

Sewa Helps San Antonians Breathe and Bend for Health



How do American teachers discipline children for their disruptive behavior at school? Going by a new and growing trend across the country, many teachers are sending them to Yoga Room within the school where children can practice yoga, pranayama (breathing techniques) and meditation to calm down.

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Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Families & Friends,

When we compare Sewa International with other nonprofit that were started the same year as we did, you see a different growth trajectory. By growth trajectory we mean the social impact the organization has had. We all agree that we have had a tremendous social impact. But are we doing the right things to document the impact and let the world know what we do?

From last year, when I took on the role of National Marketing Director for Sewa, I have been focusing on spreading the word about our social impact. Here are several aspects that I want to highlight:

- **Create awareness:** Like any brand, we must make the audience aware of our organization and the causes we support.
- **Promote our cause and services:** Other than donors and volunteers, other constituencies such as policy makers, media and other nonprofit that we work with need to know about our work. They help us spread the word or leverage the services we provide.
- **Fundraising:** We rely on donations to pursue our initiatives. Fundraising is an essential function of marketing, and it can encourage general donations or promote specific fundraising events.
- **Encourage memberships and recurring donations:** Marketing should encourage long-term relationship/ membership. These relationships increase the

partnerships we can build and provide recurring donations that serve as a reliable source of support.

- **Engage volunteers:** We need people to take action or participate in initiatives, as well as donate. Our marketing efforts encourage volunteers to get involved, both in specific events and in long-term roles.
- **Drive social change:** Skillful marketing can bring causes and problems we care about to the forefront. This puts pressure on opinion leaders, politicians, and people to bring in social and political changes that we desire.

To work on the above, we have been using several platforms:

- **Social media / Online ads / Search engine optimization / Partnerships / Email marketing / Events / Public relations / Infographics / Webinars**
In this digitally connected world where information travels instantaneously, we at Sewa International are trying to create a footprint in the social change sector. We need your help to spread the word. Please reach out to us if Sewa International has made an impact in your life. I would like to close this with our motto -- "Sewa hi paramo Dharma" -- Selfless service is the highest dharma. Thank you all for giving us an opportunity to serve.

Viswanath Koppaka
Viswanath Koppaka
National Marketing Director



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If children practicing yoga at school is news to you, and wonder how this came about considering the misgivings certain groups have about yoga, some of the credit can go to Sewa International volunteers in San Antonio, TX when they started a movement to run free yoga classes in various neighborhoods across the city.

When Sewa International and Hindu Svayamsevak Sangh (HSS) teams in San Antonio joined hands with two local yoga organizations, Ekam Life and Yoga Day, to form a group named "IDoYoga" to celebrate the International Day of Yoga (IDY) in 2015, they were giving a formal shape to their ambition of taking yoga to the masses by offering free yoga classes in low income neighborhoods and schools.

Dr. Hetal Nayak, Coordinator of Sewa International, San Antonio, Trinabh Shukla from HSS, Maggie Grueskin from Ekam Life, and Carlos Gomez from Yoga Day wanted to bring yoga to underserved communities. They realized that many San Antonians were facing health issues due to poor diet and high stress with little or no exercise, and decided that the time was right to step in and offer the age-old and time-tested ques of yoga and meditation to people who needed them the most.



Hetalji Teaching Yoga to School Children in San Antonio

Through IDoYoga (www.idoyogasa.org), Sewa International and HSS San Antonio chapters have given financial grants to Yoga Day Foundation, Yoga Seva Institute, and Veteran Yoga Project to conduct yoga classes. Yoga Day utilizes the grant to offer free yoga programs in several schools and hospitals in the San Antonio metropolitan area. Yoga Day conducts 45-minute classes for children and 3-hour workshops for teachers. It also conducts several community yoga classes in multiple locations and counts Sewa International as one of its major donors.

"Lifestyle as Medicine" is Ekam Life's mantra, and it conducts yoga and Ayurveda classes and workshops throughout the year. All four organizations are gearing up to celebrate 2020's International Day of Yoga (IDY) on June 21st in a big way. They are planning to reach over 2,500 students in the week leading to the IDY.

Starting from 2017, IDoYoga is celebrating IDY with different themes. In 2017 the theme was Yoga as Lifestyle Medicine, and in 2018 it changed to Yoga for Warriors, which focused on teaching yoga to the sizable military families and veterans in the city. For the years 2019 and 2020 Yoga in Education has been identified as the IDY theme.

In addition to providing grants to yoga organizations, Sewa volunteers so far have conducted free yoga classes in 6-7 schools and taught yoga to more than 1,000 students. More than 300 teachers have participated in the yoga workshop conducted by Sewa volunteers. Trinabh says efforts by Sewa and HSS to take yoga to the masses is very well-received and greatly supported by the Mayor, the City Council, local businesses, and the Indian Consulate in Houston.

Sewa North Jersey Chapter Conducts Volunteer Training Camp

Sewa International's North Jersey Chapter conducted their annual Abhyas Varg (Volunteer Training Camp) on November 2nd at the Gandhi Mandir in Wayne, NJ. Venkat Santhanaraman, Sewa's Vice President of Finance, and Prof. Ramesh Rao were among those who addressed the 35 volunteers attending the day-long training.

Venkat Santhanaraman explained Sewa's vision and mission statements, and Ramesh Rao conducted a workshop on "crisis management" covering topics such as how to protect Sewa's reputation and volunteers in various crisis situations. In an interactive session on "Work-Life Balance", Sewa's National Kutumb Prabodhan (Family Services) Project Coordinator Yoginder Gupta and Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), NJ Joint Secretary Sugandha Ganesh emphasized work-life integration pointing out that the work-life balance approximation is an exercise fraught with ambiguity and frustration. They advised volunteers to focus on family, work, and Sewa integrating them all in their life rather than trying to do too many things.

Sewa's Sponsor A Child Program Director Ravi Chandra Chakinala spoke about the three international projects supported by the North Jersey Chapter: Sponsor A Child, Toilet & Hygiene, and the Colombia Alternative Learning Center. Joint Coordinator of the NJ chapter Mani Venkat presented the 2019 report.

In his concluding remarks, HSS Central and South Jersey Sanghachalak Jagdish Turimella said Sewa offers the opportunity to all invested in the idea that the "earth is one family" to make it a lifestyle rather than just parrot it as a slogan.



Abhyas Varg Audience

Colorado Volunteers Serve Food at Local Gurdwara



Sewa International volunteers at the Colorado Singh Sabha Gurdwara kitchen

To celebrate Guru Nanak Dev's 550th birth anniversary, Sewa International volunteers from Colorado Chapter cooked and served food at the Colorado Singh Sabha Gurdwara in Commerce City on September 28.

Guru Nanak Dev is the founder of Sikhism, and his 550th birthday will be celebrated on November 12, 2019. He was born on April 15, 1469 but as per the Indian calendar, Guru Nanak's birthday falls on "Kartik Poornima," the full moon day in the month of Kartik (October-November).

V. Bhagaiah, Joint General Secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), India who was visiting Colorado joined Sewa volunteers and met with the chief priest of the Gurudwara.

More than 20 Sewa volunteers prepared snacks and dinner as part of the langar (community kitchen).

They served about 100 devotees and took part in the kirtan (singing of bhajans) in the evening. The chief priest and members of the Gurdwara's management committee gave an overview of Sikhism to the Sewa volunteers. They also distributed books related to Guru Nanak's teachings.

Another Successful Annual Gala: Atlanta Chapter Raises \$151,000



Sewa's Atlanta Chapter President Pratap Singh, and Sewa's Executive Vice President Arun Kankani lit the lamp at the inauguration

On October 18, 2019, Sewa International's Atlanta Chapter organized their annual gala and fundraiser that was attended by over 325 people at the Holiday Inn on Holcomb Bridge Road, Atlanta. The target for the evening's event was to raise \$151,000 and organizers were confident they had reached the goal.

The grand event that kept everyone engrossed was planned by Sewa volunteers who managed all the logistics, photography, food, and the entertainment for both children and adults that evening. The event timeline was of a blend of awareness on Sewa programs, recognition of those who have contributed to the community, and culture, fun, and entertainment.



Sewa supporters attentively listening to presentations at the Annual Dinner/Gala

Among the events for the evening was the performance of an energetic bhangra dance by a group of talented girls. Dr. Jagdish Seth and Mrs. Madhu Seth were honored with the "Outstanding Community Services" award. Both spoke highly of the work Sewa was doing. Anandhi Jambunathan and Anjali Chhabria were recognized for their service to the community.

The evening began with the Indian tradition of lighting the lamp -- which was done by Atlanta Chapter President Pratap Singh and Chief Guest and Vice President of Sewa International, Arun Kankani. Famous Bollywood singer, Geetika Kulkarni, followed up with a beautiful rendering of the Ganesh vandana. She kept the audience enthralled with popular songs throughout the evening. Chapter Coordinator Vikas Arora gave a quick glimpse of Sewa activities and efforts over the past year. Guiding the rest of the evening's events were the talented emcees, Vandana Bhardwaj and Prasad Garimella.

Srikanth Gundavarapu was appointed the new Vice President of the Atlanta Chapter. Accepting the responsibility, and acknowledging the work done by his colleagues, he closed the event acknowledging the support of DJ Balwinder Singh, Holiday Inn owner Rajiv Goswami, Ramyanath Photography, Hotel Sankranti, Sewa Adult and Youth Volunteers, and the generous donors for their support.

The gala concluded with a delicious Indian dinner and attendees went home with a beautiful family photo memento.

Riya, an Ambassador of Sewa's Public Hygiene Project

Riya Dadheech, a 13-year-old, pledged to build 250 toilets in India in support of Sewa's Public Hygiene Project. Riya, now a middle schooler, is the daughter of Anil and Sushmita Dadheech, from Parsippany, NJ. Riya has a younger sister, Sonia. A gifted painter and dancer, Riya can bring nature to life in her drawings.

Riya's family moved to New Jersey from Colorado a few years ago, just about the time that the Sewa North Jersey Chapter was taking shape. Riya joined the LEAD NJ 2107 program for middle school students. She said the LEAD program motivated her to become a Sewa volunteer: "I was able to experience amazing new adventures through several volunteer opportunities, but most importantly I learned the meaning of selfless service. And that inspired me to continue to make a difference in the community as a Sewa volunteer".

Riya and her family learned about the Public Hygiene Project at a NJ Sewa Milan 2018 presentation. Riya was moved by the plight of girls in India who drop out of school because of lack of toilets in the school. Riya decided to help by using her talent to raise the money to support this project. She pledged to raise enough money to build 250 toilets! Last summer, when every other student of her age was playing and vacationing, Riya was working hard creating her paintings. She painted 48 of them, out of which 35 were sold at an exclusive art exhibition and silent auction facilitated by Parsippany Mayor, Michael Soriano. All proceeds from the auction, \$10,000 in total, was sent to Sewa to support the Public Hygiene Project.



Since then Riya has become more committed to the project, and she has been taking the message to different forums and groups. Recently, she set up a booth at the Heritage Festival and the Gandhi Going Global event. She speaks at different venues and events spreading the word about her project. She spoke two weeks ago at Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary celebrations in Wayne, NJ. Riya has also met with well-known public figures and sought support for this project. Riya does all this in addition to her regular schoolwork and other activities, including dance practice.

Riya thinks that the Public Hygiene Project is not just a civic project but a movement and that everyone should get involved. Each toilet costs \$760, she points out, and one way to help is to sponsor the construction of a toilet. Riya is happy to travel places where she can display her artwork and raise funds to support this project. She is now busy painting more pieces in preparation of the exhibition at the NJ Sewa Milan 2019 in December.

Riya and her parents have a plan to make a Sewa Yatra to Bharat with the help of Dr. Jayanti Ramanan to get firsthand knowledge of the situation and the impact of Sewa's Public Hygiene Project.

To know more about Riya, visit her website at www.purplepaint.org.

Sewa North Jersey is proud to have Riya as a LEAD volunteer. We wish her success in achieving the goal of building 250 toilets for girl children in India, and the very best in her life and career.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

This month we recognize the work of Ajay Gupta who joined Sewa's San Diego Chapter in 2012 and is since then an active member. He was introduced to Sewa by a friend. Ajay says that Sewa provides an opportunity to connect with the local as well as Indian community and participate in programs related to supporting the Bhutanese, cleaning up beaches and riverbanks, organize and participate in fundraisers, yoga workshops, and the LEAD program for youth. Working in the LEAD program has enabled him to connect community leaders/professionals with high school students, and offer students training, guidance, and advice in areas like Bio Tech, Medicine, Engineering, Space programs, Hospital Management, Teaching, and Public Safety.



Ajay is the joint coordinator of the San Diego Chapter and directs the LEAD program. With an under-graduate degree in Electronics and Communication, and years of experience in the field, he is now the Principal Engineer at Qualcomm Research in San Diego. He is working in the area of 5G Wireless R&D.

Ajay was born in New Delhi and grew up there. A resident of San Diego since 2006, he is married to Preeti. They have two sons -- Aksh and Aadit -- with Aksh studying Computer Engineering in college and Aadit studying in 8th Grade. Preeti is a preschool teacher and an active member of the Sewa San Diego Chapter.

Upcoming Events

- Nov **24**, 2019 : Serve Houston @ Food Bank - November 2019 | Houston Food Bank – Warehouse 535 Portwall St, Houston TX
- Dec **7**, 2019 : Sewa International Atlanta | Volleyball Tournament | Atlanta Extreme Volleyball Club, 811 Brogdon Rd #108, Suwanee, GA
- Dec **8**, 2019 : Sewa Phoenix | Sewa Youth Talent Show (Indian Classical Dance, Music and Instrument)
- Dec **8**, 2019 : Sewa New Jersey | Sewa Milan 2019 | Parsippany PAL Center, 33 Baldwin Rd, Parsippany, NJ
- Nov **2** to Dec **14**, 2019 : Sewa Bay Area | Authentic Yoga to prevent, Control and Manage Diabetes | Santan Dharma Kendra, 3102 Landess Avenue, San Jose, CA
- Dec **16**, 2019 to Jun **30**, 2020 : Sewa Bay Area | Authentic Yoga to Prevent, Control and Manage Diabetes | Fremont, San Jose, San Ramon, Saratoga, Bay Area, CA
- Jan **19**, 2019 to Dec **21**, 2020 : Sewa Atlanta | Food for Hungry | Otwell Middle School Cafeteria, 605 Tribble Gap Road, Cumming, GA

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