



Sewa International Inaugurates Dorm for Orphaned Children in Nepal

When earthquakes struck Nepal in 2015 it devastated the country leaving thousands dead, and tens of thousands homeless. Two years later, on June 3, 2017 fifty boys, orphaned in the twin earthquakes in 2015, found refuge in a newly constructed dorm in Dhading, Nepal, courtesy of Sewa International.



Seen in this picture where Dr. Sree Sreenath is addressing the audience are, among others, Bhim Dhungana, the newly elected mayor of Dhading; Shiv Mishra, Sewa Columbus (Ohio, USA) Coordinator who is originally from Nepal; Shyam Parande, Chief Coordinator, Sewa International, India; Chief Guest, Llama Jugdol of the International Buddhist Federation, Nepal Representative; and Mr. Goel, the Nepal Chatravas Committee Member.

The chief supporter and donor for constructing the dorm is the Hindu Society of North Carolina.

Speaking at the inauguration, Dr. Sree Sreenath, President of Sewa International, said that it indeed takes a village to raise a child, and that the Dhading Hostel -- "Amako Mayo Chatrawas" -- should live up to its promise as the

"Abode of Mother's Love". He urged mothers at Dhading to provide "vatsalya" (love and care) to the orphaned children and treat them as their own. He said that hostel facilities would be utilized for community development activities such as vocational and skill training (tailoring, health and hygiene, etc.)

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Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Supporters:

It was heartening to meet with representatives from 18 chapters at Houston this past May. Sharing ideas with cohorts inspired by the same mission and working towards a common goal, we decided to have three thrust areas for this year: *Community Outreach*, *Mangal Nidhi*, and *Serve the Local Community*.

Community Outreach: At the core of Sewa's organizational culture is the lively and informal way of reaching out to people, getting to know individuals from different walks of society, and meeting families with the purpose of bonding and building trustworthy relationships. In-person meetings being one of the most important aspects of our Sewa work, we know it can bring many good people into our organization's fold and provide them with avenues to serve better. This coming September, our team will track in-person meetings with present or potential volunteers, donors, and partners..

Mangal Nidhi: Sewa volunteers and supporters are always looking for ways to contribute their *tan-man-dhan* to serve the underserved. "Mangala Nidhi" roughly translates to "auspicious welfare" in Sanskrit, and it is a great way to involve one's family

and friends in financially supporting our organization's work during family events. It is inspired by the Hindu ethos of sharing our life's joyous and auspicious moments with society, and a practical medium to channel our personal and family happiness towards community and social responsibility.

Serve the Local Community: Sewa believes in arriving at global solutions through local action. For all our volunteers, making a difference in their neighborhood is just a deeper way of giving. It is not just sending money but also giving your heart to really connect and feel like a part of something bigger. Making a change in someone's life is a spiritually elevating experience. Serving locally is also contagious in promoting volunteerism. This year, all chapters have pledged to add a new project in their chapter to serve the local community.

I eagerly wait to hear your success stories about our thrust areas this year. Also, I look forward to meeting with some of you when I travel to your chapter, and with all of you at the next national conference in New Jersey!



Sandeep Khadkekar
VP Organization



Adding Life to Your Years

Americans are living longer than ever today. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says if you make it to age 65 the chances of living for another 15-20 years is really high.



Dr. Hetal Nayak (second from left) with her team

One of the biggest concerns at this age is the reduced quality of life due to lower mobility, lack of motivation to live, and declining mental health. A decline in quality of life in the elderly is reflected by the presence of negative feelings, lack of meaning in life, addictions of various kinds (or dependence on others), and a loss of autonomy.

In San Antonio, TX, there is a silent revolution happening that is enabling elderly Hispanics to take control of their health and well-being. It started with Sewa International's Yoga trainer and physician, Dr. Hetal Nayak, who has been working with senior Hispanic citizens for the past three years. The change she has brought about in the lives of some of these people is remarkable. Her classes started out two times a week and have now grown in frequency to three times a week at the city community center.

Most of the seniors had never heard about yoga in their lives, and thus the deep relationship that Dr. Nayak now has with her students did not have a very smooth start. In the beginning the students resisted yoga as the concept of silent meditation and quieting of the mind before actually doing any workouts was alien to them. There was also a clash of culture of sorts, as this was the first time they were "working out" without loud music, and the focus was more on the self than outside.

Today, in the class with a capacity of about 20, there is never space for a spare yoga mat. Her students rave about her. "I am thankful to Dr. Nayak for she has taught me patience, meditation, and help me stay limber as I battle osteoarthritis," said Lupe Rains. Another senior, Faith Wotton, said, "In 2009 I had an operation which left a large scar across my stomach. Periodically, this scar would spasm. I would double up and stay in pain for several minutes before I could 'right' myself. After a number of sessions of yoga, starting in 2014, the spasms stopped. In addition, I would also have leg and foot cramps -- usually in the evening. After a couple of months of yoga, the cramps stopped also". These testimonies are just a few of the many that were shared by the class.

The remuneration of \$50 per class that Dr. Nayak gets is donated to Sewa International, and the funds are used for research on yoga by Dr. Sat Bir Khalsa of Harvard University, as well as in supporting several other community projects.

Along with Dr. Nayak's contribution, Sewa International is raising funds with support from other yoga studios, so that they can provide similar workshops, free of cost, to seniors in churches, distressed women's shelters, and juvenile centers. Sewa hopes that these communities can have another tool to help their members attain a better quality of life.

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At present, one of the challenges is that the road to the dorm winds through very difficult terrain in the mountains, and the last mile approaching the dorm is extremely difficult to traverse. The construction of the dorm was challenging because all construction material had to be carried by workers over the 'last mile', and since labor in the mountainous terrain is hard to find the construction of

the building was time consuming. Mayor Bhim Dhungana has promised a newly paved road to the dorm.

Nearly five hundred people attended the inauguration, and the local youth had organized a program of events showcasing the talent of youngsters in the village..

Yuva for Sewa – 2017 Summer Internships in India



This summer, nine young adults carved time out of their hectic schedules to give back and learn by becoming Yuva for Sewa interns.

Studying at universities across the US, majoring in different subjects, Kripa Chandran (from Georgia), Taejasvi Narayan, Shivani Thombare, and Megha Koul (from Massachusetts), Mallika Varkhedi (from California), Disha Manvikar (from Ohio), Samyukta Singh (from Texas), Eesha Bemra (from Indiana), and Prahlad Sarma (from Maryland) travelled across the globe to Bengaluru and Pune in India to immerse themselves in present day Indian healthcare systems, and to be a part of Sewa public relations and community outreach.

Samyukta is working with a number of doctors and has already witnessed crucial procedures, including angioplasties and childbirth. Kripa, our sole Pune intern, works specifically with the Women's Empowerment Project; her long-term goal for her YFS summer is to create a health, hygiene, and family planning seminar to allow volunteers to educate local women on various facets of health and hygiene, thereby encouraging empowerment. Taejasvi is working with adults at *Amogh*, a care center for those with autism spectrum disorders, and to connect them with local businesses to encourage financial independence.

Prahlad, in addition to working on the economic side of Sewa PR is also working on a research project.

Despite their wide-range of activities during the day, all nine interns spend the latter half of their days in local classrooms, teaching and connecting with children, and further developing the educational facet of their time in India, cultivating connections with people, and learning their heritage.

A universal theme that seems to stand out for all the interns is the kindness and compassion every person they've interacted with shows them: nurses, teachers, and managers. As Samyukta said, "the culture of **sewa-bhaav** is an intrinsic part of Indian culture."

"YFS program is working out really really good. We are very happy to see that Shivani is having great time working at the Sagar Hospital", says Shivani's mother, Aparna Thombare. "All the interns are really enthusiastic and having such a good time. They have fully packed plan for ten weeks. I am sure all the interns will benefit greatly from this program."

You can follow their stories via their blogs: thoughtsbytae.wordpress.com, summerofseva.wordpress.com and follow our Facebook page - "Yuva for Sewa" or Instagram - "yuva4sewa" to get the latest updates.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Mugdha and Mandar Pattekar, with their children Sushruth, Shruti, and Shreeya, have been leading the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) Sewa activities at Trewyn School, located in an underserved part of Peoria, IL for the past six years with help from several volunteers. Annual activities include teaching yoga/pranayam, weekly in-school Saturday tutoring/reading for first graders, food and toy drives, supporting book fairs, reviewing academic

progress reports with students, international food/culture fairs, career fairs, Indian cultural presentations such as Bharatanatyam and music recitals. These efforts have been recognized by the school district and the Illinois State Board of Education with an Award of Excellence for the HSS team. Other activities of the group include adopting a highway, Indian cultural presentations at other local charities which conduct adult education and after-school children's activities, and helping other community groups like the Jewish Federation, and the Center for Prevention of Abuse.

Mugdha and Manda Pattekar believe that serving together as a family increases bonding, helps self-improvement, as well as providing fun and joy for the whole family. They say their inspiration for volunteerism came through the guidance and training at HSS by its full time pracharaks (volunteers). Observing, interacting, and training with HSS volunteers has helped the Pattekars experience the true spirit of selfless volunteerism. Mugdha coordinates all the local Sewa activities; Mandar is a radiologist and teaches at the Hindu Temple Sunday school; Sushruth, a senior at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, will be commissioned as an Officer in the United States Army next fall; Shruti is starting her undergraduate studies at Illinois Wesleyan University; and Shreeya starts high school this fall.

Upcoming Events

Sep
08

Houston: Stop Diabetes Camp.

Sep
10

Avon Lake, Ohio - Run for Sewa – a fundraising event to support ASPIRE program
(Register before Sep 6)

Sep
16

San Diego: Katha – a medley of Indian classical dances

Nov
15

Boston – Nrityameva Jayatey - celebrating rich Indian tradition of dance, art and music

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