

Weekly Voice: Toronto Benefit Raise \$1.7 Million For Seva

Contributed by Bala Menon
Friday, 05 October 2007

A stunning \$1.7 million was raised during a single evening - at the Seventh Annual Gala of the Toronto Chapter of the All India Movement for Seva on Saturday. The event at the Woodbine Banquet Hall saw the South Asian community open their hearts and wallets in response to an appeal by AIM Toronto president Dr. Terry Papneja.

The money goes into various educational projects in rural and tribal areas across India. The donations included construction of five student hostels - each at a cost of \$63,000. The donors were Aditya Jha (hostel in Bihar), Dr. Narendra Singh and Family for a hostel in Goa; the Arora Family in Madhya Pradesh and Dr. Rakesh Bhandri for hostel in Madhya Pradesh. An anonymous donor offered to build a hostel in Gujarat.

Chief Guest at the event was Aditya Jha, co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Osellus Inc., Canada and Osellus Asia Pacific Company Limited, Thailand. Prior to this, Aditya co-founded a software company, Isopia Inc., Canada, which was acquired by Sun Microsystems in July 2001. He has endowments (\$800,000) and grants (\$50,000) at leading four Canadian universities and supports a number of charitable programs at Roy Thomson Hall (\$20,000), Toronto International Film Festival Group (\$35,000), Trillium Hospital (\$50,000) and Canadian Museum of Human Rights (\$30,000) to name a few.

One of the other guests was Michael Bryant, Ontario Attorney General - who hailed the spirit behind the Aim For Seva Movement and the work it was doing for future generations.

In addition to the hostel donation, Dr. Narendra Singh and family will also pay for the education and living expenses of 50 students in AIM for Seva schools every year for the next 20 years. The cost of sponsoring 50 students for one calendar year is \$25,000. This takes the total donation by the family to \$500,000 over the next 20 years.

Mahendra Vyas, an aviation professional - who has served in the top echelons of the Government of Canada, the US defence company Raytheon and a leading Canadian Aviation System Company offered two scholarships every year for tribal students in a top-rated Indian engineering school for a 4 year program for the next 20 years --value \$40,000.00 per year for 20 years. Total donation amount - \$ 800,000.

Currently he is an Aviation Consultant and also the CEO of Ahmedabad Aviation & Aeronautics Ltd, (Gujarat, India) which is in the business of aviation training - from professional pilots to aircraft maintenance engineers to aviation managers they do it all. Ahmedabad Aviation is a part of Electrotherm group of companies. Electrotherm is a leading Indian company in the business of environment friendly electric vehicles, furnaces and steel manufacturing.

200 other donors chipped in with \$500 each - to sponsor 200 children - total value \$100,000.

In a message to the guests, AIM for Seva founder Swamy Dayanand Saraswati said from Pennsylvania: " Our people in Toronto have shown us the way to go about to win support for the great work of Aim For Seva in India. Your continued inspiring participation will make us all work with more enthusiasm."

Dr. Papneja said he hoped that "our collective efforts will continue to benefit under-privileged children living on the fringes of Indian society, by providing them with the life-long gift of education. The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence. And these are precisely what hundreds of AIM for Seva volunteers are trying to do across India, interacting with youngsters in the drive to create a more cohesive and dynamic Indian society - which will remain a torchbearer for the rest of the world - as it has always been!"

Among the many speakers was Dr. Haren Joshi who left a flourishing practice in the United States and moved to a remote tribal area in Gujarat to run a free hospital; which has now become a model institution attracting scores of volunteer doctors offering their services for free in various medical disciplines. "The message of seva is spreading," he said.