visions today or getting involved in our work. There are many ways you can help, including:

- *Organize a fundraiser or event on Visions' behalf (or turning an event or party into a fundraiser for Visions)
- *Organize a school supplies drive (use our Amazon Wishlist) with campus groups, friends, your church/temple, or local businesses, etc.
- *Offer your professional services, such as legal, business/accounting, architectural, web design, and more
- *Ask your company to make a corporate contribution or matching grant
- *Volunteer with us locally or abroad

This year the new Visions Leadership Education Program will benefit an estimated 1,000 youth & teachers in Sri Lanka and India. Help give them crucial Leadership & Life Skills and Human Rights training by donating **just \$25** today!

Join Our Mailing List!

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PLEASE DONATE:

Donations are accepted online thru 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 Kalagam Visions Learning Centre, Leadership Education Program, Scholarship Program and more. We can only do this important work with your support. Education is simply too important...

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