

# Spotlight on Charities

## Vision India

*You may remember this wonderful charity from our Christmas Drive article last month. Here, Nancy Zrymiak looks at the tremendous work Vision India does.*

Vision India is one of 25 charities that the OWC helps to fund. Specifically, we are involved with 'Abayashram,' Vision India's rehabilitation centre for mentally ill and vagrant women. Abayashram, located twenty minutes east of Whitefield, currently provides residential care and treatment to 35 abused and abandoned women. The women are literally picked up off the street; many are mentally ill, some are HIV/AIDS afflicted, and some are pregnant.

Vision India provides free care and a temporary home for the women, anywhere from six months to two years depending on their needs. As you can imagine their needs are great and varied. Luckily a nearby hospital offers free consultation to the women and reduced fees for treatment. A psychiatrist visits periodically and a Social Worker is on hand for behavioural and occupational therapy, counselling, nutrition and much more.

The ultimate goal is to rehabilitate the women back to their families and homes whenever possible. First, medical and psychiatric needs must be met. Next, Vision India provides skill training in stitch craft, household work and gardening with the hopes of teaching each individual to lead an independent life. Then comes the difficult task of finding the woman's family and educating them about her illness and needs. Once a family accepts the woman back, follow-up visits to the home are made twice a year to address any concerns and to check on her well-being.

You may wonder who would take it upon themselves to run a place like Abayashram; who would want to spend their life taking care of destitute women? It all began with an amazing woman named Daisy Mathew who started out as a crèche teacher and then studied and received her Masters in Social Work. In 1996 Daisy founded Vision India "to optimise the potentials of the less endowed through measures of empowerment that would ensure them economic independence and social dignity."

Sadly, Daisy passed away in 2007 from cancer. Her death was a huge blow to the charity but co-founder Joby Varghese



Photo by Nancy Zrymiak

Joby Varghese with the Vision India Display at the 2010 OWC Charity Road Show

readily took over the lead role. Today Daisy is remembered and her mission is carried on. To date Vision India has rehabilitated 165 abandoned women.

In December, Dixie Harvey and I delivered Christmas gifts to the women on behalf of the OWC Christmas Drive. The ladies were shy but happy to see visitors. And then to receive a wrapped gift - they were thrilled and thankful.

Vision India currently rents a small building in a quiet area, surrounded by farm land. It is sparsely furnished with just the basic necessities. But then again compared to living on the street - having a roof over ones head and a full stomach means a lot. Over the next few months the OWC will be working with Joby to fund a project that will help improve the lives of the women.

The work at Vision India is challenging and difficult; each woman needs individual care and guidance. But with dedication from Joby and the trustees, and with donations and help from the caring community, Vision India will continue to help the mentally ill and homeless women of Bangalore.

Female volunteers are always needed to visit and help with simple rehabilitation activities such as crafts and gardening. If you would like to know more about Vision India or want to know how you can help please visit their website: <http://www.vision-india.net.in/>