

Sewa Bay Area Annual Banquet 2024 Raises Over \$800,000



At its 2024 Annual Banquet, Sewa Bay Area brought together over 250 attendees, including community leaders, volunteers, and supporters

Sewa Bay Area hosted its Annual Banquet 2024, bringing together over 250 attendees, including donors, dignitaries, partner organization members, and volunteers. The event celebrated community service and garnered significant support, with over 50 donors contributing during the fundraiser, helping raise nearly \$800,000 to further Sewa's mission. Dr. Anurag Mairal, President of the Sewa Bay Area Chapter, outlined the organization's focus areas, while keynote speaker Colin Boyle, Lecturer at UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business, emphasized the power of collective action.

The Sewa Excellence Award was presented to Milli and Himanshu Seth of the Saloni Heart Foundation, and the Sewa Partnership Award to Loreto Quevedo Dimaandal, founder of LoretoQD's Brigade - Silicon Valley. Both awards were presented by Colin Boyle and Rakesh Adlakha, Deputy Consul General of India in San Francisco. The event also recognized high school volunteers with Presidential Volunteer Service Award certificates and featured a captivating performance by Neil Nayar.

Sewa Atlanta Raises Over \$500,000 at Annual Gala to Support Community Programs



The team of Sewa Atlanta volunteers who made the Annual Gala 2024 a success

Sewa Atlanta raised over \$500,000 at its Annual Gala on Saturday, December 7. Over 250 people, including community leaders, volunteers, and supporters, attended the event. The funds collected at the event will support key programs such as Sewa AmeriCorps initiatives, free health clinics, food drives, and disaster relief efforts. The evening began with opening remarks by Dr. Madhav Durbha, President, and Raj Radhakrishnan, Vice President of Sewa Atlanta. They highlighted the expansion of the Sewa AmeriCorps Afterschool Tutoring Program, which aids underserved children, and the success of free health clinics and food security initiatives.

Prof. Mohammed K. Ali, Co-Director of the Emory Global Diabetes Research Center, delivered the keynote address, highlighting the global diabetes crisis and the need for interdisciplinary solutions. Sewa Atlanta honored several individuals and organizations for their contributions to the mission, including Sophie and Sid Mookerji of the Mookerji Foundation, Dr. Paul Lopez, Esteban Alarcon, and others. As appreciation, attendees received an autographed book by Dr. Jagdish Sheth and a tree kit. The event featured performances by Saganika Mukherjee, Anaga Jaswani, and Neeti Patak. Subhash Patel of Natson Hotel Group sponsored the banquet hall and dinner. Prof. Devesh Ranjan and Mrs. Sheela Pailwan emceed the event.



The audience enjoyed a gala that celebrated selfless service, volunteering, and community support

Sewa South Jersey Delivers Over 3,000 Pounds of Candy to Troops at McGuire Air Force Base



South Jersey volunteers participated in the Candy Drive for Troops initiative

The Sewa South Jersey Chapter delivered over 3,000 pounds of candy to military personnel at McGuire Air Force Base as part of its Candy Drive for Troops initiative last week in November.

The event honored the service of Air Force, Navy, and Army personnel, fostering a stronger community-military bond during the holiday season.

The ceremony opened with the singing of the national anthem, followed by an introduction to Candy Drive's mission. Service members expressed gratitude, noting how such acts boost morale. Children presented poems, speeches, and posters, strengthening the connection between the troops and the community.

The Candy Drive was a collective community effort, with contributions from Mast Pharmacy in Bordentown (500 pounds of candy), libraries, schools, and local businesses. Volunteers from South Jersey, including LEAD (Leadership, Education, and Development) members, played a key role in making the initiative successful. The event served as a reminder of the sacrifices made by the military and the importance of community support.

Sewa Volunteers Recognized for Supporting Virginia Science Olympiad Competitions

The Sewa Washington, DC, chapter received a letter of appreciation from Emily Owens, State Director of the Virginia Science Olympiad, for Sewa support during the state's elementary school competitions on November 28.

Over a dozen Sewa volunteers facilitated STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) events for grades 3-5 students, including science and engineering tasks. Many volunteers participated in tournaments, helping manage, set up, and grade activities. This support was crucial, as the Virginia Science Olympiad saw a significant increase in participants, doubling its tournament opportunities and volunteer needs.

In her letter, Owens expressed gratitude for the volunteers' commitment and highlighted the positive impact on the students' educational journeys.



Courtesy: Virginia Science Olympiad (VASO)

Sewa's involvement extends beyond event support, with the chapter also assisting elementary schools in Fairfax County and nearby counties with after-school Science Olympiad programs.

Strengthening Borders: Sewa SHE Team Visits Jammu, India



Students thanked the SHE team for repairing the toilet blocks at their school in Ghordi Khas village, Jammu

The Sewa International SHE (Sanitation, Hygiene, and Empowerment Project for the Girl Child) team recently visited Udhampur, Jammu, to inspect newly repaired toilet blocks at two schools in remote Ghordi village. The improvements benefit 150 students and are part of Sewa's ongoing commitment to enhancing sanitation in underserved areas. Donor Riya Dadheech, a student Sewa volunteer from the US, interacted virtually with students who expressed gratitude through songs and handmade cards, showcasing the initiative's impact.

Jammu student's testimonial: <https://youtu.be/LL1m8KecBRo>

In addition to the improvements in the Ghordi village, the SHE team surveyed other schools in the area, identifying additional infrastructure needs and exploring skill development opportunities with local village leaders. The team also visited the *Kashmiri Pandit Colony*, where Seva Bharati runs skill programs, and discussed potential collaborations to further support livelihood initiatives in the region. This visit reinforced Sewa's commitment to sustainable development and expanding its efforts in India's border areas.

Jammu video: <https://youtu.be/bYo4i-Os0F0>



Beneficiary students from Udhampur express their gratitude to donor Riya Dadheech

Houston Chapter Celebrates LEAD Achievements



Participants of the Houston LEAD program's year-end celebrations at the Fort Bend County Library, TX

Sewa Houston Chapter hosted the LEAD program's End-of-Year Celebration at the Fort Bend County Library on December 14.

The event recognized the achievements of 38 PVSA (President's Volunteer Service Award) recipients and 18 LEADs who completed the program with more than 100 hours of commitment. Judge Christian Becerra of Fort Bend County District 434 was the chief guest. He presented awards, shared his experience with Sewa during the COVID food drive, and highlighted the value of community service.

Sewa President Arun Kankani and Vice President of Finance Venkat Subramanian also attended the program, showing their support for the LEAD program's initiatives. Nikhil Jain, Houston Chapter Coordinator, thanked volunteers, youth participants, and parents.

The event marked another successful year for the Houston LEAD program. Ramesh Bhutada, a Sewa Board of Directors member, and Rajesh Patwari, the LEAD Coordinator, expressed their appreciation for the volunteers' hard work and dedication.

Food and Winter Clothing Drive in Phoenix, AZ



Sewa Collaborated with 40 organizations to host a food and winter clothing drive in Phoenix, AZ

Sewa Phoenix organized a food and winter clothing drive on December 17 with the support of over 40 organizations, donors, and volunteers. Volunteers were able to collect substantial food and winter clothes for those in need.

Lynn Charley and Jerry Hunter from the Navajo Nation in Cuba, NM, traveled to Phoenix to collect the donations. The group also visited the Sri Venkata Krishna Kshetra Mandir, where they shared information about the civilizational culture and the connection between ancient civilizations. The event was made possible through the collective efforts of various organizations, including the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and the Maha Ganapati Temple of Arizona.

Diwali 2024 flag-off events were held on December 8, in the East and West Valleys, marking the beginning of a charitable drive to collect donations for the homeless and Native American communities in Phoenix, AZ.

Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke flagged off the event in the East Valley, while Peoria Vice Mayor Jon Edwards started it off in the West Valley. The events saw a strong turnout of community members, organizations, and youth volunteers to support the noble cause. The collected donations will be distributed to the homeless and Native American communities, providing support during the festive season.



Volunteers at the Sewa Diwali 2024 flag-off event for the charitable drive in Phoenix, AZ

Holiday Cheer with Toy Drive



Sewa and Swasth Yoga volunteers delivered toys to the American Indian Center of Houston, TX

In partnership with Swasth Yoga of Katy, TX, Sewa Houston organized a toy drive to benefit the Native American Tunica Biloxi tribe on December 15. The initiative collected toys worth \$650, donated to the American Indian Center of Houston. Sewa and Swasth Yoga volunteers delivered the toys, showcasing the community's collective efforts. During the visit, they had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Julie Zahn, Executive Director of the center, and other dedicated staff members.

San Diego Raises \$30,000 in its Banquet



San Diego chapter organized banquet-style fundraiser

Sewa's San Diego chapter raised \$30,000 during its first banquet-style fundraising event on December 14 in San Diego, CA. The event drew over 130 attendees, including notable guests such as Antonio Martinez, a San Ysidro School District Board Member; Alicia Jimenez, Co-founder of Hearts & Hands Working Together; Casey Castillo, CEO of the San Diego Food Bank; and representatives from Interfaith Community Services. The evening brought together dignitaries, donors, and volunteers, with chapter leaders expressing heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to its success.

Boston Gala Celebrates Unity and Giving



Community leaders, volunteers, and supporters attended the Boston gala

Sewa Boston hosted a gala on December 7 in Framingham, MA, bringing together 250 attendees, community organizations, and partners for an evening of celebration and unity. Singers Raghu Saranathan, Meena Sundaram, Sankar Gangaikondan, and Sharanya Sarkar Verma performed at the event. Lasya School of Dance and Tarana School of Kathak presented traditional dance pieces, engaging the audience. Sewa Boston leaders acknowledged the presence of guests, including Mona and Vishwanath Khaitan, Vandana Sharma, and Bela and Sanjay Kaul. They thanked the event's sponsor, Shova Sharma of New York Life, and the volunteers whose efforts contributed to its success.

Community Unites for 5K Walk/Run Event

Despite chilly weather and rain, about eighty participants gathered at the John Paul Landing Park Cypress, TX, for a 5K walk/run on December 7. The morning began with warm-up exercises, followed by representatives from partner organizations sharing their community service initiatives in Cypress.

Participants were interested in joining the upcoming Houston Marathon as runners and volunteers. Sewa Houston organized the event with the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, the *Sri Govindaji Gaudiya Matha* (SGGM), and the *Sri Satyanarayana Temple* (SSTGH).



Participants gathered for a 5K walk/run at John Paul Landing Park in Cypress, TX

Disaster Relief and Cultural Continuity



Swadesh Katoch, VP of Disaster Recovery, discussed disaster relief with the MOS at the Sewa Bridge Office in Delhi, India

Swadesh Katoch, Vice President, Disaster Recovery, visited the Sewa Bridge Office in Delhi, India, on December 18. During the visit, he shared valuable insights on disaster relief, emphasizing the critical importance of timing in fundraising efforts. He also praised the dedication of Sewa volunteers, noting their tireless work in challenging environments, even in countries where conditions are not always favorable.

Additionally, Katoch reflected on his global travels and interactions with the Indian diaspora, highlighting how these communities have successfully preserved their cultural heritage despite being disconnected from India for centuries. His conversation with his Indian counterparts underscored the importance of timely intervention, the resilience of Sewa volunteers, and the enduring strength of cultural continuity across generations.

Upcoming Events

- January 11, 2025: LEAD Program Starts | Houston, TX
- February 22, 2025: BEI - Sewa 5k Walk/Run | W. Sam Houston Pkwy South, Houston, TX

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