

THE ORANGE COUNTY BETA
REGISTER

Linking across generations

By [JANE GLENN HAAS](#)

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Prayerna Uppal is changing the world at age 16.

And along the way, she's going to add happiness to elders' lives and give teenagers an understanding of senior needs and the value of community service.

She's using the Internet to link teen volunteers to hospitalized elders who are seldom visited by friends or family.

Here's how she explains her vision of [RLove.us](#), the web site she created:

"The idea of this website struck me as I was searching for some way to complete my community service hours. I automatically thought of helping the elderly when my grandmother told of her experiences as a nurse. She explained how many elderly men and women are often abandoned by their friends and families once they are hospitalized.

"These stories touched me deeply, and I began pondering some way to ensure company for lonely senior citizens. It is then I realized that I could help both my peers and many other high school students, in addition to the lonely elders so often isolated — all through a program such as the Rising Leaders' Organization of Volunteers for the Elderly, also known as RLOVE."

Still in its founding stage, RLOVE has already attracted teens, especially Prayerna's sister, Mayher, 13, who became interested in her sister's quest for a meaningful way to serve the community.

Their father, Bob Uppal, who is involved in hospice care in Orange and Los Angeles counties, told them about his company's difficulties in finding volunteers for the terminally ill.

Prayerna and Mayher, who live in Anaheim, learned that many of these people starve for human contact and, quite often, die alone.

"Our plan is to visit people in hospices and retirement homes as well as elderly care facilities," Prayerna says.

Q. Who designed your web site?

A. My uncle, Rag Thaudhri. He did it in three weeks.

Q. You are an 11th grade student at Valencia High School in Placentia and your sister is an 8th grader at Kraemer Middle School in Placentia. Was this a school project for you?

A. I needed to have a community service project, and I think in a way it will help me a lot in college. Schools look for something to distinguish one person from another — a separator between students. My goal is to go to Stanford and major in medicine. I really want to do that. But there was no grade involved in doing [RLove.us](#).

Q. You've done other volunteering?

A. Both of us have done picking up trash in our Anaheim neighborhood.

Q. You are planning to spend your summer improving the web site and organizing the volunteers. Have you had many hits from teens yet?

A. We have heard from a few but not a lot yet. Nothing really big. Our summer is going to be filled with promoting this project, though. My goal is to basically help as many teens and elderly as I can with the web site.

Q. Your grandmother encouraged you?

A. My grandmother, Prem, lives with us and has told me many stories about the needs of the elderly. Supporting the elderly is part of our Indian culture.

Q. You have resources across the U.S. already?

A. Yes, we can link teens with projects that can use their help in serving the elderly across the U.S.

Q. And someday...?

A. We hope to be international.

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