



spirit of service

A PUBLICATION OF SEVA®

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Exponential Return: One Patient Helps Restore Sight to 18 More

Seva first met Abdul Mahjid in the rural Himalayan foothills of West Bengal, a part of India nestled between Nepal and Bangladesh.

Abdul had spent his life working diligently as a tailor. He did not make much money, but it was enough to support his family.

Three years ago, Abdul's eyesight began to fade.

Abdul told Seva, "I am a tailor. Losing my vision meant I was going to be unable to work."

He went on to explain that his diminishing eyesight caused him trouble with stitching, and threatened his livelihood.

As Abdul's vision worsened, it became harder and harder for him to thread a needle.

Before long, he had lost his vision completely.

Abdul worried deeply as he was no longer able to support his family.

Without money for evaluation or treatment, Abdul was left with few options.

Then Abdul learned about an outreach camp organized in his rural area of West Bengal, India.

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Photographers

Jay Blakesberg, Jon Kaplan, Julie Nestingen, Joseph Raffanti

Our heartfelt thanks go to all our photographers for generously donating their work.



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Exponential Return

He went and learned that mature cataracts were causing his blindness. He was also told that he could receive sight-restoring surgery free of charge at the Siliguri Greater Lions Eye Hospital — a Seva-supported eye hospital that serves the poorest of the poor in the northern districts of West Bengal.

Abdul traveled to the hospital where he received surgery on his left eye. His clouded lens was removed and a new replacement lens was put in place. The entire procedure took just 15 minutes.

When his eye patch was removed the next morning, Abdul joyfully proclaimed, “I can see again! I am able to return to my work as a tailor, and can again provide for my family.”

But this was just the beginning of Abdul’s incredible story.

Inspired by the dramatic improvement the sight-restoring surgery had on his quality of life, Abdul wanted to help others who suffered with debilitating blindness.

He returned home and immediately began to spread the word to friends and neighbors in his village who also had vision problems.

Many didn’t know that free sight-saving eye care was available or they had been nervous about traveling to the hospital for treatment. Abdul took it upon himself to educate anyone he could find.

Amazingly, Abdul gathered 18 people from his community who were losing their vision. He brought the entire group to the Seva-supported hospital where his friends and neighbors received sight-restoring surgeries.



While there, Abdul received surgery on his second eye, fully restoring his vision. As Abdul stood with his 18 friends who also had their sight restored, Abdul proudly stated “For three long years I was blind, but now I can see.”



This Mother’s Day, honor all the mothers in your life by restoring sight to a person who is blind. This meaningful gift, along with the other gift options offered in Seva’s Gifts of Sight catalog, will provide a vital, life-changing service to a person in need. Beautiful personalized cards will let your Mother’s Day Honorees know about the incredible gifts you’ve chosen – gifts that will be remembered for a lifetime.

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Global Sight Initiative

Improving Hospital Eye Care Capacity to Reach More People In Need

Sundari had a child to care for, a house to clean, and no one to help her. Lately, her vision had been getting worse and was beginning to negatively affect her work. She took a rare day away from home to travel to the nearby Alipurduar Lions Eye Hospital.

Hoping that simple eye drops would help her see clearly, Sundari was dismayed to learn that her problem could only be solved with cataract surgery. Anamika, a counselor at the hospital, assured Sundari that the surgery would be free. Sundari was still against the procedure; she couldn’t afford to take so much time away from home.

There was a time when Anamika might have let the conversation end there. But after receiving training through Seva’s Global Sight Initiative (GSI), she had learned how crucial her role as a counselor is.

“I told her the problem wouldn’t improve but would only get worse until she couldn’t see at all,” said Anamika. Using what she had learned from her counselor training, Anamika walked Sundari through the benefits of surgery – and the consequences of ignoring the problem. Sundari realized that if she wanted to see clearly again, she would need to make time for treatment. After a successful surgery, Sundari has returned to work and is able to provide for her child.



The Global Sight Initiative (GSI) is a network of hospitals and organizations around the world committed to improving eye care services. Successful hospitals mentor smaller hospitals that want to improve their services. Seva convened the network, which is now made up of 11 mentor hospitals that work with more than 50 mentee hospitals. GSI focuses on HR development and training as a key strategy to improve eye care delivery. With better-trained staff, surgical outcomes improve, infection rates go down, and more people can see again. After one year of working with GSI mentor hospital Vivekananda Mission Ashram Netra Niramay Niketan (VMANNN), Alipurduar Lions Eye Hospital has increased their cataract surgeries by 25%, and thanks to newly trained employees like Anamika, will most likely double that increase over the next two years.

Dr. Asim Sil, Medical Director of VMANNN, has been working with the staff of Alipurduar for the past year and has seen their growth firsthand. “GSI is all about strengthening different agencies working in different locations of the world, so that ultimately eye care services reach the community very effectively,” said Dr. Sil. As a result, “many more people get to see again.”

Trainings, like those provided by Dr. Sil and his staff, are not only good for patients; they are also good for the health of the hospital and its staff. Recently, a slit lamp – a device essential in the exam of a patient – broke at Alipurduar. At this hospital, each slit lamp is used to examine 70 patients per day. Sajib,

an Instrument Technician who recently attended a GSI-supported training on equipment maintenance, used his training to repair the slit lamp in just two hours. If he hadn’t participated in the training, the slit lamp would have been sent to Kolkata for repairs, an expensive process that would take at least seven days. During that time, the hospital would have seen almost 500 fewer patients. The equipment maintenance training not only led to patients receiving necessary care, but also resulted in a committed employee.

“Sajib’s confidence is much higher, and he is comfortable working with the instruments,” said Sajib’s supervisor, Hospital Executive Officer Minakshi Paul. “Previously, he was not so interested in work. Now, he is proactive, immediately volunteering to do any extra work, and always excited to use his new skills to repair and set up instruments for the hospital.”

Around the world, human resource constraints continue to limit the number of surgeries provided. Through training and other interventions, GSI is changing that and enabling more people to see again.

“Training is a very important job in today’s world,” said Minakshi Paul. “We must keep ourselves updated and GSI is playing a pivotal role in that.”





2nd Annual
YOGA
FOR SIGHT
May 9th and 10th, 2015

Yoga For Sight

On May 9th and 10th, Seva's Yoga for Sight events will bring together yogis from around the world, joining forces in an effort to raise awareness about the fact that 80% of blindness and low vision can be prevented or cured.

Last year, Yoga for Sight events also helped to raise thousands of dollars to support Seva's programs that provide vital sight-saving eye care services to adults and children in need.

Participating yoga studios have been extremely creative, offering unique Yoga for Sight experiences to their local communities.

Last year, for example, Casa de Yoga in El Paso, Texas, offered a special yoga class where all participants wore special glasses that simulated what it feels like to experience cataract blindness.

Leela Yoga in Alameda, California really got everyone in their class moving with an exciting live music performance.

In Chesapeake, Virginia, Yoga Nook offered a Yoga for Sight event that took place outdoors at Oak Grove Lake Park. Natasha Olechnowicz, who organized the event,

noted, "As a group we walked around the park and then arranged our mats on the grass for practice. At the beginning of class we shared some of Seva's goals and core values. We asked people to close their eyes in one of the sequences...to acknowledge how blessed we are for having the gift of sight. Our goal was to raise awareness and contribute to a noble cause. We feel this is one of yoga's main purposes; to serve and help transform lives."

Dozens of studios have signed up to host events this year throughout the country and world.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who is organizing events, to all who have signed up to participate, and especially to Seagate, our Namaste Platinum Sponsor, and all of the other generous Yoga for Sight sponsors who are helping to make this event a huge success.

We invite you to please visit Seva's Yoga for Sight webpage to find out about events at yoga studios in your area.

www.seva.org/yogaforsight



CIRCLE OF SHARING
SEVA'S MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM



Circle of Sharing is the way Seva donors give regularly each month.

Make compassionate service a way of life — and know that your monthly gift helps provide sight to someone every month, all year long.

www.seva.org/circle_of_sharing

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Ellen Schiffman



As observers we shed tears as bandages were removed and slow smiles appeared on the gentle Cambodian faces as they realized that they could once again see. The “gift of sight” was given to us along with the patients, as we shared this special moment with them.

For years – make that decades – my husband Tyler and I have been supporting the work of Seva under the auspices of our small family foundation The Robert M. Schiffman Foundation. It is hard to remember now exactly how we found out about Seva, though I believe my trusted brother was the first one to tell us of their admirable work. We continued our support over the years because we intuitively connected with the mission and spirit of the organization as presented in the literature they provided. In addition they got high marks from some watch dog groups such as Guidestar and Charity Navigator, lending credibility to their work. It was not until this past January that we got to experience firsthand what a magnificent and special group Seva is.

We received an invitation to visit their program (at our own expense) in Cambodia along with a small group of staff and donors. This coincided with some changes in our own lives which allowed us to accept. Having never been to Asia, we knew we were in for a travel adventure and since Tyler had a brief pleasant meeting the year before with some of the Seva staff, we thought there was a good chance we’d meet some like-minded, likable people. To our delight that all proved to be true in a big way. However we did not realize at the time just

how profound the entirety of the experience would prove to be.

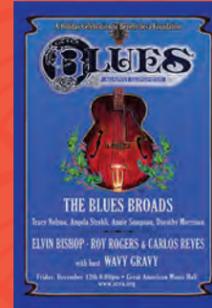
First – I will state the obvious. Most of the eye surgeries are easy and quick to perform. They do not cost a lot of money, yet the restoration of vision accomplished by these surgeries is life changing. In regaining sight, individuals regain independence which they have lost and reconnect with the world and their loved ones in tangible, life enhancing ways. As observers we shed tears as bandages were removed and slow smiles appeared on the gentle Cambodian faces as they realized that they could once again see. The “gift of sight” was given to us along with the patients, as we shared this special moment with them.

We observed tremendous respect and gentleness in the interactions of the staff with the patients. The attitude of “service” which we had read about in all the Seva brochures was palpable. We were honored to meet and spend time with many of these dedicated professionals working to provide eye care to their fellow Cambodians. Seva strives to equip local communities and practitioners with the skills and tools to provide treatment rather than providing “charity”. It’s an admirable goal and of particular, poignant importance in Cambodia. After the trauma of Pol Pot

and the Khmer Rouge there was only one ophthalmologist left in the country. Seva has played no small part in the gradual return of quality eye care to this country. The dignity of self sufficiency seems so important in a society as profoundly ravaged as Cambodia. While the members of our group were acutely aware of the devastation recently wrought in Cambodia, I think we were also filled with hope as we saw lives transformed before our eyes.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the wonderful group of Seva staff and donors we traveled with. Unbeknownst to us we’ve been members of an incredible family of kindred spirits all these years. Our fellow travelers were interesting, interested, compassionate, dedicated, kind, creative and more fun than we hoped for. We were moved by every single one of them – from the 20-something social entrepreneurs supporting Seva’s work, to the 70-something grandparents and their 12-year-old grandson traveling with Seva as the first leg of a 3 month journey through Asia. If you can judge an organization by the company it keeps, the supporters and staff it attracts, and selfless work it provides – Seva scores high points. We are proud to be supporters of Seva to an extent we never could have imagined.

SEVA SPECIAL EVENTS



On Dec. 12th 2014 **Blues Against Blindness — Seva’s Holiday Party** was held at the Great American Music Hall, one of San Francisco’s oldest and grandest nightclubs.

The show featured Bay Area blues man **Elvin Bishop** who sat in with the **Blues Broads — Tracy Nelson, Angela Strehli, Annie Sampson & Dorothy Morrison** — four great ladies of roots music. Slide guitar virtuoso **Roy Rogers** opened the show with world-renowned harp player **Carlos Reyes**.



The show was a wonderful end of the year celebration and a testament to the diversity of amazing artists who are willing to lend their time and talent to support Seva.



a seamless and inspiring musical whole, a truly magical and heart felt concert.

Over the years Seva has been the lucky recipient of seven Crosby Nash performances. The first of these was in 1982 at the Santa Monica Civic with Jackson Browne, Kate Wolf, Holly Near and more. Their contribution to Seva has helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars and introduced many new donors to the organization.



On May 17th, we will honor **Wavy’s 79th Birthday** with a very special event, held in Sonoma County at The Sonoma Mt. Event Center, a 100% solar powered, outdoor venue near Sonoma State University.

The show features some new members to our musical family: **Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros** and **The California Honeydrops**, as well as long time supporters: **Steve Kimock & Friends** and **Hot Buttered Rum**. There’s a diverse mix of music that will attract a multi-generational audience.

We will also have an art gallery, featuring the work of Stanley Mouse, Dave Hunter, Wavy Gravy, Mark Hensen & Patrick Ryan.

We are very much looking forward to this awesome event!



On Saturday April 11th, **Crosby & Nash** graced us with a very special, intimate show at the Nourse, an elegant landmark venue in the heart of San Francisco’s theater district.

As a duo, longtime creative partners David Crosby and Graham Nash bring out the best in each other, their distinct yet complementary styles balancing an equation that delivers

For more information about our events, please visit our website: seva.org

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About Seva

Seva is a Sanskrit word meaning service to others.

Since 1978, Seva has been working to prevent blindness and restore sight worldwide.

Seva is a leading innovator in the delivery of cost effective, culturally-informed eye care services for many of the world's most vulnerable – including women, children, and indigenous peoples.

We work to build the capacity of underserved communities to provide comprehensive high-quality eye care that is accessible by all.

Seva's programs are made possible by the generosity of donors and volunteers inspired by the spirit of service.

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"Seva has given so much help to so many thousands of people for so many years — such a wonderful example of love in action."



BONNIE RAITT

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