

## Sewa International Participates in The Hindu YUVA National Summit



*A picture of the participants at the Hindu YUVA Summit held in Chicago, Illinois.*

**Details on page 2**

### Executive's Corner

Namaste Sewa Friends and Supporters:

I hope you all had a cheerful summertime. As COVID seemed to ease this summer, many Sewa families visited Bharat and other destinations. It was nice seeing many of our volunteers at the National Conference in Washington, DC in May.

As you know, Sewa International USA has more than sixteen development programs addressing different needs and causes of humanity. Here I have some updates for you.

Sponsor a Child (SAC), our international flagship project, is global now, serving underprivileged children in many other countries besides Bharat. In Bharat alone, we took 6,500 (double than last year) children under our wings. We developed and implemented a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to facilitate smooth enrollment, effective engagement, and transparency.

In addition, with the super success of Phase 1 this year, we undertook Phase 2 of the Sanitation, Hygiene, and Empowerment Project for the Girl Child (SHE) and Covid Affected Families (CAF) program, rehabilitating more than 3,000 women from COVID-impacted families in India.

Coming to the domestic front, under the youth development program this year, we enrolled 800+ LEADs (high school participants) from 20 chapters. This number is the same as last year. On July 30, we conducted the Second National Youth Convention with 564 participants, and 35 speakers and panelists.

Houston, North Jersey, and Atlanta chapters enrolled increased numbers of Get Inspired (College Students) participants. Four of the chapters -- Houston, Atlanta, New Jersey, and Bay Area -- launched Achieving Students Progress, Instilling Resilience, and Excellence (ASPIRE) program serving underprivileged children with the aid provided by AmeriCorps.

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## Executive's Corner

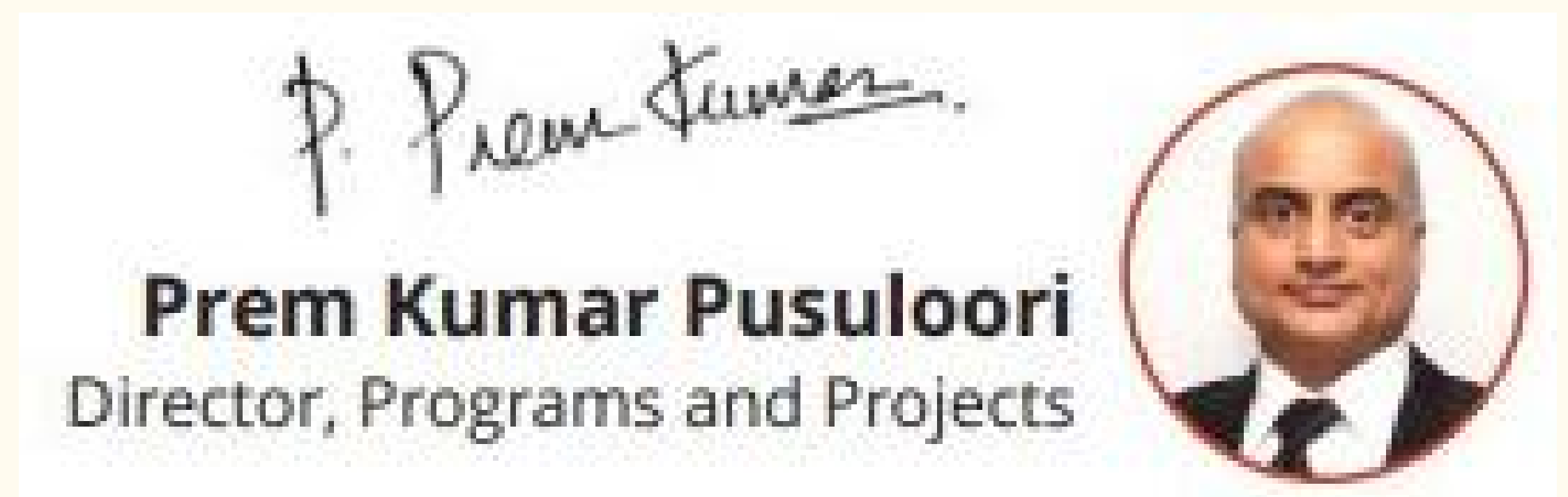
Unfortunately, Family Services cases have been increasing, and accordingly, we have increased our capacity to support families in need. Doctors for Sewa, which regrouped during the pandemic, has now more than 200 physicians involved. We launched the Explore Virtue of Obeisance towards Life by Volunteering and Educating (EVOLVE) program and saw success there.

We launched two new initiatives this year based on the need and demand: Vasundhara Sewa, serving Mother Earth, and Native American Sewa.

Sewa has grown in leaps and bounds in the last five years, implementing one or more programs in 45 chapters across the US.

Now all our Program Tolis (teams) are busy working on the growth strategy of their respective programs for the next five years -- 2023 to 2027.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy Sewa journey ahead!



## Sewa International Participates in The Hindu YUVA National Summit

Contd. from page 1

Sewa International was invited to the Hindu Youth for Unity, Virtues, and Action (Hindu YUVA) Summit in Chicago, Illinois, from September 9 to 11 in Chicago as a celebration of 15 years of organizational growth and Hindu activism on campuses across North America. Over 208 youths from 64 universities, including 48 Hindu YUVA chapters and 15 different Hindu faith-based organizations, attended the Hindu YUVA National Summit: Charaiveti -- meaning "moving forward".

In the Aitareya Upanishad there is a verse that says -- "Honeybees move constantly to collect and give honey; birds keep moving (flying), and the Sun is perpetually emitting light. Keep moving, Keep moving".

Associate Director of Fundraising Events, Roma Desai, presented a paper at the National Summit on Sewa International's mission, work, and how youths can get involved in humanitarian work.



*Roma Desai (fourth from the left) seen with other participants at the conference*

The sessions in the conference were divided to fit the YUVA acronym -- Youth, Unity, Virtues, and Action. "There were panel discussions to reflect on the importance of Hindu representation on campus, the relevance of practicing Hindu identity, the challenges of being a Hindu, and how our Hindu experience can shape the way we go about creating a change," she said.

As one of Sewa's core values is to prompt volunteerism, partnering with organizations such as Hindu Yuva, Sewa hopes to bring more positive impact to our communities and those around us. After attending the vibrant gathering, Roma Desai said, "As we usher in the new generation of volunteers and service leaders, the Summit focused on the opportunities for young leaders to engage with various Hindu initiatives. Overall, it was an inspiring experience to see how passionate everyone was about volunteering and humanitarian work."

Hindu YUVA is an organization that aims to provide a platform to preserve, practice, promote, and protect dharma (righteousness, merit, religious and moral duties) by bringing together college students and working professionals across the United States. "We had many Hindu Yuva chapters interested in doing recurring service events in partnership with Sewa International on their university campuses. These events would interest fundraisers for Sewa flagship projects, festival celebration fundraisers, individual/community volunteering, and more," Roma Desai said.



## Severe Drought in Kenya; Sewa Distributes Food Kits



Volunteers from Sewa's partner organizations distributing food grains in Kenya

Sewa International has contributed \$10,000 towards drought relief efforts in Kenya. It has also started a social media campaign to raise \$100,000 for food distribution.

In the first phase, Sewa will distribute food kits to 3,000 families. Volunteers from Sewa's partner organizations in the country have been distributing food kits to families hit hard by the drought in Kathiani and Kangundo areas in Machakos county. Soon, they will start providing food and other essential supplies in the Makindu area.

Sewa's partner organizations, Bharatiya Swayamsevak Sangh (BSS), Kenya, Hindu Council of Kenya (HCK), Hindu Religious Service Center (HRSC), Mombasa, and Premchandbhai Foundation, Nairobi are leading these relief efforts. They also provide clean water, medical care, and educational facilities in Kenya's remote villages.

Each food kit contains maize, beans, flour, freshwater, and cooking oil, costing about \$20 (2,000 Kenyan shillings).

Sewa also supplies Unimex, a nutritious fortified food recommended by the World Food Program, to children in over 700 schools and health centers. As diseases spread fast during the famines, Sewa plans to immunize pregnant women and children.

Kenya's National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) attributes the present drought to four successive failed rainy seasons. According to the agency, an estimated 4.35 million people suffer severe hunger and need humanitarian assistance. Between October 2021 and March 2022, over 1.5 million livestock, particularly cattle and sheep, died.

The agency says that in 2022, the drought situation worsened in 20 of the 23 counties in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL). The agency also said over 755,000 children under five and about 103,000 pregnant women are malnourished. By some estimates, nearly 1,500 people die of hunger each day in drought-hit East Africa.



Volunteers from Sewa's partner organizations standing in front of food items stocked for distribution



## FEMA Administrator Visits Sewa Office in Houston



The Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Deanne Criswell, visited Sewa's Houston Chapter office earlier in September to meet the Sewa Houston leadership team.

She also conducted a "Faith-based and Community Roundtable" with several other organizations working in disaster relief and recovery.

Visiting Houston, TX, nearly five years after Hurricane Harvey, Ms. Criswell talked about lessons learned from Hurricane Harvey. She also discussed hurricane preparedness and how to be better prepared for future events.

Talking about risk, she said the first thing is to know your risk: understand what threats you and your family might face where you are; second, plan on how you will protect your family based on that risk; and then make sure that you have what you need to protect yourselves in case of a natural disaster. Some decisions include whether to stay at home or to evacuate. "Listen to your local officials, as they tell you what to do to stay safe," she advised.

## Sewa Influencers Summit in Houston

Sewa International's Houston Chapter organized the "Sewa Influencers Summit" on August 18, with city and county officials, leaders, and change-makers from the world of philanthropy, disaster resilience, and education.

Lisa Helfman, Senior Director of Public Affairs, Here Everything's Better (H-E-B) Grocery Company, spoke first at the event. HEB is a privately held supermarket chain based in San Antonio, Texas. The second guest speaker, Taylor Wolter, is a Disaster Resilience Manager for the OneStar Foundation.

Pam Wells, the executive director of Region 4 Education Service Center, delivered the third guest lecture. Sanjay Rambhadrhan, the chairman of the Board of Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County, moderated the event. All three speakers challenged Sewa International to serve in the mental health domain, get more involved in the AmeriCorps program, and help teachers.



The Influencers Summit ended with a commitment and a wish to do more for the community, individually and collectively.

## Sewa Works with AmeriCorps to Serve Hurricane-Hit Puerto Rico



Homes and businesses were washed away amid high winds and surging seas as Hurricane Fiona struck Puerto Rico on Saturday, September 17. The local authorities declared a state of emergency after the hurricane hit the state.

Storm survivors require bottled water, non-perishable food, clothing, toiletries, canned fruits/vegetables, oil, pet food, etc. In collaboration with AmeriCorps, Sewa International is supporting partner organizations on the ground serving the needy.



## Sewa Assists Hurricane Ian Victims in Florida

Sewa International has donated \$25,000 to help Hurricane Ian victims in Florida, and has started a social media campaign to raise \$100,000.

Sewa volunteers have been distributing drinking water, food, and other essential supplies in Fort Myers Beach, Sarasota, and other areas impacted by the hurricane.

In addition, they are working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to aid the affected people.



Sewa volunteers from Orlando and Tampa collected food, water, and other materials and delivered them to the FEMA help centers. They also supplied groceries to the Fort Myers Hindu Temple. The temple has provided over 500 hot meals daily to physicians, nurses, and people in relief shelters for several days following the hurricane.

Considered one of the deadliest hurricanes to hit Florida, Ian has caused an estimated \$28-63 billion damage, primarily from flooding.



## Sewa Conducts Cricket Tournament to support Sponsor a Child program

Cricket4Sewa of New York - North Jersey conducted a two-day Cricket tournament over the weekends on the 10th and 17th of September at Lincoln Park Cricket grounds of Jersey City, NJ. Over 28 teams participated in the contest to support the Sponsor a Child (SAC) program.

The *Bayonne Premier Cricket League* (BPCL) team won the championship; and *Sons of Pitches* got the runners-up trophy. Executive Director of Otsuka Pharmaceutical, Leena Dharwadkar, presented the trophies. After awarding the medals, she said each team was a winner when they played for a great cause to support Sponsor a Child (SAC) program.



*The winning teams with the trophies*

The infrastructure and cricket coaching services online store in New Jersey, CricMax, sponsored balls for the tournament and awarded medals. It will also donate 20% of the proceeds from the purchases if the name "Sewa" is mentioned. With the fund raised during the tournament, Cricket4Sewa will be able to support education for 18 children from underserved areas for one year.

It is a tradition of 12 years started by Sewa International New York Metro and passed on to the North Jersey Chapter in support of the Sponsor A Child (SAC) program, conducted over the weekends immediately after Labor Day. With the help of Sewa volunteers, Get Inspired & LEADs interns, participants, and supporters, Sewa could organize such a fun-filled event.



*Sewa volunteers recording cricket score*



## Sewa Chicago Organizes a Picnic at the Busse Woods Preserved Forest



*Sewa Chicago volunteers at the Busse Woods preserved forest*

Sewa International's Chicago Chapter organized a picnic on September 4 in the scenic Busse Woods, a 3,700-acre preserved forest in Cook County's Elk Grove Village.

Over 100 people participated in the picnic. Dhiren Shah, Sewa's National Advisory Board Member, provided an overview of Sewa and highlighted its work during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said Benevity ranked Sewa as one of the top ten charitable organizations supported by companies and their employees in 2021.

In addition, he said, Sewa received the highest Four-Star rating from Charity Navigator for four consecutive years. Updating the participants on the activities of the Chicago Chapter, the Stop Diabetes Movement (SDM) coordinator, Dipti Desai, said Sewa Chicago doubled the Leadership, Education and Development (LEAD) participation in 2022.

A few parents of the LEAD volunteers shared their experiences. They thanked Sewa for giving them volunteering opportunities in several areas. At the picnic, volunteers organized games, talent shows, baked goods sales, plant sales, face painting, and henna designs on hand.



*Sewa youth volunteers in a discussion*

## Sewa International Commemorates 9/11 Events with a Charity Golf Event



*The Mayor of Pearland, Kevin Cole, with the award winners*

Sewa International conducted a charity golf event to commemorate the brave victims of 9/11 at the Clear Creek Golf Course in Pearland, Texas. Ed Thompson, State Representative, teed off the inaugural shot with the Sewa golf ball after a moment of silence in memory of 9/11. The Mayor of Pearland, Kevin Cole, who came out to support the event, gave away the awards.

The tournament was held in a four-person scramble format, and fifty-six players from Houston, Richmond, and Austin competed for the awards. Among those vying for top places were members of an all-women team comprising the Los Angeles Lakers Guard, D.J. Augustin, and Assistant Coach of the Houston Rockets -- Rick Higgins

After welcoming golfers and guests, Sewa International President, Arun Kankani, referred to the many service projects initiated by Sewa. He talked about how Sewa's yellow shirts became popular during the Hurricane Harvey response efforts. "Over the years, Sewa has become the platform for all kind-hearted people who want to serve their communities in that hour of need," he said.

Anup Bhasin of Sewa's Houston Chapter thanked the sponsors -- Namma Partner, Southeast Cardiovascular Associates, EAG, the Law Office of Leena Bhasin, Dr. Batchu (Internal Medicine Associates of Houston), Bachcha Tiwari (New York Life), Deep Foods, Awake Solar, and Monks Restaurant -- for their generosity and support.



## Atlanta Chapter Organizes Women's Cricket & Kho-Kho Championship



*Participants involved in playing Kho-Kho at Fowler Park in Cumming, GA*

The Atlanta Chapter of Sewa International organized Women's Cricket & Kho-Kho competitions on September 18 at Fowler Park in Cumming, Georgia. Six cricket and four kho-kho teams participated in the tournament. The Firebirds team won the Cricket Championship, and the Mountain Crest Challengers won the Kho-Kho Trophy.

In kho-kho, the Ferocious Feathers team bagged second place, Wildbrooke Warriors came in third, and the Lakshmi Bai team secured the fourth place. The Crickootam, ATL Strikers, and Wildbrooke Warriors won the second, third, and fourth places in the cricket championship respectively.

Dr. Syamala Erramilli and her husband, Bob Erramilli, Johns Creek City Council Member, participated in the event as guests of honor. Dr. Erramilli said it is important for women to stay active as it helps release endorphin hormones that keep them away from depression. Mrs. Raj Razdan encouraged parents to empower their young daughters. Amaresh Parvathaneni and Murali Rajagopalan from the company SlayRX sponsored food and drinks for the event.

The money collected in the event will be donated to Sewa's Sanitation, Hygiene, and Empowerment Project for the Girl Child (SHE) Program. A team of Sewa volunteers consisting of Neetu Chauhan, Pallavi Panthri, Vani Gaddam, Usha Palagiri, Garima Saini, Vijai G, and Chanchal organized the event. Prakash Srivastava, Shobit Panthari, and Raghav Tavva provided technical and marketing help.



*Winning team with the trophy*

## Economic Crisis in Sri Lanka; Sewa Plans to Help 10,000 Families



*A beneficiary is receiving a bag of grains in Sri Lanka.*

Sri Lanka has been in severe distress since the beginning of this year due to the economic hardship caused by the Ukrainian war and other global factors. Daily power blackouts and shortages of fuel and other essential goods have made life difficult in this island country. As a result, thousands of families live in harsh and stressful conditions. Sewa International is working with its partner organization, the Arumuga Navalar Charity Project, to distribute food and other essential supplies in Sri Lanka. In the first phase, Sewa has provided a month's worth of groceries to 500 economically challenged families in the Nuwara Eliya district. Sewa is targeting to assist 10,000 families soon and requests donors to help Sri Lankans in need.



## Participants showcasing their talents at Sewa Dancing Stars in Houston

Sewa International's Houston Chapter organized the "Sewa Dancing Stars 2022" event on August 27 to celebrate India's 75th Independence Day titled "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav."



More than thirty dance schools and 340 performers, including five-year-old children, participated in the competition.



Over 500 people attended the event. Over 40 Sewa volunteers and 13 Judges were involved in organizing and judging the performances.



## Volunteer Spotlight



***Hari Samanthula - North Jersey Chapter***

Hari Samanthula was one of the founding members of the Sewa North Jersey chapter in 2016. He has been volunteering in many Sewa projects since then with various responsibilities. He currently coordinates the Get Inspired program in North Jersey. He helps other Sewa chapters who want to introduce the Get Inspired internship program in their locations.

Hari is also a Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) volunteer and attends the Sri Krishna Shakha, Parsippany, NJ. As a Licensed Financial Advisor, Hari helps families to build wealth and offers insurance services. He lives in Bridgewater, North Jersey, with his wife Madhavi and daughter Ananya.

## Sewa International

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