

THE JOY OF GIVING

By Swami Aksharananda

Saraswati Vidya Niketan (SVN) is a private Hindu based secondary school located at Cornelia Ida, West Coast Demerara, Guyana. Its primary philosophy is to explore and integrate the rich and perennial values of Sanatana Dharma in a modern system of education.

The buildings of the institution were erected at an enormous cost, funded mainly by charitable bodies, individuals and families mostly based in the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands.

SVN has also benefited enormously from essentially the same group in

to overcome otherwise insurmountable hardships and difficulties to reach a position where he is able to offer a service that is of matchless class and quality. But he has also reached a position where in his words, "It's time to give back," and this he is doing with a great heart and rare generosity.

Before writing about



From left: Nardeo Singh, Tony Subraj, George Subraj, Swami Aksharananda, Andy Rambarose, Lake Persaud and Steve Subraj.

a total of 60 Desktop CPU's and Flat Panel Monitors, a quad-core server, network printer, projection screens and other network

the American Sevashram Sangha as well as computer centres established in Guyana.

But one of George's most spectacular charitable endeavors was the role he played in the historic first kidney transplant performed in Guyana. A very good friend of mine went to India a few years ago for a kidney transplant, and SVN has assisted other persons who subsequently went to the same destination for the same purpose. So, when I heard about a kidney transplant being contemplated in Guyana, I was intrigued and began to follow the events with great interest.

George brought to Guyana a team of medical specialists who, with the cooperation of the Government of Guyana, successfully performed the first kidney transplant at the Public Hospital,

Georgetown. Just as on 12th April 1967 history was created when Dr. Chris Barnard performed the world's first heart transplant in South Africa, so too on 12th July 2008 history was created in Guyana: the first kidney transplant on the soil of Guyana, and the man who made all the possible, the man behind the history was George Subraj. A man goes above and beyond the call of duty.

It was at this juncture that George became involved with SVN and made the commitment to have a state of the art computer centre established at the school. After a few more meetings and a number of e-mails back and forth SVN gave the undertaking that the room would be made ready for this purpose. Andy Rambarose, a friend of George's from New York, offered to complete the air conditioning, and Sham Mahadeo, George's nephew and furniture manufacturer of La Jalousie, West Coast Demerara provided all the furniture at a discounted price.

CCS (A member of the Neil & Massey Group of Companies), of Ruimveldt was retained to complete the networking and once this

was done George had the computers, A Quad Core Server forty (40) Dell Desktops with 22 inch flat panel monitors and other network equipment, shipped to Guyana by air. As soon as all the computers were hooked up, George and his team including his son Tony Subraj (IT Specialist) along with Nardeo Singh (New York based IT Consultant) and my friend Lake Persaud, Andy Rambarose, Jas Persaud arrived in Guyana and personally supervised and finished the configuration along with the internet connectivity so everything was in place for the grand opening on Sunday 16th August.

Thanks to this wonderful human being and his family, SVN now boasts of one of the most sophisticated and modern computer training found in any school anywhere in the Caribbean. Indeed, it is more than a computer centre, it is a complete multi-media center equipped with projectors, speakers and a pull down screen, and is destined to play a vitally important role in the delivery of the school's curricu-



George Subraj (third from right), Health Minister Leslie Ramsammy (fourth from left) and others, with the team of medical specialists who successfully performed the first kidney transplant at the Public Hospital, Georgetown on 12th July 2008.

having the school equipped in many ways with modern facilities and amenities, whether they be computers, printers, photocopy machines, scanners etc. The latest massive injection of funds, perhaps the largest single investment in education in Guyana by anyone person, into SVN has come from US-based Guyanese businessman and philanthropist, Mr. George Subraj, who is the president of Zara Luxury Apartments and Homes in Queens, NY.

George, as is the case with many Guyanese who migrated to the United States, started his eminently successful business life in a humble way as an ordinary person working for a minimum wage, but with his dedication, determination and discipline he was able

George's contribution to SVN, it's important to point out that he, along with other members of his own and extended family, has a history of charitable engagements both in Guyana and the United States. In New York, for example, Zara Realty in collaboration with Nardeo Singh (IT Consultant, BJK Computer & Business Solutions Inc.), Sarwan Budhu (SKB Exterminating) funded the establishment of a modern computer centre at the American Sevashram Sangha, under the leadership direction of HH Swami Vidyananda Maharaj. In his native Guyana, another member of the Subraj family, Mr. Jay Sobhraj, a senior executive of Zara Luxury Apartments and Homes, Mr. Nardeo Singh and Mr. Sarwan Budhu has similarly funded the installation of another computer centre at the Guyana Sevashram Sangha, at Cove-and-John on the East Coast of Guyana. These two centres have



The Zara Computer Learning Center in Guyana

lum. In this whole enterprise what perhaps stands out most conspicuously was the meticulous care with which George Subraj supervised the project from beginning to end.

He was as enthusiastic as anyone of the students who were the beneficiaries and was

doggedly uncompromising in his demand for quality. It was a strange and rare mix of generosity and charity with zeal and determination.

Another outstanding feature of the way George handled the project was his concern that the recipients themselves were worthy of his charity. He was blunt,

and respectfully and candidly stated that he investigated the institution and all its principals including the head before he made up his mind on the computer project. His policy of not giving money but delivering the project instead is one that is worthy of emulation.

In concluding, it should be

noted that George has a particular perspective on publicity in charitable work, that is perhaps not different from that of say Oprah Winfrey or for that matter Bill Gates. When Winfrey started her special school for girls in South Africa it was a major news item all over the world. Similarly, when Bill Gates spreads his munificence

whether in Africa, Asia or South America, the world knows of it. The camera and the press are invariably present.

So where does George come in? He believes that his charitable works should be publicized not because of any selfish indulgence. He does not need it. He always says in all humility that he

has been blessed with more than his needs. His main interest in publicity is his hope that knowledge of what he does may inspire and motivate others to do their part according to their capacity.

This too is our hope.



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