

December 2008

Dear Friends of Visions,

What an exciting and productive year it has been for us! Over the last 12 months Visions has undergone an extensive building period and has now grown into an established, official nonprofit organization. Though our 501(c)(3) status is still pending, we are due to receive verification of our registration as a federally tax-exempt organization any day now. In the meantime, we have been issued a tax ID code (26-3386678), which, once approved, will be retroactively applicable for all donations made now. We have also filed an application for California state tax exemption for nonprofits, for which we are also awaiting verification. We must thank our volunteer attorney and CPA for their help in this process.

Organizational Growth

Another important step we took in building the foundations of the organization was to create a Visions Board of Directors in early 2008. Currently, we have 5 Board members, including:

- ❖ Meera Pathmarajah, *CEO & Founder*
- ❖ Katherine Splitek, *Secretary*
- ❖ Kristen Buie, *CFO*
- ❖ Mythri Jegathesan
- ❖ Jennifer Claire

We look forward to building and working with our Board over the years in developing Visions and improving upon our educational efforts worldwide. You can read more about each of our outstanding and accomplished Board members on our website.

We continue to value the dedication and time of Visions volunteers. This year we are particularly grateful for 2 extraordinary volunteers. Trent Holland now serves as our Program Officer for Marketing & Finance. He helped to plan several events and fundraisers throughout the year, assisted with general administrative matters, and volunteered abroad in Kenya. Anjana Pathmarajah also came onboard as our Program Officer for Global Health Education. She has helped develop health education materials, provided general administrative support, and volunteered in India this summer. We are very happy to have both these ambitious young leaders on the Visions team!

Several months ago Visions also started sending out e-newsletters to our supporters and well-wishers in order to keep everyone more informed of the progress Visions has been making. We plan to continue sending out these e-newsletters every 2-3 months, so stay tuned for what we hope will be another year of growth and accomplishments.

2008 Summer Programs

With 11 trainings already under our belt, our ongoing summer Visions Leadership program continued this summer. After extenuating



circumstances required that we relocate our training scheduled in Sri Lanka to India, Visions successfully engaged our third country in 6 years. One 9-day training was held for 65 tsunami-affected youth in Karaikal, Southern India, which culminated in all-day field trip to Thanjavur. Our team of 6 Visions volunteers worked in close partnership with an outstanding local organization—SAWED Trust. It was a memorable experience, and we hope to return to India in the near future to work with many more disadvantaged youth and teachers.

Another training was scheduled for Kenya this summer with 7 international volunteers and several local volunteers in attendance. However, our plans were altered due to several unforeseen circumstances. As soon as we arrived, issues arose with our local



partner organizations, who had not completed the necessary arrangements. After doing everything in our power to go through with our planned program, we had to improvise and make new plans. Ultimately, we were able to hold two 1-day leadership trainings for hundreds of youth in Nairobi and Kitale. In addition, we donated books, Visions Leadership Handbooks, and general school & office supplies to the following:

- ❖ Chanuka Express students from various schools in Nairobi
- ❖ Mathumaini Children's Home in Ongata Rongai, Nairobi
- ❖ Arap Moi Children's Home in Nakuru
- ❖ Kitale Seconday School students in Kitale
- ❖ Agape Children's Home in Kisumu

Visions Leadership & Scholarship Programs

Turning to this year, Visions will be investing heavily in the newly revamped Visions Leadership Education Program. We have completely redone all of our materials and activities, and will be unveiling in early 2009 the 3 new books which we created. These books include the Visions Guide to Leadership & Life Skills, the Visions Guide to Human Rights & Citizenship, and the Visions Guide to Global & Local Issues. All materials and plans were designed specifically for youth between the ages of 14-21 and for teachers. Throughout 2009 Visions will be implementing this new leadership program with local volunteers and staff who will conduct the trainings themselves. Over 1,000 disadvantaged youth and teachers are due to directly benefit from trainings, which will be held every month for the rest of the year. One major objective of the trainings is to develop the skills of participants and provide them with the resources, basic funds, and guidance to set up Student Leadership Committees and Teacher Leadership Committees. These trainings are scheduled to take place at various orphanages and schools in Colombo and Batticaloa. We will need to raise \$40K for this cornerstone initiative.

In conjunction with the Visions Leadership Education Program, we will also be launching the Visions Scholarship Program in early 2009. Visions students (and teachers) will be encouraged to apply for small grants from the organization in order to pursue further

personal, academic, or professional endeavors. All students who have attended Visions trainings will be given basic career counseling and support, and will be taken through the Visions scholarship application process. Our goal this year is to raise \$10K for this fund.

Kalagam Visions Learning Centre

In just a few short weeks, we are expecting to break ground for the long anticipated Kalagam Visions Learning Centre (KVLC)! Working in partnership with Saiva Mangaiyar Kalagam, a Sri Lanka-based nonprofit society, we have been working year-round to support Kalagam in the logistics related to planning and construction of this important multistoried learning center. Countless youth, including many IDP/refugee youth and others from disadvantaged backgrounds, will benefit from the well-rounded educational experience that the learning center will offer. After an initial event in Pasadena last January, in which the project was unveiled, both Visions and Kalagam have been working diligently on raising the necessary funds. At present we are in need of approximately \$40K more for this large-scale effort.



St. John's IT Institute

Another project Visions assisted with this year is the St. John's Institute of Technology. In late June of this year Visions hosted a conference at the University of California, Los Angeles to discuss the crucial need & opportunity for IT in Sri Lanka today and to initiate discussions behind proposed IT institutes in Colombo & Jaffna. We welcomed representatives from ITTPO, St. John's Old Boys Association (OBA), Operation USA, and Manitha Neyam Trust, who accounted for some of the 30 participants who joined us



either in-person or via conference call. We were also happy to have Mr. Sivathasan, the project leader from Colombo, attend the event as a key speaker. This important first step in making these institutes a reality was followed up by the establishment of an IT working committee, which has since held several conference calls. We plan to stay committed to helping plan and develop each of these institutes in order to provide strong opportunities for education and employment to some of Sri Lanka's many disadvantaged youth.

Visions 2008 Events

As part of our mission statement, Visions believes in engaging both our local and international community in awareness-raising and capacity-building. As such, many exciting events, speeches and fundraisers to benefit Visions were held throughout the year in San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange County, and New York City. They included:

- ❖ KVLC "Lighting the Way" Presentation in Pasadena, CA

- ❖ “Fashions at the Cove” Charity Fashion Show in La Jolla, CA
- ❖ Visions Presentation at International House at UCSD in La Jolla, CA
- ❖ Social Mixer at Katra Lounge in New York City, NY
- ❖ Sri Lanka Young Professionals Conference at Columbia University in New York City, NY (*with participants from IMHO, Operation USA, Sarvodaya USA, & PEARL*)
- ❖ Photo Shoot Fundraiser in San Diego, CA
- ❖ “Going Global in an IT World” Conference at UCLA in Los Angeles, CA (*with participants from ITTPO, St. John’s Old Boys Association, Manitha Neyam, and Operation USA*)
- ❖ Local School Supplies Drive in Anaheim, CA
- ❖ Esperanza High School Book Drive in Anaheim, CA
- ❖ Presentation at Yorba Linda Rotary Club in Yorba Linda, CA

Through these efforts, Visions was able to reach out to many more students, professionals, organizations, businesses, and other community members this year, in an unceasing effort at building our network of supporters. Through these events we were able to recruit both domestic and international volunteers, solicit valuable services, raise much needed funds, network further, and accomplish so much more overall. Thank you to all who supported Visions this year in whatever capacity that may be. We very much rely on our strong base of committed volunteers and could not do it without you! Please visit our website for all upcoming events.

This past October, students from Esperanza High School in Anaheim, California held a book drive to benefit the students of Saiva Mangaiyar Vidyalayam in Colombo. Over 7,800 books were collected in total, 5,500 of which were donated to grateful local libraries, and the remaining 2,300 of which were shipped to Sri Lanka.



Please Donate Today!

As always, Visions cannot survive without your generous support and donations, and we encourage you to donate. We currently have a number of fundraising efforts that we wish to share with you. If you visit our website (www.visionsforthefuture.org), you can soon order specially designed and printed Visions t-shirts online. Visions is also now able to accept online donations via PayPal. You can make one-time or recurring donations, including setting up a monthly payment plan. Please help us give the gift of education to disadvantaged and orphaned youth, and donate today! Thank you for your compassion and generosity.

All the best for 2009,

Greg Buie
Visions Director