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EQUAL RIGHT TO SIGHT

Dear Seva Canada Supporters,

In August of last year, The Lancet, the world's oldest and best known peer-reviewed medical journal, published new blindness statistics. There is some good news. Globally, the number of people who are blind has dropped from 39 million to 36 million.

Proportionally fewer women are blind: 55% instead of 66%; but the statistical improvement does not extend to girls who are still half as likely as boys to receive care.

According to The Lancet, due to a growing and aging population, the world's blind are predicted to increase from today's 36 million to 115 million by 2050 if access to treatment is not improved and increased through better funding.

The majority of the 115 million will be women and girls.

Clearly, we need to do more.

On March 8th, International Women's Day, Seva Canada launched a new campaign focused on ensuring women and girls have an equal right to sight.

Continued

Continued from front cover

Why is gender equity in the treatment of blindness so important to us? It's important because women and girls bear a far greater burden of blindness due to lack of access to care; because seeking gender equity is an ethical imperative; and because treatment of conditions that affect women is particularly important to the social and economic development of entire communities.

In 1999, Seva Canada supported the first research on gender inequity in the treatment of blindness and we continue to publish, support and document ongoing strategies to achieve gender equity.

Seva Canada's new campaign – **Equal Right to Sight** – has 4 goals:



1 To increase awareness of gender inequity in the treatment of blindness through an animated video, print and online campaign: equalrighttosight.com and [#equalright2sight](https://twitter.com/equalright2sight)

3 To fund and produce original research on strategies to overcome inequity. We cannot assume something will work without studies to back up our assumptions.

2 To publish an updated Gender and Blindness Report, accessible to all eye care organizations worldwide, that documents the scope of the problem along with successful, data-supported strategies to overcome inequity.

4 To use proven strategies and continue to introduce and fund gender equity strategies in all of our international programs.



While we haven't achieved gender equity in eye care yet, with the support of our donors, we have made significant progress and provided a model for how to provide broader health care equity for women and girls.

Seva's **Equal Right to Sight** campaign will provide gender-specific program tools and work towards having gender equity as a mainstream eye care goal worldwide.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Lyons'.

Penny Lyons,
Executive Director

Visit equalrighttosight.com to learn more

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CATCH ALL THESE AMAZING SOLO PERFORMANCES IN ONE ROOM, ON ONE NIGHT:

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CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF EVOLUTION & INNOVATION



PENNY LYONS, DR. SHRESTHA, DR. SIL AND DR. ADULKAR ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE



RETIRING BOARD MEMBER
SUSAN ERDMANN

Thank you to everyone who attended Seva Canada's 35th Anniversary Annual General Meeting (AGM) in December at the Creekside Community Recreation Centre. This year's special guests were Dr. Asim Kumar Sil and Dr. Namrata Adulkar from India and Dr. Manisha Shrestha from Nepal.

The evening began with a thank you from Board Chair Laura Spencer to the Seva Canada community for their outstanding support of Seva's work providing accessible eye care to people in need. After Norm Grdina presented the Auditor's Report, Karen Chalmers was welcomed to Seva Canada's Board of Directors and we said goodbye to long-time Board members Susan Erdmann and Nancy Mortifee. Susan has dedicated 16 years and countless hours to Seva and her unwavering passion will be dearly missed. Nancy also retired from the Board after 11 years of service including five years as Board Chair. We will miss her compassion and leadership.

AGM attendees then enjoyed a moving short film showcasing Seva Canada's milestones over the past 35 years. The film featured co-founders Drs. Bev Spring and Alan Morinis, Board member Dr. Marty Spencer, Program Director Dr. Ken Bassett and Executive Director Penny Lyons. The video highlighted Seva Canada's origin story and the ways in which Seva donors have helped to improve and transform eye care worldwide.

Following the film, Penny took the stage to describe the advances Seva donors have funded over the years – from determining the leading cause of blindness and developing community-based ophthalmology programs to lowering the cost of surgery and training countless eye care professionals and advocates. Penny also discussed the newly released blindness statistics, estimating that due to the aging and growing population, the number of people who are blind is set to increase from 36 million to 115 million by 2050 if

access to treatment isn't improved and increased dramatically. The majority will be women, and most certainly girls.

Our work isn't done yet. Together we will to continue our efforts to achieve our vision of a world in which no one is needlessly blind or visually impaired.

To watch the video and read Penny's speech, visit:

<http://bit.ly/SevaCanada35>

The evening concluded with a lively panel discussion with our honoured guests. Dr. Sil shared inspiring stories of his work providing eye care to people in rural West Bengal.

Dr. Adulkar and Dr. Shrestha, both in Vancouver to do fellowships, (Oculoplastics and Orbital Surgery and Pediatrics respectively), each shared their motivations for pursuing careers in ophthalmology and the impact that their fellowships will have on eye care in their home countries.

The evening would not have been possible without the help of our outstanding volunteers: Becci, Stéphane and Dawn. Thank you for your hard work and dedication – you are superstars!

Please join us in the Fall at our 2018 Annual General Meeting on November 16th at Van Dusen Gardens.

SWEATING FOR SIGHT

For the 2nd year in a row, the Canadian fitness community came together to get sweaty and restore sight for World Sight Day. World Sight Day, the annual day of awareness focusing global attention on blindness and visual impairment, took place on October 12th.

Twenty-five studios across the country hosted classes such as candlelight yoga, disco inferno spin, fitness boot camps and glow-in-the-dark dance routines and parties throughout October in support of Seva Canada's eye care programs.

Almost \$10,000 was raised to restore sight and prevent blindness in some of the poorest regions of the world through training, surgery, glasses and medicine.



Thank you to the following gyms, studios, and individuals for participating in Sweat for Sight - we couldn't have done it without you!

- Aktion Fitness
- Amy Diehl's Personal Training and Active Rehab
- The Bar Method, Vancouver and West Vancouver
- Bayswater Neuromuscular Massage
- Baza Dance
- BEFIT Langley
- Bliss YogaSpa
- Bodhi Tree Yoga Centre
- Colleen and Zachary Gardiner
- Curves North Vancouver
- The Dailey Method, Kitsilano
- Eastwood Cycle
- Embody Pilates Studio
- Equinox
- Fit Body Boot Camp
- Fit Republic YYC
- Fit Squad
- Full Circle Studio
- Halifax Yoga
- Harbour Dance Centre
- The Hive Bouldering Gym
- J'Adore Dance
- Joy Lo
- Muse Movement
- Ocean & Crow Yoga
- Prana Yoga Studio
- Pure Barre Yaletown
- Spinunity
- Sugar Swing Dance Club
- Tight Club
- Torq Ride
- YogaJoy
- Yogalife Studios
- The Yoga Root
- Yoga Within

If you know a gym, studio, personal trainer, individual or team who would be interested in participating, please email us at admin@seva.ca

Sweat for Sight will be back for World Sight Day on October 11, 2018.



A STRATEGY FOR EQUITY

Globally, the majority of people who are blind are women. Seva Canada and its partners have found that conducting outreach with the help of trained community members, particularly women, is the most effective strategy to achieve gender equity in eye care for adults. Even in remote, rural, impoverished settings, female community workers improve eye health education, gain trust and increase the awareness and use of available eye care services by women. When these strategies are effectively employed, we also see a drastic increase in the uptake of services for men and boys.

However, the number of girls accessing care remains the same.

We know that just as many boys and girls are being found and referred for eye care, yet girls are half as likely to receive care. This is because the families of girls often do not accept this care, even when services are free and all additional expenses for the child and caregiver, such as travel and accommodation, are paid. A year-long study involving five pediatric programs

in Africa and Asia identified strategies to work around the barriers faced by girls when it comes to acceptance of care.

The following program activities have been found to improve acceptance for girls:



- Implementing a dynamic record-keeping system to promptly inform case finders of referred children's progress and trigger follow-up with the family by program staff
- Investing in a dedicated staff role to coordinate community outreach activities with a mandate to achieve gender equity
- Investing in community relationships that provide cultural, financial, and logistical support for health service utilization by girls
- Establishing gender equity, at all ages, as a major program goal recognized at all levels of the eye care program
- Investing in counselling by the entire care team, from community members to the eye care staff and ophthalmologists, that is gender sensitive.

As with all of Seva Canada's investments to advance equitable eye care programs, we will continue to support program staff to assess the success of these changes, identify additional areas for improvement and help to ensure the power of sight for girls.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD:

NEPAL'S DR. SHRESTHA IS COMMITTED TO RESTORING CHILDREN'S SIGHT

In Nepal, high proportions of children are blind from preventable causes. Unlike restoring the sight of adults, which has become relatively simple, providing high-quality care to children requires specialized staff and equipment, strong referral and follow-up systems, and an ophthalmologist with sub-specialty training in pediatric eye care.

Canada has 1 ophthalmologist per 30,300 people, while Nepal currently has only 1 ophthalmologist per 142,860 people. Furthermore, one third of the Nepali population is under 16 years old but only a few of these ophthalmologists are trained to treat children.

Dr. Manisha Shrestha, an ophthalmologist from the Seva-supported Bharatpur Eye Hospital in Chitwan District, Nepal, is looking to improve these odds.

Dr. Manisha Shrestha is currently doing a pediatric fellowship at the BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver, BC, where we had the opportunity to ask her about her work.

Q: Why did you choose to become a pediatric ophthalmologist?

Dr. Shrestha: I like being with kids. Also there are not many pediatric ophthalmologists in Nepal so I chose to become one. My husband is also a pediatrician so I thought it was good to have something in common in our profession.

Q: Why did you decide to do your pediatric fellowship in Canada?

Dr. Shrestha: While I could have stayed in Nepal to complete my studies, I decided to come to Canada because I have always wanted to receive training in a developed country and see what it



is like. I am also excited to bring this training back home.

Q: How did you come to work at Bharatpur Eye Hospital?

Dr. Shrestha: My family donated funds to build a city eye clinic for Bharatpur Eye Hospital while I was working as a medical officer at Chitwan Medical College. I became interested in ophthalmology as a career and Bharatpur Hospital offered post-graduate training. They offered me a position and I decided to join the hospital.

Q: Can you tell us a memorable story of one of your patients?

Dr. Shrestha: I had a small girl around 4 years old from a remote part of Nepal which was at the epicentre of the most recent earthquake. Their home was destroyed so they were living in a temporary camp. The child developed red eyes which she could not open so her family had to make the difficult journey to our hospital. When I examined her, which was not easy, I found caterpillar hairs embedded in her upper palpebral conjunctiva (inside membrane of the eyelid). I tried hard to take them out but it was not possible in one session. I made arrangements for

them to stay in the ward and I saw them early every morning to take more of the caterpillar hairs out. It went on for 3 days, and on the third day, the girl was standing there with her eyes open when I arrived. That gave me immense pleasure as my hard work had paid off and I could make her eyes better.

Q: What is your biggest current challenge?

Dr. Shrestha: To make the pediatric ophthalmology service better at Bharatpur Eye Hospital as it is currently in its infancy. I hope my training here at BC Children's Hospital will make me competent enough to help people in my community and country as a whole.

Q: What has been your greatest achievement?

Dr. Shrestha: Every time I have been able to relieve people from their ailment and they give me a smile back in return I think is my greatest achievement.

Q: What is your hope for the future of eye care in your country?

Dr. Shrestha: I hope the field of eye care becomes more technologically advanced but within the accessibility of all people.



HEROES IN THE FIELD: MALAGASY KEY INFORMANT, FLORETTE RAVONIMALACA

In remote villages throughout Madagascar, many people are living with blindness and visual impairment. They are poor, scared, and unaware that their vision problems can be treated and that low-cost or free services are available. As a result, Seva's Malagasy partners have been using an innovative outreach strategy whereby a network of community workers, called Key Informants (KIs), are trained to find and refer people in rural areas, especially women and children, in need of eye care.

KIs are trained on basic eye conditions and travel throughout nearby villages to identify people with eye disease. They encourage and counsel families to attend screening camps and take advantage of the services provided.

At a screening camp in Mandrosohasina, we had the opportunity to talk to Key Informant Florette Ravonimalaca and ask her about her job. Here's what she had to say:

Q: Florette, how did you become a Key Informant?

Florette: In 1998, I was nominated by my neighbours at a health project meeting. They picked me because they think I have a dynamic personality and an ability to convince people to come and get their eyes screened.

Q: What does a Key Informant do?

Florette: A Key Informant is a community health worker. We travel around the villages in our area and talk to people. We identify the people in a village who have potential vision

problems and provide them with information on how they can be helped. We do this by going house to house as well as attending church and community meetings.



FLORETTE AND HER DAUGHTER MINU AT THE SCREENING CAMP

Q: Do you have other jobs?

Florette: Yes, I am a farmer. I farm rice, legumes and I raise pigs. Being a Key Informant is a volunteer position but I believe that the improvement I make to the welfare of my community is important and I would not change it for the world.

Q: Why did you come to the screening today?

Florette: I believe it is important for me to witness the screenings and surgeries.

Many people are afraid. They believe that at these screenings their eyes will be removed but if I can accurately tell them what happens here and how it works, that can help convince them not to be afraid.

I also come here to meet other witnesses of the eye care work. I ask people who have been to a screening to come with me to church services and city council meetings to spread the word about the available eye care services. In this way I can discredit the myths around eye screenings.

Q: Tell us about your family.

Florette: I have four children, three boys and one girl. Today I brought my daughter Minu so she can learn more about what I do.

Q: Minu, what do you think about your mother's job as a Key Informant?

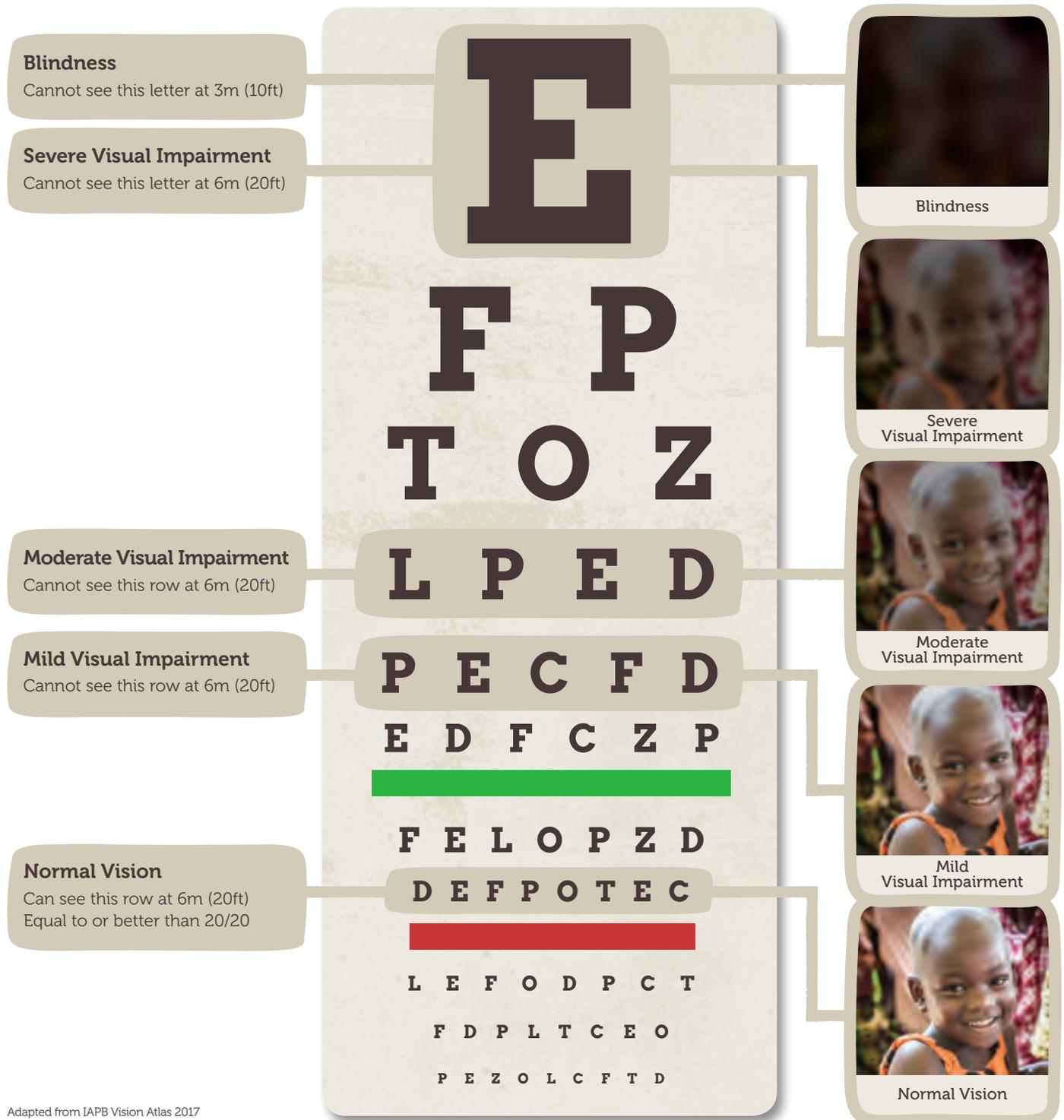
Minu: She is very busy today talking to the people she brought here and to people she hopes will come speak with her. I am very proud.

When I grow up, I hope to be a doctor so that I can have the same positive impact on our community.

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of Key Informants like Florette in Madagascar, more women and children are accessing eye care services and being given the power of sight.

VISUAL ACUITY AND THE EYE CHART

Learn how levels of visual impairment are determined during a screening. Categorization of visual impairment is based upon visual acuity, which is measured by a person's ability to read the different-sized letters in an eye chart such as the Snellen chart below.



A CATALYST FOR CHANGE



SIPCO STAFF AFTER AN ATV TEAM BUILDING EVENT IN WHISTLER

SIPCO is a proud family-owned company whose mission is to lead change by creating enzyme and other innovative solutions for a healthier planet. They are also a new corporate supporter of Seva Canada's!

Last year, SIPCO's Leadership Team engaged its employees to start a corporate philanthropy program. A sub-committee was formed and after careful consideration, Seva was selected as one of four charities to support.

The SIPCO team was shocked to learn that most blindness in low-income countries is treatable and that sight is critical to breaking the cycle of poverty. They were also inspired by the life-changing impact they could make through a donation.

SIPCO's initial contribution was used to host a surgical eye camp in Yushu, a predominantly Tibetan area of China. Thanks to the company's incredible generosity, 162 people received the power of sight through cataract surgery. Since then, SIPCO has been funding ongoing surgeries for Seva's program in Ngorongoro, Tanzania.

Thank you SIPCO for your commitment to our shared vision – a world in which no one is needlessly blind or visually impaired.



*“As part of our values, the SIPCO team strives to be **Socially** responsible in the way we operate and interact with others while maintaining the **Integrity** to simply do what is right. Our **Partnership** with Seva Canada has allowed us to further achieve our **Commitment** to take care of the environment and people around us and provide others with the **Opportunity** to achieve their full potential.”*

INSPIRING SEVA DONORS



Amevie

Amevie, a Canadian brand that designs bamboo sunglasses, has recently partnered with Seva Canada to provide children in low-income countries with prescription glasses through a buy-one-give-one program. "Even before I launched the business, I knew I wanted to tie-in my success with a charity endeavor. There is no greater satisfaction than that of helping others" says Amevie founder, Ana Caracaleanu.

"I started the business because of my own fight with a condition that makes me sensitive to the sun's ultra-violet (UV) rays. And when my mother was diagnosed with advanced cataract and almost went blind due to improper protection from the same UV rays, I knew that the first product I had to develop was sunglasses. At the same time, I wanted to work with a charity that helped others suffering from blindness, and Seva was the obvious fit."

So far, Amevie has helped 75 children see clearly with new prescription glasses! Visit www.amevie.com for sunglasses that give back.



Leanne Ellis

Leanne Ellis has been a volunteer and supporter of charities since she was a young girl. She first got involved with Seva Canada 10 years ago after a dear friend sent her a Gift of Sight card for her birthday. Leanne, an artist, sells her artwork locally in her hometown of Calgary, as well as online, and donates a portion of the proceeds to Seva.

"Knowing that my artwork will help someone see motivates me to create more art, which in turn helps create a better world for people in developing countries - it comes full circle. I hope others will consider supporting this worthwhile charity as well- people's lives are changed through generosity!"

To date, Leanne has raised over \$5,300 for Seva. That's enough to restore the sight of 106 people!

Check out Leanne's beautiful artwork on Etsy: <http://bit.ly/LeanneEllis>

INSPIRING SEVA DONORS CONTINUED

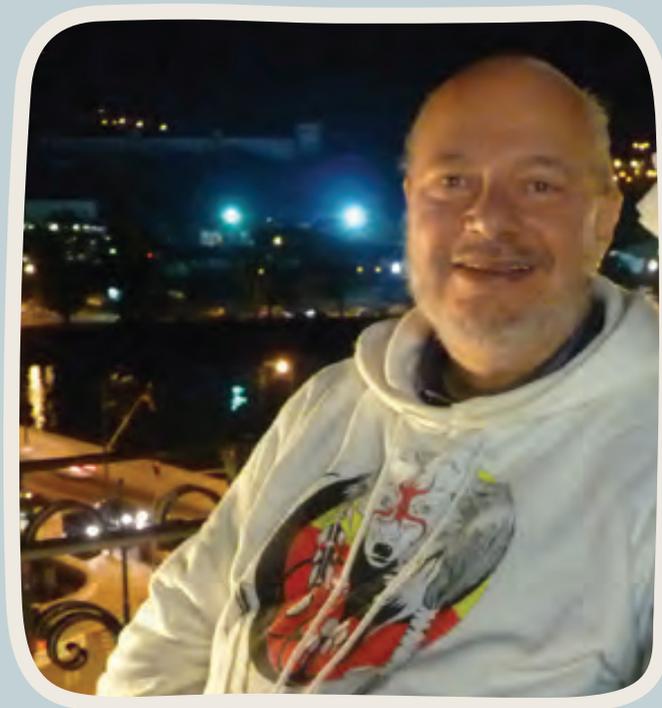


Chris Semenick

Chris Semenick grows dozens of varieties of dahlias in her garden in Comox, BC. Two years ago, she decided to use them to spread happiness and restore sight by selling bouquets, called 'Bouquets of Happiness x 3' in front of her house with proceeds going to Seva Canada.

"I have friends and relatives that have lost their sight to one degree or another and know it can profoundly affect a person's quality of life. Being able to help restore someone's sight is a privilege. I appreciate the work that Seva does delivering services where there are none, especially in two countries that I have spent time in: Nepal and Guatemala."

Chris' green thumb and generosity have given the power of sight to 30 people. She has recently expanded her garden and is looking forward to creating many more Bouquets of Happiness x 3!



Michael Rennie

Michael Rennie is a new Seva Canada donor who knows first-hand the profound and immediate impact eye care can have on someone's life. After undergoing two successful cataract operations covered by Canadian Medicare in 2016, Michael decided to pay it forward.

"I was so happy with the results that I wanted to share my good fortune with people in low-income countries who are unable to afford such life-changing surgery. As a public finance policy professional most of my working life, I naturally value accountability and cost-effectiveness."

On researching international eye health charities, Michael learned that Seva Canada received a 4-Star Rating from Charity Intelligence. Based on this rating, The Financial Post selected Seva as one of the top eight international charities, and one of the top 23 Canadian charities overall for 2017.

"Along with the excellent work Seva does, that was enough for me confidently to allocate my donation to Seva."

Thanks to Michael's generosity, 30 people in low-income countries can receive life-changing cataract surgery.

CALENDAR SALE!

50% OFF



NOW JUST \$15!



Our 12-month calendar by international award-winning photographer and longtime Seva Canada supporter, Dr. Larry Louie, is now just \$15 plus tax! Get it while supplies last.

This high-quality calendar, celebrating Seva Canada's 35th Anniversary, showcases Larry's exquisite, internationally acclaimed, black and white photos printed on premium matte paper. All proceeds go directly to restoring a person's sight.

"What photography has shown me most clearly is the perseverance that marks people the world over, and the light that is sometimes found in the darkest of places." - Dr. Larry Louie

Buy it online at <http://bit.ly/2018Sevacalendar> or call 1-877-460-6622 toll-free

YOUR GIFT...
THEIR VISION



"I'm so happy, nothing compares to vision."

- Seva cataract patient

A gift in your Will changes lives. After you've remembered your loved ones, consider a gift to Seva Canada and give the power of sight for generations to come.

Call 604-713-6622 or email fundraising@seva.ca for more information.

THERE ARE NO WORDS



PEMBI BEFORE SURGERY

Pembi Sherpa, a Nepalese teenager living in a remote village near Khandbari, should be going to school and dreaming of a bright future but instead she was sad, depressed and saw a long, dark life ahead of her.

While in grade 6, Pembi started having difficulty in school; she could no longer see the blackboard and follow what was being taught. Feeling hopeless, she quit school and began taking care of her older brother's children and doing

housework to help her mother. As her vision worsened, even routine tasks became impossible. She often wondered what kind of future she would have if she couldn't see.



PEMBI AFTER SURGERY

Pembi's mother learned of a Seva eye camp being held nearby, and with her heart full of hope that her daughter's vision could be restored, travelled with Pembi to the site.

At the camp, the eye care team determined that Pembi had cataracts in both eyes and performed sight-restoring surgery. After her bandages were removed, Pembi was so happy and excited that she was speechless. "There are no words to express my joy and happiness. I can't wait to start my new life!" said Pembi while her mother welled up with tears.



PEMBI SEEING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS!

HOW YOU HAVE HELPED

TOGETHER, WE ARE REACHING THE UNREACHED, RESTORING SIGHT AND TRANSFORMING LIVES.



Over the holidays, Seva Canada held a special 35th Anniversary campaign to help the world's most vulnerable people – women, children and those living in extreme poverty and isolation – receive the eye care they need and deserve. A generous donor, grateful for her own vision, provided a match of \$80,000 so that donations were doubled and supporters could help twice as many people.

The Seva community gave generously and more than \$165,000 was raised to help ensure the power of sight is within everyone's reach.

Your donations ensure that life-changing eye care is brought to the doorsteps of those most in need. These people will never know your name, but will be forever grateful for the gift of sight. Thank you.

EQUAL RIGHT TO SIGHT – HELP GIRLS SEE



WHILE GENDER EQUITY IN EYE CARE IS IMPROVING FOR ADULTS, GIRLS REMAIN FAR LESS LIKELY TO RECEIVE CARE THAN BOYS.



At Seva Canada, we believe that women and girls are as deserving of sight as men and boys. Thanks to programs funded by donors like you, gender equity in the provision of eye care in low-income countries is improving for adults and more women are now accessing care than ever before.

Sadly, this improvement has not extended to girls, who remain half as likely to receive eye care than boys. This is because girls face a double layer of inequity – the same barriers as their mothers and the added challenge of being a child, unable to advocate for themselves.

Thanks to the support of our donors, Seva is advocating for girls just as we did for women – by helping eye hospitals and clinics understand the need, importance and enduring value of giving girls the power of sight and the chance at a brighter future.

Your gift today will invest in programs, personnel and treatment at the community level, where extraordinary efforts are needed to convince families to bring in their girls for treatment.

Together, we can ensure that girls living with blindness and visual impairment receive the eye care they need and deserve.



YES! I want to give the power of sight and help girls see.

Please accept my gift of: \$ _____

I prefer to give by:

Visa MasterCard

My cheque to Seva Canada is enclosed

Credit Card # _____

Exp. date _____

Cardholder Name _____

Signature _____

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A tax-deductible donation will be issued to the name on the cheque or credit card.

Please send your donation to Seva Canada using the enclosed envelope or visit seva.ca/help-girls-see

Seva Canada Society
Suite 100 – 2000 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V6J 2G2

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

RESTORE SIGHT AND PREVENT BLINDNESS. EVERY MONTH.

Join ForSight, Seva Canada's community of monthly donors committed to providing the means, opportunity, and capacity for people in low-income countries to receive surgery, glasses and medicine that they need to build brighter futures. For more information, visit our website at seva.ca/monthly-giving or call 1-877-460-6622.

FOR SIGHT

"It hits my heart because sight is the most important thing in the whole world. By giving sight to people in remote areas – young and old people – you're giving them a job and freeing them to live independent lives."

– Current monthly donor

ABOUT SEVA CANADA

SEVA'S VISION

Seva Canada's vision is a world in which no one is needlessly blind or visually impaired.

SEVA'S MISSION

Seva Canada's mission is to restore sight and prevent blindness in developing countries.

SEVA'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We are guided by:

- Our belief in equal access to eye care for all
- Our belief that with adequate resources, all people can meet their own needs
- Our commitment to working with international partners to build local, sustainable eye care programs
- Our respect for cultural, ethnic, spiritual and other forms of diversity
- Our commitment to inform and inspire Canadians to join us in achieving our mission

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