

PALO ALTO, California and BASEL, Switzerland - December 8, 2009 - Rising Star Outreach announced today that it will be spotlighted on CheckOrphan's NewsFlash program - the first online news broadcast dedicated to rare and neglected diseases.

Rising Star Outreach began its quest to eradicate leprosy and come to the aid of the leprosy-affected in India in April of 2004. Upon learning about CheckOrphan's commitment to the research and cure of rare diseases, Rising Star Outreach welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with an international community of experts.

"Rising Star Outreach shares CheckOrphan's commitment to bringing rare diseases, such as leprosy, to light. It is our hope that together we can broaden our audience and garner greater support for the leprosy-affected," says Rising Star Outreach's Executive Director, Amy Antonelli.

Leprosy or Hansen's disease (HD) has existed for 4,000 years. It is a chronic and disfiguring disease caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae* and *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*. Discolored skin lesions are generally the first signs of the disease. As the disease progresses, permanent damage to the skin, eyes and nasal cavity occur. In the advanced stages of leprosy, body parts become disfigured or autoamputated as a result of severe nerve damage. An estimated 100 million people worldwide are leprosy-affected. In India alone there are over 700 "leprosy colonies."

"It is unfortunate that there are still places in the world, whose economy and development is hindered by rare diseases such as Leprosy," says Robert Derham, President of CheckOrphan. "That is why we are proud to spotlight Rising Star Outreach's efforts to eradicate Leprosy on the CheckOrphan NewsFlash."

The CheckOrphan NewsFlash turns the world's attention to nonprofit organizations working to ensure a better life for all of us. Its interactive platform creates a global community where those affected by rare diseases can collaborate with researchers, physicians and other professionals to bring about change and solutions for rare, orphan and neglected diseases such as leprosy.

Leprosy is curable. Since 1995, The World Health Organization has supplied Multidrug therapy (a combination of rifampicin, clofazimine and dapsone for MB leprosy patients and rifampicin and dapsone for PB leprosy patients) free of cost to leprosy patients in all endemic countries. Tragically however, "the historic stigma of the disease carries with it misinformation which leads to its perpetuation" says Rising Star Outreach India Chairwoman, Padma Venkataraman.

Rising Star Outreach strives to mitigate the physical, emotional and social effects of leprosy by providing mobile medical clinics, education for children of the leprosy-affected and micro-loans for small businesses. Its mission is to help leprosy colonies become thriving, self-sufficient communities.

"Progress in the treatment and elimination of leprosy is being made on a daily basis, added Rising Star Outreach President Becky Douglas. "If it is detected before deformities develop, leprosy can be cured without leaving physical signs of the disease, freeing those who suffer from it from the crippling effects of its stigma."

## **About Rising Star Outreach**

Rising Star Outreach is a non-profit organization dedicated to the eradication of leprosy and the rehabilitation of the leprosy-affected. Rising Star Outreach strives to mitigate the physical, emotional and social effects of leprosy by providing mobile medical clinics, education for children of the leprosy-affected and micro-loans for small businesses. Its mission is to help leprosy colonies become thriving, self-sufficient communities.

Today, Rising Star Outreach provides education for nearly 200 children whose parents are leprosy-affected. Children's homes on the school campus currently house 140 students and plans for additional housing are underway. The campus is being built in phases; when the project is complete, the Rising Star Outreach Marriott children's homes will have the capacity to house 460 children and the Peery Matriculation School will be equipped to train 720 students. To make a donation or sponsor a child, please visit <http://www.risingstaroutreach.org/goodtogive>

Rising Star Outreach would like to recognize its sponsors, volunteers, and board members for their outstanding contributions and continued support.

Rising Star Outreach is a 501(c)(3) with offices in Palo Alto, California, Chennai, India, and Atlanta, Georgia. For more information, please visit [www.risingstaroutreach.org](http://www.risingstaroutreach.org).

## **About CheckOrphan**

CheckOrphan - the leading global source for news and information about rare diseases - is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with no geo-political boundaries, which allows it to work with and promote all individuals and entities involved with rare, orphan and neglected diseases. Its goal is to unite all stakeholders in the fields of rare diseases, orphan drugs and neglected diseases on one platform. It attracts a large audience by offering unique solutions, such as a news database which holds the largest concentration of articles about rare diseases. In addition, CheckOrphan's users benefit from several other large databases that include: the latest research publications, clinical trials, products in development or currently on the market for rare, orphan and neglected diseases, videos, hospitals, researchers and more. Support rare disease research and CheckOrphan by sponsoring a rare disease page <http://checkorphan.getreelhealth.com/sponsor/donate-rare>. CheckOrphan encourages its visitors to submit content and information to the platform. Submit your news, events, videos and more today. CheckOrphan would like to thank the Gebert-Rüf Stiftung for its support. Please visit <http://www.grstiftung.ch/english/index.html> for more information about this foundation.

For more information, please visit <http://www.checkorphan.org>

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*EDITOR'S NOTE:* One of the goals of Rising Star Outreach is to bring dignity to those who have been affected by leprosy. Therefore, Rising Star Outreach carefully avoids using offensive words such as "leper" and "native" - which have traditionally had a stigma attached to them - and requests that others do the same. When referring to those suffering from the disease, the accepted term is "leprosy-affected."