

Daily Point of Light Award (6-1-04)

DAILY POINT OF LIGHT AWARD PAST WINNER



BLIND FOUNDATION FOR INDIA

Naperville , IL
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Dr. Rajendra Vyas, founder of the National Association for the Blind, India visited Chicago in 1988. Dr. Vyas shared the information that there are 13 million blind people in India, which accounts for 1/3 of the world's blind population. To help those blind people in India, Dr. Manu Vora established the Blind Foundation for India (BFI) in 1989. BFI was created to prevent and cure blindness and provide education and rehabilitation to permanently blind people in India.

They target the youngest child who could lose eyesight by the ages of five and six. The BFI offers measles vaccinations and an oral Vitamin A dose every six months. BFI also has 67 mobile vans in the field that carry ophthalmologists from various medical centers to the villages. The doctors then conduct eyesight checks, and those patients in need of operations are transported by the vans to the hospital.

In addition to the prevention and cure, BFI provides education. There are an estimated two million blind children in India, and only 5% of them receive any education. BFI provides a Braille kit, which helps them to learn along with other sighted children. BFI also provides rehabilitation and mentors patients who have eye operations. They provide the proper training to make them able to return to their normal day-to-day activities.

BFI has had a tremendous impact since its inception. In excess of 60,000 children have been vaccinated against measles and given Vitamin A to save their eyesight. More than 60,000 have had their sight restored as a result of cataract removal, and an excess of One Million people have been treated through BFI sponsored Free Eye Camps. Children in all States of India have received 6,000 Braille kits and support has also been provided for training blind adults. In addition, blind men and women are trained so they can work and be productive citizens.

Since 2000, BFI has teamed up with Rotary International on five "Matching Grant" projects for eye hospital equipments. Rotary plays the significant role in multiplying donations by a factor of three. An additional six projects on "Preventable Blindness" were carried out with Matching Grants from Rotary International, and due to the donations and volunteer efforts, a cataract operation costs about \$20.

BFI has been changing lives since 1989. They have no paid staff; volunteers solely run them. The dedicated servants have successfully raised \$2 million to date for its work to continue to change lives around the world. For more information on BFI, visit: <http://www.blindfoundation.org>

The Daily Point of Light Award honors individuals and volunteer groups that have made a commitment to connect Americans through service to help meet critical needs in their communities. It focuses on the goals for children and youth set by the President's Summit for America's Future. Each weekday, one volunteer or volunteer effort in the country receives a Daily Point of Light Award.

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