

A New Year of Service Begins ...

The Central Jersey Chapter has begun another year of service with **247** young LEADs joining the Chapter for 2022-2023. The Chapter's adult and youth volunteers have keenly started with their service activities keeping in mind the main guiding principle of Sewa International, USA.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - The World Is One Family

The phrase *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* in Sanskrit consists of several words: *Vasudha* (The Earth), *Eva* (Is Thus), and *Kutumbakam* (Family).

*अयम् नृणां परो वेति गर्हणां लघुचेतसाम् ।
उदारचेतानां तु वासुधावा कुटुम्बकम् ॥*

*This is mine, that is his, say the small minded,
The wise believe that the entire world is a family.*

The verse originally appeared in Chapter 6 of Maha Upanishad and is considered the most important moral value in society. The 'Upanishads' - part of the Vedas, the oldest scriptures of Hinduism - are Vedic Sanskrit texts that gives the basis of the Hindu philosophy.

Sanatana Dharma – Hinduism

Sanatana in Sanskrit means Eternal and the word *Dharma* denotes amongst various meanings also as laws or duties. *Sanatana Dharma* is popularly known as Hinduism today. These eternal laws/duties are laid down primarily in the 'Vedas' – the scriptures. These duties are towards other human beings; towards other creatures such as birds, animals; towards our ancestors; towards the divine beings functioning as elemental forces; towards our Guru (Teacher) for the divine knowledge they have protected and imparted to us.

This vision encompasses the broadest range we as an individual can embrace as a global citizen. Within the ambit of our obligatory works welfare of other human beings, other creatures who are depended on us for their survival, our ancestors without whom we would not be here in this world, elemental forces like sun, moon etc on whom we are completely dependent on our survival and lastly our knowledge without which we would not have the culture or the refinement in our character. It is this broadest vision and way of life from which the maxim *Vasudeva Kutumbakam* is extolled and by which we at the Central Jersey Chapter live by.

And thus the Chapter begins the new year of service with the motto ...

Together We Serve Better

We Believe In The Dharmic Principles Of "Serving Humanity Is Serving Divinity" And "Unity In Diversity."

We Believe In Service Above Self.

We Practice Teamwork And Self-Reliance.

We Are Proactive And Responsive To The Needs Of Society While Promoting 'self Reliance' Among Those Who Are Served.

We Are Pluralistic, Trustworthy And Transparent.

We Create A Positive Impact Through Operational Excellence And Customer Satisfaction.

We Respect And Safeguard Our Environment.

We Value Our Volunteers, Donors And Partners.

We Respect The Dignity Of Every Human Being, Consider Humanity As One Family (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam) While Serving Them Regardless Of Race, Color, Religion, Nationality, Gender, And Sexual Orientation.

We Accept And Celebrate Diversity In People And Community, We Are Sensitive To The Cultural Backgrounds Of People We Serve.

The guiding principles of Sewa International, USA

Chapter Highlights

- ❖ New year of Service Begins
- ❖ 'Sewa Diwali' Food Donation Drive for the food insecure
- ❖ 'Treats for Troops' Candy Drive for deployed soldiers and veterans
- ❖ Pumpkin Composting for Organic Farming and Environment Protection
- ❖ Sewa for Autism Foundation and Autism Speaks Walk
- ❖ Sewa at Veterans Homes
- ❖ Sewa at Temple
- ❖ Sewa at Boat Building, Community Gardens, Farmer's Market & Trail Cleanups
- ❖ Sewa Meals for the Homeless
- ❖ Sewa at Food Bank & Food Pantries
- ❖ Sewa at Township Events

Volunteer Spotlight



Smitha Ji Madireddy from Bordentown, New Jersey, has been part of Sewa International Central Jersey Chapter since 2020. Smitha Ji has been helping with the Sewa Meals grocery shopping & making meal kits for LEADs for the past one year. She also has been a parent volunteer for the past two years for the Sewa's tutoring program over the summer. Beyond Sewa, for many years she has been volunteering to help young children on their public speaking skills. Smitha Ji is also a very devoted yoga practitioner & starts her day with it first thing in the morning.

'Sewa Diwali' Food Donation Drive

28% of Americans struggle with covering daily expenses, 14% are not caught up on rent, 10% don't make enough to eat which comes to around 33 million Americans! No one when struggling so severely should have to worry where their next meal is coming from.

'Sewa Diwali' is collective initiative of 300+ Dharmic - Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist and other- American communities collaborating on a nationwide food donation effort during the festive season of 'Diwali' – a festival that is celebrated across all Dharmic traditions, bringing together people from different backgrounds - who believe in '***Sewa Parmoh Dharmah***' - ***Service to Humanity is Service to Divinity***.

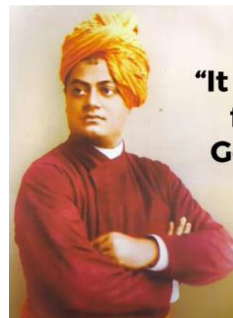
Sewa International, USA and all Chapters including the Central Jersey Chapter adheres to these very same Dharmic principles and since **2018** has conducted these food donation drives. The food collected are donated to food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens across townships in Central Jersey.

This year, in the months of September to November 2022, the Central Jersey Chapter conducted the food donation drive with the mission of fostering togetherness and selfless giving for the welfare of society. In the enlightening spirit of Diwali, the drive is to celebrate the joyous occasion of Diwali by ensuring no one gets hungry.

This year the Central Jersey Chapter collected and donated **above 15,000** pounds of food. The food collected was then dropped off to the various beneficiaries and subsequently distributed to the food insecure.

The recipients of 2022 'Sewa Diwali' food donation drive:

Cherry Hill Food Pantry
Christina Seix Academy
Feeding Hands Food Distribution
FPC Food Pantry
Franklin Food Bank
Hands of Hope Food Pantry
HomeFront NJ, Lawrence Township
Metuchen YMCA
Ozanam Food Shelter
Presbyterian Church of Metuchen
Somerset Food Pantry Network
South Jersey Food Bank
Zarepath Pantry



**"It is a privilege to serve mankind,
for this is the worship of god.
God is here, in all human souls."**

- Swami Vivekananda



The Central Jersey Chapter would like to thank all the donors for their service to humanity. 🙏

Sewa 'Treats for Troops' Donation Drive

'Treat The Troops' drive is a way of letting deployed American military persons know that people at home are remembering them through free care packages. These care packages are sent via the U.S. Postal Service to each soldier at an Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine base. It is a way of the American People, to let these troops know that the civilians are appreciative of the hardships and risks they must endure every day for the country. Letters received from soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen prove that these packages from home are greatly appreciated and that they do boost their morale.

Sewa International, USA and its nationwide network of committed volunteers and donors have given graciously and generously over the years. The Central Jersey Chapter has been organizing and conducting the donation drive since **2019** and each year since then the number of volunteers and the amount of treats collected has only grown.

This year the Chapter collected **~5,200 pounds** which was then donated to the JBMDL - Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst at Trenton, NJ.



The Chapter Coordinators, LEADS and adult volunteers met with the active duty members from the army, air force, navy, and marines. It was an inspiring moment for the volunteers. The air force base Command Chief Michael Wynn appreciated the Central Jersey Chapter's efforts for the candy drive as well as the handmade cards by the LEADS for the troops.

The Chapter gives our heartfelt thanks to Brandi Shugart, President of Spouses of JBMDL for giving us an opportunity to serve our troops. The Chapter also wishes to thank all the residents from Camden, Burlington, Mercer, Middlesex, Somerset & Bucks County (PA) for their generous candy donations.



Here are some of the moments captured ...

<https://youtu.be/f54delFoS8o> - Candy Collection

<https://youtu.be/Xr96yeiEYik> - US Anthem

<https://youtu.be/bvWfZhCLkqo> - Cards for the Troops

<https://youtu.be/VMRVXRcDPms> - Message from Command Chief Michael Wynn & Brandi Shugart, President of Spouses of JBMDL

The Central Jersey Chapter would like to thank all the donors for their generous donations and take this opportunity to thank our deployed service personnel for their service to the country. 🙏

Sewa for Pumpkin Composting

It is estimated that around 1 billion pounds of pumpkins go into the landfill after Halloween each year!

Landfills are used to collect waste and are intended to reduce the amount of waste that makes it into the environment and keep it contained. But when pumpkins are put into the trash and end up in the landfills, what results from it is the release of methane gas. Methane gas is the most potent of greenhouse gasses which adversely affects the environment and results in climate change by contributing to increased warming.

Reducing landfill emissions and increasing composting access is crucial in the effort to reduce the effects of climate change. Access to mainstream composting can lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduce waste, and create compost to re-enrich the soil.

Composting takes organic materials and breaks them down efficiently. The goal of composting is not to manage waste, but to create beneficial compost. When the pumpkin is composted, it becomes new nutrients for a garden or for soil.

Composting Reduces Emissions by diverting organic waste away from landfills.
Composting Transforms Organic Waste into a product that enriches the soil.
Compost Enriches the Soil allowing it to support flourishing plants, trees, and crops.
Composting Reduces the Effects of Climate Change.

In an endeavor to protect the environment and also to promote organic farming, the LEADs of the Central Jersey Chapter, post Halloween, went around their respective communities collecting the pumpkins, removing any candle wax, glitter, or paint from the pumpkins and then dropping them off at Chesterfield Organic Orchards for composting. Most of the pumpkins were slowly incorporated into compost piles to be composted into an organic fertilizer which will then be used to amend the soils in spring for fruit production. In this manner, the LEADs have played a part in sequestering carbon and reducing its contribution to climate change.

“Thank you for your work in collecting and transporting decorative pumpkins from residents of Chesterfield, Bordentown, Cherry Hill, Mt. Laurel, Monroe and Kendall Park (in 3 different counties!) and delivering them to our organic farm in Chesterfield this fall. ... sincerely grateful for Sewa’s volunteer efforts in this and past years ... “

- Sherry Dudas, Farm Manager, Chesterfield Organic Orchards



Sewa at Autism Speaks Walk Event

In the month of November, the Central Jersey Chapter LEADs volunteered at the Autism Speaks Walk event. The LEADs helped at making sure the event went through well in every aspect from start to finish.

This event provided an excellent opportunity for all participants and the Chapter volunteers to learn more about the crucial autism research, the spectrum of solutions for tomorrow and throughout the lifespan, the advocacy needs of individuals with autism and their families, and the services needed to help people with autism and those who support them to thrive.



Sewa at AttachAvi Autism Foundation

This month, the Chapter LEADs have continued to volunteer at AttachAvi Autism Foundation, located in Edison, NJ. The AttachAvi Autism Foundation is an education center for young children with autism. They mainly focus on early intervention, as well as helping children develop their cognitive skills. Some of the LEADs volunteer here throughout the year by assisting the kids and helping the teacher run the classes. LEADs help the kids with various games, dances, exercises, rhymes, and speech exercises. This project has been a very fulfilling experience for our LEADs!

Sewa at Veterans Homes



The Chapter LEADs had the opportunity to volunteer at New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Menlo Park, a state-run nursing home that cares for military veterans and their spouses. LEADs assisted in transporting the veterans around the building, socializing with them, assisting them in their meal time, and playing trivia games with them.

During trivia every time a veteran recognized a name or event they indulged in their own involvement with the event in the past, which was informative and enlightening to the LEADs. It was an opportunity to hear their stories and their experiences from the war in their service to the country. It was a mutually beneficial experience.

The veterans thanked the LEADs for their service activity and the LEADs in turn thanked the veterans for their service.

Sewa at Temple

In November, the Chapter LEADs helped out at the Radha Gopinath Temple for their 'Patotsava' celebration.

LEADs helped serve 'Prasadam' – an offering to the devotees and helped set up the dining hall. They also helped clean up after the festival.

It was an occasion where the LEADs were blessed to be a part of the celebration of the re-consecration ceremony of the temple 'Murti' – temple deity.



Sewa at Boat Building, Community Gardens, Farmer's Market, and Trail Cleanups



In November the Chapter LEAD volunteers collaborated with the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership with building cedar wood boats. With the help of skilled professionals, the LEADs worked hands-on through the process of boat-building, including cutting and shaping the wood. These boats are designed to be used for travel on the Raritan River.

LEADs attended a four days' workshop to learn how to operate power tools and large machinery as part of the boat-building process.

The Chapter thanks the technicians at the woodshop for their guidance and the opportunity!

Chapter LEADs also contributed to the cleanup of the nature trail circling Menlo Park Elementary School. The autumn season and breezy climate had completely covered the trail with leaves and branches.

LEADs put in strenuous work to clean up the trail, raking leaves and removing sticks and roots in the trail for hours, but worked optimistically while enjoying the experience amidst the natural colorful scenery. LEADs have made the trail walkable again for the children of Menlo Park Elementary School and other visitors.

Central Jersey LEADs would like to thank Menlo Park Elementary School for giving an opportunity to help restore the nature trail back to its original beauty!



In November, Chapter LEADs continued to work at Marlboro Community Garden, learning about the garden and doing garden work most Saturdays. They worked to winterize the garden in order to protect it from the harsh winter and make sure that the garden beds are ready for the upcoming spring.

LEADs shoveled leafy mulch onto abandoned plots and moved soil onto empty beds. They also sifted the compost, took down the pin board at the front of the garden and ensured that the garden was ready to shut down for the winter.

LEADs learned about composting leaves and plants, identifying different herbs, procedures to ensure plants survive throughout the tough winter, and different chemicals that help and hurt plants.

In the month of November, Chapter LEADs also helped out at the YMCA Farmer's market in Metuchen. They helped with loading and unloading the stalls at the YMCA and distributed pamphlets to the market visitors.



Sewa Meals for the Homeless

In November 2022, Central Jersey Chapter LEADs continued with their monthly service of providing home cooked meals for the homeless, food shelters and food pantries.

The LEADs prepared Indian and Italian cuisine consisting of veggie pulao rice, channa masala peas curry, pita bread, burritos, pasta with veggies, chickpeas salad, baked potatoes, bread roll, and chips. Dessert was semolina sweets, brownies, muffins and cupcakes. Kids' meals consisted of grilled cheese sandwiches, fruits, fruit juices, and cookies. The LEADs transported the homemade meals to the beneficiaries and also helped to pack the individual meals and distribute them to the food insecure at the churches.

The LEADs always enjoy preparing the meals and going to deliver them in person. Thanks to all of our LEADs for working so hard this month, and thanks for all the support from our parents and especially to our sponsors!

Recipients:

Ozanam Food Shelter
United Methodist Church in New Brunswick
Westminster Presbyterian Church in Trenton

This month's meals was sponsored by:

Shital & Manoj Khabe
Suchitra & Sai Krishna Potluri
Shilpa & Mukul Rathi (State Farm)
LEAD Sowmya's family

LEADs worked as a team to cook large amounts of food in a short period of time.

The recipients for the donation were very grateful and welcoming to the LEADs for putting in the effort to make these delicious meals!



Sewa at Food Banks and Food Pantries

This month of November, on a windy Saturday morning, Central Jersey Chapter LEADs were partaking in a complex assembly line at the Hands of Hope food pantry/soup kitchen initiative, a nonprofit community based organization dedicated to helping families in need by providing food as well as other household items.

Volunteers started by putting the necessary food items in grocery bags before passing them onto other volunteers, who then passed it onto tables to give to individual families in need who were in a drive in line to get the food. In addition to packing food for the families, the LEADs also sorted donations and labeled specific items for expiration date.

LEADs thus was part of an efficient and effective system for distributing food to alleviate hunger in the community, one family at a time in the Central Jersey Region.



Chapter LEADs volunteer at the Franklin Township Food Bank every Saturday in helping out with sorting food, restocking supplies, and helping out the employees in any way needed.

The LEADs have taken on the responsibility to serve the food needs of the local community in an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

In the month of November, Chapter LEADs also volunteered at the Rise Pantry in Hightstown.

They sorted the donated produce and food items and stored them in the designated areas. LEADs also assembled food packages, to be readily available for easy distribution to those in need.



Sewa for Township Events

This November, the Chapter LEADs volunteered at events with the Chesterfield Township Athletic Association. The association had requested the Chapter's help to operate the sign-in table for elementary basketball try-outs. The LEADs were able to volunteer two nights to help ensure the try-outs went by efficiently and that the parents and kids were informed and directed on what was required.

They were tasked with signing the players in for their respective tryout slot which was based on grade level. The LEADs also had to give each player the respective participation number label that was assigned to them. They then directed the players inside the gym for their tryout. With the help of the LEADs, the Chesterfield elementary school basketball tryouts went smoothly.



In the month of November, LEADs had a wonderful time at the Sewa Diwali Milan organized by Marlboro Indian Foundation at the Colts Neck Fire Company's banquet hall.

Volunteers helped setting up and decorating tables, registering guests into the party, taking pictures, helping with serving dinner, and cleaning up afterwards. LEADs also handed out brown paper bags with fireworks to families celebrating Diwali.

Guests had a wonderful and eventful night enjoying the holiday and food, it was a colorful night with sparkles and fire crackers as well. All volunteers had a fun time helping out in such an incredible event and look forward to participating in events such as these.

Sewa for the Christmas 'Giving Tree'

Chapter LEADs volunteered for making the tree ornaments for 'The Giving Tree' at Kiddie Academy in Collegeville, PA this November. Ruchi Ji from Kiddie Academy has been fulfilling the Christmas wishes of the children at Metuchen YMCA through the years.

This year 17 children have asked for their wishes for Christmas and Chapter LEADs have been making ornaments out of the children's wish lists and all their wishes will be fulfilled by Ruchi Ji once again!

LEADs created a beautiful display for the 'Giving Tree' and have fun volunteering for this event every year.



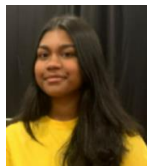
Central Jersey Chapter would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas!

*'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – The World Is One Family
Together We Serve Better*

Newsletter Team



Adwita Jagannathan
Grade: 9
Interests: Music, Reading, Writing
Favorite Sewa Project: AttachAvi Autism Foundation



Anjali Pyeddu
Grade: 10
Interests: Dance, Music, Reading
Favorite Sewa Project: Sewa Meals



Arjun Kella
Grade: 10
Interests: Drawing, Video games
Favorite Sewa Project: Franklin Township Food Bank



Arvind Subbaiah
Grade: 9
Interests: Science, Technology, Games
Favorite Sewa Project: Park Cleanup



Ashwin Vijayabaskar
Grade: 9
Interests: Volleyball, Cricket, Coding
Favorite Sewa Project: Treats for Troops



Atharva Kadam
Grade: 10
Interests: Java, Sports
Favorite Sewa Project: KKWC Summer Activity



Dhanvee Palakodeti
Grade: 9
Interests: Volleyball, Football
Favorite Sewa Project: Treats for Troops



Krish Visram
Grade: 10
Interests: Technology, basketball, Cars
Favorite Sewa Project: Road Cleanup



Lakshya Chauhan
Grade: 10
Interests: Web Development, Machine Learning, Political Science
Favorite Sewa Project: Hands of Hope



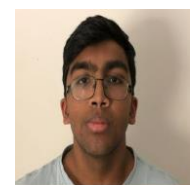
Praveen Prabaharan
Grade: 11
Interests: Technology
Favorite Sewa Project: Python Camp



Saumya Singh
Grade: 8
Interests: Basketball, Computer Programming, Arts & Crafts
Favorite Sewa Project:



Shamitha Chadaga
Grade: 11
Interests: Music, Dance
Favorite Sewa Project: Marlboro Garden



Vaman Rajagopal
Grade: 11
Interests: Piano, Technology
Favorite Sewa Project: Python Camp



Vishal ThamaraiKannan
Grade: 11
Interests: Finance, Music, Soccer
Favorite Sewa Project: Trail Clean Up

Upcoming Events

- ❖ Sewa Milan 2022
- ❖ Winter Coat Drive
- ❖ Sewa at Temple Festival of Gita Jayanthi
- ❖ Sewa for Christmas Spectacular
- ❖ Sewa for Autism Foundation and Christmas Party
- ❖ Sewa Meals for the Homeless
- ❖ Sewa at Food Bank & Food Pantries
- ❖ Sewa at Boat Building
- ❖ Sewa for Pumpkin Composting

Communication Channels

Please visit our Chapter website and Follow us on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram

Web: <https://Sewausa.org/centraljersey-Chapter>

Twitter: @JerseySewa

FB: @JerseySewa or Sewa Central Jersey

Instagram: sewainternationalcentraljersey

Email: CentralJersey.Sewa@gmail.com

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