

South and Central Asia (SCA) Highlights

The Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (SOSA)



The South and Central Asia (SCA) region has been redefined by the Department of State since AAFSW began its SOSA program in 1990. Many of the “stan” countries that were once part of the European bureau now belong to SCA. We, therefore, list these countries and their nominations on page 11.

The Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA), made up of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, bands together countries in close geographical proximity yet with diverse religious/ethnic/cultural origins, varying degrees of poverty, and differing levels of economic development. The region has been challenged by ongoing conflicts and a war in Afghanistan that threatens regional stability and development. Even the more developed countries cannot escape the devastation caused by an earthquake, tsunami or natural disaster. Faced with issues of global terrorism, human rights violations, refugee movements, poverty, healthcare deficiencies, and sustainable security, SCA continues to attract dedicated Foreign Service employees and their family members who over the years have found innovative ways to reach out to people in need.

Those who volunteer in the region have taught new skills to host-country counterparts to improve services in healthcare and education. They have created schools and provided impoverished children with access to books and learning. They have fed the hungry from their own doorsteps. They have given hope to thousands of orphaned children who strive for a better life. And in doing all of this and more, they demonstrate in concrete ways that Americans care.

Since SOSA began in 1990, thirty-six (36) nominations from 10 SCA countries have been submitted for award consideration — each and every one a testament to the power of volunteerism. Volunteer impact in this region can be seen time and time again. Projects that began in the 1990s still exist today, with greater stability and organizational structure. New volunteers have emerged to replace those who have left for onward assignments, proving to people in the host countries the importance of continuity and perseverance. Such continuity only serves to strengthen the ties between Americans and the people they help.

The profiles and country highlights in the pages ahead illustrate a true self-less dedication to others: an American who witnessed street children in Dhaka, Bangladesh without food and education began the ABC School and assured its continued existence; a Department of State employee in Karachi, Pakistan who chose to rebuild an internal Employee Association structure and commissary so that fellow Americans living and working in Pakistan could get through their hardship experience with a small taste of home; an American in Calcutta, passionate about music who brought her teaching skills to musically-gifted children and began a foundation so that an orchestra could provide the pathway to future opportunities; and an American working in Kabul who came to the aid of orphaned children with clothes and toys, and raised money to pay for firewood for heating and cooking during the cold winter months. These and the many other volunteers noted here stepped outside their comfort zones, spent time outside the walls of their embassies and homes, and took action to improve lives and change the future for fellow citizens of the world.

Paul Sabatine (winner 2007) Giving People Hope for a Better Life in Bangladesh



Paul Sabatine demonstrated during his four-year tour in Dhaka that one individual, working together with local counterparts, can make a difference in the lives of street children and destitute women in Bangladesh. Paul raised over \$80,000 in donations and pledges to help the women, children, and their families who live “on the edge” in one of the poorest countries in the world.



Just weeks after his arrival in country, Paul volunteered to serve on the board of the ABC School, which educates some 50 street children. This was not the first time an American had made a lasting impact at the ABC school. SOSA winner Eglal Rousseau (in 1999), spouse of a USAID employee, worked with a local elementary school principal to begin the school in the late 1990s after realizing that providing a nutritious lunch to street children on the steps of her home was not enough to end the cycle of poverty. The street children also needed education so Rousseau, a teacher by training, expanded her lunch program to offer classes in her driveway, in both English and Bangla. The ABC School was formed and expanded quickly to encompass five teachers and a real campus.

Paul’s participation as Board President was truly “the right person, in the right place, at the right time” to bring the school to the next level of development. He oversaw a major renovation, including the construction of a computer lab, a library, an upgraded kitchen, and installation of ceiling fans. Vaccinations and medical care were added to the school’s standard services, and Paul’s implementation of a monthly family subsistence plan catapulted school attendance from 70 to 92 percent.

In an article Paul wrote as USINFO Special Correspondent, “*The students’ families are among the poorest of the poor in Bangladesh, with most surviving on a combined income of only \$1 to \$2 per day. Parents, most of whom are illiterate, work as unskilled laborers pulling rickshaws or at construction sites. A few run tea stalls or sell produce in the market, while others are domestic workers for more affluent families. These families came to Dhaka in recent years from the countryside in search of jobs. Rent consumes the bulk of their incomes. Their nutrition is poor and illness an ever-present threat to the family’s ability to earn money and whatever meager savings it has. In an effort to break the cycle of poverty and destitution for these children and their families, the ABC School cares for the whole child. In addition to basic education, the school provides wholesome meals, health care for the children and their families and sanitary washing facilities. It also provides life skills and vocational training. As an incentive to encourage attendance, the school provides families rice allowances.*”

Paul soon discovered another center for street children and raised needed funds for it as well, and he also offered to manage the sale of handicrafts by a cooperative of marginalized women. His management and financial skills resulted in tripling the income for the 50 women who relied on the cooperative for their sole support. The cooperative, with Paul’s help, now manages its own sales and financial plan.

To better his understanding and to communicate more effectively with the people he was helping, he learned the local language of Bangla. Paul led by example and coupled with his enthusiasm and practicality, become a force of nature in the community.

Paul Sabatine’s Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Overseas reads, “For a man who saw those with nothing and gave them hope for a better life, the confidence to believe in themselves, and courage to begin the journey.”

“... I still keep in touch with folks at the school. I really miss them...was probably the best thing I have ever done,” said Paul.

Calvin McQueen (winner 2008)

Reviving the Karachi Employee Association in Pakistan

When FS employee Calvin (Cal) McQueen took on the volunteer task of reviving the Karachi Employee Association, the challenges were many. Commissary shelves were empty, there was no record keeping system in place, and a merger with the Islamabad Employee Association was already in the works.

Cal wasted no time. He overhauled the association's operations by meticulously going over every aspect of its daily functions. He created a filing system, reviewed membership eligibility requirements, tracked down over 200 members, and collected delinquent payments. He restocked commissary shelves, and improved food options in both the Karachi Consulate cafeteria and American Club by personally taste testing many of the recipes. To ensure a high level of both quality and service, he went to the American Club every night it was open with a critical eye towards customer satisfaction. And though there were roadblocks while rebuilding the association, Cal consistently kept operations going.

Decisions were made with the interest of Embassy staff in mind. One colleague said, "Cal brought a human touch to our operations." When the Islamabad Employee Association decided to increase the prices at both the Karachi American Club and Consulate cafeteria, he worked with Locally Engaged Staff (LES) and American staffs to figure out which price increases were justified. LES staff input became an integral part of the process. Through such inclusiveness, Cal created an environment of trust and support.

Karachi is an unaccompanied post with a 35% danger allowance. Due to attacks on the Consulate and Consulate shuttles, American employees live in virtual lockdown. Other than home to office, there is little outside movement. To counteract the bunker mentality, Cal began hosting Sunday Brunch at the American Club, an event that blossomed into a social occasion for all members of the extended American community. He worked with American colleagues to bring outside vendors to the American Club to sell their goods during brunch times. As a result, all in attendance could enjoy seeing the works of Pakistani artisans without venturing into the dangerous streets of Karachi. The brunch attracted not only Embassy American and LES staff, but also local Americans and invited guests. The result was an overall ambiance that forged closer ties with working colleagues and provided a safe venue for entertaining, but most importantly, people looked forward to this "morale boosting" activity.

As nominator, Catherine Rodriguez noted, "Consulate Karachi is not an easy assignment and keeping up morale is extraordinarily important but a difficult task and constant struggle. Cal took on this mammoth task. Even though Cal's section in the Consulate would be understaffed for his entire tour, he felt it was his duty to help the "troops" (his Foreign Service colleagues) even though he left the military and fields of Vietnam years ago. Cal illustrated the highest standards of service and duty anyone can expect or hope."



Cal McQueen assists Consul General Kay L. Anske in cutting the cake at the 4th of July Community Celebration, held at the Karachi American Club in July 2008.

"Unlike other nominations for this award, he did not do any charity work with the underprivileged. Cal provided our countless Americans living in Pakistan a little piece of Americana. And, he did his part to make sure that the 31 Americans assigned to the Consulate General stayed sane ..."

— Nominator Carolyn Rodriguez

Fran Caterini (winner 1993)

Where Music Fills the Air, Young Musicians Thrive in Calcutta

Within the first few weeks after arriving in Calcutta in 1991, Fran Caterini discovered the Oxford Mission, an orphanage where boys are taught to play string instruments – violins, violas and cellos. As an experienced teacher, and passionate amateur violist, Fran embraced the opportunity to encourage the boys and expand their repertoire. The boys had practiced the well-known classical composers like Bach and Mozart but were never exposed to or given the chance to play American composers like Copeland, Broadway show tunes or movie scores like The Dunbar Theme from Dances with Wolves. Fran Caterini changed all that.

In the first phases of her volunteer work, Fran formed a string quartet and worked with the Oxford Mission chamber orchestra. She convinced her colleagues in the United States to donate musical scores and, when possible, badly needed instruments. Once the boys had improved their technique and mastered new musical selections, she had them perform in front of wider audiences, producing and organizing a number of concerts at various locations in Calcutta. To raise awareness of her efforts, she invited music lovers and potential patrons to the concerts.

In Calcutta, a city of 14 million, it is easy to slip into oblivion and succumb to the poverty that fills the streets. To give the Oxford Mission boys a chance at employment, Fran arranged for the local Oberoi Grand Hotel to showcase the Mission quartet for a two-hour concert each evening. With Fran's sponsorship and promotion, soon the young Oxford Mission musicians were playing at other hotels and at parties and other social gatherings.



CALCUTTA APART/Fran Caterini

An amazing repertoire

Devdani Mitra met Fran Caterini, the guiding spirit of the Calcutta Concert Orchestra, which aims to popularize western classical music, jazz, Bollywood music, and even experiment with RabindraSangeet.

Fran Caterini's outstanding volunteer work in Calcutta was the subject of many newspaper articles. Among the headlines: An amazing repertoire; The music makers touch a chord; Dreamer of musical dreams; Sheer euphony; and Striking the right chord. Articles praised the good work of the Calcutta Foundation, founded by Fran in the early 1990s.

The Calcutta Foundation Orchestra played in parks, gardens, living rooms, hotels, athletic clubs and anywhere Fran could find a venue and a sponsor. Her success lifted musically gifted children from severe poverty and gave them a chance to change their lives through music. One former student is now a music teacher in India, another has his own music studio.



Musicians need mentors, so Fran arranged for the boys to meet more experienced players when they came through Calcutta. To further improve their music skills, Fran turned her home into a practice hall where young musicians could practice for their next concert and prepare "as professionals" for the next venue.

In the course of her time in Calcutta, Fran spent countless hours doing what she loves and mentoring young musicians. At the time, her husband, Dino Caterini, was director of USIS and together with the Consul General, they weaved Oxford Mission music into some representational events, resulting in tremendous goodwill for the U.S. Consulate in Calcutta.



Fran's legacy lives on through the Calcutta Foundation, which she founded in 1993/4 to nurture the musical talents of graduating students from the Oxford Mission. Under the banner of the Calcutta Foundation Orchestra, the charitable trust continues today and funds the training of young string players, giving them the chance for a better life. Since Fran's departure from Calcutta, the Calcutta Chamber Orchestra, composed mostly of Oxford Mission graduates, remains a professional string orchestra, the only one of its kind in Calcutta to play Western music, Broadway scores, and selections from India. Funding has also brought the best musicians from all over the world to Calcutta to help train and conduct these young players.

The nomination of Fran Caterini was correct in stating, "Members of this Consulate have seen and participated in voluntary activities all over the world, and never have we seen anyone make such a dynamic and lasting impact for good." And in looking back, Fran says, "This was the most rewarding work I have ever done, although I love teaching 8th grade English as I am doing now. But as a lover of music, and young people, (and putting on shows) this experience was unforgettable."



Steve, in 2005, delivering clothes to children at the World of Hope orphanage, after driving 3 miles through Kabul's dangerous streets.

Steven Carroll (winner 2006)

Volunteerism that Boosts Post Morale in Kabul, Afghanistan

In 2005 and 2006, “duck and cover” drills, living in “hooches” (shipping containers) and the noise of rockets streaming across the sky were part of daily life in Kabul. There was no Community Liaison Officer (CLO), no employee association to sponsor activities outside of work, and as Human Resources Officer Suzanne Clarke, nominator of Steven Carroll, said, “no contact with the outside world.” Life in Kabul was tough for Foreign Service employees who rose to the call and volunteered for this assignment. Steven Carroll, the Embassy’s Financial Management Officer, made the most of his 19-month posting. He dug in to assist a local orphanage, hosted a Valentine’s Day fundraiser, and directed the Embassy’s first outdoor music festival. His success was infectious and in the process, he involved his colleagues and boosted post morale.

Steve’s first initiative involved partnering with school children in the U.S. to donate 50 boxes of used children’s clothing to the World of Hope orphanage. Other Embassy employees joined him in visiting the orphanage and helping to celebrate the Christmas holidays with toys, food and book reading. For many of the orphans, this was their first contact with Americans. As cold weather approached, the orphanage requested funds to purchase firewood for heating and cooking. Steve organized a successful Valentine’s Day charity dinner and raised over \$1,500. Many Embassy staff pitched in to help, cooking Italian specialties and decorating tables. “The event was a huge success but, more importantly, a real morale booster in the dead of Kabul’s depressing winter... this is no small feat in a place like Kabul where everything from table cloths to candles is either imported or custom-made,” said Suzanne Clarke. She further noted that “*Organizing large-scale community events on an Embassy compound in a war zone is a huge security and logistics nightmare. Steve has done this repeatedly, for the benefit of all staff members, Afghan and Americans alike.*”



Steve with Mary from Hope Worldwide charity and one of the big blue boxes, full of supplies, clothes and food donated by Embassy staff.

Working with an NGO in Afghanistan, Steve also helped raise \$2,700 to fund the shipment of book bags given to children across the country. In addition, he arranged for the U.S. military to donate 16 containers of surplus food and medicines to the poor.

With his assignment half over, Steve realized the need to institutionalize Embassy support for charities. Working with Facilities Maintenance personnel, several large crates were constructed, painted bright blue, and placed around the compound for voluntary donations of food, clothing, and other items. Known as “big blue boxes,” the idea quickly caught hold. Those leaving post could deposit items they no longer needed, which in turn, were transferred to needy people in Kabul. Charitable giving was now a common activity for Americans posted in Kabul.

In June 2006, Steve organized the first Kabul Music Festival — “Kabulstock” — on the Embassy compound. The security situation at the time required a curfew, but despite the war zone, over 600 employees, both American and Afghan, enjoyed a free concert and barbecue. Decorations included Afghan carpets and oil lanterns. After weeks of rioting outside Embassy walls, this event was a welcome morale booster and stress reliever.

In just one year’s time, Steve successfully involved American and Afghan counterparts in aiding the poorest of Afghan citizens. His efforts are a prime example of volunteerism as a means to improve mutual understanding between two cultures. But the lesson learned in Kabul in 2006 is that when people focus their efforts on helping other people, morale improves. Steven Carroll successfully led the way.



Above, Steve, in September 2005, taking 30 boxes of clothes, toys and supplies to World of Hope orphans in Kabul. Below, Steve with Embassy Marine guards and staff taking donations to the same orphanage in June 2006.

Steve’s volunteerism continues at his current post, Rangoon, Burma. In May 2010, he organized the largest ever community yard sale to raise funds for a charity that trains street kids to repair and refinish old teak furniture. Over 200 locals and expats got together to buy and sell old items and have a great time. \$400 was raised for the charity and the kids sold their restored furniture at the sale.

Country Highlights

For an American to adjust to life in Bangladesh, he or she must come to terms with mass poverty on a scale that has never existed in the United States. Each person adjusts in his or her own way... Very few reach out to the poor in their homes and try to help them improve their lives. Jo Ellen Fuller is one of these few.

*-Nominator Ambassador
John Holzman*

Eglal Rousseau (Bangladesh) won her SOSA in 1999 for beginning a program to feed street children, which eventually led to the development of the ABC School in Dhaka. The swarms of beggars are endless in Dhaka and the poverty overwhelming. Eglal Rousseau, greatly disturbed by the number of hungry begging children, decided to feed lunch to two children who passed by her house every day. Word spread throughout the nearby slum of Muslim inhabitants called Notun Bazaar and soon about 60 children came to the Rousseau's house on a daily basis for lunch. Five of the original beggar children were appointed as helpers, assisting Eglal in the day-to-day tasks of running the lunch program by cleaning, serving, and reading the newspaper to others to help in their education. The Dhaka Women's Club became aware of Eglal's work during the 1998 floods and found two doctors to treat the children, vaccinating them and treating for various medical problems. Soon parents of the children, poor and often beggars themselves, began to help. One baked bread, another supplied bananas for the children. Eglal offered a small payment to take away the stigma of unemployment. But providing a nutritious lunch to street children on the steps of her home was not enough to end the cycle of poverty. The street children needed more formalized education so Rousseau, a teacher by training, began to offer classes in her driveway, in both English and Bangla. This effort transformed into the ABC School, which soon grew to five teachers and the development of a real campus. Eglal's school attracted many other Embassy volunteers, who rose to the call to work on its school board or provide medical assistance. She was nominated two more times for a SOSA — in 2003 for her work in Bangladesh and in 2005 for her work in Morocco.

Another Foreign Service resident of Dhaka, **Jo Ellen Fuller (Bangladesh)** won the 2000 year SOSA for reaching out to the poor in a Rishi village named Chuknagar, far outside the city of Dhaka. The Rishi are untouchable Hindus, an impoverished and supremely vulnerable minority within a minority in this Muslim nation. The villagers lacked access to education, medical care, and other social services, and remained among the poorest in Bangladesh. Help came in the form of a Catholic priest, Father Luigi Paggi, who has made the Rishi his life's work. Jo Ellen Fuller joined Father Luigi's efforts as his chief fundraiser and, in the process, became a presence in Chuknagar. She collected donations of used, excess, or unwanted items such as clothing, shoes, toys and school supplies from members of the expatriate community. Her efforts helped a barber and a carpenter to buy the tools of their trades, paid to teach small rice farmers how to raise such cash crops as vegetables, fish, and poultry, and paid for teachers' salaries and school supplies. A professional educator, Jo Ellen trained the Chuknagar village teachers in modern teaching practices, literacy skills, conceptual skills, and to present material in an integrated manner. She even taught English classes in Chuknagar. As a new respected elder in the village, she counseled young adults in such areas as self-esteem, career planning, and the special challenges to women in this male-dominated society. Father Luigi wrote, "Ms. Jo Ellen Fuller's contribution to the human and religious growth of the Rishi outcaste people has been great. The Rishi have appreciated her love towards them and as a sign of gratefulness have given her the name of 'Auntie Jo.'"

Regional Medical Officer **Kimberley L. Ottwell (Bangladesh)** was nominated for a SOSA in 2002. Immediately upon her arrival in Dhaka, she encountered local medical practitioners who were under-educated and ill-prepared to handle procedures and treatments considered commonplace in the United States. Medical care for the people of Bangladesh was tenuous at best. "Dr. Kim" developed a weekly education program for local doctors to close some of the gaps in their knowledge. A daylong introductory CPR workshop, a trauma care lecture series, discussion of emerging problems in various medical fields, and a special weekend course on bioterrorism highlighted the training. Dr. Kim began caring for a group of children and parents living in the slum areas adjacent to the Embassy. This small assistance soon grew into a more structured program, with a make-shift clinic run out of her home on the weekends where she could tend to sick or injured children. She expanded her network of physicians willing to help, enrolled more poor families in a local USAID-supported primary health care clinic, and found local assistance for TB care and medications.

In 2004, **Jennifer Breiman (Bangladesh)**, a nurse by profession, was instrumental in providing basic medical care to children at the ABC School. She was involved since its beginning as a Board member and medical director. She secured the donation of six sewing machines, organized a daily sewing class, and taught the students to produce and sell their handicrafts to supplement their families' incomes. As medical director at the school, Jennifer convinced a local clinic to open its doors to not only the students at the school, but to their families as well. Jennifer personally accompanied children and their family members to the clinic for care and treatment. Amidst the poverty of Dhaka, Jennifer would often step outside the comforts of her gated house and provide medical assistance to those gathered at her doorstep, digging into her own pockets to pay the fees for lab tests. In one special case, Jennifer spent hours researching options for a baby born without an esophagus, consulting with doctors in the United States and Thailand, and arranging for the baby to have surgery in Bangkok.

In Bombay in 1994, **Margaret Mast (India)** organized a group of eight battered and abused Indian women into a quilting group. Quilted products were sold to generate income, earning each woman a monthly salary equivalent to that of a secretary or clerk. Margaret taught them marketing skills and gave them the economic independence needed to leave their abusive husbands without the fear that their children would go hungry. Many of the women could not read and write and to further complicate the challenge, they came from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds and spoke different languages — Tamil, Hindi, Urdu, and English. Her dedication resulted in a sense of pride and increased self esteem for women who might not otherwise have broken the cycle of abuse.

Marilyn Edwards (India) won a SOSA in 1997 for a variety of volunteer activities, including her work with the American Women's Association (AWA) Thrift Shop, her involvement in AWA's outreach program and library, and her commitment to visiting female inmates at the notorious Tihar Jail in New Delhi. The Tihar Jail at the time was one of the largest prisons in the world, with an inmate population of over 12,000. Many of the women at the jail had children living with them. Marilyn's projects taught the inmates to bake and sell bread and to knit shawls and sweaters. The sale of these items earned a few rupees for the women. Marilyn also dedicated time to Mother Teresa's orphanage for handicapped children, where she spent time holding, playing with, and reading and talking to the children.

Wendy Dwyer (India) also spent her time in New Delhi on a wide range of volunteer projects. Just after arriving in country in January 2001, she quickly organized a team to visit the Indian state of Gujarat, which had experienced a devastating earthquake late in the month. She organized a team of volunteers to raise money and collect blankets and warm clothing, and she led meetings for Habitat for Humanity in Gujarat. She personally went to the disaster region to help rebuild houses. Wendy became President of the American Women's Association (AWA), supervising an office manager, engaging the business community in the exchange of information and assistance, and spearheading AWA initiatives. Those initiatives included work at the Tihar Jail (mentioned above) where Wendy was a regular volunteer. AWA, through Wendy's efforts, provided children at the jail with blankets, toys, school supplies, and freshly painted surroundings. The organization also organized outings for children at Mother Teresa's Orphanage for the Mentally and Physically Handicapped in the Nizamuddin area of New Delhi. And finally, under Wendy's leadership, AWA sponsored Women's Health Awareness Week, administering breast examinations, pap smears, and general physical exams to 500 women living in village slums. Wendy was nominated for a SOSA in both 2002 and 2004.

Karie Ennis (India), Office Management Specialist and winner of a SOSA in 2003, made a commitment early in her tour in New Delhi to spend several hours each weekend at the Missionaries of Charity Orphanage for Handicapped Children in New Delhi. She provided physical therapy for the children, taught Indian staff to feed the children properly and spent time talking, playing with, and holding the children. She organized the Marines' "Toys for Tots" campaign to benefit the orphanage and obtained a grant from the J. Kirby Simon Trust (\$2,500.) to buy mattresses, therapy mats and other supplies. Karie took a leading role in promoting and organizing the first "Health Fair" for Embassy New Delhi and motivated both American and FSN personnel to contribute their time. The event was attended by over 500 Mission staff.

Tihar Jail in New Delhi is one of the largest prison complexes in the world with seven prisons and a prison population of over 12,000. Approximately 560 of these prisoners are women and about 50 children under the age of six live in the prison with their mothers. Wendy is a regular volunteer at the jail and helps provide supplies and support for programs which encourage the women inmates to learn a new skill so they can work and help support themselves. One of these programs is called Weaving Behind Bars. The AWA, with Wendy's guidance, provides training for many women to learn specific weaving skills so they may sell their finished creations and become independent and employable when released.

-From the nomination of Wendy Dwyer

Lee-Alison B. Sibley (India) plunged into volunteer work soon after her arrival in Calcutta in 2002. She taught acting technique to students at Jadavpur University, conducted workshops at both Calcutta and Jadavpur Universities to teach professors of English new techniques in pedagogy, and became an advisor to a group working on archiving the folk music in the region. The first organization she joined was The Calcutta Foundation (see Fran Caterini's profile on page 4). With a Master of Arts degree in music, she was uniquely qualified to assist with the training of young string players who formed the foundation's orchestra. She performed with them at the Governor's mansion in December 2002 and at a gala fundraising event the following year. Money raised from these events helped to secure the survival of the orchestra. Her volunteerism also extended to the Samaritan Help Mission, where Lee helped obtain a full year's operational funding, enabling the mission to purchase a computer and fund honorariums for teachers. In the summer of 2003, Lee raised money to build a toilet at the mission school, providing 300 students with access to the one and only new toilet facility. Lee also provided assistance to Tiljala Society for Human and Educational Development (SHED), an NGO serving the needs of Calcutta's rag pickers (children who earn a living by sorting through the city's garbage for items to sell). Other organizations that benefited from Lee's help included The Rehabilitation Centers for Children and The Bengal Service Society. In 2004, she was nominated for a SOSA for her these accomplishments, her many acts of kindness and caring, and her contributions to her surrounding community.

From the very beginning, Melodie has made a tremendous effort to include Nepalis in all phases of her Chiranjeevi project. Her goal has always been for it to be a Nepali-run project.

Her concern and dedication to Chiranjeevi have ensured that children with cancer at the Kanti Hospital will continue to be cared for and cared about.

-From the nomination of Melodie Gage

Thomas Lucas (Nepal) was nominated for a SOSA in 1996 for his sustained commitment to the ROKPA Clinic in the Boudha area of Kathmandu over the course of four years. ROKPA means health in Tibetan. As a medical officer, Thomas could not ignore the immense need for medical assistance for thousands of indigent Tibetans and Nepalese who had no other medical recourse. The clinic's meager beginnings (care given in a tent with no electricity) improved during Tom's time in Nepal. After moving to a storefront, Tom secured donations of medicines, equipment, and funds to hire the clinic's first lab technician and administrator. Difficult cases were not turned away, and in one case, Tom and his wife raised money to send one girl with a heart defect to India for surgery. He became a mentor for Nepali physicians, organizing monthly grand round meetings and taking the lead in AIDS awareness education for medical practitioners in Nepal.

Melodie Gage (Nepal) arrived in Kathmandu in 1998. In 2001, she won her SOSA for bringing a measure of hope and joy to children with cancer, who came to the cancer ward at Kanti Children's Hospital in Kathmandu from villages outside of the capital city. No monies were allocated for the care of long-term pediatric cancer patients. Her project, Chiranjeevi, which means long life, recruited a group of volunteers from the expat community to visit and play with the young patients who had nothing to do. She recruited a psychiatrist with experience in child and adolescent mental health to provide special workshops on coping with cancer. She worked closely with Nepali counterparts with the goal of making Chiranjeevi a Nepali-run project. From its inception, Melodie dedicated time and energy to the priority of making young patients' lives a little easier as they fought their battle with cancer.

Theresa McGallicher (Nepal) won her SOSA in 2004 for her work with several community organizations. A fulltime mother of three, Theresa spent her spare moments as Chair of the Education and Training Committee of The Active Women of Nepal (AWON). The committee focused on providing educational opportunities for Nepali women and girls, a monumental task considering that Nepal at the time had the lowest literacy rate for women in the world. She conducted site visits to prospective and ongoing programs to give out 218 scholarships and provided skills training to 64 women. She became an avid fundraiser for AWON and spent hours seeking other sources of funding for organizations her committee couldn't support. She acquired and sold over 400 masks for an AWON Masquerade Ball fundraiser. She sold Women in Development calendars to raise more than \$6,000 for scholarships for girls. In addition, four orphanages received Theresa's time and energy as she became their unofficial advocate bringing them donations of books, toys, clothes and connecting them with other volunteers. Her nomination referred to Theresa as "a champion for the less fortunate."

Cesaria (Ria) Boyer (Nepal) was nominated for a SOSA in 2007 for her work with 35 children at a local orphanage in Kathmandu, beginning with the purchase of rice, dal, milk, oil and other staples. By Christmas time, she had organized a giving tree with 35 cards each boasting a child's name. Donations from the Embassy community provided clothing for the orphans, wrapped carefully by a team of volunteers. Christmas for the orphans was held at Ria's home. Her assistance continued with the baking of bread, which she sold at a local restaurant, and other fundraising activities. She also worked with children at the Assumption Catholic Church School, arranging for free dental exams, and with the Godavari Orphanage, seeking financial assistance to support the 19 children at the home.

Elizabeth Mates (Pakistan) was awarded a SOSA in 1995 for her volunteer work in Islamabad with the American Women's Club (AWC) as head of their Community Services Committee. She spent countless hours collecting items for donation to needy people and charity groups in Pakistan. To store the donations, she converted one bedroom in her home as the collection point and hosted "sorting out" teas for volunteers who organized bed sheets, towels, worn-out linens, magazines, pots and pans, clothing, plastic bottles, and other "recyclables" to meet charity requests. Families leaving post gladly donated items to Elizabeth's effort. Recipients included the Rawalpindi Boy's Hostel, Saint Faith's Home, Saint Catherine's Girls Hostel, Azad Kashmir refugees, Afghan refugees, the Rawalpindi Central Jail, the Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital, among others.

Six years later, **Kate Lollar (Pakistan)** was also praised for her service to the American Women's Club in Islamabad with a 2001 SOSA nomination. She ran the Diplomatic Exchange consignment shop and actively supported numerous bazaars, fundraisers, and bake sales to raise funds for needy charities. She was also a tireless volunteer at the St. Joseph's Hospice, a 60-bed resident care and outpatient facility for the destitute in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Kate also served on the International School of Islamabad's school board and raised money for the Kidney Foundation.

Linda Wright (Pakistan) lived in Karachi at the time of her SOSA nomination in 2001. As co-chair of the Welfare Committee of the American Women's Club (AWC), she helped to disperse some \$8,000 to various charitable and humanitarian organizations. Her volunteer work entailed vetting applications for the funds, visiting the most promising, and reporting the decisions to the larger membership. During her tenure, Linda expanded the number of supported organizations to 70. She became the President of AWC after one year at post, further lending her service to fundraising efforts. She also served as secretary on the Board of the American Consulate Employees Association Karachi (ACEAK) and worked to rejuvenate the Consulate's snack bar and cafeteria.

Edward Brown (Pakistan) won a SOSA in 2002 for his extraordinary service to the American community in Islamabad following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Ed Brown was instrumental in maintaining the quality of life at post during a time of crisis. The evacuation of personnel and family members from Islamabad left post lacking in managerial staff. Ed assumed responsibility for the large commissary/recreation association and became the Acting "At-post" Community Liaison Officer. He organized events and arranged for morale-boosting activities like movie nights, an Oktoberfest, a series of special themed food nights, and assisted the Marines in organizing a successful Marine Ball on the compound. During a very tense, potentially dangerous period, he managed support services for hundreds of VIP visitors and temporary personnel. Ed's management skill and advocacy for the community contributed immeasurably to the spiritual and material well being of his colleagues at post.

Patricia and Dave Williams (Sri Lanka) were nominated for a SOSA in 2004 during their first Foreign Service tour in Colombo. Their passion for volunteerism took hold in their first nine months. They worked with three institutions to improve services and infrastructure: an infant orphanage, a pre-school orphanage, and a teenage mothers' home run by the Sarvodaya organization. Patricia and Dave collected and delivered supplies, organized an educational toy drive, enlisted the Marine Detachment to include the pre-school orphanage in their "Toys for Tots" program, and secured funding for the renovation of the pre-school

Elizabeth has been doing "acts of non-random kindness" throughout her stay in Pakistan with an enthusiasm that is catching. She also teaches at the International School of Islamabad where she founded the ISI Key Club, which has been an excellent outlet for introducing students to the spirit of social service. The club held an inoculation drive two years ago at a nearby Afghan refugee community.

-From the nomination of Elizabeth Mates

Rabies is a serious health risk in Sri Lanka, with about 90 human deaths per year caused by rabies. Dog bites are also prevalent, with about 200 per day reported to hospitals, especially among children who don't understand how to avoid being bitten. The initial assessments showed that most animals had fared well during the tsunami itself, but now traditional sources of food and water had gone. Owners had been killed or fled. Communities, hotels and restaurants which fed "community dogs" were no longer functioning. The dogs were hungry and thirsty and becoming more aggressive in their search for food and water, and the fear of rabies was a growing concern through tsunami-affected communities. Robert and the coalition group he formed used the donated funds to field vet teams along the hard-hit South and East coasts to vaccinate as many animals as possible, including stranded dogs and cats, animals with individual owners and "community dogs." Red collars were placed on the vaccinated dogs, the national "I've been vaccinated" symbol in Sri Lanka.

-From the nomination of Robert Blumberg

home-classroom building and installation of playground equipment. In addition, Dave volunteered to speak at leadership training seminars hosted by the Sri Lankan chapter of Presidential Classrooms, an organization that teaches high school students leadership and diplomacy and brings them to the United States for the study of government and leadership practices.

Robert Blumberg (Sri Lanka) won a SOSA in 2005 in the aftermath of a tsunami that struck Sri Lanka on December 26, 2004. Robert, an engineer by training, recognized an added danger to the human crisis if Colombo's stray dogs, cats, and other animals were not taken care of. Hungry animals roaming the streets posed a danger, especially if infected with rabies. He formed a coalition group, funded with donations, to vaccinate as many animals as possible. Red collars were placed on animals to indicate that they had been treated, and over 14,000 animals were vaccinated. The effort was particularly critical because the existing Sri Lankan government anti-rabies program was not well equipped to respond to a large-scale disaster. Robert co-founded the Tsunami Memorial Animal Welfare Trust to carry on the sterilization program for a longer term, and to help find homes for those animals whose owners had died.

Jim Landherr (Uzbekistan) was nominated for a SOSA two years in a row, in 2005 and in 2006 for his leadership in starting the Tashkent Youth Sports Association (TYSA). When Jim arrived in Tashkent, sports programs such as soccer, basketball and baseball did not exist for expatriate children. Devoting every Saturday morning, he ran TYSA for children in kindergarten through sixth grade, offering soccer in the fall, basketball in the winter, and baseball in the spring for boys and girls. In addition, he served as a volunteer coach for the Tashkent International School middle-school basketball team and took the team to compete in a regional Central Asia tournament held in Almaty in March 2005. Jim generously donated his time to develop these sports programs outside of his full-time work responsibilities at the U.S. Embassy.

In 2009, the SOSA for the SCA region was awarded to Marine Sergeant **Bernadetta Ruch (Tajikistan)**, who made an indelible contribution to the morale of her Mission community in Dushanbe. Sgt. Ruch expanded Detachment fund-raising activities to include American and local staff along with expatriates living in the capital city. She organized and cooked Thanksgiving dinner for over 100 people and planned a Cinco de Mayo celebration with a Mexican fiesta food night in a city where staples such as milk and chicken are hard to find. At her request, incoming military personnel hand carried supplies including precious avocados. Staff and community members were stunned at the quality and quantity of dishes served. Spearheading the annual Marine "Toys for Tots" drive, Sgt. Ruch discovered that in previous years, orphanage directors often pocketed donated funds and sold toys. To prevent a reoccurrence, she organized a holiday event at the Mission that brought 140 children to the Embassy grounds to enjoy games and activities as well as 150 meals donated from local businesses. Sgt. Ruch organized all these activities despite serving in a Detachment consistently understaffed for her entire tour.

SOSA Award Winners and Nominees

Winners are noted with an asterisk (*)

AFGHANISTAN

2006 Steven Carroll (Kabul)*

BANGLADESH

2007 Paul A. Sabatine (Dhaka)*
2004 Jennifer Breiman (Dhaka)
2003 Eglal Rousseau (Dhaka)
2002 Kimberly L. Ottwell (Dhaka)
2000 Jo Ellen Fuller (Dhaka)*
1999 Eglal Rousseau (Dhaka)*
1996 Carol Haycock (Dhaka)

INDIA

2004 Wendy Dwyer (New Delhi)
2004 Lee-Alison Sibley (Calcutta)
2003 Karie Ennis (New Delhi)*
2002 Wendy Dwyer (New Delhi)
2001 L. Charlene Perry (New Delhi)
1997 Marilyn Edwards (New Delhi)*
1994 Margaret Mast (Bombay)
1993 Fran Caterini (Calcutta)*

KAZAKHSTAN

1998 Betsy Wagenhauser (Almaty)

NEPAL

2007 Cesaria Boyer (Kathmandu)
2004 Theresa McGallicher (Kathmandu)*
2001 Melodie Gage (Kathmandu)*
1996 Thomas Lucas (Kathmandu)*

PAKISTAN

2008 Calvin L. McQueen (Karachi)*
2002 Edward R. Brown (Islamabad)*
2001 Kate Lollar (Islamabad)
2001 Linda A. Wright (Karachi)
1996 Norma Sparks (Islamabad)
1995 Elizabeth Mates (Islamabad)*
1994 Carole Faulk (Karachi)*

SRI LANKA

2007 Grazia Deulus (Colombo)
2005 Robert Blumberg (Colombo)*
2004 Patricia and Dave Williams (Colombo)

TAJIKISTAN

2009 Bernadetta J. Ruch (Dushanbe)*

TURKMENISTAN

2004 Karen Sprakties (Ashgabat)

UZBEKISTAN

2006 Jim Landherr (Tashkent)
2005 Jim Landherr (Tashkent)
1998 Nida Tansey (Tashkent)*