

SEWA INTERNATIONAL :: BOSTON CHAPTER

DONOR NEWSLETTER

UTTARAKHAND DISASTER RELIEF

On the morning of February 7, the Dhauli Ganga river ferociously swept through the village of Raini in the lap of the Uttarakhand Himalayas, washing away everything in her path with massive stone and ice rocks. In the confluence of the Rishi and Dhauli Ganga rivers, where you would see farmers tilling their lands and artisans weaving *ringal* (local dwarf bamboo), life turned to sorrow as villagers lost their lives, livelihoods, and families.

Sewa volunteers, already in Uttarakhand helping locals rehabilitate from previous calamities, witnessed the destruction wrought by the floods firsthand and were the first responders to this event that affected 12+ villages and left 30+ dead and 100+ missing. The experienced Sewa volunteers helped guide rescue teams to people trapped in mountain tunnels. They provided essential emergency medical services, set up temporary shelters, and ran community kitchens to meet the villagers' basic needs. Sewa's donors have also given over \$60,000 to provide emergency aid. Visit <https://sewainternational.org/uttarakhandflood2021> to learn more.



Feeding The Hungry

Sewa Boston Chapter had the annual food drive during the month of February, collecting donations of canned and non-perishable food items. This initiative energized Sewa interns and numerous elementary and high school children who reached out to community members through a plethora of creative activities such as distributing collection bags with flyers, video appeal campaigns and simple friendly knock on the door. The sole mission was to bring smiles on hungry faces, to 'Feed the Hungry'. The task was daunting, given the challenging environment due to the havoc that COVID-19 has created around the world in the last 12 months. But the indomitable spirit with which the youth and Sewa volunteers conducted the food drive in the neighborhood and garnered funds through corporate donations and sponsorships was commendable. Collection of over 5600 pounds of food worth \$11,000+ and distribution in 7 food pantries, food banks and shelters are testimony of the efforts that went in for a noble cause.

The outcome was overwhelming and it was heartening to witness that humanity has stood the test of time and emerged as a winner no matter what the circumstances!

Sponsor a Child



Obali Vidyalaya, a rural school in Hanur Taluk of Karnataka, was adopted by the Boston Chapter as one of their service goals for 2021. Obali Vidyalaya, which is located very close to the state's border with Tamil Nadu, is being run by an ex-serviceman Shri Gangadhar Ji, who left his government job in India to join his father to set up and run this school.

Affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, the school sought the help of Sewa to ensure continuity in the education of 44 kids in the school between 4th grade to 9th grade. Sewa's staff and volunteers immediately reached out to the Principal of the school to understand the students' needs and began making arrangements to support the school.



After two months of outreach through social media, neighbors, colleagues, friends and family members, Sewa brought together 34 donors who were excited to be a part of the kids' education. Some of our donors who were hitherto unaware of Sewa's programs even volunteered to be a part of other initiatives of Sewa.

Thanks to the generous donation from our donors, we have been able to do our small part by ensuring that all 44 kids in the school can continue their education.

Youth Services–Leadership Engagement and Development (LEAD) Program

The Sewa Boston LEAD team which consists of 15 high school interns and 6 mentors has been working for the betterment of the local communities. While being instrumental in collecting 10000 lbs of food via Sewa's winter food drive, the LEAD interns engaged numerous youngsters and adults from Hopkinton, Westborough and Shrewsbury area in Sewa's work. On the request of the head priest of ISKCON's Krishna temple, they took the lead in temple clean up work. Fundraising is a key part of the LEAD internship. With that in mind the interns kicked off planning for Sangeetotsav 2021, a virtual music competition fundraiser. With a goal to raise \$10000 they dove right in and were able to get over 100 registrations across three categories: classical music, light music and instrumental music. Video performances by the participants will be judged and the winners will be announced during the live event on Saturday, April 24th.



FAMILY SERVICES

INITIATIVES

Family Case Management Service

Educational & Awareness Seminars

Health and Wellness Programs



GOALS

Strengthen communities by supporting families in need

Educate community members to make positive lifestyle changes

Create awareness on societal and sociological issues

Educational and Awareness Seminars

Believing **S**leep, **E**xercise, **L**iving in the present (or lifestyle) and **F**ood (or diet) are key to the emotional and physical resilience needed to face some of life's challenges, Sewa's "Know your Healthy S.E.L.F" initiative brings people together and supports, encourages and guides them in adopting a balanced and active lifestyle. Given COVID, the workshops are presented in an interactive webinar style and have already covered topics including: COVID 19 Vaccines, Discovering Inner Strength and Happiness, Women's Heart Health, Weight Gain (Trends, Causes, and Remedies), and Sleep (The Essential Ingredient to Healthy Living). Seminars on educational and awareness topics included Managing Career Transitions – Effective Marketing Tools and Addressing Concerns on Immigration, among others. Please go to www.SewaUSA.org/SELF for more information.

Case Management

Domestic violence in the Indian community is rarely brought to light, but that does not mean it does not exist. The feelings of guilt and the associated stigma are often so high that victims are seldom able to speak out. So, when they do speak out, it is time to stop and listen carefully. Here is one of our neighbors in Massachusetts (names and identifiable details changed to protect identity):

"My name is Asha. I am a domestic violence survivor single mom struggling with poverty, lack of resources and housing instability for the last 4 or so years. Today I would like to express my deep heartfelt gratitude and appreciation towards the truly benevolent and selflessly serving organization called Sewa International. Since the last few years Sewa International has been a tremendous help to keep food on our table by reimbursing our grocery bills.

A few months ago, my child, who was awarded a scholarship to go to school, was having trouble with keeping grades up. A few young Sewa "LEAD team" interns tutored my child until the grades improved. My child has now been awarded full scholarship for the entire college education.

Lately, my current landlord gave me no-fault eviction notice. Housing in the area is extremely expensive. Sewa again came to my rescue and has promised to pay one month rent to keep the roof over me and my children's head. Thank you Sewa."

Asha's is not an isolated case. Starting in January, volunteers and donors in the New England area have given compassion, love, and financial help through the Sewa Case Management Service to more than 12 families in trouble. At Sewa, we believe that there's no better way to enable change than from within. With the community's help, we can provide victims of domestic violence with safety and stability for a better life.

Nrityameva Jayate

Sewa International’s Boston Chapter organized its annual fundraiser and the Nrityameva Jayate dance competition on January 9, 2021 via Facebook Live and YouTube. With more than 100 performances by over 200 participants from 25 dance schools, the 2020 program was able to raise over \$20,000 to benefit communities via Sewa’s “Feeding the Hungry” and COVID relief programs.

The dance program was organized to promote volunteerism and create awareness about Hindu culture highlighting the principles “The Whole World is One Family,” and “May Everyone be Happy”. Nrityameva Jayate means “victory to the art of dance”. While maintaining social distancing, this dance competition united participants for the common goal of serving the community.



Sponsor Highlight

HELPING YOU ACHIEVE FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE



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