

■ Silver Innings

'Silver Innings' wants people sensitized to issues affecting seniors

By Ela Dutt

Though 'Silver Innings', an organization highlighting the plight of the elderly, was founded barely a month ago, the NGO has been set up by experts in social work and marketing in Mumbai.

They want to make sure people are sensitized to the issues affecting seniors and the lack of good services to this section of the population.

"I have worked in NGOs for three years, but I find that those working on seniors issues, the few that are there and have been working for 15 years, are more focused on marketing their brand and not the issues," says founder of Silver Innings, Satesh Mishra. "They should be highlighting elder issues, and even though they have been working for the last 15 years in this field, they are. If the corporate world is aware of senior issues, then funding and volunteers will come."

His team, he says, has a strategy for sensitizing the community and society on elder issues. "We are not going to market our brand but rather the issues," he told *News India-Times* in a telephone interview from Mumbai.

So far Mishra has been funding the initiative. A marketing executive in corporate India for the last 15 years, Mishra decided to go into non-profit work because he stopped getting any satisfaction from his work. "It was all material, all about pleasing my dealer or my boss." When he went to volunteer with Dignity Foundation, they immediately offered him a job, though at half the paycheck he was getting. Mishra took them up and worked with the NGO sector for three years, familiarizing himself with elder issues.

"I got immense happiness that I was contributing something, and especially for seniors, who are neglected by everyone," Mishra said. Getting to know the mental and physical prob-



More than 200 people, many of them seniors, came to the launch of 'Silver Innings' on April 10 in Mumbai. (Photo: Bbavesh Chedda, courtesy: Silverinnings)

More than 200 people, including representatives from other NGOs, and the media landed up at the launch of 'Silver Inning' this April 10.

"We are virtual, but we have started working already," Mishra concedes, "But we have started a lecture series to sensitize the community about the elderly. We will be having one every month. About 40 people attended the first lecture," he said.

This May 11, the organization hosted a Memory Clinic for those suffering from dementia or Alzheimers disease. Mishra's Web site (www.silverinnings.com) got more than 2,000 hits in 10 days, and more than 100 visitors joined up as members.

"We feel there is a lot of expectation from people and we have a bigger responsibility on our shoulders," he said.

'Do you have a financial plan for your retirement?' the Web site asks. It is amazing how such

for elderly. I want to network and the first board meeting was scheduled for May 10. You will be surprised that all the board members are youngsters, and even those that are coming to our Web site are young," Mishra says.

"We do not want to work in isolation, we must work as part of the society. My vision is to make an organization that will work for seniors and network globally," Mishra enthuses..

Mishra leveraged his work at Dignity Foundation and feels he has met enough Indian parents to figure out what they need.

He has many schemes whirling in his head. "When I was at Dignity, I met many people living abroad who wanted someone to take care of their parents here," Mishra says. "So if we start something it would be good. But we need experts in geriatric care from abroad, then we can start something," he adds, "The government is not funding the initiatives on seniors as

\$22,000. "But we will need more when we start a day-care center for the elderly," he says. There are only two senior centers like the one he wants to set up.

"NRIs have invested in a lot of properties in India. If they can assign us a place, it would be so helpful. There are no courses in gerontology for instance. If there is a center like we are wanting, it would encourage students to take up this field of research and study," he believes.

There is no infrastructure that is elder-friendly in this country, Mishra says. For the Web site they have launched, the mission is to provide comprehensive, accurate, information and an interactive domain. "It has been our endeavor to collect information for this Web site and make it comprehensive and interactive. However, since this is an ongoing process, we will keep on adding and updating," Mishra says.

The Web site informs seniors about financing

lems seniors face, made Mishra passionate about working with them. "I thought why not start something on my own. In all of India, there are barely five or six organizations helping the aging, and those too are in big cities," he says.

Some young people, including Mishra, launched Silver Inning, and their slogan is 'Who's afraid of Aging?'

Currently, Silver Innings is a one stop destination for information for the Elderly and their family members. In Mumbai, with its 10 million population, has only one NGO for the elderly.

"In India 7.5 percent of people are seniors and I felt there was a vacuum there, and a lack of information on this domain."

a simple question can get wildly different answers, Silver Lining says in a press release. "Finance is one of the most important aspects of aging gracefully," Silver Lining contends. It has a section about retirement planning. "Understand the difference. It is not about quitting work today; it's about giving yourself options for tomorrow. Look at retirement planning as preparing for financial independence," the organization advises.

While it may be advising seniors about getting a sustainable income after retirement, Silver Lining is worried about its own sustainability.

Mishra has begun networking with existing seniors organizations in India, "And I have started meeting all the other organizations that work

much, he contends.

Products for elders is rarely available in India, he notes.

"But industry and government does not seem to consider them a market. But it is a growing market," he says. "We see a lot of products for seniors in Western countries. If we could have them customized to Indian conditions, it would be great. Or even importing at a lesser cost, it would make a great difference. For instance, there are so many 'assisted living' devices abroad, but not in India," he points out.

Currently, Mishra estimates, the group needs some Initially, we are looking for Indian Rs.10 lakhs per year," the equivalent of approximately

for retirement, and looks at aspects of finance such as investment, insurance, reverse mortgage, taxation, pension, discounts/concessions, wills and frauds.

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