

Over 2,700 participate in the 2018 International Day of Yoga Events

The fourth *International Day of Yoga* (IDY) was celebrated by Sewa International chapters across various cities in the United States.



Yoga conference at Military Veteran - San Antonio

On June 9, the Sewa San Antonio Chapter organized a yoga conference to celebrate Military City USA and to provide free yoga classes to all military, veteran, and first-responder personnel. Titled "Yoga for Warriors", the conference was also free and open to the general public. Over 1,000 attendees benefitted from 52 different presenters in a day full of classes and seminars for participants of all ages. The highlight of the day was a presentation by Dan Nevins, a war veteran who lost both his legs during the 2004 combat in Iraq when an improvised explosive device (IED)

detonated beneath his truck. Dan, who later learnt and has taught yoga to thousands of people, guided a class of amputees and inspired veterans to reach beyond the limits of their bodies, and to acquire a new perspective on life. A full-day *Continuing Medical Education* (CME) program titled "Yoga for Health, Well-being and Medical Conditions" was attended by 22 physicians and yoga therapists. To promote yoga, Sewa disbursed a \$7,500 grant to three local nonprofit organizations that teach yoga to children, women, and veterans.

On June 21, free yoga classes, workshops and presentations were conducted at 47 locations in San Antonio. It was supported by all councilmen across the 10 districts in the city. They offered free venues, and marketed the events in the community centers, libraries, and parks. The day began with a sunrise yoga class offered at the Joint Base, San Antonio, attended by over 30 army personnel.

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Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Supporter,

We have successfully completed six months of work in 2018. Many noteworthy events have happened this year. The national team has come up with a new strategy for organization by framing a new mission; we have had a successful national conference in New Jersey; Sewa's IT team is working on launching a new website with many new features; and new chapters are coming up in different states. This is indeed great progress!

During the national conference, Sewa President Prof. Sree Sreenath explained about the 2023 strategic plan. Our new threepartmission is disaster recovery, family and child welfare, and promoting volunteerism. To accomplish this new mission, demographic outreach, strategic alliance with local organizations, and more thrust on fund development is essential.

Successful demographic outreach is possible by reaching out to senior citizens, women, and youth in our communities. Encouraging people from these groups to take up an active role in volunteer work, and promoting them to leadership roles in our organization will strengthen our volunteer base while also bringing a remarkable change in our organization. Having a strategic alliance with local organizations helps

in establishing Sewa's work at chapter levels, promotes Sewa's brand in different organizations, and also increases our volunteer base. It is not so easy to collaborate with other organizations: Sewa volunteers embody patience, and possess a knack for reaching out to these organizations. Proactively participating and volunteering in the programs of local organizations, and establishing good rapport with their leadership team members will help in gaining trust among these organizations. A give and take approach always helps in upholding cordial relations.

Fund development is an essential part of our organizational success. Funds will flow into Sewa only when we show a deep commitment to our work, promptly report to our donors and well-wishers the status of work on projects, and increasing our volunteer base by following the above mentioned strategies.

These strategies will work only when our chapters are strong and healthy. Chapter teams should have a deep and abiding commitment to our vision and mission because the chapter teams are ultimately responsible for implementing these strategies and for bringing about positive changes in the organization.


Syam Kosigi
 VP Administration



Cause of the Month: Youth and Volunteering



Sewa International provides volunteering and internship opportunities to promote volunteerism among youth through a variety of programs designed for different segments among them. For instance, **Get Inspired** is an annual summer internship program for personal development and leadership training geared to high school and college students. **Lead** program introduces socially conscious leadership to young adults; the Lead interns are required to perform a minimum of 50 hours of service, including direct service at Sewa events. **Yuva for Sewa (YFS)** is a ten-week international summer internship program for American college students. Since its inception in 2006, YFS has provided 73 young men and women the opportunity to volunteer their time for different service projects in India, based on their interests and expertise.

Sewa also promotes volunteering among youth and young adults by providing opportunities through periodic and ongoing volunteering activities, as well as structured internships. Sewa has been granted authority as a Certifying Organization (CO) to administer the President's Volunteer Service Award (PVSA) to volunteers.

We hope that there is renewed effort this month in all chapters to disseminate this message, and to attract more young people to volunteering.

Two Decades of Growth: Educating Nomads

Some experiences are inspiring, others are enriching, but when one gets to visit a successful project first time after supporting it in a small way 20+ years ago, the experience is truly nostalgic.

On his recent trip to India, Sewa Executive Vice President, Arun Kankani was visiting Solapur, Maharashtra, to attend his nephew's wedding. He took the opportunity to visit a project in Yamgarwadi village. A unique initiative to end 'generational poverty', it was the brainchild of Girish Prabhune under the nonprofit 'Bhatake Vimukta Vikas Parishad.' The challenge was in bringing children of nomadic tribes to educate them so that they settle down and give up their nomadic way of life. He could get a first-hand experience of the fruits of a visionary's action initiated decades ago. What started in 1993 with a few children in two huts has today grown to a full-fledged school up to grade 10, with 550 boys and girls enrolled. The residential school with dedicated teaching and non-teaching staff take care of the children with parental affection and care.



Arun Kankani (center) with the staff at the school

"Visiting the entire facility with simple but clean environment showed how the staff were managing the project with the scarce resources available to them" said Arun Kankani. "It was their dedication for the cause that energized them and the whole project in that tough area. I interacted with the 'Katri' tribe who are migrants from Rajasthan. The fact that there are 15 million people in India who belong to nomadic tribes, with no place to call home, was something new to me." After the five-hour journey, the one regret that Arun had was that he did not take his relatives along to see the school.

Sewa encourages you to visit a project in an area of interest on your next visit to India and share your experience. For more details visit <https://sewausa.org/sewa-yatra> or write to sewayatra@sewausa.org.

2018 IDY

A yoga class offered in the afternoon at the summer program in the school was attended by over 100 students. An evening class at the iconic River Walk in downtown San Antonio was attended by over 200 people. Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), Ekam Life, Yoga Seva Institute, and Yoga Day partnered with Sewa International in the IDY celebrations. Dr. Hetal Nayak, spearheading the efforts in San Antonio, said, "Yoga is the most important contribution of India to the world, and this gift from India comes with no strings attached but which benefits the body, mind, and soul of anyone who takes up the practice. It is a joy to celebrate the International Day of Yoga because yoga is now a truly universal practice." On June 17, Sewa Boston Chapter, in association with 11 partner organizations, celebrated IDY with the theme "Yoga for Peace" at the Radisson Hotel in Chelmsford, MA. About 125 enthusiastic participants took part in the program that included light warm-up exercises, *Surya Namaskar* (sun salutation), *pranayama* (breathing techniques), and sitting and standing yoga postures. The three breakout sessions on *Sit for Meditation*, *Whole Health with Ayurveda and Yoga Therapy* were well received by the attendees. Sessions were conducted by yoga professionals from *Nataraja Yoga Center*, *Om Studio Central*, *Well Life Medical*, *Jey Smith Yoga*, and *Savsani*. The program was wrapped up with participants doing the *Yoga Nidra* -- a deep relaxation technique.



"We loved the diversification, how you offered the different yoga sessions on asanas, Yoga Nidra and parallel sessions on Ayurveda and therapeutic yoga. We also love the outreach and humanitarian work Sewa is doing around the world"

- Dorothy Grant, arthritis patient and participant at IDY Clemsford

Over 30 participants from all over Cleveland came together to celebrate the arrival of summer with the Fourth Annual Yoga Summer Solstice event on Saturday, June 16, at the Weiss Field, Avon Lake, Ohio. The morning was beautiful and cool, but it was followed by torrential rain. Undeterred, the yoga participants moved into a pavilion to continue with their yoga practice. The event started with an explanation and demonstration of *Antarayoga* by yoga masters from India -- Hema Malini Prasad and T. S. Prasad. They emphasized the importance of linking mind with body and emphasizing mindfulness to realize the true benefits of yoga in the long run. After *pranayama* the yogis were led through *108 Surya Namaskars*, by teachers Staci Teter of Yoga Alliance in Strongsville, Ohio, and Renee Barrett, Director of Personal Training and Yoga, University Hospitals, Avon Health Centre.

In Houston, over a 1,000 participants took part in the IDY celebrations organized by Sewa in three main events and 21 other smaller events at temples and yoga studios. The events were conducted on June 21 and 23 with support from 42 partner organizations. Well-known cardiologist and yoga expert, Dr. Sarkar, was the chief guest at the Woodlands event. He later conducted a day-long workshop titled "Yoga as Medicine", a recognized Continuing Medical Education (CME) program, that was attended by 42 medical professionals.

Sewa North Jersey chapter, in partnership with Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, celebrated IDY on June 23 at PAL Center, Parsippany, NJ. About 125 people participated in the 2.5 hour program that included yoga, meditation and *pranayama*. Volunteers from the *Isha* Foundation guided the participants through the workshop.



Swarup Kurella has been associated with Sewa International since 2015 as the Washington DC chapter coordinator. He has worked towards reestablishing the chapter by planning and executing activities with the team over the years. Swarup is motivated to meet and work with people who have a common interest in volunteering activities.

One of the issues he is deeply committed to is helping the homeless. He believes that homelessness is a blot on society that needs to be addressed in this country, and one way to alleviate the situation is by strengthening the established institutions like family and community organizations. Treating the homeless with dignity, sharing a meal with them, and providing care to make them overcome their misery is an important step forward, he believes. In this context, he likes to involve different teams and organizations by conducting skill development workshops for the homeless that motivates them to join the workforce and earn a decent living. Swarup also believes that volunteering is a divine activity and a healthy life-style that needs to be imbibed from an early age. He finds the camaraderie among the Sewa volunteers to be immense, and a day of selfless service with them stirs the body, mind, and soul.

Swarup is a management consultant with the US Federal Government for many years. He is also an executive board member of the Project Management Institute, DC chapter, and a few other nonprofit organizations. Swarup has been a *swyamsevak* from childhood, continues to learn Sanskrit, and actively volunteers for Samskrita Bharati.

A native of Visakhapatnam, Swarup has been in the United States for more than twenty-one years. He lives in Virginia with his wife Priyanka, and three daughters – Saahiti, Pallavi, and Laasini. In his spare time, he enjoys singing, playing the flute, doing yoga, and long-distance running.

Lighting the Path to a Brighter Future

Performing arts is one of Pranav Sharma's passion, and in the summer of 2017, he leveraged it to raise funds for purchasing 100 solar lamps through the *One Million Lights* program which is part of the World of Color public charity, a Palo Alto based 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization. With a mission to improve the daily lives of children and adults by providing clean and healthy lighting, they distribute safe, rechargeable solar lights around the world, replacing dangerous and polluting kerosene lamps. A week after his fundraising effort, Sewa volunteer Pranav landed in Mumbai, India. Accompanied by a local Sewa volunteer, he travelled to Divya Vidyalaya, in Palghar district of Maharashtra where he handed over the solar lamps to representatives from ten social organizations. Travelling through bumpy terrain and on mud roads, he then drove to Patkar Pada, a tribal hamlet in Mokhda *taluka* (county) and distributed solar lamps to members of the tribal community, who live in huts with roofs made of leaves and twigs. The solar lamps allow them to use environmentally safe lighting instead of harmful kerosene lamps. By enabling families to work after sunset and use solar energy, these lamps help bring in additional income to support their children's education. "Through this journey I had a chance to learn more about the reality outside of my personal surroundings. I hope that my work inspires more people to join the cause and bring clean, safer alternative energy to those around the world who lack access," said Pranav. Sewa salutes Pranav, and we believe his experience will enthuse more young people to become global ambassadors in this cause.



Pranav distributing solar lamps at the tribal hamlet in Maharashtra India

Upcoming Events

July **21**, 2018 : Sewa Cleveland, Health Care Proxy & Living Will Workshop at 6206 Pearl Rd, Parma Heights, OH 44130.

July **22**, 2018 : Sewa Cleveland, Health Care Proxy & Living Will Workshop at Shiva-Vishnu Temple.

Sewa International

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