



Christel House®  
*Transforming Lives*

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### **Sowder family donates almost \$80,000 to expand remediation program for at-risk Indian students**

*Indianapolis, Ind.* – The Sowder family has donated \$79,988 to Christel House India-Bangalore to expand the Sowder Transformational Academic Rewards and Support (STARS) Program which provides remediation programs to Christel House International students around the world.

"We take children from the poorest sections of society," said Raju Shahani, Managing Director at Christel House India. "Coaching them in addition to the class roster is essential to address learning difficulties and help them in evolving both their intelligence and emotional quotient. We ensure that students do not drop out or get intimidated with the open and caring environment at school, in stark contrast to their homes, sometimes marked with emotional trauma.

"We are delighted with the Sowder grant to the Christel House network as it further strengthens our resolve and programs to transform lives and break the cycle of poverty."

With the Sowder Family gift, Christel House India will add three full-time interventionists to roll-out the RTI (Response to Intervention) program in all grades. Additionally, STARS will be offered on 25 Saturdays in 2013-2014, five more than were offered during the 2012-2013 academic year.

The STARS program provides remedial instruction in three languages including English, Hindi and Kannada; and math for students in grades 1-9 who are performing in the bottom 25 percent. In addition, STARS provides a Learning Support Centre for students with specific learning disabilities during the regular school day and teachers with additional training throughout the year.

"I believe that we all have a responsibility to help mankind whether it is one dollar, thousands of dollars, or the giving of our time," said Cindy Sowder, founding funder of the STARS program.

"There are so many worthy charities. When I found Christel House I knew this was the one I wanted to support. I am very proud to be a part of what Christel began. She is a visionary and a woman of compassion and integrity. Each time I visit a school and meet the kids and the staff I realize how much I am changing lives. I read somewhere that the true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit. I hope to plant many trees."

The Sowder family's gift will expand the program for the 2013-2014 school year.

"Thanks to the Sowder family's ongoing support, the STARS program is providing struggling Christel House students with individualized help to close learning gaps," said Christel DeHaan, Christel House Founder and CEO. "We are enormously grateful to Cindy and her family for their generosity, and for their steadfast commitment to fund additional academic support for students whose needs are the greatest."

Globally, in 2012, the STARS Program assisted more than 600 students with language arts remediation, and helped nearly 750 students struggling with math in India, Mexico, South Africa and the United States. STARS funding also provided extra study sessions for high school students preparing for final tests and graduation exams.

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#### **About Christel House International**

Christel House International (CHI) is transforming how kids, their families and future generations permanently escape poverty. Much more than a school, CHI was established in 1998 by founder Christel DeHaan and currently serves over 4,000 impoverished children around the world. By providing high quality education, nutritious meals, regular health care, character and life skills development, and career counseling, CHI helps students grow into confident, hardworking and ethical young adults who give back to their families and communities. CHI operates five learning centers in India, Mexico, South Africa and the U.S.A., as well as a career development program in Venezuela. For more information, please visit [www.christelhouse.org](http://www.christelhouse.org).