

## Woodland Hills family never forgets where it came from



Neighbors on Saltillo St. in Woodland Hills get ready for their 5th annual Charity Sale this Saturday with all proceed going to build schools and other worthwhile projects for the poor children of Sri Lanka

**By Dennis McCarthy**

It's not a neighborhood where you give a casual wave to the man walking his dog, the guy you see every day but whose name you don't ever know.

On the 4400 block of Saltillo Street in Woodland Hills, you know his name, what he does for a living, how many kids he and his wife have and how big their hearts are.

That last part is important, because heart is what it's all about in this close-knit neighborhood of 23 families.

Most of them have known each other for a quarter-century, have watched as their kids have grown up and gone off to start families of their own.

They helped repair each others' homes after the 1994 Northridge Earthquake. And now, when one family goes on vacation, there's an army of people ready to keep an eye on their homes or walk their dogs.

So when the Perera family comes knocking on their doors to say it's time again to help those on the other side of the world, no one argues or says they're too busy. They gather what they don't use or need anymore and take it out in the middle of Saltillo Street - clothes, furniture, appliances, knickknacks - and sell it to the public and each other.

It isn't a typical garage sale. You don't keep what you make. Instead, every cent goes to help impoverished kids and destitute families in Sri Lanka. Last year, the neighbors on Saltillo Street raised \$1,700 to fund a village school and feed poor families in the tiny town of Vali Konda.

Now, \$1,700 doesn't sound like much here. But in Sri Lanka, it can buy the equivalent of \$20,000 worth of food and other supplies.

The Pereras - Srinia and husband Frank - were born in that far-away country, now embroiled in civil war. They make the trip every summer with their twin, college-age children, Jeneeka and Niminde, to take the proceeds from their block sale to the people in those desolate villages.

"The money we make at the charity sale buys cows for milk, feeds hundreds of families and builds schools to give these people at least some quality of life," says neighbor Val Doran.

And none of it would be possible if it wasn't for the Perera family, the residents say.

"They've drawn us together as a neighborhood to a wonderful purpose, and to care for each other," says another neighbor, Ann Trinz. "They are incredible people."

When a tsunami hit Sri Lanka five years ago, it was the Perera twins who collected and delivered more than 5,000 backpacks filled with supplies for the children there.

It's important to look beyond your own lives and neighborhoods to see what's going on in the world, Srinia Perera says.

"As a neighborhood, we're reaching out to the other side of the globe to countries going through some really bad times," she says. "We can't go there to help, but we can have a neighborhood charity event like this every year so we can feel connected, and also stay close as neighbors."

Dennis McCarthy's column appears Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday. [dennis.mccarthy@dailynews.com](mailto:dennis.mccarthy@dailynews.com), 818-713-3749

**WANT<sup>TO</sup>  
GO?**

**Residents of the 4400 block of Saltillo Street will hold a charity garage sale, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Saturday**

**For more information on the Perera family's humanitarian efforts, go to [www.ecsworld.com](http://www.ecsworld.com)**