

EYE2EYE



Apr 2008, Volume 10, Issue 1

EIN: 77-6141976

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Milpitas, CA 95035
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Murali's Corner

Dear Friends,

Warm greetings to all of you from San Jose.

I am very happy to report that the Sankara Eye Hospital & Training Center, Bangalore, was successfully inaugurated on Sunday, March 9, 2008. Congratulations to all of you for making this happen. This Hospital is right in the heart of Bangalore on the Airport-Whitefield road and is already attracting many out-patients. Free eye camps should be starting anytime now.



Five of us visited India to participate in this grand ceremony and some of us also visited the Sankara Eye Hospital, Coimbatore and the Sankara Rural Eye Hospital, Krishnan Koil.

This was our first trip to Krishnan Koil and it was very nice to see the loving care and attention given to the patients by our dedicated Hospital staff. Please see inside for more details of our India Trip. We also had a board meeting at Coimbatore where we reviewed our short-term goals and discussed the long-term Master Plan to achieve our Vision 20/20 by 2020.

What is happening in the USA? SEF is completing ten years in May 2008 and as you all know, it has come out of its garage and has its own office and a dedicated Office Manager in Milpitas, CA and processes have been initiated to help handle the exciting growth.

Our Volunteer Resource Management (VRM) team meticulously organized a grand meeting for all the volunteers on February 23 in the SF Bay Area. It was well represented by volunteers from all across the USA. We presented last year's achievements and the plans for this year. Teams from outside the Bay Area presented plans to grow SEF in their regions. We are always looking for new, energetic and driven volunteers from all over the country, please eMail us at info@giftofvision.org or call us at 1-866-SANKARA (726-5272). We encourage our youth all over the country to join us. You can take small or big initiatives at your School, College or University and we will support you all the way.

Our volunteers organized a booth at AAHOA(Asian

American Hotelier's Association) and raised funds for our upcoming Hospital in Anand, Gujarat. SEF and KKNC (Kannada Koota of Northern California) organized 'Rasika Ranjani' an hour long hilarious Kannada Play by Alamelu Iyengar followed by an excellent Light Music show (Sunayana) organized by Soma Shekar and friends to raise funds for our Bangalore Hospital. SEF volunteers sincerely appreciate the support of AAHOA and KKNC.

What next? As always, there is never a dull moment at SEF, USA and SECI (Sankara Eye Care Institutes), India. SECI is working extremely hard to complete the construction of the Anand and Shimoga hospitals this year. Personnel for both these hospitals are being trained at our Coimbatore hospital. These hospitals will be inaugurated in September and October this year, respectively. Please plan to attend.

We are also very lucky to get local donations in India for the Bangalore and Shimoga hospitals. We are also being supported by SEF, UK for the Gujarat Hospital. SEF, USA now has to raise the following amounts for the three projects –

SEH-Anand - \$550,000
SEH-Bangalore - \$425,000
SEH-Shimoga - \$450,000

Help us get to 1000 Founding Donors, from the current 800 each for Anand and Bangalore. Please donate \$1,000 to any of the above three projects and become a founding donor today. The sooner we complete the fundraising for the above, the sooner we can announce our next two projects and the current thinking is Punjab and Uttar Pradesh or Uttaranchal.

SEF and its partners will be running eight Hospitals in India by the end of the year and take the number of FREE Eye Surgeries from the current annual level of around 58,000 to more than 100,000 soon. We also need to raise over a million dollars this year to support the expanded number of free eye surgeries.

I may have said this many times but we understand very well that all this progress would not have happened without your unstinting support and please stay with us until we get to Vision 20/20 by 2020.

Sincerely,

--Murali Krishnamurthy

Calendar

May 3rd - **Banquet Dinner - A fund raiser for Gujarat Hospital - ICC, Milpitas, CA**
May 9th - **Udit Narayan Concert - La Mirada, CA**
May 11th - **Eye Walk for Peace - Drake Track Stadium , UCLA, Los Angeles, CA**
August 23rd - **4th Annual Sankara iWalk - Shoreline Park, Mountain View, CA**
October 4th - **SEF Dandia 2008 - Santa Clara Convention Center, Santa Clara, CA**
October 11th - **SEF Dandia 2008 - Santa Clara Convention Center, Santa Clara, CA**
October 18th - **East Bay Dandia, CA**
November 15th - **Roshni - 2008 - Chabot College, Hayward, CA**



Champion for Vision at iWalk- Juhee Goyal

Hi! I am Juhee Goyal. I am seven years old. My father is a volunteer with the Sankara Eye Foundation. I walked in a walkathon for SEF. I walked 5K with my father. To raise money, I read 80 books. For each book I got 50 cents from my parents and 50 cents each from two of my uncles and an aunt. My friends and their families also supported me. My goal was to read 60 books to raise 30 dollars on my own for one eye surgery.

At the end I raised more than 3600 dollars. I got a lamp for raising the most money. I also got a kit to make a treasure box by coloring the pictures nicely. I was the happiest kid at the end of the event.

PS: With the money raised from Juhee's walkathon participation and additional money from candy sale, a room was sponsored in the name of "Sankara Eye Foundation Volunteers" at the Bangalore hospital.

Walk On The Blind Side– 4th Annual Sankara iWalk

Date: August 23rd

Distance: 13.1 Half marathon(Run only)/10K/5K(Walk or Run)

Target: \$100K.

Come **train with us and run** a half marathon at Shoreline Park. If you are not a long distance runner, walk 10K or 5K, or just come have fun at the carnival. Your participation can help a few people regain their eye sight.

Select whether to walk or run. Select the distance; select your fund raising goal. Register for the iWalk. Tell your friends and colleagues about Sankara and ask them donate to the cause. We will help you at every stage. If you are the top most fundraiser you will win a prize.

You can form a team. Team events are always fun. Have a group of friends who are interested in walking/running and register as a team.

To learn more, please give us a call:

Manjula : 650-533-2459
Balaji : 510-709-5581
Usha : 925-487-1031
JP : 408-329-0566
1-866-SANKARA



The Bangalore Hospital Inauguration - Murali Krishnamurthy, Divyogi Patel, Sundar Radhakrishnan, K. Sridharan and Girish Muckai

We were in cloud nine that Sunday morning - though it was a beautiful sunny day - when the plaques of the Specialty Eye Care Services and the Infosys Community Eye Care Center were unveiled, respectively by the Chief Secretary Mr. Sudhakar Rao and Mr. S. Gopalakrishnan, the CEO of Infosys Ltd. This moment was seen in



Managing Trustee of SECI, painted the picture of how we have emerged from a small initiative in 1977 to today. Mr. M. Krishnamurthy, a trustee of AKKA and a Partner-in-Service, spoke about the role of the Kannada community in the US and their contributions to worthy causes. The Chief Secretary, who was the Chief Guest, pledged to donate his eyes on that special day. Mr. Dayanand Pai and his brother, Satish Pai offered all the resources to build a hospital in Mangalore and challenged SECI to take this up. Mr. D. R. Karthikeyan, the former Director of CBI and the Director General of National Human Rights Commission, provided encouraging news about the Government working to release the DBCS grants. SEF USA Chairman, Murali spoke about achieving Vision 20/20 by the Year 2020. Dr. S. V. Balasubramaniam and Dr. Ramani felicitated the dignitaries and special invitees including Smt. Saroja V. Rao, mother of our Partner-in-Service, Mr. B. V. Jagdeesh. Finally, one of the major supporters of the movement, Mr. Jagdeesh Chanrai of the Mission for Vision Trust proposed the Vote

person by over five hundred extraordinary people (and by hundreds more over the Internet). The people assembled at the site of the shining brand new eye hospital were witnessing history being made on March 9, 2008. It was a milestone and a very important one in the journey for eradicating curable blindness in India undertaken by numerous selfless and extraordinary people all over the world. The Sankara and the Infosys teams together with the construction crew worked tirelessly through days and nights to make sure the construction was complete in time for the inauguration.

One by one, the dignitaries and special invitees who had made amazing contributions and went out of their way in conceiving, enabling and completing this super-specialty hospital, spoke about the blindness problems crippling our beloved country and its citizens. They were all in agreement that with focus, determination and hard work, we can bring about much needed change and well-deserved vision to millions of people living in rural areas without the means or access to basic eye-care. Dr. S.V. Balasubramaniam, the Chairman of Sankara Eye Care Institutions (SECI) spoke about the work done by the Sankara family and supporters around the globe. Dr. Ramani, the man behind the Sankara movement and the

of Thanks.



Kannada Koota of Northern California (KKNC) is very close to becoming a partner of this hospital and they were represented at the inauguration by Mr. Ashok (Katte fame) and Mr. Ramesh Javagal (ex-President of KKNC).

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Let us take a quick look at the facts of the Sankara Eye Hospital in Bangalore: it is located in a gorgeous 4.5 acre lot in Marathahalli in White Field, minutes from the HAL airport. It has been designed and built with convenience, longevity and economy in mind. It has two sections – the Specialty Eye Care Services which has 25 beds and provides state-of-the-art out-patient and in-patient care for paying patients. The Infosys Community Eye Care Center is a 200-bed facility that provides free eye care for people brought in from rural areas. The Bangalore hospital, with over a dozen well-trained doctors and scores of support staff all serving the patients with passion and dedication, the common traits found in all six hospitals, also has a specialty training center and will be the training ground for the medical and paramedical staff for all Sankara hospitals. Out-patient consultations started on the 10th of March. Special diagnostics such as ultrasound, angiography and digital fields have also commenced and patients requiring surgical intervention have been registered. The surgical theatre is expected to commence in the second week of April. The hospital's CMO (Chief Medical Officer) is Dr. Umesh Y. Rao and the Administrative Manager is Ms. Gayathri.

The day before the inauguration, we were all invited to a grand party hosted by Mr. Dayanand Pai, a noted construction magnate in Bangalore, at his huge residence. Mr. Dayanand Pai and his brother Sathish Pai donated Rs. 50 Lakhs and have also introduced several other big donors. Mr. Dayanand Pai was introduced to us by our own Dr. Bhagilthaya and Mr. Venkat Reddy who donated the prime land in Bangalore for our Hospital via the Navajeevana Trust. After the inauguration, everyone was transported to Mr. P. Balasubramaniam's family house in Sarjapura where a fabulous lunch was arranged at their community center. You may recall that Mr. P. Balasubramaniam, who volunteers his time at the Coimbatore Hospital encouraged Murali and Sridharan to start SEF USA in the late nineties. That evening, Mr. Venkat Reddy organized a nice party at a Golf Club – a relaxed evening with mouthwatering food and listening to Karaoke singing of erstwhile and golden melodies.

With the SECI team's amazing vision and motivation, together with the generous donors in the US, India and Europe, and a growing cadre of selfless and brilliant volunteers across the country spending myriad hours strategizing and planning and working hard to bring vision to the needlessly blind, we have no doubt that we can achieve Vision 20/20 by the Year 2020. We encourage each and every one of you to visit the Bangalore Hospital or any of the other Sankara Eye Care Institutions in India when possible and see for yourself.

Rasika Ranjani - Hema Chamraj

KKNC, a community based organization in the bay area, shares SEF's vision of freedom from curable blindness and has played a key role in raising funds for this cause. KKNC aims to become a "partner-in-service" for the Bangalore hospital by



raising \$100K, of which \$60K was already raised in 2007. The team led by Mr. Soma Sekhar organized a successful event, "Rasika Ranjini" on March 22nd, 2008 to raise the remaining funds for the Bangalore hospital. The event included a family comedy play, written and directed by the talented Alamelu Iyengar from the bay area and a light music concert by "Sunayana's leading bay area artists including Mr. Nachiketa Sharma. The pledge drive conducted during the event generated donations which added to the ticket proceedings to total nearly \$30K. With the support and generous donations from the community members, SEF is confident of reaching its vision towards freedom from curable blindness.

AAHOA: Partners-In-Service Now Four Years Strong – Naushik Desai

Yes, it was that time of the year. March Madness!! And no, we are not speaking of basketball. We are totally talking about the annual AAHOA convention. By coincidence (or not) it was held in San Antonio, where a week later the "Final Four" teams were playing for the NCAA championship (we had neither the tickets nor the money to stay back and enjoy the games).

So once more we packed our bags (with SEF brochures and donation cards) and off we went. This year the team consisted of Anju Desai, Smita Patel, Divyogi Patel, yours truly and a very special volunteer- in-training Khushali Shah.

Khushali is a junior at UCLA and a new volunteer in SEF. She was planning on spending her spring break in Cancun dancing away the nights but her parents would not pay for it (just kidding). Instead SEF paid for her ticket to San Antonio, so that she could spend her days standing at the SEF booth and educating over 4,000 AAHOA attendees on the benefits of donating to our worthy cause (tax deduction and personal happiness). To tell the truth, we needed her so that we could reduce our group's mean age and look a little hipper.

Successful battle against Macular Degeneration - Srinidhi Raghavendra

Macular degeneration is a medical condition predominantly found in elderly adults in which the center of the inner lining of the eye, known as the macula area of the retina, suffers thinning, atrophy, and in some cases, bleeding. As a result patients suffering from this condition can't see properly and have a hazy or blurred vision. Macular degeneration begins affecting sight slowly but in a progressive manner, starting with difficulty in reading, driving, recognition of people and objects etc. Straight lines will look broken or distorted. This is a peculiar medical condition which doesn't cause complete blindness. Patients suffering from macular degeneration usually have their peripheral vision intact even at advanced stages.

Macular degeneration is usually observed in two distinct forms.

- Dry (atrophic) macular degeneration
- Wet (neovascular / exudative) macular degeneration

The former is more common and accounts for nearly 90 percent. It has been noticed that wet macular degeneration is less common but more severe. Characterized by choroidal neovascularization (CNV), wet macular degeneration results in 90 percent blindness very quickly.

Research studies have found that macular degeneration is more common in the US than in Europe. This is attributed due to unknown genetic and environmental factors. Like cataract, macular degeneration is also observed more in people in their mid-70s and rarely in people below 50. Hence this disease is also referred to as Age-Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD) and is the leading cause of blindness in the United States with over 200,000 new cases reported each year. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, ARMD is the leading cause of central vision loss (blindness) in the United States today for those over the age of fifty.

This disease usually starts off with characteristic yellow deposits in the central area of the retina. These deposits are known as drusen and occur between the retinal pigment epithelium and the underlying choroid. This condition is referred to as maculopathy and most people have good vision at this stage. But slowly drusen can develop into advanced ARMD. The risk is considerably higher when the drusen are large and numerous and associated with disturbance in the pigmented cell layer under the macula. Recent research suggests that large and soft drusen are related to elevated cholesterol deposits and may respond to cholesterol lowering agents or the Rheo Procedure.

During the next stage known as Advanced ARMD, the patient suffers from profound vision loss and can turn into any one of the above mentioned forms. The dry form results in central geographic atrophy and

causes vision loss through loss of photoreceptors in the central part of the eye.

Treatment of ARMD

Till date no cure/ treatment has been discovered for this condition. Research institutions including National Eye Institute have demonstrated that administering vitamin supplements with large doses of antioxidants, lutein and zeaxanthin can help slow down the progression of dry macular degeneration and in very cases, improve visual acuity.

Prevention of ARMD

Some of the most common causative agents that accelerate the onset of ARMD include smoking, aging, family history, exposure to sunlight especially blue light, hypertension, high cholesterol, obesity, etc.

Smoking is one of the major risk factors for macular degeneration. Several research studies have confirmed the link between smoking and macular degeneration with smokers being at a two-to-three-fold higher risk than non-smokers.

Bibliography and further reading

Wikipedia - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macular_degeneration
Macular Degeneration Network: <http://www.macular-degeneration.org/home.htm>
Ageing Eye.net <http://www.agingeye.net/maculardegen/maculardegeninformation.php>

Manthan B. Adiga, An international level inline skater who suffers from macular degeneration

Manthan B. Adiga (21) looks and talks like any other young and high-energy college student. But enquire further and this lanky youth reveals a personality who fights and wins against congenital macular degeneration as he negotiates his way through skating practice, Bangalore traffic and tough academic regimen. Adiga is the five-time national roller skating champion.

Adiga's achievements are a testimony that a determined individual can rise against all odds and emerge triumphant. He has won five national, nine state and six district roller skating championships in the under-15 and under-17 categories since he started skating competitively in 1994. Adiga attributes a large part of his success in this esoteric sport to Bangalore's Garden Skating Club where his coaches insisted on training him for competitive roller skating despite his visual impairment.

During the decade starting from 1994, Adiga participated in 145 roller skating competitions notching up an aggregate tally of 29 gold, 26 silver and 27 bronze medals and represented India in two international meets in Italy (2002) and Belgium (2004).

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To celebrate the final phase of
Sankara Eye Hospital . Anand, Gujarat
SEF Proudly Presents a Benefit Banquet

Date: May 3rd, 2008
Time: 6:30pm
Venue: The Malavalli Auditorium, ICC
Address: 555 Los Coches St
Milpitas, CA

General Admission: \$75 per person
Dress Code: Formal
Child Care (12 & under)
Valet Parking

Contact:
Neha Desai (408) 910 3891
Anju Desai (408) 307 8885
Smita Patel (408) 997 5429

Join Us and
Spread the Magic of Vision

Become a Founding Member (\$1,000) now
and receive two complimentary Admissions to the Banquet!

Largest Charity Eye Care in Gujarat
225 bed Hospital
Total Fund needed \$ 2.5 million
So far collected \$ 1.9 million
Balance remaining \$600,000
Inauguration September 2008

www.giftofvision.org
email: banquet@giftofvision.org
1-866-SANKARA

Dallas Chapter Ramps Up-Srinidhi Raghavendra

Here in Texas, we have been very actively promoting our message of "Vision 20/20 by the year 2020" by organizing booths during various cultural and religious occasions this year. Though direct fund-raising is low, awareness building is happening big time. The "Desi" crowd of Dallas - Fort Worth metropolis has started to recognize our presence. Here is a low down on the many events in which we participated.

January 15th - Pongal celebrations of DFW Tamil Sangam

Padma Mariam and Srinidhi Raghavendra set up a booth at the colorful, boisterous and cheerful pongal celebrations of the Tamil Sangam. Conducted at the Plaza auditorium in downtown Garland, the event attracted over 500 people with lots of kids.

Our booth was very popular with children because of the large bowl of candies. Parents followed kids to our booth and we talked to many people and spread the word. We also met a few people who showed interest in volunteering. We will follow up with them.

Members of Tamil Sangam were happy with our presence as we didn't chase prospective donors, but waited for them to come to our booth and speak to us. The Tamil Sangam has promised to invite us to set up booths in all their future events.

March 8th - Kuchipudi Dance Drama

We were invited to set up a booth during a Kuchipudi dance drama by Natyanjali Dance School. It was held at Granville Art Center, Garland and attracted a huge crowd. Padma, Srinidhi, Uma Suresh and Chethan Gorur participated. While Padma and Uma managed the booth, Chethan and Srinidhi helped out by ushering people and talking to visitors about SEF.

March 16th - 2nd Anniversary of Plano Hindu Temple

A big contingent of SEF volunteers helped in successfully organizing the 2nd anniversary celebrations of the Plano Hindu Temple. Over 200 visitors came. We could not set up a booth, but most of us promoted our message successfully by being attired in SEF T-shirts and distributing SEF brochures and newsletters to visitors. Srivatsa, Shanti Rajaram, Padma, Nupur, Prabhavathy, Govinda, Sandeep and Srinidhi took complete charge of food distribution and managed the proceedings efficiently.

March 23rd - Holi Celebrations at Irving Ekta Mandir

Holi, the festival of colors was celebrated at the Ekta Mandir in Irving. The event was planned as a major fund-raiser for the temple. We set up a stall to sell brownies which we had baked over the weekend. The stall, food, time and the proceeds

from sale of brownies were our donation to the temple. Over 500 people played Holi with colors, enjoyed music, food and dancing. A few aspiring singers belted out Bollywood numbers while the young, and the young at heart, danced away to glory.

Padma, Uma Suresh, Shanti, Govinda, Sandeep and Srinidhi managed our booth. It was the one with the biggest banner and one of the biggest attractions at the event. We were very popular among children and youngsters with a sweet tooth. We sold out over 250 brownies by 3 PM raising \$124 for the temple.

Upcoming Events before the next Newsletter

April 8-9th - Baylor University Student Association's Holi Celebrations

We have agreed to invest \$250 and sponsor Holi celebrations at Baylor University, Waco. They are going to showcase SEF banner and play the DVD during the event. One or two volunteers may travel to participate and ensure that the banner is prominently displayed. We will also try to recruit some youth volunteers.

May 10th - SEF Film, Fun, Food for Families

We are organizing an evening of film and fun for families in an outdoor amphitheatre from 6 PM to midnight. We will show two Bollywood super hit movies. It will be an evening carnival (mela) with ten booths of various businesses (Food stalls, face painting, clothing, mehendi, costume photography etc.). At the beginning of the evening, and in between films, visitors will be provided an opportunity to sing to karaoke tunes of popular Bollywood hit numbers. Each participant will pay a fee to sing. Our DVD will be played a few times during the evening (before the movie, during the intermission etc.). We will also have a booth to raise funds at the venue.

Sankara Performance in Year 2007

Coimbatore	
Camps Conducted	616
Population Covers	2812200
Outpatients Seen	102095
Surgeries Performed	36139
Krishnan Koil	
Camps Conducted	339
Population Covers	574800
Outpatients Seen	31052
Surgeries Performed	10812
Guntur	
Camps Conducted	65
Population Covers	302800
Outpatients Seen	19424
Surgeries Performed	10810
Consolidated	
Camps Conducted	1020
Population Covers	3689800
Outpatients Seen	152571
Surgeries Performed	57761

My India Diary - Murali Krishnamurthy

Thursday March 6 and Friday March 7:

K. Sridharan and I left SFO by Singapore Airlines early in the morning. Got my badly needed rest - reading, sleeping, watching TV etc. - lots of fun. We reached Singapore in the morning on Friday. My last trip to India was two or three years ago.

We reached Bangalore by 9:55 pm on Friday. Our Uncle Mr. P. Balasubramaniam's daughters Vasudha and Lalita both live in Bangalore. Vasudha's husband Ravi is COO of Tech Mahendra and they live in a beautiful community in Sarjapura and we stayed with them in Bangalore.

Divyogi Patel, his friend Surender Patel from UK and Girish Muckai were already in Bangalore. Sundar Radhakrishnan came on the inauguration day from Bombay. Our mother was already in Bangalore and our cousin Vijaya from Bombay, Ramesh from Chennai and Sridharan's IIT classmate Sampath from Hyderabad also joined us. All of them are willing to join our movement in India and help take it to the next level.

Saturday March 8:

We are thoroughly enjoying every moment of our very precious time in India. Had fresh coffee and breakfast in the morning and then headed out to take a look at our Bangalore Hospital. The construction is going on at a frantic rate to have it almost ready for the inauguration tomorrow. We attended a grand party at Mr. Dayanand Pai's residence in Bangalore to celebrate the inauguration of our Bangalore Hospital.

Sunday March 9:

You must see the Hospital to believe it. It is in the heart of the City on Airport Road and very clearly visible from the Road. As usual, our own Agriculturist from Coimbatore has planted several trees around the Hospital and it should look even more beautiful in a few years. My classmates from REC Trichy - Raghu, Ganesh, Sukumar, Krishnaswamy and George C. Paul and the parents of our volunteers Jawahar Sundaram and Vaishnav Rajagopal also joined us at this grand inauguration.

Monday March 10:

I spent the whole day with George C. Paul who came all the way from Kerala to meet Sundar and me. He has pledged Rs. 10,000 for Sankara and is motivating Sundar and me to attend our REC Trichy Alumni meeting on August 15th at Kodaikanal to raise more funds for Sankara.

George and I went to the Hospital where Ganesh joined us and we toured the Hospital. This Hospital is so huge that just by walking from one end to the other end is good exercise. I cannot believe that we have over 800 Founding donors. Their names have been carefully inscribed on the Hospital 'Wall of Founders'.

Tuesday March 11:

I was supposed to go to Shimoga or Guntur but canceled it and will do it the next time around. I just relaxed in Bangalore. Went with Uncle to his Doctor and had lunch at Lalitha's house. On the way we both went to the Sankara Eye Hospital and collected the inauguration Photos and Video.

Wednesday March 12:

In spite of the Airport staff strike, the flights were on even though they were delayed. Uncle, Aunt, Sridharan and I flew by Jet Airways to Coimbatore. It just took thirty minutes. We had lunch and then our friend Mr. Vasu took me shopping, and we had dinner at my wife Kala's sister Bhanu's house.

Thursday March 13:

Sridharan and I went to the Coimbatore Hospital and took a tour of the

Hospital. When you see all these patients getting vision that is when it strikes you that all this is worth it. Until then you may not feel it. You feel so happy seeing them eating at our cafeteria and given excellent care by our kind staff. We met with three young children who had trauma in their eyes being cured by us and we have their story published in this Newsletter.

It was also nice to see these enthusiastic young girls from Gujarat being trained at Coimbatore. They were all recruited from the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Gujarat and will be going back to work at our Sankara Eye Hospital, Anand, Gujarat in September this year.

We had lunch at our Cafeteria and then I went to see Dr. P.G. Viswanathan, a trustee of SECI and also a very well known ENT specialist. We talked about Sankara and then I also checked up my ears.

Friday March 14:

Our driver came to the cottage at 5 am sharp and we all left for Krishnan Koil to take a look at the Sankara Rural Eye Hospital (SREH). We reached Krishnan Koil via Madurai at around 11am. It was a beautiful and pleasant ride.

Krishnan Koil is a small village just before Srivilliputhur. SREH at Krishnan Koil is just wonderful. It is like an Ashram surrounded by trees, Mountains etc., and is spotless, just like our other Hospitals. Mr. Kannan is the administrator there. Dr. Sandeep (Chief Medical Officer) and his wife Dr. Sweta are the main Doctors. They are from Madhya Pradesh and are looking forward to move to Anand when our Hospital is ready. We also met Dr. Pradeep from Rajasthan. Young dedicated Doctors and we are lucky to have such people contributing to our movement.

We also met with Dr. Vivekananda Raja, a great man. Dr. Raja and his family donated this Hospital to our group a couple of years ago.

Dr. Raja did not know we were coming. He was out of town, but came rushing to the Hospital as soon as he came to know that we were there. They have an excellent in-house cook there and we had awesome food. You know how much I love food. All of us served the patients when they were having their lunch. It was so touching to see all of them being fed excellent quality food at the Hospital. That is all and there is nothing more to life. We are all very fortunate to be in this movement working towards eradicating blindness in India.

The same care and affection for the patients are seen in the staff at this Hospital also. Kudos to Dr. Vivekananda Raja and Dr. Ramani.

It was a very memorable trip indeed.

Saturday March 15:

Sridharan and Sundar joined us and we had a detailed Board meeting at Dr. SVB's office in the evening. It was a good Board meeting and we spent time on the current projects, running costs and future projects. Later in the night we all went to Dr. SVB's beautiful house and had a wonderful dinner.

Sunday March 16:

Divyogibhai, Surenderbhai, Sridharan and I came by Kingfisher Airlines to Bangalore. We boarded the flight to USA from Bangalore, and reached San Francisco on Monday March 17th in the afternoon.

We are eagerly looking forward to our next trip to India in September to participate in the inauguration of Sankara Eye Hospital, Anand, Gujarat.

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Our battle cry was "Remember the Alamo". Sorry wrong era! It really was "Remember the poor blind of India". And on this battlefront we did well. AAHOA has been a true friend of our cause raising about \$100K for the Anand Hospital. Its leadership team had visited our construction site earlier this year, envisioning our dream becoming a reality. And AAHOA was generous again this year, with valuable stage time, membership in the "Passport Program" and a heart full appeal on our behalf in their conference book.



The AAHOA members came through for our hospital. Nilaxiben, Ajitbhai and Ashwinbhai generously gave us \$25,000. We also got pledges for additional \$35,000. But most importantly, we had fun talking to many people about building our hospital in Anand, and eradicating curable blindness in Gujarat. Our heartfelt thanks to AAHOA members and the leadership team (Mukesh, Danny, Ash and Tarun) for their continued support and their generous hospitality in the Alamo town.

See you all in Washington DC next year.



The Focus Shifts to Shimoga –*Srivaishnav Rajagopal*

With the grand opening of the Bangalore hospital under our belt, our focus has shifted to the Shimoga hospital. It is our second hospital in the state of Karnataka, which has the 3rd highest population suffering from curable blindness among all states. The hospital is located on a beautiful piece of land along the river Tunga and is one of the models for our next generation of hospitals. Construction is in full swing and close to 50% complete. The inauguration date has been tentatively set for early October.

Looking back, around mid-2007 the project needed approximately \$1.5 million. Dr. Sonni provided the much needed impetus by pledging to match the funds raised by us in 2007 by up to \$100K. With the help of ardent supporters like Mr. Anil Lal, among others, we blew past the \$100K goal and gathered close to \$350K. Our momentum surged when Jaslok Hospital (Mumbai) donated 3 Crores Rupees (approx \$750K).

The challenge on hand is to raise \$450K more by August. Fund raising plans are being finalized across the country. Please contribute and help us meet the target either by donating towards the many rooms that are still available, or by participating in our ever popular "Wall of Founder" program.

First & Goal – *Naushik Desai*

It has been a long game. Seems such a long time ago when we had the ball on our very own one yard line. But we are elated with our running game. With tough blocking and tackling and running a few yards on every down (very occasionally a completed pass), we have moved the ball to the other side. Before long we saw the goalposts. But we could not just kick a field goal. We had to score a touchdown.

Well friends, with your support and the hard work of volunteers, we are now almost there. Construction has been progressing rapidly and the hospital building should be complete within a month or two. Then we furnish it, landscape the grounds and we are in business. Our opening ceremony is scheduled in September (just after the Olympics).

At the same time, we have also been working on getting the medical team together to staff the hospital. The nurses are being trained in Coimbatore and will be ready on day one. Other staff is being recruited. In short, we will be running hard to begin free surgeries from the get go.

But we are not done yet. We have ten yards to go. Translation: We need to raise the last \$550K.

To date we have raised nearly \$2M (yes that is two million dollars). Recently thanks to some major partners (AAHOA, CLiPS, Harshadbhai Uka, Ajitbhai and Nilaxiben, Asvinibhai Patel among others) we were able to close on this major milestone. A fund raising banquet is planned in the Bay Area on May 3rd. And, of course, we will be ringing in Navratri with our Dandiya program in October.

So please pitch in. Help us move ten more yards and score a touchdown for the poor blind team of Gujarat.

Thus far, my career as a student has been marked by the activities that a typical Indian-American - student will perform during their course of study – internships, research projects, challenging courses, late nights, and lots of exams. I would often ask myself how everything tied together – how did running a gel-electrophoresis or learning the structure of dimethyl sulfoxide help me understand the field of medicine? I wanted to become the best doctor possible and not necessarily just the top-scorer on my organic chemistry exams. In a sense, I was searching for meaning behind my studies and I found it in a place that I never expected to.

I accepted the invitation graciously given to me to take part in an observership at the Sankara Eye Institute at Guntur in November of 2007. I had hopes that I would be able to broaden my horizons and knowledge of the various facets of the medical field. My first day at the institute turned out to be an extreme shock – however, it was what I needed to understand the state of the poor in India and all over the world. I was able to see one of the camps that the institute organizes on every Sunday in order to identify patients that need eye surgery. The amount of effort that each member of the team put in left me standing in awe because the doctors, nurses, and other officials had so much passion in their eyes, so much desire to help every person that they could. It was no longer about the money, success, or pride – the practice of medicine had become what the Hippocratic Oath had deemed it to be in this small world.

The days following the camp, I had opportunities to observe the process that the patients at the institute undergo in order to receive proper treatment. Again, the dedication and quality of service provided to those afflicted by poverty surpassed not only my expectations, but the expectations of the patients as well. Upon having various conversations with patients, it struck me that they had never been treated as equal human beings seeking the help of those that were more fortunate than them until their experiences at the Sankara Eye Institute. What was most amazing, however, is what improving their vision did to the lives of the individuals. The Sankara Eye Institute claims that they simply give the Gift of Vision to those that are afflicted by poverty, but they are mistaken. Improving the vision of every single patient gave the Gift of Life to not only the patient but their family as well. Each surgery provides the means for patients to go out into the world and seek work in order to improve the lives of their children and other dependents.

The Sankara Eye Institute emulates what medicine should be: devotion, care, and a complete and total abandonment of self. In this small haven, an incredible goal is being pursued and I know that throughout my career as a student and doctor, I will strive to uphold all the principles that this Institute has set in place for itself.



Indeed Adiga's achievements are a saga of triumph over adversity. "Due to my eye condition I can't see beyond 3-4 ft. Therefore I would do practice runs on championship tracks several times with my coaches before the actual races. Another problem that all roller skaters in India face is that skating rinks are very small compared with the 200 metre rinks abroad. For instance the training rink in Bangalore's Kanteerava Stadium is a mere 20 sq metres. Therefore I used to wake up at 4 a.m in the mornings to practice on the city's deserted roads," says Adiga.

After an action packed career as a competitive roller skater, in 2005 Adiga switched to coaching aspiring skaters. "Most Indian children have a natural sense of balance. Therefore they learn to skate very quickly. Given minimal training and rink facilities we could produce world champions. One of my ambitions is to build a skating rink of Olympic standards in Bangalore," says Adiga currently a business management student of Vasavi Vidyaniketan Institute of Management Technology and Research, Bangalore.

It takes will power and a desire to excel and the human spirit can achieve success over any adversity. Manthan B. Adiga is a living example of such spirit.



Four Years Later Now Sprinting –Venkat Maddipati

This April marks the 4th anniversary of our Sankara Eye Hospital, Guntur. We have organized over 200 eye camps covering a population of 1.5 million. We have checked eyes of about 100,000 people, performing about 38,000 free surgeries during these four years. Sankara team back home and here deserve a big pat on their back for this magnificent achievement.

These achievements have been highlighted by local Telugu newspapers. They commended our work and mentioned our phase II expansion plans as well.

Keep up the good work. Go SEF Go.



Sankara Eye Foundation, USA: Donation Form

501 (C)(3) Non Profit Organization, Tax id: 77-6141976

www.giftofvision.org

1851 McCarthy Blvd, Milpitas, CA 95035

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(Helps us find if they match your contribution.)

For used car donations, contact SEF at cargiving@giftofvision.org

Sell an item on ebay and donate proceeds. Go to <http://givingworks.ebay.com/>

and select Sankara Eye Foundation as charity

Visit www.giftofvision.org for stocks, payroll, bank transactions or online donations.

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	Surgeries	Other
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<input type="checkbox"/> Focus Karnataka	<input type="checkbox"/> Corneal Transplant (\$100 each)	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Staff Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus Gujarat	<input type="checkbox"/> Cataract Endowment (\$300 each)*	<input type="checkbox"/> Entire Service activities of the hospital (\$400 a day)
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus Bangalore	<input type="checkbox"/> Corneal Endowment (\$1000 each)*	

*Endowment: 1 surgery every year for 10 years

Special requests: _____

(E.g. Donate "In the name(s) of" / "In memory of" a dear one and/or preferred date of surgery/food for patients.)

If first time donor, how did you hear about us? _____

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1851 McCarthy Blvd Suite 218

Milpitas, CA - 95035

For more information, or to volunteer your time for this noble cause, please call us at 1-866-SANKARA (1-866-726-5272) or (408) 528-9570 or write to us at info@giftofvision.org.

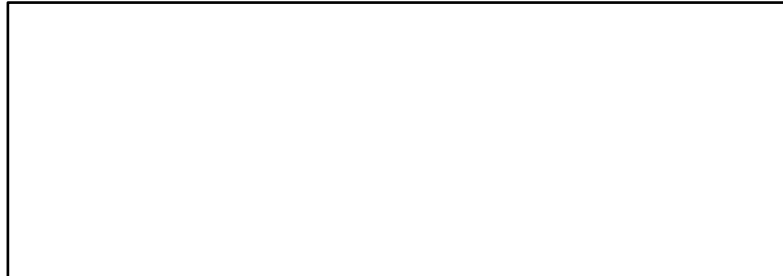
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Thank you for your support

A Clear Vision – Naushik Desai

Seven year old Ramasuriya is a fun loving third grader. His dad earns \$50 a month working as a construction coolie. At home he lives with his two elder sisters and parents.

Recently he noticed that his vision became blurred. He started sitting in the first row at school. He still could not see the writing on the blackboard clearly. His teacher noticed this and informed his parents. The local eye doctor said nothing could be done.

Luckily a field worker from Sankara Eye Hospital was at their house with a routine survey and asked that Ramasuriya be brought to the outreach camp at Dharmapuri. After a preliminary examination at the camp he was taken to the Sankara Hospital where he was thoroughly examined.

He needed pupillary membrane excision which was promptly performed. The blurriness was gone. Ramasuriya now had clear vision. He is a happy kid once again and looks forward to school. With education he can visualize better life for himself and his family.



**Do you know that you can donate to Sankara through Payroll deduction?
With company matching, for just \$50 a month for 10 months, you can become a Founding Donor and have the name of your loved ones permanently etched on a wall of a Sankara Eye Hospital
If your company doesn't match, you can become a founding donor by deducting \$100 a month for 10 months.
Ask about it at your company.**