

VeAhavta

Volume II, Issue 2

May 30, 2004



- The word "VeAhavta" is a Hebrew verb meaning, "you shall love."
- VeAhavta is a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation, exempt from taxes pursuant to IRS Code section 501(c)(3).
- Through VeAhavta, we seek to fulfill our privilege to love our neighbors – to help repair the world – by providing charitable assistance to low income, destitute and displaced persons, and promoting peace, understanding and mutual respect among people of different religions through education.

Inside This Issue:

Grace Home Filled to Capacity	3
"ePals" Program to Start at Grace Care Center	3
School Bus Purchased for Grace Care Center	3
VTC Expanded at the Grace Care Center	4
Report of Annual Visit to Sri Lanka 2003	4
Rev. Jeyanesan Tours North America	5
2004 Annual Visit to Sri Lanka	5
The "Golden Rule" and the Discipline of Empathy	6
Profiles of Our Children: Prabalini Manirasah	7
"Sponsor an Elder" Started at Mercy Home	8
VeAhavta to Develop Ecumenical Center	8
VeAhavta Website Revised	8
Recent Photos from the Grace Care Center	9
Words to Arouse, Challenge & Inspire	9

Mercy Home to Open August 1, 2004

Mercy Home is scheduled to open in Trincomalee on August 1, 2004 – just a few months from now. Through Mercy Home, VeAhavta and the Church of South India will provide free full-time residential nursing home care for 100 destitute senior citizens – the “abandoned of society” from all castes and religions who, if not cared for, would spend the end of their lives mired in loneliness, pain and sorrow. With your help, we can

provide these “poorest of the poor” with a loving environment in which to spend their final days.

You can see the final building plans and budget for Mercy Home on our website: www.you-shall-love.org.

The cost to build and fully furnish Mercy Home will be approximately \$140,000, of which we still need to raise about \$90,000. Won't you consider helping us with this important project? You may donate on-line, at our

website, or by mail using the form that the end of this newsletter. Please help us to care for our neighbors in need. Thank you!



Mercy Clinic, Phase I, to Open August 1, 2004

In early 2003, and in an effort to help combat the healthcare crisis in the north and east of Sri Lanka, VeAhavta appointed a small Medical Committee comprised of eminently-qualified and deeply dedicated physicians to study the problem and offer a recommended course of action.

The Medical Committee members are: Steven Bowen, M.D., a family physician from San Luis Obispo, California, who has twice conducted free clinics in Sri Lanka and is the Chairperson of the Committee; Naresh Guna-

ratnam, M.D., director of clinical research for the Department of Internal Medicine at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Justin Yax, D.O., a third-year resident of Internal Medicine at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan, who last year participated in the 10-day medical clinic conducted at the Grace Care Center and examined all of the children of Grace Home, Trincomalee, and St. John's Home, Batticaloa; and Larry Hirsch, M.D., a Director of VeAhavta and an obstetrician in San

Luis Obispo, California.

We are also very privileged to have the following dedicated professionals serving as advisors: Lakshmi Halasyamani, M.D., Associate Chair of Internal Medicine at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Ali Yazdani, M.D., a lecturer at the University of Michigan, Division of Gastroenterology; Preeti Malani, M.D., a fellow in geriatrics at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, Oregon; Rushika Fernandopulle, M.D., M.P.P., Executive Director

(See, Mercy Clinic, p. 2)

Mercy Clinic

of the Harvard Interfaculty Program for Health Systems Improvement; Uma Mahadevan, M.D., Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology at the University of California San Francisco and Director of Clinical Research, Center for Colitis and Crohn's Disease.

Finally, we are also pleased to have **Trinity Health International** (THI) assisting us with the staffing and training needs on this project. THI, formerly known as Mercy International Health Services, has over 20 years experience providing technical assistance, training, consulting and management services to governments, ministries of health and private healthcare organizations around the world. As a subsidiary of Trinity Health, one of the largest non-profit healthcare systems in the United States, THI has access to over 40,000 employees and 46 hospitals, numerous long-term care facilities, home health and hospice programs, and senior housing communities in seven states. These resources are utilized, as appropriate, in the provision of high quality services to our clients. THI has conducted more than 170 healthcare projects in 39 countries around the world.

A heartfelt THANK YOU! to the Medical Committee members and advisors; and also to Patricia Williams, the Director of THI, and Dr. Rolland Mambourg, a THI Trustee, for their work on this important project.

The VeAhavta Committee recommended the following two-phase plan which was then adopted and implemented by the VeAhavta Board of Directors:

Mercy Clinic - Phase One

In Phase One, VeAhavta will develop an unconventional medical clinic as an adjunct to Mercy Home on the Grace Care Center property in Trincomalee. When completed, Mercy Clinic will provide medical care for the residents of the Grace Care Center (i.e., the orphans, wid-

ows, daycare children and elders), and will serve as a "pilot project" for the development of a larger public facility to be developed during Phase Two. Phase One of Mercy Clinic will contain the following facilities:

1. Treatment and In-Patient Care

Within Mercy Home – Two large rooms will be designed in the development plan of Mercy Home that will accommodate the following facilities: two examination rooms complete with modern medical equipment, a pharmacy, a laboratory, a separate in-patient ward that will accommodate 10 beds, and an area for the storage of patient records.

2. *Isolation Ward* – A building, separate from Mercy Home and able to accommodate 10 beds, will be developed for use as an isolation ward. The isolation ward will accommodate residents of the Care Center who have been diagnosed with infectious diseases such as tuberculosis.

3. *"Teledoc"* – Another building, separate from Mercy Home and the isolation ward, will be developed to house an office that will be used to launch "Teledoc" - an "eHealth" pilot program designed to provide health care to people in IDPs and villages in the Trincomalee area. This program will be developed in conjunction with JIVA, a non-profit corporation based in India. The building will contain a climate-controlled office that will accommodate the Teledoc hardware and a separate residential facility for visiting healthcare providers.

4. *Mobile Clinic* – Finally, Mercy Clinic will also include a "clinic-on-wheels" or a "mobile clinic." This mobile clinic will be an ambulance-style, 4-wheel-drive vehicle that will be equipped with modern medical equipment. Mobile clinic will be used in conjunction with and/or to provide support for the Teledoc project.

Mercy Clinic - Phase Two

Phase Two of the Mercy Clinic medical facilities will be either a clinic or a hospital that will be open to the public and built on property that is separate from the Grace Care Center. The scope and design

of Phase Two will depend, in large part, upon what we learn during Phase One and the recommendations of the VeAhavta Medical Committee.

We Need Your Involvement

Mercy Clinic, Phase One, is scheduled to open on August 1, 2004, but we still need your support to complete the construction of the facility by that date and to staff and maintain the facility once it becomes operational. Won't you join us in reaching out to help our neighbors in Sri Lanka? You can help by making tax-deductible donations to VeAhavta. If you are a healthcare provider, or even if you aren't but just want to get involved in a "hands-on" manner, you can further assist us by providing volunteer services at the facility in Sri Lanka or via the Internet when the Teledoc program becomes operational.

You may make donations via our website or by mail (please see the form at the end of this newsletter).

If you would like to volunteer your services at Mercy Clinic, please complete the form and the end of this newsletter and mail it to us. We'd love to have your help. You can also join our Mercy Clinic Discussion Group by pointing your web browser to:

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/veahavtamercyclinic/>

Thank you for your support!



Grace Home Filled to Capacity

We are pleased to announce that Grace Home – the girl’s orphanage at the Grace Care Center – is now filled to capacity and that all 100 children have financial sponsors! The final nine children were all sponsored by families and individuals who attended Rev. Jeyanesan’s talk in Lancaster, California, on February 28, 2004. On behalf of our children in Sri Lanka, a special THANK YOU to all of our sponsors!

“ePals” Program to Start at Grace Care Center

How would you like to correspond with your children in Sri Lanka via email, see recent photographs of them and send them recent photographs of you and your family? Thanks to the creative thinking of Dr. Lakshmi Halasyaman and Dr. Naresh Gunaratnam, both of Ann Arbor, Michigan, you will be able to do all of these things very soon through our “ePals” program.

More than just a way of enabling sponsors to become more involved in

the daily lives of their children in Sri Lanka, the “ePals” program will match all of the children at the Grace Care Center with electronic “pen-pals” (“ePals”) from an elementary school in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The ePals program will allow the children to exchange letters, pictures and photographs and form overseas friendships.

The ePals program is expected to go on-line sometime within the next few months, so please check our website frequently for updates.

School Bus Purchased for Grace Care Center

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, VeAhavta was able to provide the Grace Care Center with a new school bus to replace the old bus that was being rented to take our children to school each day. The cost of the bus was approximately \$26,000. The funds were wired on April 6, 2004, and the new bus arrived on May 5. It was then painted to identify it as the Grace Care Center bus.

In addition to providing transportation for school, the bus will also be used for field trips and other activities. Since most of the children at Grace Home have never even been to Colombo, having the bus opens up a new world for them.

Our thanks to the donors who contributed to this project.



Left: The New Bus
Above: All Aboard!
Below: The now-retired “Bondo Bus”



Vocational Training Center Expanded at Grace Care Center

On October 1, 2003, VeAhavta and the Church of South India opened the Grace Vocational Training Center (VTC) on the Grace Care Center at a cost of approximately \$19,000. Through the Grace VTC, VeAhavta is providing needy youths and widows with no-cost educational opportunities that provide a long-term solution to the devastating effects of poverty.

Initially, the training programs offered through the VTC included carpentry and computers. However, on April 9, 2004, VeAhavta extended an additional grant of \$11,390 to purchase the capital equipment and hire the instructors needed to include vocational training courses in sewing, welding, masonry and bicycle repair. The first full class of the Grace VTC will begin their studies in the Fall of 2004, and through the facility, we will be able to train 90 students per year.

The six-month training programs



Grace Home children in the expanded computer room

being offered by the Grace VTC are only available to destitute girls and women, who are among the least empowered and most vulnerable of the various groups in Sri Lankan society. Although the courses being offered do not fall within the ambit of "traditional women's work," the need for skilled workers in the disciplines for which we are providing training

Center, especially if you have teaching skills. With your help, we can provide our neighbors with the skills they need to lift themselves out of poverty and to have meaningful lives.

To make a donation or volunteer, please use the form at the end of this newsletter. Thank you for your support!

and the desire of women to receive such training compel us to move outside what may be considered the "realm of the traditional."

The Grace VTC will be managed by Rev. S. Jeyanesan and Mr. L.R. David of St. John's VTC in Batticaloa until a suitable female candidate is appointed principal. The tremendously successful St. John's VTC was started in 1988 by Rev. Jeyanesan. You can help the Grace VTC by donating to the program or by volunteering at the Care

Report of Annual Visit to Sri Lanka (Sept. 29 to Oct. 12, 2003)

VeAhavta's annual on-site inspection of the Grace Care Center took place last year between September 29 and October 12. The participants this year were: Jill Horner-Jencks, Steven Boothe, Scott Peterson, Colin Lewis, Anna Lyons, Steven Bowen, Justin Yax and Eric Parkinson. What follows is a brief description of the trip.

The official opening of the Grace Vocational Training Center took place on September 29. Initial courses at the VTC included



Dr. Justin Yax (left) and Dr. Steven Bowen (right) taking a well-deserved break from the medical camp.

carpentry and computers. (For additional developments since the opening, see *Vocational Training Center Expanded at Grace Care Center*, supra.)

A medical camp was conducted at the Grace Care Center for 10 days beginning on September 29, during which time approximately 22,000 patients were seen. Dr. Steven Bowen from San Luis Obispo and Dr. Justin Yax from Ann Arbor, Michigan, participated along with 18 other physicians and healthcare providers

(See, *Annual Visit 2003*, p. 5)

Annual Visit 2003

from around the world.

On September 30, the children of Grace Home and Grace Daycare put on a Sports Meet. Colin Lewis of San Luis Obispo was the “Chief Guest” for the Meet. The event was well-attended by the public and all of the children had a wonderful time.

On October 2, members of the visiting team distributed food packets, water bottles, Vitamin A supplements, and gifts donated by Samaritan’s Purse, to 100 families surviving in the Valaichchenai IDP camp outside of Batticaloa. Each food and water package was designed to feed a family of five for 15 days. The total cost for the food packets and the rental of a truck to carry the packages to the camp was just \$450. Extra Samaritan’s Purse presents were distributed to other orphanages in the Batticaloa area.

On the evening of October 2, a barbeque party was held at St. John’s as has been the tradition now for the past three years. The party included children from St. John’s Girls Home,



Line at the entrance of the Grace Care Center during the medical camp

St. John’s Boys Home, and students and staff from the St. John’s Vocational Training Center.

On Saturday, October 4, youth began to arrive in Trincomalee for the Second Annual Grace Youth Camp.

Rev. Scott Peterson of Grace Church, San Luis Obispo, was, once again, the featured speaker. The Youth Camp lasted until Tuesday, October 7.

Rev. Jeyanesan Tours North America

Rev. S. Jeyanesan was, once again, the featured speaker for VeAhavta’s Fourth Annual Third World Cleric’s Tour conducted between February 28 and March 30 of this year. Rev. Jeyanesan’s speaking engagements included stops in San Luis Obispo and Lancaster, California; Covenant Family Church in Redlands, California; Bellbrook United Methodist Church in Bellbrook, Ohio; Shalom Mennonite Church in Indianapolis, Indiana; St. Joseph’s Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Christ United Methodist Church in Staten Island, New York.

By his message, Rev. Jeyanesan sought to raise awareness of the current situation in Sri Lanka and he emphasized the need for people to become personally involved in the plight of the needy.

2004 Annual Visit to Sri Lanka

Our annual on-site inspection of the Grace Care Center will take place this year between July 24 and August 7. Anyone who would like to attend is welcome to join us.

The following projects are being planned for the trip this year:

1. Playground & Playroom Construction – We will construct an indoor playroom and an outdoor playground for the children of Grace Daycare.

2. Public Health Seminars – We will be conducting public seminars at the Grace Care Center and in villages and IDP camps located in the Trincomalee area on basic health care and sanitation.

3. The Garden of Tikvah (“Hope” in Hebrew) – We will be planting a garden at the Grace Care Center for the children to enjoy.

4. Children’s Art Courses – We will be offering art courses for any inter-

ested children at the Grace Care Center – not just as a way of allowing the children to have some fun, but also as a possible means of assisting the children in working through any traumatic experiences.

5. English as a Second Language – We will be offering to teach English as a second language to any interested children and adults at the Grace Care Center.

If you have an interest in any of these projects and would like to get involved, please contact us either through our website or by telephone. You can also join our email group to discuss the upcoming trip with others on-line; just point your browser to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/veahavtasrilanka2004/>

The “Golden Rule” and the Discipline of Empathy

(By Eric Parkinson)

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”
(Lev. 19:18)

“Do to no one what you would not
want done to you.” (Tobit 4:15)

“Always treat others as you would like
them to treat you; this sums up the
Torah and the Prophets.” (Matt. 7:12)

“If you can learn a simple trick, Scout,
you’ll get along a lot better with all
kinds of folks: You never really under-
stand a person until you consider
things from his point of view – until
you climb into his skin and walk
around in it.” (To Kill a Mockingbird,
by Harper Lee [Warner Books, 1982].)

A long-established tenet in Juda-
ism, affirmed by Jesus and, later
on, by Christianity, the so-called
“Golden Rule” is a teaching also
found in each of the world’s other ma-
jor religions as I am told by my
Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim broth-
ers and sisters. We all know what it
means; indeed, we have heard the
rule so often, it has probably become
platitude for most of us. But do we
truly understand what the Golden
Rule requires of us? And, more impor-
tantly, do we know how to practice it
effectively?

The Golden Rule implicitly de-
mands that we develop and practice
the discipline of empathy. “Empathy”
is the ability to intimately identify
with and deeply understand another
person’s feelings or difficulties. More
than simply feeling pity or sorrow for
the pain or distress of another (which
is “sympathy”), to empathize is to
understand life from another person’s
perspective – to see the world
through their eyes. Sympathy is a
step removed from empathy. Sympa-
thy can say, for example, “I don’t
know what it feels like to live in the
midst of a war, but I can see that it is
difficult for you and I feel sorry for
you.” Empathy says, “I have experi-
enced life in the midst of war or can
imagine what it must be like, and so I
can identify with how you feel.”

If we truly want to treat someone
else as we would want to be treated –
that is, if we have an honest desire to
practice the Golden Rule – then we
have to try to understand what life is
like from that “someone else’s” perspec-
tive. In other words, we have to prac-
tice the discipline of empathy.

If we choose *not* to practice the disci-
pline of empathy, if we choose *not* to
see life through the eyes of others but
instead remain preoccupied with our
own problems, needs and desires, then
– like eyesight that has atrophied – we
begin to lose our ability to see others in
need and, eventually, we become blind
to them altogether.

As an example, many of us Ameri-
cans today manage to ignore the desti-
tute by dismissing them as an
“economic problem” better left to so-
called “experts” to solve; or by relegat-
ing the responsibility of caring for them
to government or religious leaders; or
by engrossing ourselves in religious
studies, work, entertainment and other
distractions; or by claiming that we
lack the means to do anything about
poverty; or by simply pretending that
the destitute don’t exist. But the poor
are with us today in greater numbers
than ever before; we are just having
trouble seeing them.

UNICEF estimates that approxi-
mately 29,600 children under the age
of five die *daily* around the globe,
mostly from “preventable poverty con-
ditions.” That’s 10.8 million children
per year! (*The State of the World’s Chil-
dren 2003*, by Carol Bellamy [New
York, UNICEF, 2003], p. 87.) It also
estimates that the lives of most of
these 10.8 million children could be
saved each year for a total of approxi-
mately \$70 to \$80 billion. (*Id.*) This
seems like a lot of money, but is it
really a lot of money for Americans?

In 2002, according to data published
by the U.S. Department of Commerce,
Bureau of Economic Analysis, Ameri-
cans spent: \$633 billion on recreation
and entertainment, \$380 billion eating
out at restaurants, \$116 billion on alco-
hol, \$89 billion on tobacco products and
\$51 billion on jewelry. (*Personal Con-*

*sumption Expenditures by Type of
Expenditure in 2002*, U.S. Dept.
of Commerce, Bureau of Eco-
nomic Analysis.) Combined, the
expenditures in these categories
total \$1.26 trillion. So, for
around 6% of what Americans
spend per year on entertainment,
eating out, alcohol, tobacco and
jewelry, we could save the lives of
10.8 million children! These fig-
ures demonstrate that poverty is
a crisis of the heart, not an
“economic problem.”

“But,” some may say, “we give
to our church and our church is
helping the poor.” Unfortunately,
this is not usually the case.

In the 2001 version of their
annual study of church giving
(published Oct. 2003), the non-
profit “Empty Tomb, Inc.” found
that “per member giving” in the
American churches as a percent-
age of income now sits at just
2.66%. (*The State of Church Giv-
ing Through 2001*, by John and
Sylvia Ronsvalle, Empty Tomb,
Inc., 2003, p. 7.) More revealing,
however, is what is done with
this money once it is given to the
churches.

The Ronsvalle survey, which
has been conducted each year
since 1968, found that of the total
amount of money given to the
churches in 2001, only 15 cents
out of each dollar went to
“benevolences,” which they define
as “external expenditures, beyond
its own operations, for what
might be termed the larger mis-
sion of the church.” (*Id.*, p. 4.)
“Benevolences” include, however,
“support of denominational ad-
ministration at all levels, as well
as donations to denominational
seminaries and schools,” so if
these categories were removed,
the amount spent per dollar on
“benevolences” would undoubt-
edly be even less. (*Id.*) The re-
maining 85 cents out of each dol-
lar was utilized for what the

(See, *Empathy*, p. 7)

Empathy

study refers to as “congregational finances,” defined as “contributions directed to the internal operations of the individual congregation, including such items as the utility bills and salaries for the pastor and staff office, as well as Sunday school materials and capital programs.” (*Id.*) In aggregate numbers, funds used for “congregational finances” in 2001 totaled \$16.8 billion, while total funds given for “benevolences” totaled just \$2.9

billion. (*Id.*, App. B-1, p. 135.)

All of these figures make it clear that America is in a state of severe “ocular atrophy.” We are spending money on luxury items (i.e., “wants” as opposed to “needs”) while our neighbors are starving and dying. We are valuing possessions more than people. Our hearts are growing cold and we are becoming blind.

But there is a way to restore our eyesight. If we wish to see again, then we must *choose* to see life from the perspective of our neighbors – our brothers, sisters and children. We must put our-

selves into the shoes of others and walk around in them for a while. When we do this – when we choose to develop the discipline of empathy – our eyesight will be restored.

So start with this: If your biological children were among the 29,600 children under the age of five dying each day, what would you want the people in the richest country in the world to do about it?

Eric Parkinson is an attorney in San Luis Obispo, California, and an officer and director of VeAhavta.

Profiles of Our Children: Meet Prabalini Manirasah



January 19, 2003



October 4, 2003

Born in Kaddaivirichan, Sri Lanka, on April 3, 1993, Prabalini is now 11 years old. She was accepted into the Grace Home on January 19, 2003. Prabalini’s mother committed suicide when she was 4 (in 1997) and her father left her alone soon thereafter. Before coming to Grace Home, she lived with an aunt who was widowed and already had five children of her own. Prabalini likes to sing and aspires to one day own her own business. Like all children her age, Prabalini needs

love and she likes to play. Unlike many of the orphaned children in Sri Lanka, Prabalini is now receiving the love and care she needs at Grace Home and is spending time having fun with other children her age. Thanks to the generosity of VeAhavta’s donors and Prabalini’s sponsor in the United States, this beautiful little girl can finally be the carefree child that God intended her to be, and she also has the opportunity to fulfill her dreams in life, whatever those

dreams may be. Now that you know a bit about Prabalini, please look at your own children and then ask yourself this: If one of your biological children was all alone in a war zone, is there anything you wouldn’t do to try to help him or her? There are thousands of orphaned children in Sri Lanka and millions of others around the world who are waiting to be loved and cared for. Prabalini is one of the fortunate ones. Please help us care for others. Thank you.

“Sponsor an Elder” Started at Mercy Home

Prior to the opening of the Grace Care Center in August of 2002, VeAhavta started a program that would allow donors to “sponsor” children at Grace Home. For a commitment to sponsor and a donation of just \$25 per month, donors would receive a special “Sponsorship Packet” which included the name of their child, biographical data, a photograph and an invitation to become personally involved in providing for the non-material needs of their child through correspondence and even visits to the orphanage.

The Child Sponsorship Program was enormously successful. Grace Home is now filled to capacity (100 children) and each child is sponsored by individuals or families from the United States, the United Kingdom and Asia. More than providing for just the material needs of the children, sponsorship also benefits donors by giving them the opportunity

to make a real difference in a child’s life and the satisfaction of seeing their child bloom.

At the present time, we have no children to sponsor since Grace Home is filled to capacity and all of our children have been matched to sponsors. However, we have now started another sponsorship program, called “Sponsor an Elder,” that will allow donors to sponsor one or more of the 100 elders who will eventually occupy Mercy Home.

How “Sponsor an Elder” Works

The Sponsor an Elder Program will be similar to the Child Sponsorship Program. For a monthly contribution of \$40, a donor can provide for all of the material needs of an elder at Mercy Home, including a bed, clothing, food and medical care. The cost to sponsor an elder is more than the cost to sponsor a child due to the higher level of care – including, in particular, medical care –

that the elders will require.

Persons who participate in the Sponsor an Elder Program will receive a small plaque stating the donor’s name and country of residence, which will be a duplicate of the plaque that will be mounted on the bed occupied by their sponsored elder. Sponsors will also receive the name and a photograph of the elder being sponsored, along with any biographical data we are able to obtain.

If you would like to sponsor an elder, you may do so via our website or by mail (please see the donation form at the end of this newsletter). If you would like more information regarding Sponsor an Elder, please contact us and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your generous support!

VeAhavta to Develop Ecumenical Center

With the goals of fostering inter-faith dialog and providing a model for peaceful coexistence among people of different religions in Sri Lanka, the directors of VeAhavta have adopted a plan to develop the “House of Peace Ecumenical Center” (“HOPE Center”) at the Grace Care Center. Sri Lanka is a nation rich in religious diversity – approximately 70% of the population is Buddhist, 15% Hindu, 8% Christian and 7% Muslim. Most analysts who have studied the 20-year-plus civil war in Sri Lanka have concluded that, although religious differences play some role in the conflict, its origins are complex and stem more from ethnic as opposed to religious diversity. However, “faith-based violence” and “religious hate crime” seem to be on the rise, and the government is presently giving serious consideration to legislation prohibiting the “unethical conversion” of people from other religions. It could, therefore, be argued that tensions stemming from religious

differences are playing a greater role in the conflict today than they did in times past. These concerns have prompted VeAhavta to develop the new facility. HOPE Center will contain a common area to be used for gatherings and meetings and 4 separate “prayer rooms.” Although the common area will remain free of all religious ornaments and symbols, VeAhavta will invite respected local clerics from the Buddhist, Hindu, Catholic and Muslim faiths to adorn the inside of their prayer rooms in the manner of their choosing and to provide religious instruction in the rooms to the Grace Care Center residents. Our aspiration is that the HOPE Center will serve as a model for religious harmony in Sri Lanka and that it will, in some small way, contribute to the recent advancements made toward peace. The directors of VeAhavta realize that, for whatever reasons, some people may not feel comfortable participating in HOPE Center or even contributing funds for its construc-

tion. Therefore, our directors have resolved that only those funds specifically designated for “HOPE Center” will be used for the development and maintenance of the facility. VeAhavta will not use any unrestricted funds for HOPE Center. In this way, donors who do not wish to contribute to this new project can be assured that their unrestricted contributions will only be used for VeAhavta’s other programs.

VeAhavta Website Revised

As many of people have already noticed, the VeAhavta website was completely revised this year at the beginning of May.

The website now contains more information about VeAhavta, more complete descriptions of our programs and much more information for volunteers. Please visit the site at www.you-shall-love.org and let us know what you think.

Recent Photos from the Grace Care Center



Words to Arouse, Challenge & Inspire

A rabbi asked his students, "When is it at dawn that one can tell the light from the darkness?" One student replied, "When I can tell a goat from a donkey." "No," answered the rabbi. Another said, "When I can tell a palm tree from a fig." "No," answered the rabbi again. "Well, then what is the answer?" his students pressed him. "Only when you look into the face of every man and every woman and see your brother and your sister," said the rabbi. "Only then have you seen the light. All else is still darkness." (Hasidic parable)

"There is much suffering in the world – physical, material, mental. The suffering of some can be blamed on the greed of others. The material and physical suffering is suffering from hunger, from homelessness, from all kinds of diseases. But the greatest suffering is being lonely, feeling unloved, having no one. I have

come more and more to realize that it is being unwanted that is the worst disease that any human being can ever experience." (Mother Teresa)

"Do not weigh, as it were in scales, the importance or the insignificance of your acts, as long as they are acts of righteousness; and do not speculate and say, 'I will not do this or that because it is only a small or light act in the scale of God's commandments; I will therefore rather perform a more important act, and my reward will be correspondingly greater.' For this reason God hath concealed the nature of the reward for carrying out his statutes. A certain king hired workmen to cultivate his garden, but did not tell them what the reward would be for raising each kind of fruit or plant, for if he had done so the workmen

would one and all have endeavored to produce the fruit for which the highest wage was promised, and the other products would have been neglected. Yet there are two commandments, one apparently of slight and the other of great importance, for which precisely the same reward is promised: (1) that of sending away the dam [the the female parent of an animal] and retaining its young, for the carrying out of which well-being and long life are promised; and (2) the honoring of parents, for which the same reward is assured. This demonstrates what we maintain, that it is not for man to define the smallness or greatness of a godly act, or the nature and quality of the rewards. It is sufficient to know that the doing of God's will carries with it reward for trust and for doing it simply because we are told to do so." (Midrash Tanhuma)

VeAhavta
A Nonprofit Corporation

1190 Marsh Street, Suite B
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Phone/Fax: 805.542.9357
Tax ID No. 77-0577817

www.you-shall-love.org



Will You Help?

(Please Cut Out This Form And Mail It With Your Donation)

MAIL TO: VeAhavta, a Nonprofit Corporation, 1190 Marsh Street, Suite B, San Luis Obispo, California 93401

Dear VeAhavta:

I want to help my neighbors in Sri Lanka. Enclosed is my donation, payable to "VeAhavta," which I understand is tax deductible. **Please use the enclosed gift as indicated:**

\$_____ *Grace Home (Girls Orphanage)* \$_____ *Grace Daycare* \$_____ *Mercy Home*

\$_____ *Widows' Empowerment Project* \$_____ *Grace Vocational Training Center*

\$_____ *Sponsor an Elder at Mercy Home (\$40 per month)* \$_____ *Mercy Clinic*
(Total number of elders you would like to sponsor: _____)

\$_____ *Third World Clerics Speaking Tours* \$_____ *House of Peace Ecumenical Center (HOPE Center)*

\$_____ *Where needed most* \$_____ **TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED**

_____ *I would like to volunteer. Please send me information.* Please print name & contact information below:

_____ email: _____

Thank you for caring and giving so that others may know the love of a neighbor. Should any fund be oversubscribed, excess funds will be channeled to an equally deserving need unless you indicate otherwise. VeAhavta is a 501(c)(3) registered charity; all donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Thank you for your generous support!