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## Message from our Chairman - Murali Krishnamurthy

Dear Friends,

Warm and Happy Holidays to all of you from San Jose, California.

This year has been a very busy year for all of us, and we thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. We are making a steady progress towards 'Vision 20/20 by 2020', thanks to community participation all over the United States. We are already performing around 1,000 FREE Eye Surgeries per month at our Sankara Eye Hospital, Guntur. I would like to reiterate that we are on target to perform over 60,000 FREE Eye Surgeries this year at our three Sankara Eye Hospitals in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Please participate in our 'Open an Eye a month' program to support FREE Eye Surgeries.

Land for our new Sankara Eye Hospitals in Karnataka and Gujarat will be acquired by the end of the year. As the Hospital construction will begin only after a substantial portion of the funds is raised, please participate in the 'Wall of Founders' program and enable our construction projects.

Sankara Eye Foundation is taking root in many parts of the country - New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Virginia, North Carolina, Illinois, Texas, Washington, Arizona, etc., in this issue we have made an attempt to cover some of the activities in these regions. If you are interested in participating in this wonderful adventure, please call us now at 1-866-Sankara (1-866-726-5272) or email us now at [info@giftofvision.org](mailto:info@giftofvision.org).

Together, let us eradicate curable blindness in our Dear Bharat.

Sincerely,  
Murali Krishnamurthy

## India Update

Dear SEF volunteers and donors,

Wish you all a very Happy Deepavali.

It is almost time to bid adieu to 2004. Looking back, it was indeed an eventful year for Sankara.

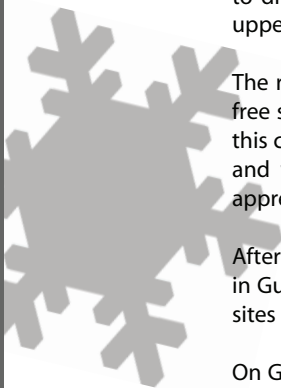
2004 saw the birth of our Eye Hospital at Guntur, which is strongly marching into its toddler years, performing 200 free surgeries every week and 75 paid surgeries every month. Sankara Orbis - Pediatric Eye Care Department has been established, and we will start screening children on the World Sight Day, 14th October. We are spreading the word about sub-specialty facilities such as the Diabetic Retina Clinic, Glaucoma Clinic, Cornea Clinic and IOL Clinic to draw more paying patients. The Guntur hospital will greatly benefit from new sponsorship for rooms in the upper floor.

The rural eye hospital that we acquired this year at Krishnankovil is also making steady progress, performing 180 free surgeries every week and 40 paid surgeries every month. We are trying to cope with acute water shortage at this center by putting up a bore well. The influx of free patients at the Coimbatore Sankara Eye Center is on the rise, and we are performing 1,000 free surgeries every week and 275 paid surgeries every month. We definitely appreciate the support from SEF in this effort. A new Retina Clinic has also been commissioned.

After our trip to the United States, Mr. S.V. Balasubramaniam and I plunged headlong into the launching of hospitals in Gujarat and Karnataka. We are working with both Governments and are sincerely hoping to finalize the project sites in a few months.

On Gandhi Jayanthi day, I had the privilege of participating in a function called Sankaram at Chennai, where 3,000 school children were screened. Rashtrapathi Dr. Abdul Kalam graced the occasion and enquired about the progress of the Guntur hospital. I have been asked to participate as a Resource Person at the World Sight Day Celebrations in New Delhi.

Looking forward to your continued support,  
With kind regards,  
Dr.R.V.Ramani.



## Upcoming Events

- "A Grand Naama Sankeertanam"; December 5, 2004, Jain Bhawan, Milpitas, CA
- "Jyothi 2020 – A Kathak Dance Program"; January 29, 2005, Foothill College, Los Altos Hills, CA
- "Dinner @ Tiffany's"; February 3, 2005, Tiffany's, San Jose, CA
- "Dance competitions"; February 19, 2005, Cook Auditorium, Anaheim, CA

For more information on SEF events, please visit [www.giftofvision.org](http://www.giftofvision.org)  
Contact Muckai Girish at (925) 875-9793 or [muckai@yahoo.com](mailto:muckai@yahoo.com) for sponsorship details

## A Grand Naama Sankeertanam

Sankara Eye Foundation (SEF) is proud to present "A Grand Naama Sankeertanam" on Sunday, December 5, 2004 at Jain Bhawan, Milpitas, CA ([www.jcnc.org](http://www.jcnc.org)) at 4:00 PM by the renowned artist Thiruvaiyaru Sri S.R. Krishnan and Disciples. They will be accompanied by Hemmige Sri V. Srivatsan on Violin, Sri Vadiraja Bhatt on Mrudangam and Dolak and Sri Ravi Gutala on Tabla. (*More information on Page 7*)  
Contact: Subhapiya (408) 855-8525, [subhapiya@narada.org](mailto:subhapiya@narada.org)

## Dance Competitions - Southern California

TASC (Telugu Association of Southern California) and Sankara Eye Foundation present Dance competitions. 1st annual charity event for Sankara Eye foundation in Southern California.

Deadline for signing up - January 31, 2005. To purchase tickets - [www.tasc2000.org](http://www.tasc2000.org)  
Contact Information: Lakshmi Chundu (714) 685-1130, Sankar (818) 242 7629, [sankar@giftofvision.org](mailto:sankar@giftofvision.org)

## An Evening @ Tiffany's

Tiffany ([www.tiffany.com](http://www.tiffany.com)) will host a very exclusive evening on Feb 3rd, 2005 for the first 75 donors who donated over \$1,000 in the year 2004. The jewelry company, renowned for its quality and craftsmanship, was inspired by SEF's commitment and dedication towards its goal of Vision 20/20 by 2020.

It will be an evening of hors d'oeuvres, champagne, and fine wines, followed by an entertaining and informative presentation about Tiffany's elegant and sparkling history of design. Gorgeous jewelry will be available for the guests to try on and enjoy. This event will pave the way for future alliances with Tiffany, in our quest to eradicate curable blindness.

Contact Information: Sneha Bhaidasna, (408) 247-9611, [sneha\\_bhaidasna@yahoo.com](mailto:sneha_bhaidasna@yahoo.com)

## A Kathak Dance Program - Jyothi 2020



A SEF Fundraiser for Focus Gujarat Project  
January 29, 2005, Foothill College, Los Altos Hills, California

Rhythms from India and Japan:

This musical feast bringing intricacies of north Indian classical dance, KATHAK, and folk music from India and Japan, will feature a combination of Japanese and Indian kathak dancers from Ruchika Indian Dance Academy, Osaka, Japan. The program will be choreographed by Nalini Toshniwal who is also the main artist and the founder of the academy.

Since her childhood Nalini took keen interest in classical music and dance. She started learning Indian classical dance, kathak, at the age of 11 from Guru Manak Chand Jodhpuri. She obtained a Masters degree in kathak called "VISHARAD" from the Chandigarh University in India. Nalini has given kathak performances at various places in Japan, India and United Kingdom. Her dance performance has also been telecast by the Japanese national television network.

All proceeds from this event will go towards the construction of Sankara Eye Hospital in Gujarat.

Contact Information:  
Ritesh Tandon / Zurica Dhar: (408) 365 3248,  
[rtandon2004@yahoo.com](mailto:rtandon2004@yahoo.com), [zurica@comcast.net](mailto:zurica@comcast.net)

## First Annual SEF-Tri-State Fund Raiser Dinner

SEF Tri-state is hosting a fundraiser banquet dinner in West Chester, NY, which is right outside New York City on November 21st 2004. 100-150 people are expected to attend this event. This is expected to be a fun filled evening with live music and DJ along with nice food.

Contact Information: Dr. Ram Kancherla: (845) 463-2074; Seetha Ram Balusu: (845) 473-4752 Gautam Gurijala: (203) 444-4644

## The Road to '20/20 by 2020' Begins in Coimbatore - Gowri Pachigolla

I held on tightly, while our rickety van traversed the unpaved rutted dirt road ahead. I concentrated on the road through the front windshield, and prayed that my western immune system would withstand all that this rural journey would throw at me. The nurse seated next to me clutched the bag, containing the portable operating room, as if it were a to-go box from a restaurant, and the doctor sitting across from me explained what I was about to see.

We were on an "Eye Call," an excursion to retrieve a pair of eyes from a deceased lady. Just a few minutes earlier, the deceased's family placed a call voicing their wishes to have her eyes donated to help restore vision to somebody suffering from corneal blindness. Once the phone rings at the Base Hospital, there isn't much time before the eyes need to be enucleated. This was my initiation on the first day of my three-week volunteer observership at Coimbatore's Sankara Eye Centre (SEC) in January of 2004.

When I first told my family, friends and ophthalmologist mentors about a hospital in India that performs around 40,000 free eye surgeries a year, most everybody questioned my ability to recall numbers. "You mean four thousand surgeries, right?" I would reply, "No, I mean forty thousand," and continued with the simple equation, "Each surgeon performs 30 surgeries per day and there are ten operating tables in the OR. Conservatively, that makes about 1,000 surgeries each week and roughly 52,000 each year.

Then take away some holidays, low patient turnout on some weeks, and you're left with about 40,000." Although my well-rehearsed response came off without a glitch, I couldn't believe my own words and I knew I just had to see for myself. So during my final year of medical school when vacation time was plentiful, I decided to visit this so-called "cataract factory" I had heard so much about.

Until I stepped off the Cheran Express in Coimbatore, I thought SEC was just an eye hospital. I had no idea that it was actually a fully functional independent ophthalmologic community. My experiences during those three weeks in January ran the entire gamut of SEC. I attended eye camps in tiny villages where a handful of eye technicians and two doctors would screen hundreds of patients; I saw patients in clinics before and after surgery; I observed multiple surgeries occurring simultaneously in the operating room; I participated in religious celebrations sponsored by SEC; and I witnessed the inauguration of the Krishnan Kovil Rural Eye Hospital.

For three weeks I lived on the SEC campus, sharing a room with a doctor in the Physician's Hostel. Our workday was divided by multiple tea and coffee breaks and we passed the time in the evenings by watching pirated movies on the hostel's only television. I interacted with staff, although minimally due to the language barrier, and listened to their stories of moving far away from their homes to become trained eye technicians at SEC in Coimbatore. The doctors also came from all parts of India, sometimes leaving behind husbands, wives and children to work in a city where they could barely speak the local language. And it was during this time, when I plunged into this foreign community (to me), that I came to understand the philosophy of the Sankara Family, where everyone functioned or lived on a single campus with an unwavering persistence and willingness to make sacrifices on their way to reaching their collective goal. This certainly was not just a "cataract factory."

SEC is the Indian model of an American medical residency training program with some modifications. The common concept is simple: doctors-in-training delivering medical care under appropriate supervision to the medically underprivileged. But SEC goes beyond just this concept. It has successfully created a health care delivery system that works symbiotically with the surrounding population. SEC recruits staff from nearby areas, providing education and then job placement once training is complete. They have also launched several public health initiatives that address childhood vision screening and ocular health education as a part of their "Mission for Vision."

My story would be incomplete, however, if I ignored the shortcomings of a system that operates in a less than perfect world. In my three weeks at SEC there were times, albeit only a few, when frustration and disappointment prevailed. At one eye camp we saw a child with a new-onset paralysis of a muscle that controls eye movement. She needed a CT scan of her head to further evaluate the problem which could be related to a tumor or aneurysm. Although SEC did not have a CT scanner, she was brought to Coimbatore in hopes of being able to obtain the study some way. We also saw a lady with a significant cataract who could not be brought to Coimbatore for surgery because she had untreated severe asthma and would not be able to tolerate the long journey.

Eye camps are not uncommon in India; in fact similar camps are run by many other institutions, hospitals and training facilities. However, Sankara's leadership has undertaken a national effort to unify all states of India with systems based on Coimbatore's SEC. In this effort, Sankara stands alone. This is an even more noble and sometimes daunting task given that the country is so divided in language, culture and politics. Additionally, a significant majority of SEC's surgeries are performed for free, an aspect that sets it apart from other Indian ophthalmologic institutions. Sankara's highly effective and successful method is not going unnoticed by the rest of the international medical community. This clearly demonstrated when I met a Nigerian physician on the bus to the Maatu-Pongal (Cow Pongal) Festival at SEC Trustee's estate. The urologist had journeyed all the way from Africa to southern Tamil Nadu in hopes of learning some of SEC's secrets and emulating the strategy in his own country.

Although the road to '20/20 by 2020' may at times be as rocky as the road I traveled during my first Eye Call at SEC, with Sankara Eye Foundation's efforts we can help transform the unpaved dirt path into an efficient highway for delivering ophthalmologic care. It is the least we can do to support the sacrifices made half a world away. My unique experience this year would not have been possible without the graciousness of Dr. R.V. Ramani, the physicians and staff at SEC. I sincerely thank them for the opportunity to be a part of their world.

**Gowri Pachigolla is a medical intern at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and will start her ophthalmology training next year at The University of Texas-Southwestern in Dallas, Texas. She visited the Sankara Eye Hospital in January 2004**



The "Windy City" has been the eye of some exciting activity during the past year. The highlight was Jyothi2020, a light music concert in Tamil and Malayalam by Padmabushan K.J. Yesudas and his troupe. Gopal and Kavitha, our seniors volunteers from the Chicago area, lead the efforts for this concert. The Chicago Tamil Sangam and SEF arranged the event jointly. Yesudas started the program in the traditional Indian style with a prayer to Ganesha (Maha Ganapathim from the movie Sindhu Bhairavi). Soon to follow were his masterpieces like "Adhisaya Raagam" and "Vizhiye Kadhai Ezhuthu". The latter one especially was very appropriate for the occasion with the lines "Deepam Eriginradhu!!! Jothi Theriginradhu" ("The lamp is burning!!! The vision is alive!!!"). To satisfy both the Tamil and the Malayalam speaking audience, Yesudas interspersed Tamil and Malayalam songs. True to the SEF's spirit of events all the SEF volunteers came together to make our first big concert in the Mid-west region a grand success.

On another front, our energetic volunteers Nandita and Anita are working together with the DePaul University of Chicago. They are planning a fundraising dinner and beauty pageant (tentatively set for late April) with Bollywood star Rani Mukherjee as the chief guest. In addition to this, the South Asian Students of association of DePaul has put a petition forward to the University officials to designate SEF as their official philanthropy. This would help them put together fundraising programs for Sankara with the University's support and resources. Chicago Volunteers are in the process of approaching other universities to create a similar system in other local Universities.

Our youth volunteers Ashratha, Vamika and Pradeep from the Chicago area are adding new vigor and energy to the chapter there. Heena is another motivated volunteer who got to know about SEF from the T.V advertisements on Namaste America. They were active volunteers in the Jyothi2020 concert and the TNF event that took place in Chicago. They are also volunteering their time at the various SEF booths that are organized in the Chicago area. Youth Volunteer Laxmi visited the Coimbatore hospital during her school break in August. She took the time to visit one of the rural outreach camps near Coimbatore and also spent a day at the hospital. She got to interact with some of the patients who were being treated at the hospital.

Pragna ji is another volunteer who is helping us greatly with our latest Focus Gujarat initiative. She is helping out with logistics to keep a booth at a wedding expo in November. She has spread awareness about our cause to some of the local Indian shops in Devon Street and is working towards keeping SEF donation boxes in the different stores. The Mid-West region has some really dedicated and motivated volunteers who are taking our organization to the next level. Their energy level has been infectious. We are looking forward to some more exciting action from there in the coming days. There is a humorous quote on Chicago which goes as follows: "There is no such thing as a dangerous high-speed chase in Chicago. We all drive like that." This quote seems to epitomize the spirit and dedication of our SEF mid-west volunteers!



**Independence Day Booth, North Carolina - Anagha Vaidyanathan**

Raleigh, North Carolina was alive with action during the past Indian Independence Day on August 15, 2004. Of course, Sankara Eye Foundation wanted a share of this enthusiasm and excitement during the celebrations.

AID (Association for India's Development) volunteers kindly lent space to set-up the SEF stall since there was no room for any new entrants on that day as the space was booked up pretty early. A booth was set up in the midst of a bustling crowd at the Hindu Society Hall in Morrisville, also known as the heart of the "triangle area (Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill)."

Several guests visited the booth to inquire about Sankara's activities and seemed especially interested in participating in future events. Students Naga, Sudha, Bharati, and Yoganand, from the prestigious Duke and North Carolina State Universities, made an appearance at the booth to further promote the organization. Representatives Ravikiran and Venu, from companies such as Cisco and Ciena Networks, attended the booth as well to help inform visitors. The booth was overall incredibly successful and proved to be an excellent opportunity to expose Sankara to the triangle area.

Close to 30 people attended Dr. Ramani's presentation in Raleigh in July. The Tower, Around the World, and Udipi restaurants graciously provided snacks free of charge to the attendees. Dr. Ramani gave a very powerful, and incredibly effective, audio visual presentation about SEF. In addition, the doctor answered several questions from an enthusiastic audience who participated in the lively Question and Answer session after the presentation. The event's success is greatly indebted to the hall provided free of charge by the Hindu Society of North Carolina (HSNC) and by the tremendous cooperation from Sankara volunteers and the AID volunteers, Naga, Ravikiran, and Yoganand.

We look forward to seeing many more events in North Carolina from our active Triangle Area volunteers!  
Source: Subramanyam Darbha

## SEF Dandiya, 2004 - Amit Patel

The beating drums get Project Focus Gujarat Rolling ...

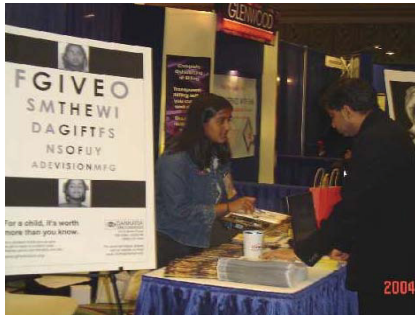
Sankara Eye Foundation, USA organized its first ever Dandiya Garba on October 1st and 2nd in the San Francisco Bay Area. This was a kick-off event for the Focus Gujarat project. These highly successful events helped reach 1,000 people, majority of whom were new to Sankara. The guests enjoyed opening their Navratri with SEF and danced to the rhythm and music of singer Sharvari Dixit and her troupe of musicians. They got to experience the warm hospitality, a SEF legacy, up close and personal.



A new relationship established - On October 2nd, Sri Bipin Shah, the President of Jain Center of Northern California (JCNC) addressed the audience and shared some of his thoughts about Sankara Eye Foundation. A prominent Gujarati and founding General Partner of Inc 3 ventures, CO -Chair of Ekal Vidyalaya, and a Founding Chair member of TIE, Sri Bipin Shah has lived in Bay area for a long time and has been helping the Gujarati community. He had nothing but praise for the organization.



## News from the Sunny Southern California - Usha Kizhakekara



Grapevine has it that there's a lot brewing down south. This week I took a peek into the goings on there and was quite amazed at what I uncovered.

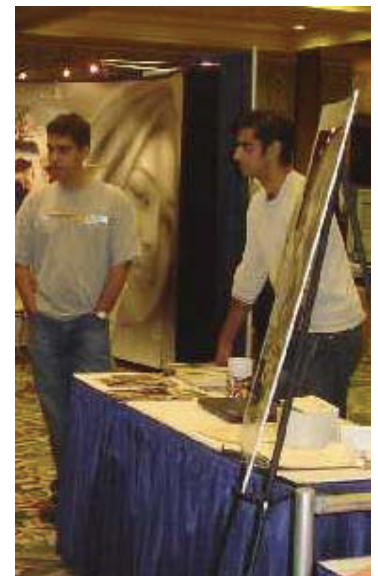
To start off, it was my pleasure to speak with Pooja Nair, a senior in school. She and her younger brother Siddarth (sr@itnusa.com) came upon <http://www.envirosolutionsllc.com>, a company that recycles printer cartridges for cash. They were very enterprising. They convinced their neighbors and companies around them to part with their old printer cartridges, sent them to Envirosolutions and donated the proceeds to SEF. They also convinced the after-school-snack-shop to donate one whole week's profits to SEF.

Down in Anaheim, Lakshmi Chundu from the Telugu Association, is conducting children's competitions on Valentine's day, to raise funds for SEF. She believes that it is important for children of Indian Origin to direct their energy towards India's cause and feel connected to India. The hope is that one day, they will of their own accord, carry the torch. Her uncle Yelamanchili, a very magnanimous man, donated a bus to the eye hospital in Guntur. Sankar in LA, donates his time and energy unrelentingly towards SEF's cause. He focuses his creative talent on generating posters, flyers and newsletters that he does in his own free time and saves SEF oodles of money. He has done many booths in the past and raised money for SEF.

Ramesh and Uma Venkatraman, very enterprising people down in San Diego, asked people to bring cheques for SEF to their house warming ceremony instead of gifts. A very fine gesture indeed!

Ashish Ahuja from LA, (who is by the way, fascinatingly passionate about making artificial eyes happen) along with Ramesh Venkatraman and 14 year old Anagha Vaidyanathan managed to get a free booth (thanks to Ashish's mom who is a physician) for three days at the Indian Physicians (AAPI) conference. This conference was attended by 20,000 doctors from all over the US. They gave SEF some good exposure. Many ophthalmologists, who want to give something back to India, signed up for eye camps in India and few of them donated to the cause. They plan to do this every year.

Palak and Saranyan are enthusiastic about helping SEF raise funds in the near term and we can look forward to hearing from their quarter soon.



## News from the Cowboy Land - Kumar Iyengar



Texas is slowly taking root as another SEF branch with booths in Beaumont, Houston, Dallas and Austin. Dr. Sambasiva and Dr. Uma Sukhavasi from Beaumont visited SEF booth in Los Angeles and were so impressed by it that they went back and had their first SEF booth on October 2nd. In the next few months they are planning on asking the Telugu community to come to their house and sharing the SEF literature and experiences with them and expanding their group in Beaumont.

Houston now has a motivated group of volunteers in Priya Sastry, Gowri Pachigolla, Shankar Perumaala, Rajinder Anandeshi and Vinay Veeramachaneni. They have already had several booths this year, most recently at Independence Day and are planning to get more volunteers to increase their booths and activities in that area.

We have volunteers Srinivas and Lakshmi Chintala in Austin, actively holding booths in the Austin area and also promoting the Wall of Founders for the SEF hospital in Andhra Pradesh. They have had several booths this year, and at the Independence Day booth they raised \$3,000. They are also looking for more volunteers to help them with future activities.

Sailaja Seethamaraju, Srinivasulu Bayyareddy and Srini Koganti have formed a group in Dallas and have been holding booths for over a year. They are looking for more volunteers to grow their activities over there.



## Yesudas performs in Chicago - Kavitha and Gopal Pillai

Sankara Eye Foundation and Chicago Tamil Sangam's joint presentation "Jyothi 2020," a light music concert by Padmabushan K.J. Yesudas, was one of the highlights of the Chicago's Indian cultural scene this summer.

Yesudas was accompanied by local talents Sindhu and Anitha for the female voices and a host of instrumentalists who came from different corners of the US. He started the program in the traditional Indian style with a prayer to Ganesha (Maha Ganapathim from the movie Sindhu Bhairavi). Soon to follow were his masterpieces like "Adhisaya Raagam" and "Vizhiye Kadhai Ezhuthu". Especially the latter one was very appropriate for the occasion with the lines "Deepam Eriginradhu!!! Jothi Theriginradhu" that means "The lamp is burning!!! The vision is alive!!!"

To satisfy both the Tamil and the Malayalam speaking audience, Yesudas interspersed Tamil and Malayalam songs, which he explained by giving a very interesting analogy from the Kerala cuisine. He was comparing it to the alternating layers of coconut, sugar and other types of goodies used in the preparation of "PUTTU", a popular dish from Kerala.

The intermission was preceded by a film about SEF activities in India which was well appreciated by the audience to be followed by a pleasant digression with the delicious food that was catered by Madras Palace of Westmont.

A fast paced song "Maadi Meedhu" concluded the program and left the audience still immersed in the music avalanche that they had experienced during the evening. The audience was full of praise for the event about being well organized and to have started and concluded on time.

There was great interest in SEF's activities in India. A number of new donors and volunteers signed up at the SEF booths at the venue. With the community's continued support, SEF's mid-west volunteers are all charged up and looking forward to bringing several more enjoyable fundraiser events to the Chicago land region, thus working towards "Vision 20/20 by 2020".



## Telugu Velugu - A Literary Event by SEF - Visala and Venkat Maddipati

SEF organized an event on Telugu literature "TELUGU VELUGU" on October 17th in Santa Clara, to raise funds for Sankara Eye Hospital, Guntur. M.V.R Sastry, Editor of Andhra Bhoomi, was the chief guest. He is a scholar and a renowned writer.

He spoke about the present state of Telugu literature and journalism. This event was supported by the Bay Area Telugu Association. SEF's Focus-AP coordinator Venkat Maddipati thanked the donors. Ramachandra Rao and Kumar Koneru of Los Angeles donated \$30,000 towards a bus, Jayaram Komati donated \$12,000 for an ambulance, and Prof. A. Satyanarayana, co-founder of Ajovibokam Foundation, spontaneously donated \$1,000.

SEF Chairman, Murali, gave a update on the progress of Sankara Eye Hospitals at Coimbatore and Guntur. He said the number of surgeries has dramatically increased from 8,000 to 50,000 since the inception of SEF in 1998.



## A Grand Naama Sankeertanam - - Subhapiya Srivatsan

Sankara Eye Foundation (SEF) is proud to present "A Grand Naama Sankeertanam" on Sunday, December 5, 2004 at Jain Bhawan, Milpitas, CA ([www.jcnc.org](http://www.jcnc.org)) at 4:00 PM by the renowned artist Thiruvaiyaru Sri S.R. Krishnan and Disciples. They will be accompanied by Hemmige Sri V. Srivatsan on Violin, Sri Vadiraja Bhatt on Mrudangam and Dolak and Sri Ravi Gutala on Tabla.

Sri S. R. Krishnan is a renowned exponent of 'Divya Naama Sankeertanam,' a classical divine music tradition handed down by eminent Indian musical saints spanning the last five centuries. Sri Krishnan has presented this ancient form, which includes Carnatic and Hindustani systems of music, for over four decades, and across four continents. For additional information about Sankeertanam and a complete background of Sri Krishnan please visit [www.sankeertanam.com](http://www.sankeertanam.com). For information about the accompanying artists and SEF, please visit [www.giftofvision.org](http://www.giftofvision.org). This event is a fundraiser for Focus-Karnataka and admission is free. We look forward to seeing you on December 5-th and appreciate your continued support.



## Yuva Netra Vani - Balaji Rajavelu and Ram Sriram



Though the event competed with six other significant South Indian cultural events on the same day in the South Bay, the Yuva Netra Vani concert by Pallavi Sriram drew a fairly large crowd. More importantly, this collaborative event between SEF and Latha Sriram's Sri Lalitha Gana Vidyalaya, managed to raise close to \$15,000 for the Focus Karnataka project. The event was a launch for Focus Karnataka, a new \$1.5 million eye hospital.

Pallavi's Carnatic vocal music concert followed the rigorous traditional style of a full length kutchery. At 17, Pallavi showed maturity beyond her years, and her melodious voice and voice modulation made the event a treat. Anuradha Sridhar, a senior violinist and reputed Carnatic music teacher, was excellent as usual. Natarajan Srinivasan, a veteran of many concerts, was brilliant on the Mridangam. Both the accompanists were very nurturing and supportive and put the young vocalist totally at ease.

Sri K.B. Chandrasekhar, a well-known entrepreneur, was the chief guest for the event. His speech about the performance and the effort of SEF was inspirational. His presence was an encouragement to the youth who are becoming active in SEF. The volunteers of SEF and Sri Lalitha Gana Vidyalaya ensured the success of this event.

Subramanyam Darbha at the North Carolina Booth



Texas-Beaumont Booth by the Sukhavis



SeethaRam Balusu at the Bridgewater Temple New Jersey Booth



## Seattle, Washington - Janani Muralidharan



Having completed two successful events, the Seattle chapter of SEF is slowly growing. They even had two members from the House of Reps (Jim McDermott and Jay Islee) visit the booth they had kept at the Indian Independence Day Celebrations. However, it still has not amassed a large enough volunteer base. What I discovered was that there are only five to ten key volunteers working on a regular basis. Of course, people do show up on the day of an event to help, but as they only have a few key volunteers, the chapter is not able to grow in size. Also, I discovered that there are no youth volunteers in the area. The chapter is doing very well considering its size, but we do need to spread the word in the area.

I spoke to quite a few volunteers based in the area. Suveen Vuppala, who was the foremost volunteer in the Seattle area, was a key driving force, along with Padma Parthasarathy (of the Bay Area chapter), in the "Microsoft Giving Campaign" last year. Both Suveen and Padma, together, helped raise quite some money for SEF. They are both working hard on this year's campaign (going on right now) and hope to raise even more money—for SEF—than they did last time.

Yamini Gowrishankar, another key volunteer in the area, is currently working on promoting SEF in her company. She works for Boeing and the company has an Employee Matching Campaign. She is eagerly pursuing potential donors in the company to donate so that the company can match the donation and Sankara will receive double the money.

I also spoke with the newest volunteers in Seattle: Vasudeva Pai and his wife Dr. Vaishnavi D. Bhat. Vasu came to know of Sankara through his wife's uncle and aunt (Drs. Narendra and Vrinda Bhat), who have been conducting free eye camps in Badravathi with the help of the Lion's Club and many friends. The couple heard and passed on the information that Sankara was planning on building an eye hospital in Badravathi, and Vasu approached SEF because he wanted to help. Vasu also works in Microsoft and is helping out with the "Microsoft Giving Campaign."

As you can see, Seattle has quite a few activities going on. With the "Microsoft Giving Campaign" and the Employee Matching Campaign at Boeing, the volunteers have their hands full. There is still some doubt as to what events are coming up in the next year, but all the volunteers mentioned that they would continue keeping booths at major events, to spread the word. If such a small volunteer mass can do so much, think of what the Seattle Chapter can achieve with even more volunteers. So, if you live in the area, come join the Seattle, Washington SEF Chapter. We can never have too many volunteers!



## Sankara Eye Foundation Goes to Ivy League - Sumanth Rajagopal

Seetha Ram Balusu has been continuously spreading the SEF message for a couple of years now to his friends. An ardent believer in the cause, he has been instrumental in numerous donations to the Foundation.

Dr. Ram Mohan Kancherla, a prominent oncologist in New York, is helping put together a fund-raising dinner in White Plains, NY which he hopes will also serve to gather our volunteer base in the region. As chairman of the Kakinada Medical College Alumni Association, he is helping disseminate SEF information to the Association's membership. His experience and insight is an asset to SEF.

A long time SF Bay Area volunteer, Gautam Gurijala, is now in the North-East, bringing his SEF volunteering experience to this area. He has kept SEF booths at Harvard University and other areas. He is also actively working with the Yale Indian Medical students to spread the message in that community.

Sejal Dave, who almost single handedly organized a major fund-raiser for SEF in New Jersey a few years ago is still at it, spreading the word at local universities: the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Rutgers and New York University. She has also spoken about SEF at a local meeting of the Rotary Club of Plainsboro, New Jersey. This self-made youth activist who is in her Junior year in College, serves as a role model for the Foundation's youth volunteers.

Also a long time volunteer, Raj Shah, has been keeping SEF booths along with his wife and other volunteers like Lakshmi Devineni. In addition to reaching the Indian diaspora, he is keen on spreading the cause among the non-Indian communities.

T T Bhat and Prof. Dathatri from Connecticut and New York respectively have been tirelessly spreading the SEF message. They both spoke at a Kannada Koota pooja celebration and distributed SEF brochures and DVDs to the patrons. Mr. Bhat, his family and others organized a booth at the Diwali celebration of the Association of Indians in America. Prof. Dathatri made a presentation at the Rotary Club of Farmingdale while he also sent SEF pledge forms and appeal letters to the members of North American Sankethi Association, many of whom have positively responded to our message. Mani Manthena, another motivated volunteer, has been helping with booths in the Bridgewater, New Jersey temple among other places.

Collectively, all these volunteers have impressed countless people, on the vision of Sankara Eye Foundation. With such enthusiasm and dedication, our march towards 20/20 vision by the year 2020 is stronger than ever.



## 1ST ANNUAL SEF GOLF TOURNAMENT - Sumanth Addagarla

Two weeks of rain and cold ended when the tournament teed off at 12 noon on Friday, October 29th. The sun brought its almost 70 degree warmth on the 59 participants, just as they hit their first ball at the Coyote Creek Golf Course in San Jose. The Jack Nicklaus designed golf course, with its lush greens and mountain backdrop, belied the challenge of this 18-hole golfing beauty.

The players, they came from Cisco, from Sun, from Varstreet, from Remedy and Lockheed Martin, and even from as far off as Seattle and Minnesota to support the cause. They were young and younger, professionals and retirees, all playing each hole from Tee to Green.

Each team was provided a box lunch and when they completed their round of golf they came in for an awards banquet dinner. Murali and Sridhar did a splendid job explaining to the participants the cause that had brought them all together. The winners were the Remedy foursome of Rick Chen, Terry Cline, Rick Fitz and Vy Nong. Curt Allen, Clint Davis, Bill McLaughlin and Don Smith were the runners-up. The SUN Microsystems foursome of Kevin Buchanan, Benoit Chaffanjon, Carl Chesborough and Shin Jon Choi were in the 3rd place. The Long Drive was won by Vy Nong and Closest to the Pin by Paul McMenamy.

The volunteers put in a major effort in spreading the word about the tournament. Given less than two months to put the tournament together, and this being the first exposure to golf for all but two of them, getting 59 participants and a plethora of donations is a testimony to their phenomenal efforts.

At the end of the 1st Annual SEF Golf Tournament, we felt it was critical for us to get this first one under our belt. Next year the tournament will be held a little earlier in September, and we look forward to an even bigger turn-out. Pass the word around and come out to play. We will be seeing many more of you NEXT YEAR.

We would like to thank all the sponsors who contributed in their different ways to the success of this event. Some of the key sponsors include: Mr. Seetharaman Narayanan from Adobe, Mantram magazine, Sun Microsystems, Dell Computers, Amber Restaurant, Coyote Creek Golf Course, Kaiser Optical, Chimes, MIS Consulting and Washington Mutual.



*Shin Jon's Drive*

## Playing for a cause... Howzzat!!! - S.R. Nair



**Triumphant FCC team with the trophy.**

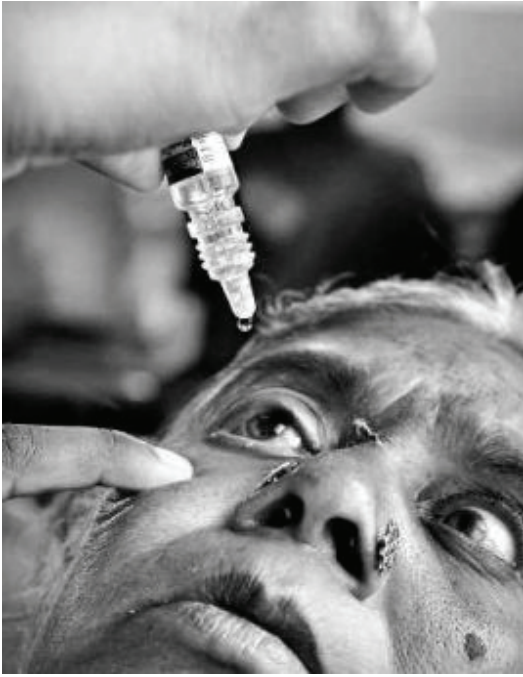
When the ninety odd players participated in the first-ever formal cricket tournament in central Pennsylvania, they had their eyes on more than just the red ball... they were playing to raise money for Sankara Eye Foundation. Organized by the Harrisburg Cricket Club (HCC), the tournament featured six teams from the region. Spanning seven weeks, the tournament saw each team play the others in a round-robin format. The top four teams got into the semi-finals. The semi-finals and the final were played under lights—a first in the region. FCC beat HACC XI in the first semi-final and Tigers got the better of Pak XI in the second.

The final, played at the Veteran's Park, was watched by over 150 cricket enthusiasts and by some curious by-standers trying to figure out how this strange version of baseball worked! Batting first, FCC scored 130 for the loss of 5 wickets in their allotted 25 overs. FCC then bowled out the Tigers for 110 in 22.5 overs to lift the inaugural HCC Championship Trophy.

FCC's Sridhar who made an unbeaten 29 and had bowling figures of 1-17 in the final was declared the Man of the Match. Akash Patel of HACC XI was adjudged the Player of the Tournament. Siddharth Balakrishnan of the Tigers and FCC's Suresh won the best batsman and best bowler awards respectively.

The award ceremony was attended by Ms. Kathleen McGinty, Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and by Murali Krishnamurthy, Chairman of SEF. Food at the award ceremony was sponsored by Passage to India, a well-known local restaurant. Juzer Rangoonwala and Venkat Ramachandran, of HCC, sought to spread awareness of SEF and its activities. "We enjoy playing cricket. And if we can help a good cause, our enjoyment is doubled," said Juzer. The event raised about \$3,500 for SEF and was covered by the Patriot-News, a local newspaper.

## My visit to Sankara Eye Hospital - Sarah Kim

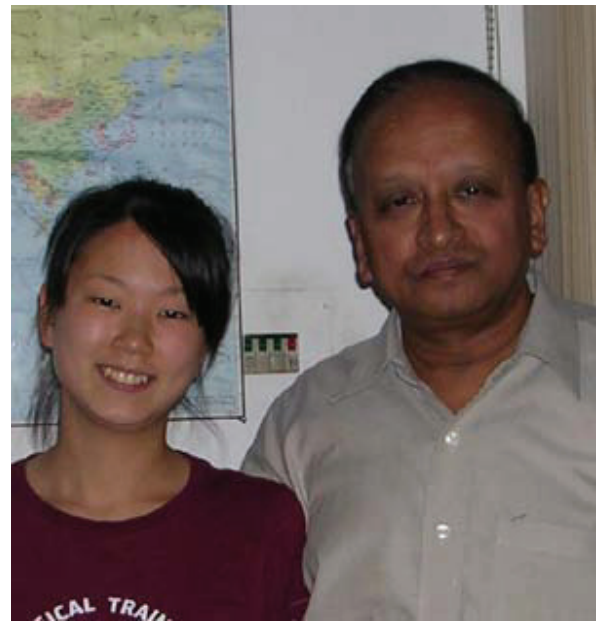


Hello, my name is Sarah Kim and I am a 4th year microbiology student at University of California, Los Angeles. This past summer, I had the privilege of staying for one month at the Sankara Eye Hospital in Coimbatore. As I would like to become a doctor to serve people who are less fortunate to afford proper medical care, my main reason for going to the hospital was to volunteer at a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting healthcare for socially and economically disadvantaged populations. I initially found out about the hospital through members of SEF, Visala and Venkat Maddipati, who are friends of my parents. What struck me foremost was the devastating number of curably blind people in India. So the idea that free operations were being done on those who could not afford surgeries explained the dedication of Visala and Venkat and the other members of SEF. However, none of the brochures and descriptions of the hospital prepared me for the real experience and the people I encountered at the hospital.

Upon arriving at the hospital, I started out by observing the various departments of the hospital. Although the hospital receives many generous donations from sponsors, it is striving to become self-sufficient by offering quality healthcare to the local population of Coimbatore who can afford to pay. For the paying ward, the hospital offers a range of services from basic eye checkups to laser eye surgeries. What surprised me the most was the quality of the healthcare provided to patients. Although the Sankara Eye Hospital is a non-profit organization, highly skilled doctors and well-trained staff work in a well-organized environment of equipment and procedures for various needs of the patients. The staff members are knowledgeable about every part of the hospital, and are capable of counseling the patients and administering basic eye examinations to assist the surgeons.

In the free patient wards, the hospital provides beds, nutritious food, and medications. Most of the patients are aged people from villages who work in agriculture with minimal amount of needs met. Initially, I was surprised by how many patients I saw in the wards, but it was even more shocking to find out that about 1,000 free surgeries are performed every week. Every patient undergoes a fitness test and careful eye examination for proper diagnosis before they receive the gift of vision. Although it was exciting to observe the flow of the patients through the different procedures and the surgeries, due to my lack of experience and the language barrier, I felt the most helpful when I interacted with the patients by helping them dress for the surgery, leading them to different parts of the hospital and administering eye drops.

In addition to observing and working in the hospital, I had the opportunity to accompany the hospital staff to the village eye camps, where initial screening is conducted before the patients are brought to the hospital. By traveling to different parts of Tamil Nadu, I had a chance to travel with the members of the hospital, and saw much beautiful scenery of the rural parts of India. At the eye camps, there was an astounding amount of care and effort by the members of the community who organize and assist at the campsites. Although so many surgeries are performed every day, the pressing need of even more blind people was evident at the camps. In addition, I began to appreciate more the importance of the work being done by the hospital.



Sarah with Dr. Ramani



Although at first I only thought of the ability to see as a convenience as compared to other deadly diseases, for the village people losing their sight impairs so much of their already difficult living situation. For these patients who are usually old and socially and economically challenged, losing their eyesight means becoming a burden on their family and community, and losing a means to work for their living. What was most rewarding was actually hearing the stories of the patients who were returning for review and their grateful smiles as they talked about the work of the hospital.

The work of the hospital and its heart and dedication for helping the village people can come only from the family of Sankara. During my stay in Coimbatore, Dr. R.V. Ramani and his wife Dr. Radha took care of me as their own and by interacting with them; I truly saw their hearts for the patients and their unrelenting efforts to eradicate blindness in India. In addition, I had the benefit of living with members of the staff at the hospital, who share Dr. Ramani and Dr. Radha's spirit of giving. Although I had left for India with high expectations of learning about the hospital, I did not imagine that I would become a part of a family and return with love and nostalgia for the experience and friendships I gained at Sankara.



www.giftofvision.org

# Sankara Eye Foundation, USA: Donation Form

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

3175 Arcola Court, San Jose, CA 95148.

www.giftofvision.org

## Contact Information

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Donate in several ways:

Cash:  Check:  Credit Card:  Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

If check, make it payable to: **Sankara Eye Foundation, USA**

If Credit Card, enter Credit Card #: (Only Visa and Master Card)

\_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A One time donation:  Monthly Donation (Open an Eye a month):

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

(Helps us find if they match your contribution.)

For used car donations, contact SEF at [cargiving@giftofvision.org](mailto:cargiving@giftofvision.org)

Visit [www.giftofvision.org](http://www.giftofvision.org) for stocks, payroll, bank transactions or online donations.

*Would you like to designate your donation for a specific purpose? Donations to Central Services go to a common pool and we distribute it to Sankara Eye Hospitals as per their needs. Donations to Capital projects support Hospital constructions and the donor can choose AP, Karnataka or Gujarat.*

Capital Projects	Central Services	
	Surgeries	Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus AP	<input type="checkbox"/> Cataract Surgery (\$30 each)	<input type="checkbox"/> Food for patients (\$200 a day)
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus Karnataka	<input type="checkbox"/> Corneal Transplant (\$100 each)	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Staff Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus Gujrat	<input type="checkbox"/> Cataract Endowment (\$300 each)	<input type="checkbox"/> Entire Service activities of the hospital (\$400 a day)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Corneal Endowment (\$1000 each)	

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.)

Note: Preferred date is applicable only for surgeries and food for patients and not for any capital projects.

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

### Mail it to:

**Sankara Eye Foundation, USA**

**3175 Arcola Ct**

**San Jose, CA 95148**

**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) 274-1443 or write to us at [info@giftofvision.org](mailto:info@giftofvision.org).

If you have any other comments, please write them at the back of this form. We really appreciate and value them.

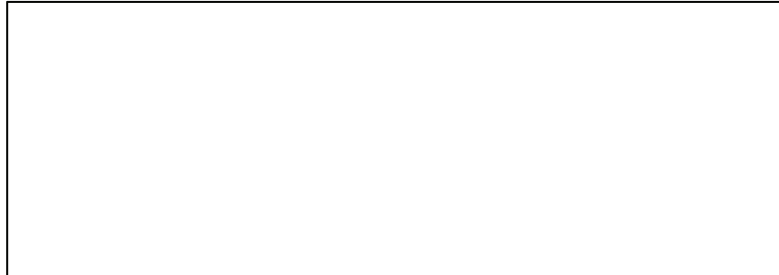
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**Thank you for your support.**

**Darkness Dispelled – Samma celebrating her regained sight**

After 14 years of darkness, Kodaikkal Samma Robert saw her children with her own eyes.

It was on one black day in August, 1990 that Samma lost her eyesight because of the dreadful disease "Post Steven Johnson's Syndrome."

Samma was working since 1974 as an operation theatre nurse in a mission hospital at Kodaikkal. After disinfecting the theatre, Samma came out of the theatre and had to be taken immediately back into the theatre as a patient for emergency care.

An asthmatic person by birth, she was gasping for air and her eyes were on fire, she said. The next day she was discharged and was feeling much better and was put on oral medication. Because of the medication, she was restless and her vision started blurring, said her family members.



When she lost her complete eye sight Samma was 43 years old. Her husband's sister, Mary Christopher, looked after both her small children Smitha and Tony.

Both in Kerala and outside, they tried each and every kind of treatment. Finally it was at Sankara Eye Hospital, under the treatment of Dr. J.K. Reddy, that Samma regained her vision.

When she lost her sight her daughter Smitha was still in school. Now Smitha is a married woman and a mother too. Samma saw her daughter, grandchildren and her son-in-law, Vismil, with her eyes full of love. She is awaiting the return of her son Tony who is working in Sharjah with lovelorn eyes. Samma saw her mother Mariamma and was looking at her for a very long time.

Samma Robert is one of the blessed few in this world who has regained sight after contracting this dreadful disease, said the hospital authorities.

What Samma Robert told the hospital administrators soon after the surgery: "14 years I have been praying to Lord Jesus to send me a doctor who will give me back my vision. Now after 14 years of prayers, my prayers have been answered. I saw Jesus in Dr. J. K. Reddy."