

Local philanthropist gives hope to blind children in India and Brazil

Vision-impaired children from India and Brazil's poorest and most isolated families will soon benefit from the generosity of a Perth pioneer.

Joyce 'Joycie' Henderson ran the general store, post office and telephone exchange in North Beach back when the now-affluent suburb was a tiny village of beach shacks accessible only by a bush track.

Following Joyce's death in 2001, a \$3 million trust was established to fulfil her life-long dream that child blindness would one day be eradicated.

Swetha Philip from Vellore in south-east India and Clairton de Souza from São Luís in north-east Brazil are here in Perth on Joyce Henderson Bequest Fellowships to bolster their skills so that when they return home they can provide their child patients with the very best of care.

Swetha and Clairton's one-year program will see them moving between the Lions Eye Institute, Princess Margaret Hospital and UWA undertaking a mix of research, hands-on clinical tasks and lectures.

Swetha said her access to the latest research information, methods and techniques at the Lions Eye Institute was what she was enjoying most at the moment.

"In India even the wealthiest of families have difficulty accessing good health care, especially eye-health care for their children, and access to good quality data, literature and research facilities is very rare," she said.

Clairton said what's benefitting him most right now is the clinical experience he's gaining at Princess Margaret Hospital as well as the continuity of his clinical research.

"At Lions Eye Institute and Princess Margaret Hospital I'm having relevant clinical exposure to paediatric eye disease, especially retinal diseases, my major area of interest in Ophthalmology, and also having the opportunity to continue my work on related research projects," he said.

Clairton and Swetha share Joyce Henderson's dream to one day eradicate blindness in children.

Both agreed their Henderson Bequest Fellowships would help them gain valuable experience in their shared passion - researching and treating eye diseases and injuries in children.

