

Five Counseling Centers Opened for Kerala Flood Victims; Nine more Centers Planned



Inauguration of Punarjani Counseling Center in Aluva , Kerala.

Encouraged by the success and positive impact on the community of its psychological and trauma counseling centers in helping 2018 flood victims, Sewa International which has opened five counseling centers in Kerala over the past three months, plans to open nine more centers soon. Sewa has been engaged in flood rehabilitation work in Kerala since June 2018 when the abnormally high rainfall from June 01 to August 19, 2018 resulted in massive flooding across the state killing 370 people and displacing a million others. Sewa's partner organization, Sevabharathi Keralam, is leading the rehabilitation efforts.

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Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Family,

Mother nature is inviting us to celebrate summer and many of you are away on holiday. It is my privilege to give you an update this month, and I want to start with the LEAD program, LEAD is Sewa International's internship program for high school students. It introduces socially conscious leadership to volunteers, and it provides a platform to the participant to serve people and experience the joy of giving. Recently, Sewa Central Jersey chapter took inspiration from the North Jersey chapter to get the LEAD program started and so far, more than 70 students have enrolled in the program in Central Jersey, and more than 50 students have enrolled in North Jersey. Other chapters involved in this program include Pennsylvania, Washington DC, and West Chester.

The motto of the LEAD program is "LEAD by example". Sewa/service is something that needs to be experienced and cannot be understood by merely reading about it. We must participate in service activities - whether it be cleaning of trash on the roadsides or parks, serving food at Sewa events, or collecting clothes for donation to your local Goodwill Centers. The philosophy behind sewa/service is that our identity is expanded when we serve, and service enables us to become part of the larger group or community. This enables us to accept the world as our family. The spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" can be experienced only when we serve humanity.

In this context, let me mention Yoga Day which is now celebrated worldwide. Yoga is a gift India has offered the world, and the world acknowledges that yoga has enriched the health and wellbeing of people and transformed people's lives. So, just as "yoga" has become part of the world's lexicon, let us try and add "sewa" to that lexicon so that we can begin to redefine how we look at our fellow beings - both human and other living beings. Sewa is not about charity and giving, but it is all about sharing, and performing without expecting any rewards. When we give there is a receiver, but when we serve, we are all participants in the human endeavor to transcend the self.

In closing, let me call your attention to the new international project to support tribal children in India. This intervention program will enable many students to continue their education beyond the tenth grade and put these young people on the path to earning a decent livelihood. Please visit our website to get more details and support this project <https://sewausea.org/Educating-the-Tribal-Children>

Sincerely,

Vijay Mallampati

Vijay Mallampati
Director of Sponsor a Child (SaC)





Dr. Vanita Patwardhan speaking at the Sewa International educational workshop for families in Houston on June 22, 2019.

Dr. Vanita Patwardhan, senior psychologist at the Jnana Prabodhini Institute (JPIP), Pune, India, conducted a half-day workshop titled, “Family Culture: Towards a Happy Family,” at Keshav Smruti in Houston on June 22, 2019. Sewa International Houston Chapter organized the workshop as part of its educational workshop series for families.

Using a special psychological inventory developed by JPIP to measure the status of family on five dimensions important for harmony, understanding, and cordiality within family, she helped participants develop charts for their own family and develop an action plan to address areas which can help them take the family culture in the desired direction.

Participants benefitted by creating charts to visualize the status of their family using the JPIP psychological inventory. For some, it was the first experience to sit in this type of group setting to think about their family, its purpose, and how to develop a positive culture in the family through simple actions that lead to improvement in their family structure and mutual happiness.

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Beyond the physical destruction of homes and lands, Sewa volunteers noticed psychological stress and anxiety -- post-traumatic stress disorders and depression among flood victims. The opening of counseling centers to provide mental health support to flood victims and families was the need of the hour. The name 'Punarjani' ("revitalize" in Malayalam language) was chosen considering the regenerative role of these centers in helping flood victims and the community. Currently these counseling centers offer mental health screening, trauma counseling, skills and career training, and motivational and resilience building programs.

Serving Women, Children & Elderly

Retired District Medical Officer Dr. Junaid Rahman inaugurated the first counseling center at an event held at the Bhaskareeyam Convention Center in Kaloor, Kochi in March 2019. Kerala Sevabharati president Dr. P. Balachandran presided over the event. Although these centers cater to the general population, their focus is on serving children, women, and the elderly. Each counseling center is managed by a development team consisting of 8-11 members and staffed by counselors and other supporting personnel. The first five centers started under this program are in Aluva, Chengannur, Kodungaloor, Angamally, and Budhanoor in Kerala.

The nine new centers will be situated in Konni, Mayannur, Chalakudi, Palakkad, Thenjipalam, Kozhikode, Kannur, Iritty, and Thiruvananthapuram. Out of 375 applicants, nine counselors with a bachelor's degree in psychology or social work have been selected to head these new centers. Punarjani project director, Jinesh Lal, and coordinator Rajeev Narayanan are leading the efforts to establish the new centers and ensure proper functioning of the existing ones. The Punarjani project team has conducted orientation programs for the new counselors. To manage and direct work at all the 14 centers, a coordinator has been appointed.

More than 125 people have benefited by attending training programs and workshops conducted at the existing counseling centers. These programs were focused on topics such as stress reduction, yoga and meditation, parenting, goal setting, and career orientation.

Chinmaya Viswavidyapeeth, Ernakulam, Kerala is partnering with Sewa in managing these centers by providing subject matter experts.

Organic Farming Initiative in Uttarakhand

To prevent excessive use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides that threaten the fragile ecosystem of the Himalayan region, Sewa International has started an organic farming project in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand.

Sewa aims to improve farmers' income and increase soil fertility through this project. Aptly named Harela ("harvest" in the local Kumaoni language), this program includes setting up of training and resource centers, as well as demonstration farms and nurseries to provide organic seedlings to farmers. Sewa is collaborating with the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation of India (ONGC) and the Eklavya Foundation on this project.

Prof. Sree Sreenath, President, Sewa International, visited the Uttarakhand projects May 18 - 20 while on a visit to India. He went to Chamoli to see the organic farming initiative and visited Narayankoti to understand the community farming efforts. He interacted with farmers while on the field and visited Sewa Kaushal Vikas Kendras and the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra.

Nishant Agarwal and Bindumadhava Kerur, Sewa International volunteers in India, and the Uttarakhand Sewa team accompanied Prof. Sreenath. The Sewa team also had a briefing on the mobile medical unit, Sewa Arogyam. Prof. Sreenath shared his experience working on academic and social service projects with local volunteers and appreciated service initiatives taken up by the Uttarakhand Sewa team.

Sewa Colorado Honors Graduates



Dr. Ved Nanda giving certificate of appreciation to Sanjana Shenoy. Dr. Asha Sunku, Dr. Jayasimha, Katherine Nanda and Sreedhar Talanki (left to right) are also seen.

Sewa's Colorado chapter recognized high school and college graduates from the community on June 2 in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Ved Nanda, Professor of International Law, University of Denver, and Sanghachalak (President) of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), North America, addressed the new graduates.

The event was held at the Hindu Temple of Colorado in collaboration with HSS and the Hindu Temple. Seven graduates and their parents participated in the event and shared their experience navigating the American school system. After the event, Dr. Nanda talked with the graduates about their field of interest, and career and life goals.

Congratulating the graduates on their achievement, Prof. Nanda asked them to become leaders and serve the community. Community leader Dr. Jayasimha and President of the Hindu Temple and Cultural Center of the Rockies and Director of Sewa International Sridhar Talanki, attended the event. Other dignitaries who attended the event included Katharine Nanda and Dr. Asha Sunku.

Sewa volunteer Surabhi Malhotra provided career guidance, and temple trustee Madhu Bhat, and parent Shravan Tedla also spoke on the occasion.

Sewa New Jersey Chapter Receives Adopt-A-Highway Award



Sewa International New Jersey volunteers, Hari Samanthula (left) and Ketan Patel (right) receiving the Adopt-a-Highway award from the New Jersey Clean Community Council representative in a program organized in Trenton, NJ. The award was given to Sewa's highway cleanup program which is in its third year.

Experience in Kumbh Mela

Dr. Sulochina Lulla, an allergist-immunologist in Santa Clara, California, who received her medical degree from Bangalore Medical College and has been in practice for more than 20 years, is a Sewa volunteer from the Bay Area. She volunteered at the Ardh Kumbha Mela in Prayagraj, which was celebrated from January 15, 2019 to March 4, 2019. Sulochina shared a tent with several physicians who had a background in pediatrics, intensive care, and pathology, and worked with them for two weeks taking care of the sick and tending to those in need.

The patients at the Kumbha Mela were grouped into two categories: one of them included pilgrims who were sick because of unfortunate weather conditions, and the malnourished pilgrims who were poor and/or illiterate. They were in desperate need of medical help, and many medicines were not easily available to this group of individuals. The other group of pilgrims, who were local residents, received free expert medical advice from physicians and specialists. During her two-week stay, Dr. Lulla had the opportunity to help doctors deliver a newborn baby. She felt that it was one of the highlights of her two weeks there, and said, "It was such a special spiritual experience to take care of the baby in the holy atmosphere of Kumbha Mela. I felt blessed. I had the most invigorating and spiritual two weeks of my life and am thankful to Sewa for giving me the opportunity to travel and serve at such short notice".



Denver, the capital of Colorado, is a metropolis that began its journey during the Old West era and is now the home of the Sewa Colorado Chapter. The city has gone through its phases, and now has been attracting quite a few high-tech industries and businesses, and thus more and more of people from India and Indian-Americans who have begun to call Denver home.

Leading the Denver chapter is Parveen Gupta, who says he is lucky to be guided by Prof. Ved Nanda, who has been teaching at the University of Denver for more than four decades and is their Distinguished University Professor and Thompson G. Marsh Professor of Law. Prof. Nanda now directs the Ved Nanda Center for International and Comparative Law at the university. Parveen believes that the guiding lights of the Denver chapter – Ved Nanda, Sridhar Talanki, and Madhu Bhat -- have provided the guidance and necessary support to him and the many volunteers at the chapter to contribute to Sewa work, and he hopes that one day he too would commit his whole life to service.

Parveen works for Motorola Solutions as a Senior Software Engineering Manager in the business of “saving lives”. He points out that Motorola just celebrated the one hundred millionth incident where Motorola’s suite of software applications helped someone in their most critical time of need. Parveen earned his BE in Computer Science from the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS Pilani), and an MS in Computer Information Systems from Regis University in Denver.

He lives in Aurora, Colorado with wife Abha and their two children – Diti, a tenth grader who volunteers for Sewa, and Vasu a first grader.

Prof. Sreenath Speaks at the IISC Global Conference

Prof. Sree N Sreenath, President, Sewa International, spoke at the Fourth Global IISC (Indian Institute of Science) Conference which was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Palo Alto, CA, June 21-23. The Indian Institute of Science Alumni Association of North America (IISC-AANA) hosted the conference to “discuss breakthrough ideas for a healthy, safe and ecologically sustainable world”.

IISC-AANA invited Prof. Sreenath to speak on “social entrepreneurship”. More than 500 scientists and engineers from academia, leading corporates, and start-up companies participated in the conference.

Upcoming Events

- Feb **1** to Sep **1**, 2019 : *Lead Program for High Schoolers* | Edison/Monroe/ChesterField Central New Jersey.
- Mar **1** to Sep **8**, 2019 : *Sewa New Jersey | Lead Program for High Schoolers*
- Jun **3** to Jul **19**, 2019 : *Sewa Atlanta | Summer Internship 2019*
- Jul **13**, 2019 : *Family Services Workshop | Houston | Arya Samaj 14375 Schiller Road Houston, TX 77082*
- Jul **20** to Aug **11**, 2019 : *Authentic Yoga to prevent, control and Manage Diabetes | San Jose, CA*

Sewa International

P.O.Box 820867
Houston, TX 77282-0867

(708) 872-7392
info@sewausea.org
www.sewausea.org



Editorial Team: Prof. Ramesh Rao, Columbus State University, GA; crucially supported by Vidyasagar Tontalapur, Denver and Kusuma, Sewa Bengaluru Office, India.