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### **Adopt-A-Village Donation Brings Clean Drinking Water to Indian Poor**

Hamden, CT – Clean drinking water is no longer a dream in Chilapanahalli, a 90-household village in Karnataka state, south India. The poor village of farm workers -- family income averages \$10 per month – last month was the first village where 50 families received a household drinking water filter, thanks to a special program run by a Hamden couple and supported by local Rotary Clubs.

Mike Lipman and Cathy Forsberg, the husband and wife founders of the Hamden-based South Asia Pure Water Initiative, Inc., personally supervised the organization's first Adopt-A-Village installation in Kolar District, 60 miles east of Bangalore, India. The Adopt-A-Village program matches local civic groups and churches in the United States with poor villages in south India to provide Bio-Sand filters for clean household drinking water.

The Rotary Club of North Haven, Connecticut, committed in May 2006 to support the first installation in the Adopt-A-Village program with a donation of \$2,200. “Our members were looking for an international water project that delivered direct benefits right to the neediest people,” said North Haven Rotary Club president \_\_\_\_\_. “The Adopt-A-Village project does that and more without any layers of red tape.”

The centerpiece of the Adopt-A-Village program is a donation of 50 locally made Bio-Sand water filters to the most needy families in a village. In addition to the household

filter installations, the program also delivers a special educational course for children about basic water sanitation. As part of the course, soap is distributed to village kids along with instructions on proper care of water and general cleanliness.

Training a village water keeper, called a “community steward,” is another important component of the Adopt-A-Village program. The steward is paid an honorarium for one year to answer questions and troubleshoots to insure the water filters are used and maintained properly.

On June 7, 2006, Lipman and Forsberg went to Kolar District to prepare and coordinate the delivery of 52 water filters to Chilapanahalli. The installation was the largest single-day one-village delivery of filters since the project began. Village leaders responded with a gala event to kick off the clean water program. Festivities included a troop of musicians and actors who told the story of proper hygiene and water sanitation through songs and skits.

The Bio-Sand water filter is made in the project’s Kolar factory entirely from locally available materials of concrete and a copper spout, plus fine sand and coarse gravel is used as filter media. The Bio-Sand water filter is ideal for rural areas because it uses no electricity, has no moving parts, requires no chemicals or replaceable cartridges, and has no on-going costs. One filter provides a household on-demand clean drinking water for 25-30 years.

“The response from the users of the water filters has been overwhelmingly positive,” Forsberg said. “Users say the water tastes sweet because the mineral salts are removed and we have reports of less joint pain, less hair loss and better general health.”

Lipman and Forsberg returned to Connecticut and made a presentation with photos to the North Haven Rotary Club on June 26 about the installation of 50 filters in homes throughout the 90-household village and two filters in the Chilapanahalli school. Rotary

members were so impressed they donated additional funds at the meeting to guarantee another 40 filters, so that every house in the village will have a filter soon.

“Our dream of providing clean water for the people of India will get a tremendous boost from this cooperative program between our countries,” said Forsberg. “We hope to talk to more civic groups in the United States to sponsor similar programs for many other villages.”

For more information about the Adopt-A-Village program and the South Asia Pure Water Initiative, contact South Asia Pure Water Initiative, Inc., 2832 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06518, or e- mail Mike Lipman or Cathy Forsberg at [Info@SAPWII.org](mailto:Info@SAPWII.org).

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## **Sidebar: Adopt-A-Village Donation Brings Clean Drinking Water to Indian Poor**

### **Helping People One Drop At A Time**

The idea for the South Asia Pure Water Initiative's Bio-Sand Filter project began in June 2004 when Mike Lipman returned to Kolar, Karnataka, India, after serving there 35 years ago as an American Peace Corps volunteer. "Shock is the only word I can use to describe my feelings when I saw the condition of the water in Kolar," said Lipman, president of South Asia Pure Water Initiative, Inc. and a Hamden accountant.

Thirty five years ago Lipman's Peace Corps project, funded by CARE and working in conjunction with Mysore State Agro Industries, specialized in blasting farmer's irrigation wells and drilling bore wells in villages to reach the water table at that time 25 feet below ground level. "Back yard wells were common and farmers could irrigate their crops with shallow wells and pump sets," Lipman recalled.

Today the water table has dropped to 1000-1200 feet below ground. Lipman discovered in 2004 that backyard and neighborhood wells are dry and townspeople and villagers have no access to potable water. Water of questionable quality is delivered untreated in old tanker trucks to neighborhoods and villages. "Women and children meet the tanker with jugs and pails to carry home enough water for their daily use," said Lipman.

On the airplane back to the United States in June 2004 Lipman decided to do something about clean drinking water in Kolar District. Researches lead him to a Canadian-designed Bio-Sand water filter for households used in 42 countries, but not widely used in India. Lipman went to Calgary, Canada, to get training on how to manufacture and implement a program for the distribution of Bio-Sand water filters.

In November 2005 Lipman and his wife, Cathy Forsberg, an accountant and former Rotary Club of Hamden Connecticut president, established a small factory in Kolar to manufacture Bio-Sand water filters with the help of Rotarian RamaChandre Gowda, the project's managing director, and member of Rotary Club of Kolar, India.

One secret to the effectiveness of the Bio-Sand filter design is it maintains two inches of water on top of the sand filter media where a beneficial biological layer blooms. This bio-layer literally eats the microorganisms and pathogens in the water poured into the filter. The filter media of washed powdered granite is also very effective at trapping protozoa, worms, viruses, heavy metals and minerals. A Bio-Sand filter cleans water immediately at the rate of one liter per minute.

The South Asia Pure Water Initiative project also provides manufacturing and service jobs for more than 20 people in Kolar, a town with 50-60% unemployment, according to Lipman. "This includes full time employment for eight previously unemployed young men in the manufacturing facility," Lipman said.

The motto for South Asia Pure Water Initiative, Inc. is "Helping People One Drop At a Time." For the people of Chilapanahalli a simple natural water filter seems to be one answer to their clean water problems and indeed is helping one drop at a time.

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