

eyelights



Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust Inc.,

**Sankara Nethralaya
OM Trust, USA**

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AMERICA

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Taking the Light of Vision to Africa

THE MONITOR
How
The Indians
Brought Back
Their Sight





Sankara Nethralaya Ophthalmic Mission Trust

Sankara Nethralaya Ophthalmic Mission Trust, Inc., a registered non-profit organization in the USA, was established in 1988 with the sole purpose of supporting Sankara Nethralaya, a charitable, not-for-profit ophthalmic hospital, in Chennai, India. SN OM Trust consists of a group of like minded individuals who support Sankara Nethralaya's community programs. Over the years, SN OM Trust has successfully helped raise substantial funds which have provided vision to thousands of under privileged people in India. Through their fund-raising and awareness efforts, SN OM Trust has contributed significantly in making world class ophthalmic eye care available to a large number of indigent people in India.

In this edition of Eyelights America, we profile a few trustees who have lent unstinting support to Sankara Nethralaya's initiatives and are always exploring newer ways of raising funds to support Nethralaya's cause.

Chandramouli V Bharadwaj (Chandra Bharadwaj) Trustee, SN OM Trust



Chandra is a software consultant from St. Louis. He had organized several fund raising concerts for Udhavum Karangal. His association with Sankara Nethralaya started in 2008 when he organized a fund raising concert for SN OM Trust in St. Louis. Chandra and family are actively involved in St. Louis community cultural activities for the past 14 years and organize Nataraja Aradhana every year. Also, they are closely involved with Sangeetha (Organization for promoting Indian Classical Music) and Abhinaya (Organization for promoting Indian Classical Dance).

Varsha Upadhye Trustee, SN OM Trust



Varsha Upadhye is a SFR, HAFSA certified realtor from California and a recent member of the SN OM Trust. This vibrant young businesswoman finds the challenge of finding housing and commercial accommodation for people in need not just professionally rewarding but emotionally fulfilling too. Having lived away from her home land for a long time, she finds her association with SN OM Trust a great way to touch base with her roots, stay connected, an opportunity to work with prominent personalities and a great way to give back to her home country.

Sankara Nethralaya salutes its old and trusted friend!



Sockalingam Sam Kannappan a long time friend and well wisher of Sankara Nethralaya and a senior member of the SN OM Trust hails from Nattarasankottai located in the heartland of Chettinad, famed for its sprawling, stately houses, delectable cuisine and its philanthropic and industrious people. Having moved to the US way

back in 1968 he has over the years become a guide and pillar of support to the local Indian community.

Shri Sam Kannappan is a highly accomplished Engineer and MS in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Texas to his credit. He is a great example of a man who gave his best to worlds, his motherland and the nation he adopted as his foster home. His knowledge, experience and expertise have been sought by the US government in some of their most strategic and critical projects as the following list of accomplishments would elucidate.

- As a Member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Gas Pipeline Safety Research Committee, he played a critical role in keeping bio-terrorism in check in Houston.
- The General Electric company's Astro Division honoured Shri Kannappan with the ' "Lighting Award" for accurately estimating the remaining life of a critical component in a Satellite already in orbit.
- The Tennessee Valley Authority recognized him with an award for expediting the non- conformance reports in the design of the Belafonte nuclear power plant.

If the professional accomplishments of Shri Kannappan are truly mind boggling his human side and concern for social causes both in India and the US are most heartwarming as the following would illustrate

- As the Chairman of the Indo-American Disaster Relief Fund he raised a substantial sum of \$ 20,000 through the Indo-American Charity Foundation for the recovery fund of hurricane Ike.
- As the Advisory member of the prestigious Asia Society he helped in rallying the Indian community to lend support for many deserving causes and as Chairman of the Disaster Relief Committee he was responsible for mobilizing \$10 Million for the relief of the Gujarat Quake victims and \$230,000 for the victims of 9/11

A highly devout individual with considerable literary skills and a strong affinity with his roots Shri Sam Kannappan is founder of the Bharathi Kalai Mandram, Houston, Founder Secretary Sri Meenakshi Temple, Pearland, Texas, he has authored a book titled "Stress analysis and EZFLEX piping analysis software programme" and has pioneered a Tamil language font with voice synthesizer for disabled people.

The Sankara Nethralaya family expresses its sincere thanks to Shri Sam Kannappan for his unstinting support expresses its hearty congrats to him and his family for his appointment to the prestigious professional body 'The Texas Board of Professional Engineers'

Taking the light of vision to Africa



In keeping with its founding principle of providing humanitarian eye care across geographical and regional boundaries and in continuation of a noble journey which started in Kenya and Zambia, a team of doctors, nurses and paramedics embarked on a noble mission to Botswana from October to November of 2011. The seeds for the mission were sown in 2006 when a survey by the Ministry of Health, Botswana and the National Prevention of Blindness made a startling revelation that a staggering 3.7% of Botswanians were visually impaired of whom 8000 were blind due to cataract.

It was a rare honour for Sankara Nethralaya when the Health Ministry of Botswana approached the Indian High Commission through the India-Botswana Chamber of Commerce (IBCC) to conduct eye camps in various locations in the country. Sankara Nethralaya responded with characteristic enthusiasm and deputed a two member team consisting of Senior Consultant Dr Rashmin Anil Kumar Gandhi and Shri. Suresh Kumar- Manager Projects to Botswana on a reconnaissance visit, the pair did a quick survey, studied the ground realities, prepared the logistics and other requirements and prepared the grounds for the

visit of the surgical team. Once the stage was set a team of doctors comprising of Dr Rashmin Anil Kumar Gandhi, Dr Vijay Ananth, Dr Sandip Mark Thirumalai, Dr Sudharshan and Dr Sridhar Bharathan accompanied by nurses Arul Gajendra Bhupathi, Prakash Kumar, OT assistants Shiva and Manigandan and Krishnamurthy from the Bio-medical department left on their mission of restoring eyesight to the underprivileged communities of Botswana.

The Sankara Nethralaya team conducted highly successful eye camps at hospitals located in the cities of Mahalype, Maun, Molepolole and Serowe and completed a total of 1,500 cataract surgeries over a period of two months. A very touching highlight of the initiative was that most of the beneficiaries had almost given up hope of seeing the world again; many of them had not seen their children and grandchildren and knew them only by their voice, it was almost like a re-birth to them and they were overwhelmed with joy in regaining their vision.

A commendable part of the entire initiative was the manner in which the Indian business community rose to the occasion and gave a generous helping hand to the Sankara Nethralaya surgical team in terms of taking care of their boarding and lodging needs and through their constant encouragement and support.



Heavenly Weddings!



We are all quite familiar with the saying 'Marriages are made in Heaven' which simply implies that wedlock between a man and woman is ordained by a divine force. We thought we should share with our readers the inspiring story on how three young men and women added a new dimension to this saying by making their holy matrimony a heavenly experience and a very special day in the lives of several visually impaired and poor people. The couples Priya & Sethu, Dr Sujay and Dr. Shruthi and Vivek & Nina decided that their wedding bells should ring in the joy not just into their lives but into the lives of visually impaired, indigent patients by bringing the light of vision into their lives on this Special day.

Marriage after all is the first step into a new life and the beginning of a new phase and an occasion to seek the blessings and well-wishes friends and relatives before doing so, could there be a better blessing to start it than with the sincere and bottom of the heart blessings and well-wishes of people who have just got back their vision? Blessings from people who were too poor to afford treatment and had almost given up hopes of regaining their eye sight. While Vivek & Nina and Dr Sujay and Dr Shruthi made an emphatic appeal to all their wedding guests to make their cash gifts in favour of Sankara Nethralaya, Dr S.K Rajasethupathy a long time well-wisher of Sankara Nethralaya who serves as a Professor of Computer Science in the US, consolidated the entire cash gifts received from guests on the wedding of his daughter Priya and Sethu as a single donation cheque to Sankara Nethralaya. The cash gifts received from the guests of these munificent couples, became a significant donation for noble cause was utilized to meet the cost of food, to & fro transport and eye care including free cataract and glaucoma surgeries of poor and needy patients needing immediate medical attention.

If you are inspired by the noble example of these three young couple who made their weddings something more than just some fun, frolic and handshakes and made it a great occasion and truly a day to remember year after year not just for themselves and their families but to visually impaired people and their families who found a new hope, light and reason to live on this day.

If you would like to perform a truly blessed wedding in the family or suggest to a friend, please contact

Shri S. Alagiri

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Tele-ophthalmology team makes foray into Tiger Country!



The Sunderbans region in West Bengal is known the world over as the last natural habitat of the Royal Bengal Tiger and among the last backwater mangrove forests in a fast dwindling ecology chain. This region also happens to be among the backward and inaccessible areas in the State of West Bengal, with poor availability of medical facilities. The Tele-Ophthalmology team at the Aditya Birla Sankara Nethralaya identified this region as an area which badly needed its community ophthalmology services, it also

realized that such service could be delivered more effectively if the initiative is undertaken jointly with agencies which are engaged in relief work among the locals. Keeping this in mind the Tele-Ophthalmology team joined hands with welfare associations like the Dr. Ambedkar Community Development Society and Satyen Mitra Samity and conducted eye screening camps at Sunderban Pratitor Prathima and Sunderbans Moipith respectively.

The Tele-ophthalmology teams consisting of a doctor, a coordinator and 4 staff optometrists screened 384 and 454 people respectively at the camps and diagnosed 55 people in the former and 48 people in the latter camp as needing cataract surgery. The dates for the surgery were finalized with the welfare associations and patients needing cataract removal were transported to the base hospital and dropped back at their village after surgery. The Sunderbans camp marked a major milestone for the Tele-Ophthalmology department in having taken eye care to a most backward and inaccessible region and came as a major relief to the local people.

How to donate in the United States of America...



Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust Inc.

9710 Traville Gateway Drive, No. 392,
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Tax Exempt ID No. 52-1611548

For additional details, feel free to contact S. V. Acharya at (301) 529-7377

Donating online at Omtrust.org - All your donations are securely routed through www.groundspring.org.

United Way - Mention the above information on your authorization form. Local chapters will remit your contributions to the SN OM Trust Inc.

Combined Federal Campaign - If you are a US federal employee, make your donations to Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust Inc. CFC No. 68803.

Employer Matching Program - A number of US employers match *dollar for dollar* to employees' contributions. You may be able to double your contributions to SN OM Trust.

Appreciated Stocks - You may donate appreciated stocks to SN OM Trust Inc. and avail of a tax deduction. For additional information, please contact the Trust at the aforementioned phone number.

Contributions by check - Simply make your check payable to SN OM Trust Inc. and mail to the above address.

Payroll Deductions - Please check with your HR office if they are programmed to withhold from payroll and remit to a non-profit organization. A number of organizations provide this as a public service.

Draft from Checking Account - Download from our website www.omtrust.org, the direct debit authorization form and forward your authorization with a 'void check' to the above address. We will draft the funds on the 15th of every month. You can stop your authorization any time by a simple notification to us.

Donate on Special Occasions, as a tribute Festivals, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, in memory of a loved one and provide support in the form of a bequest.

All donations to SN OM Trust are 100% IRS Tax Exempted in US, IRS Registered 501 (c) (3)

How can you help us?

Sankara Nethralaya OM Trust owes its existence and success to its committed volunteers. To realize our mission of 20/20 by 2020, we need many more volunteers. You can be one of our volunteers and can help us by:

- Spreading the word about Sankara Nethralaya.
- Supporting Teleophthalmology & Glass dispensing vans.
- Conducting events for fundraising.
- Helping with accounting, web management.
- Arranging for American students to undertake summer projects at Sankara Nethralaya.
- Personally making small donations

The following employers have supported us through GIFT MATCHING or PAYROLL DEDUCTION programs!

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