

Category:
Leader

Ali Khan

One sure sign of a leader is the ability to bring together people who appear to have very different agendas and align them behind a common purpose. Yavar Ali Khan has done this on both a macro and a micro scale. From his own family to his professional life, Khan is truly a leader.

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As one of the founders (along with Dr. Murray Hulbert and Dr. Patrick Quaid) of the Canadian Coalition of Eye Care Professionals (CCEPro), Khan devoted countless hours to its inception and ongoing success. Modeled on the Ontario-based government lobby and consultancy group, the Society of Eye Care Professionals, CCEPro has 1,000 members across Canada, drawn from optometry, opticianry and ophthalmology. The simple existence of this group is remarkable, given the history of conflict between the professions. The coalition works collaboratively on eyecare issues with the goal of upholding high standards of patient-centered eyecare across Canada.

Khan also brings Canadian optometrists and opticians together through The Khan Group's Academy of Ophthalmic Education and



Optifair trade shows. These events bring continuing education to both professions under the same event umbrella.

Living the proverbial immigrant story, Khan arrived in Canada from Hyderabad, India in 1968 with less than \$10 in his pocket. He applied for a job in an optical lab, a position for which he had minimal experience. “I arrived on a Thursday and by Monday I had a job,” he explains. He remains grateful to Dr. Sid Faibish who gave him his first job, and who subsequently recommended that Khan undertake opticianry training. Within five years, his leadership skills became obvious.

When Ryerson University needed to revise its opticianry curriculum in 1976, it turned to Ali Khan. When he finished this task, Ryerson President Walter Pitman gave him a lifetime achievement award in teaching and curriculum development. Pitman also recommended Khan to the Ontario health minister, who appointed him to the Board of Ophthalmic Dispensers in 1979. These distinctions and responsibilities came his way after only a few years in Canada.

Doing his best in everything he undertakes

has been Khan's guiding value throughout his life. On the personal front, he had a responsibility to his family in India when he first arrived here at age 24. “My father was a wealthy industrialist who lost everything during the partition of India in 1947. He died when I was 15 and at that point, I undertook to work hard and restore the family to a place of security. I worked with diligence to achieve that goal.”

Khan's example has rubbed off on his two sons, an optometrist and an optician. Both have served as leaders of their professions.

Charitable fundraising is another area in which Khan shows leadership. He has raised over \$100,000 for vision-related charities through the Eye Ball Gala, an occasional event held most recently in Toronto in April 2013.

What will Khan's legacy be? “I want to help achieve the highest standards of practice and the best possible education for ECPs. I also hope that each profession understands the value of its contribution and that they work together collaboratively for the public good.”