

Sewa Raises \$70,000 for Disaster Relief Efforts in India



Sewa volunteers distributed essential item kits to the families affected by Cyclone Biparjoy in Gujarat, India

Sewa International has raised nearly \$70,000 through its fundraising campaign for three relief efforts. To support Balasore train victims, Sewa raised about \$40,000. For Manipur relief efforts, it collected almost \$22,000, and nearly \$7,000 to assist the Cyclone Biparjoy-affected families of Gujarat. Sewa provides food, medicine, and other essential items to affected families through its relief program.

Executive Corner

Resembling the holy Vata Vriksha (Banyan tree), Sanatana Dharma (eternal order) continues to sustain and grow -- adapting to the changes according to Kalamana (time). Generation after generation, people built their life based on the universal principles embedded in Hindu Dharma. The older generation left this world with their impeccable guidance and passed on their wisdom to the new generation. Raising this next generation in a dharmic way could be challenging with the changing times; however, it all boils down to how much the new generation embraces the samskaras (psychological imprints) passed on to them.

Ever since Swami Vivekananda arrived in the US, Hindus have found a way of life on foreign soil. The generation that migrated to the US in the early and mid-20th century had very few resources to raise their children according to the Dharmic principles. They strived to survive in the new land facing inequality and cultural deprivation but did not discard the rich heritage they brought from home.

These three events included a fatal train accident in Odisha, in which over 288 people died, and over 1,000 were injured. In the ethnic violence in Manipur in the first week of May, nearly 120 people were killed, and over 3,000 were wounded. In Gujarat, Cyclone Biparjoy led to power outages in thousands of villages, uprooted hundreds of trees, destroyed crops in nearly 50,000 hectares of farmland, and damaged numerous homes.

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They received guidance from gurus such as Paramahansa Yogananda, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Srila Prabhupad of ISKCON, and many more to adapt to the Dharmic way of life.

In the late 20th century, organizations such as Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Ekal Vidyalaya, Samskrita Bharati, etc., have worked relentlessly to inculcate the rich Hindu samskriti among the generation that was born and brought up in the US. As this new generation grew up with the Hindu value system, it brought a wave of people with a pluralistic mindset not only to serve underprivileged communities but to spread the wisdom of equality.

This mindset has been vital in making Sewa International a humanitarian organization based on Dharmic principles. The younger generation continues to inculcate Sewa Bhav (service mindset) and Aatmeeyata (feeling oneness) by merely participating in the number of activities conducted by the chapters across the country.

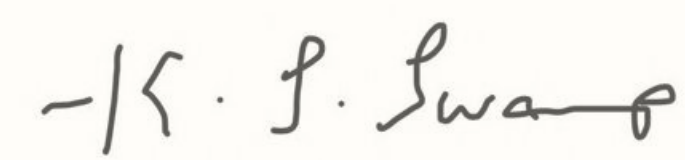
Executive Corner

Generation Z grew up in the Sewa environment with Swabhimaan (self-confidence) owning the country as their Karma bhoomi (workspace). In recent years during the pandemic, they stood up to the challenge by delivering many products with the use of technology such as 3-D printers and other electronic gadgets.

Utilizing social media to create awareness and enhance communication has become a normal part of the day. In the midst of the pandemic, they took a noble initiative to conduct a virtual National Youth Convention. Hundreds of high school students contributed, organized, and participated to make it a vibrant event. The resolution they passed during the convention strongly put forward the sentiments of Ekatmata -- the oneness of hearts.

The enthusiasm and curiosity of the students in the panel discussions at the convention made it evident that the generations to come are in the safe hands of new leaders. The third youth convention is scheduled on July 29 this year and we can see the young hearts on the job to make it successful. The Hindu ethos has certainly started to reverberate all over the world with the concept of "service to all" making Krunvantho Vishvamarayam (making the world a noble place) a reality.

Sincerely,



Swarup Kurella
Director, North East Region



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The Cyclone Biparjoy-affected families in Gujarat receiving essential kits

Sewa has distributed 140 essential ration kits to the affected families in Gujarat. Additionally, volunteers are serving cooked meals to those in need. Gujarat is currently facing the devastating aftermath of Cyclone Biparjoy.

Understanding the importance of basic amenities, Sewa has provided essential clothes and hygiene items to help individuals rebuild their lives. Furthermore, volunteers are repairing homes and facilities.

Swadesh Katoch, Sewa's Vice President of Disaster Recovery, said, "We can make a difference by joining local and government forces in their efforts to provide relief. Your generous donation will aid those affected in rebuilding their lives and finding hope amidst the wreckage."

The impact of the cyclone/hurricane has been severe, with over 940 villages experiencing power outages, hundreds of trees uprooted, and the loss of thousands of animals and birds. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has successfully evacuated over 40,000 individuals from the affected regions.

In Kutch, approximately 80,000 electricity poles have collapsed, and nearly 50,000 hectares of farmland have been affected. Gujarat received 55 percent of the season's rainfall in two weeks leading to inundation of farmland, villages, and towns.

Sewa Trains Women on India's Eastern Border: 250 Families Benefit



Radhika Sheshadri and Rajini Hodigere (first & second from right) of Sewa's SHE - CAF team with traditional weavers in West Bengal, India

Sewa International has started a Program at Phulia, in Nadia District in the Indian state of West Bengal, near the India-Bangladesh border, to provide training, mentoring, and marketing support to weavers. The program intends to preserve and promote traditional craftsmanship, and 90 women and their families have signed up.

These artisan communities fell into financial hardship as the sale of their products plummeted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sewa launched this program as a part of its Sanitation, Hygiene, and Empowerment Project for the Girl Child (SHE) and Covid Affected Families (CAF) project.

The SHE-CAF program provides employment training and other resources to women who lost their families' bread earners to the pandemic.

Expanding Sewa's efforts to Tangta, a small village in the Kalimpong District in West Bengal, near the India-Bhutan border, SHE-CAF extended support to the local community by organizing training programs targeting young beneficiaries. Nearly ten determined women enrolled in tailoring, beautician courses, and vocational skills training.

Additionally, Sewa International assisted 30 women through livestock-rearing initiatives. Sewa's endeavors impacted the lives of over 120 women near the India-Bangladesh and India-Bhutan borders. Armed with the newly acquired skills, these women can now explore opportunities in the local fashion industry, forging a sustainable livelihood for themselves and their families.

Discussing the initiative, Rajini Hodigere, SHE's Program Manager, said: "We firmly believe that empowering women is the cornerstone of societal progress. By equipping them with valuable resources and training opportunities, SHE-CAF strives to uplift their lives and instigate positive change within their communities. Our journey to the borders of West Bengal is a testament to our unwavering commitment to our vision."

Alief ISD Honors Sewa International as Diamond Partner in Education



Sewa volunteers with Alief ISD officials in Houston, TX

Alief Independent School District of Texas has recognized Sewa International as their “Diamond Partner in Education” for the academic year 2022-2023.

The school district lauded Sewa International for its exceptional support and partnership, highlighting Sewa volunteers' contributions. Sewa's AmeriCorps members actively participated in various initiatives, serving in classrooms across the school district and providing essential disaster preparedness training to students and their families.

Their presence in classrooms enriched the learning experience for students, while their disaster preparedness training has contributed to the safety and well-being of the entire school community.

This recognition of Sewa International as the “Diamond Partner in Education” solidifies the strong bond between the two institutions. The collaboration has proven to be a catalyst for advancing educational goals and fostering community development within the district.

Houston AmeriCorps Members Invited to Vietnam Memorial Dedication Ceremony



Sewa Houston AmeriCorps Members

Sewa Houston AmeriCorps Members actively participated in the Houston Vietnam Veterans Memorial Dedication on Friday, May 26. During the event, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Harris County Commissioner Lesley Briones, 2022 Houston Poet Laureate Emmanuel "Outspoken" Bean, and representatives from all the Armed Services engaged in meaningful interactions with the members.

AmeriCorps member Shane Baker, who served in the US Navy for 17 years, and Sewa Workforce Development Coordinator Greg Figler, a former member of the US Army, joined the Sewa Corps. The Sewa Houston team expressed gratitude for their service.

The memorial, an exquisite sculpture, crafted by Troy and Vickie Kelley, was conceptualized by Councilman Edward Pollard of District J, who closely collaborated with Sewa International to champion equity in underserved communities in Southwest Houston.

Constructing the memorial took three years. It honors all who served in Vietnam while offering a distinct representation of the experiences of individuals from the Greater Houston Area. Additionally, the memorial acknowledges the specific contributions of women, minorities, Prisoners of War (POWs), Vietnamese community members, and allies. It commemorates the 543 servicemen and women from the Greater Houston Area who lost their lives in the war.

Sewa International to Organize Third Annual Youth Convention in July

Sewa International plans to host its third Annual National Youth Convention on July 29. The event, conducted virtually, will bring together approximately 900 high school and college students across the United States.

The convention will serve as a platform for Sewa volunteers and participating youth to celebrate their accomplishments in creating positive change. The participants include LEAD students and “Get Inspired” interns, who showcase their work throughout the year. Attendees can interact with one another, exchange ideas, and foster connections, despite the virtual format. From impactful community service projects to innovative social initiatives, these young people can present their current year achievements at the convention.

Another highlight of the meeting is a panel discussion in which students engage in conversations on topics of their choice.

These interactive sessions provide a platform for them to exchange perspectives, learn from one another, and contribute to meaningful dialogue. The convention also features several keynote speeches from experienced professionals who will share their insights. The culmination of the youth convention will mark the passing of a resolution that aligns with Sewa International's vision and mission.

“We are proud of Sewa youth and would like to showcase their talent during this Third Annual National Youth Convention intended to celebrate in the last week of July, and their passion, determination, and commitment to service will empower them to become the changemakers of tomorrow,” said Jyothsna Prasad, Joint Director of Sewa International's LEAD Program.

Houston's SELF Team Organizes 5k Walk/Run in League City, TX



Houston's SELF Team at 5k walk/run annual event in League City, TX

Sewa International Houston's SELF Team, in collaboration with the Indian Cultural Center of Clear Lake (ICCL), Sanatan Dham, and the Jain Business Group, hosted their highly anticipated twenty-seventh 5k walk/run event recently, at Challenger Seven Memorial Park in League City.

The event brought together over 60 participants who enjoyed a scenic walk/run in beautiful weather. The 5k walk/run has become an annual event eagerly anticipated by fitness enthusiasts, attracting participants of all ages and backgrounds from across the city and surrounding areas.

The morning began with refreshing warm-up exercises and yoga, led by experienced instructors who ensured participants were ready for the walk/run. Among the attendees were eight dedicated high school volunteers, whose involvement added youthful energy and passion to the event.

The event also attracted children, who eagerly participated with their families. Each person who completed the event received a 5k Sewa medal, symbolizing their achievement and commitment to the cause.

Indian Government Launches "Know Your India" Program for NRI Youth



Indian Government's initiative to reconnect NRI youth

The Government of India has unveiled the "Know Your India" program, a groundbreaking initiative designed to reconnect the youth of India residing abroad with their cultural roots. Applications are now being accepted for the 66th and 67th editions of the program, offering an incredible opportunity for young Indians to explore the diverse cultural heritage of their country.

Interested individuals can visit -- <https://kip.gov.in/> -- to apply and learn more about the application process.

During the program, participants will visit various states and cities across India, immersing themselves in the life and culture of local communities. They will witness and partake in traditional festivals, visit historical landmarks, interact with renowned artists and intellectuals, and forge connections with fellow participants from different corners of the world.

Emphasizing the significance of this initiative, Prem Pusuloori, Sewa's Vice President for Programs and Projects, said, "We believe that this program will provide young Indians abroad with an extraordinary opportunity to reconnect with their homeland and develop a profound understanding of India's rich cultural diversity. It is a chance for them to create lifelong memories and establish lasting connections with like-minded individuals."

An Eleventh Grader Launches Math Boot Camp for AMC-8 Exam Preparation

Atharv Naphade, a passionate math enthusiast and eleventh grader, has initiated a math boot camp as part of Sewa's summer Do It for Yourself (DIY) LEAD program.

The program, "Intro to Competitive Math to Train for AMC-8 Math Exams," starts on July 11, and seeks to equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in the American Mathematics Competition (AMC-8).

Having nurtured a love for mathematics since third grade, Naphade, loves finding solutions to challenging math puzzles.

With incredible achievements under his belt, such as qualifying for the AIME exam for three consecutive years, scoring a perfect score on the Math Kangaroo contest, and securing a position on the honor roll for both the AMC-8 and AMC-10 exams for five years straight, Naphade is eager to share his expertise with others.

The virtual classes have a nominal fee which Naphade wants to donate to Sewa Bay Area service projects. Interested workshop participants can register at tinyurl.com/sewaAMC8Camp.

"Don't look back - look forward, have infinite energy, infinite enthusiasm, infinite daring, and infinite patience - then alone can great deeds be accomplished."

-Swami Vivekananda

Central Jersey Chapter Supports Paediatric Cancer Research and Survivors



LEAD participants supported the 5K Run/Walk in New Jersey

Sewa International's Central Jersey Chapter has partnered with local organizations and nonprofits for the past two years to support OM Foundation's "OM Memorial 5K Run/Walk" in Monroe Township, New Jersey. This event raises funds for and awareness about childhood cancer research.

During the Sixth Annual OM Memorial 5K Run/Walk, Sewa's LEAD and adult volunteers played a vital role in ensuring the event's success. They distributed race day T-shirts, checked in participants, set up the event area, and organized the distribution of refreshments for participants and volunteers.

During the race, LEAD volunteers guided participants to the starting point and cheered them along the track, offering support. After the event, they cleaned up the area, collected signs, banners, and event materials, and helped to pack chairs and tables.

Lead Volunteers Serve at Food Banks, Pantries, and Shelters in New Jersey



LEAD volunteers at work in various food banks in New Jersey

Sewa's LEAD members (Leadership Development through Community Engagement) from Central Jersey were involved in serving and working at various food banks, food pantries, and food shelters in their commitment to serving their local communities.

At the Jewish Relief Agency (JRA) in the Philadelphia area, LEAD members packed and distributed food, contributing to the organization's mission of assisting those facing food insecurity.

Additionally, their involvement at the First Presbyterian Church Food Pantry and the Ozanam Food Shelter allowed them to assist individuals by packing and distributing food. LEAD members also donated the food from their chapter's SewaMeals to support the Ozanam Food Shelter.

Their efforts extended to the Franklin Food Bank, where the youngsters packed, distributed, and stocked food supplies. By participating in these activities, they provided immediate assistance and contributed to the overall functioning of these organizations.

Collaborating with the respective food shelters allowed them to demonstrate support for the community and work together as a team to ensure people have access to food.

Sewa's Cleanup Initiatives Transform Streets and Parks in New Jersey



Central Jersey LEAD volunteers cleaned up parks in Riverside, NJ

Amico Island in Riverside, NJ, a beautiful park, has been faced with the problem of littering. In response, the Burlington County Department of Solid Waste organized a cleanup recently to address the issue.

Sewa International's Central Jersey LEAD group volunteered for the cleanup and diligently collected litter throughout the park. Amico Island is a 55-acre peninsula which includes forests, ponds, wetlands, and meadows.

By removing trash, Lead volunteers worked to safeguard the park's natural beauty and integrity. This cleanup initiative underscores the importance of community involvement in preserving and protecting natural open spaces. By raising awareness and actively participating in cleanup activities, LEAD volunteers ensure that parks like Amico Island can be enjoyed by and sustained for future generations.

Additionally, LEAD members participated in a Chesterfield, NJ, community cleanup and collected various types of trash from the streets. Twenty LEAD volunteers joined the event.

Sewa's "Design to Lead" Symposium Empowers Youth to Tackle Inequities



Attendees at Design to Lead (DTL) symposium in Bay Area, CA

Sewa Bay Area Chapter hosted the Design to Lead (DTL) symposium centered around "Addressing Inequities in Underserved Communities," at the Sewa Community Center (SCC) on June 25, 2023.

Alex Lee, the 27-year-old assembly member representing the 24th Assembly District of California, was the guest speaker.

With a diverse audience that included LEAD students and nearly 200 other participants joining virtually, the symposium offered a unique opportunity for the DTL students to gain insights from stakeholders actively working to uplift marginalized populations in the Bay Area. The event was an invaluable platform for youth to showcase their remarkable mental health research projects alongside a thought-provoking moderated panel discussion featuring two trailblazers: Todd Langton from Agape, and Denari Brown from Hunger at Home.

These entrepreneurs are spearheading transformative initiatives, combating food insecurity and homelessness, and making a significant impact on underserved communities.

Through a rich exchange of ideas, the DTL Inequity Symposium demonstrated a collaborative approach to bridge gaps, advocate for justice, and build a more equitable society.

Food Distribution Drive Creates Lasting Impact and Addresses Critical Need



Houston Chapter volunteers involved in a food distribution drive

With the generous support of Fort Bend County Judge's office, Sewa's Houston Chapter successfully conducted a series of food distribution drives in June 2023.

Expressing his gratitude, Nikhil Jain, Houston Chapter Coordinator said, "We are incredibly grateful to the Fort Bend County Judge's Office for their unwavering support and commitment to improving the lives of our community members.

Their generosity through the Average Revenue Per Account (ARPA) grant has enabled us to make a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by food insecurity. Working towards a common goal, we can significantly impact the lives of those facing adversity."

The ARPA grant has allowed the Houston Chapter to procure a substantial quantity of essential food items, including grains, fresh produce, canned goods, and other non-perishable items, ensuring a well-rounded and nutritious offering for those in need. Sewa volunteers worked diligently, adhering to all safety protocols and guidelines established by local health authorities.

The initiatives garnered overwhelming support from residents and businesses, who came forward to contribute financially and through volunteer efforts.

ASPIRE Volunteer Orientation Program Held in Milpitas, CA



ASPIRE volunteers in an orientation program

The event celebrated the contributions of six dedicated young volunteers who had excelled in the ASPIRE program. These students, graduating from high school and moving on to college/university, are exceptional individuals who shared their volunteering experiences, highlighting how they impacted them and the communities they served.

Sewa ASPIRE program's volunteer appreciation and orientation program, held at Sewa Milpitas headquarters on June 4, 2023, attracted over 60 attendees.

Parents had the honor of presenting trophies and commendation certificates to these accomplished graduates.

The subsequent Volunteer Orientation session was informative as participants discussed volunteer roles, the code of conduct, and school expectations. A Q&A session followed, enabling volunteers to seek clarification of their responsibilities.

The event concluded with volunteer scheduling, during which the ASPIRE youth volunteers signed up to lead enrichment programs such as coding, robotics, arts & crafts, chess, performing arts, martial arts, and more. The summer in-person volunteer program was scheduled from June 7 to July 21, 2023.

Sewa Bay Area Family Camp Unites Community



Participants of weekend family camp at redwood forest in Piercy, CA

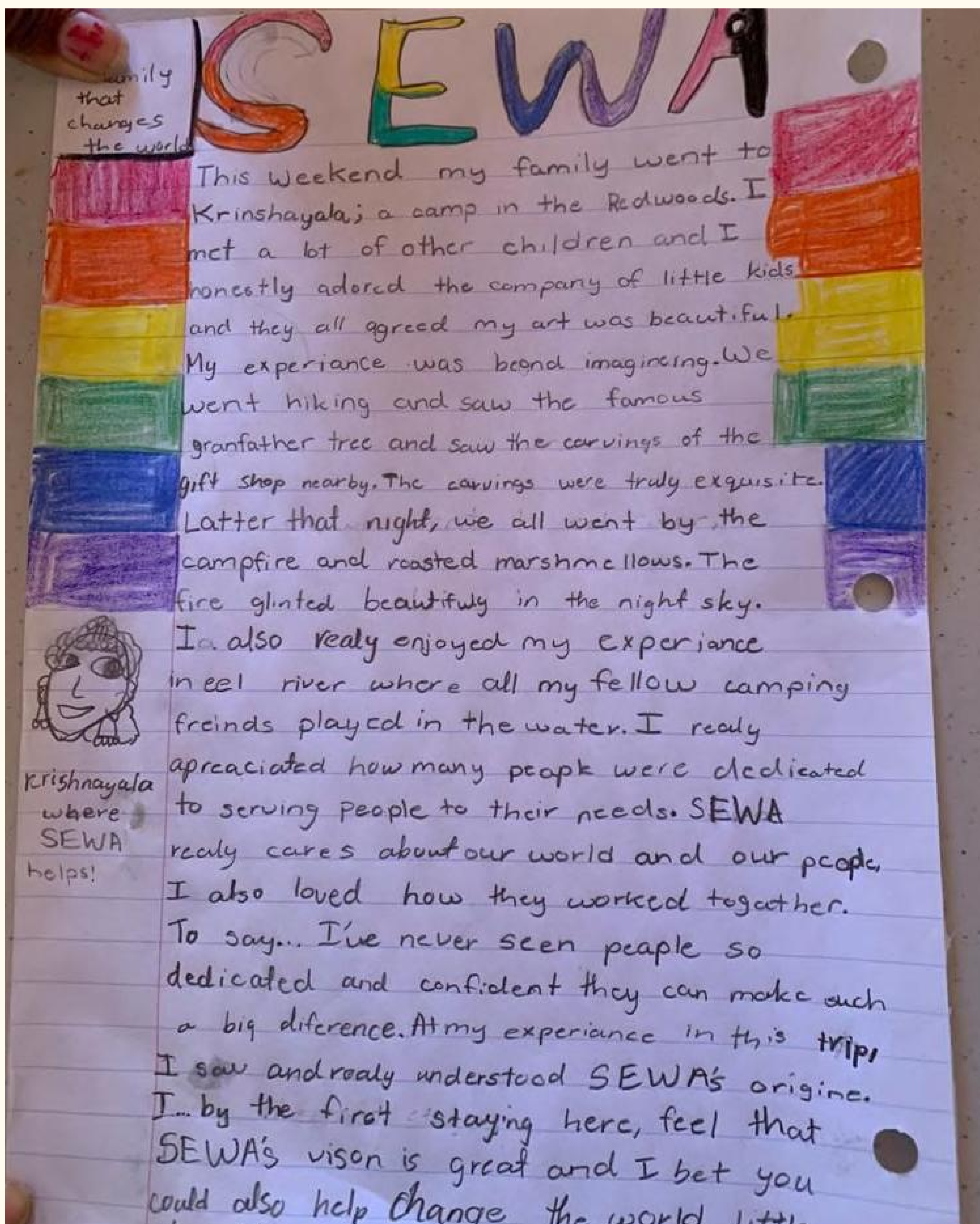
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A recent weekend family camp organized by the Sewa Bay Area Chapter at the serene Chinmaya Mission Krishnalaya brought more than a hundred people together. The redwood forest in Piercy, CA, became the backdrop for the gathering during the weekend.

The event brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds who connected, cooked together, embarked on invigorating hikes, and creatively showcased Sewa initiatives. During the friendly skit competition magic unfolded as the young and old came together, bridging and strengthening family and community bonds.

One of the standout aspects of the camp was the food that was lovingly prepared and served due to the dedicated efforts of the Bay Area coordinators -- Utpal, Praveen, and Guruprasad.

A Child Discovers Sewa and the Beauty of Working Together



An eight-year-old kid appreciates Sewa's work

At the weekend family camp organized by the Sewa Bay Area Chapter at Chinmaya Mission Krishnalaya in the Redwoods, an eight-year-old witnessed the magic of selfless service. In awe of Sewa work, the youngster recounted the experiences at the camp and expressed admiration for the volunteers' commitment to service. The article celebrating the power of compassion received widespread praise in the camp. See the transcription below:

This weekend, my family and I went to Krishnalaya, a camp in the Redwoods. I met a lot of other children and I, honestly, adored the company of little kids. They all agreed that my art was beautiful. My experience was beyond imagining.

We went hiking and saw the famous Grandfather tree and saw the carvings of the gift shops nearby. The carvings were truly exquisite. Later that night, we all went by the campfire and roasted marshmallows. The fire glinted beautifully in the night sky.

I also really enjoyed my experience at the eel river, where all my fellow camping friends played in the water. I really appreciated how many people were dedicated to serving people to their needs. Sewa really cares about our world and our people. I also loved how they worked together.

To say... I have never seen people so dedicated and confident they can make such a big difference. In my experience on this trip, I saw and really understood Sewa's origin. I by first staying here, feel that Sewa's vision is great, and I bet you could also help change the world little by little.

Help the Flood-Affected Communities in North India

Heavy rains in the recent past have led to extensive flooding and landslides took at least 22 lives in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir in North India. The affected communities need immediate assistance. Sewa International is offering support and providing relief to those impacted by the floods. Many families have lost their homes and need basic supplies like food and toiletries as well as temporary shelters, tents, blankets, sweaters, etc.

Providing essential food items, packaged drinking water, and water purification supplies is crucial to prevent the outbreak of diseases. Medical teams and supplies are urgently needed to provide healthcare services to those injured and address any potential health emergencies arising from unhygienic conditions. Once the floodwaters recede, there will be a significant need to rebuild damaged infrastructure, including homes, hospitals, schools, and roads.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Sujata Varshneya Mittal, a Sewa parent volunteer, has been actively involved with the Central Jersey Chapter since 2021. Over the past 18 months, she has actively participated in numerous Sewa events. Notably, she played a pivotal role in organizing the Sewa medical camp in Edison in early 2022, where she worked alongside other volunteers and doctors to organize and manage the session.



Sujata Varshneya Mittal

Sujata particularly enjoys facilitating students in the LEAD programs in food drives, boat building, and vegetable cultivation for charitable purposes.

Recently, Sujata Mittal has taken up the task of promoting the work of the Central Jersey Chapter and encouraging greater community involvement. In addition to her commitment to Sewa, she actively contributes to her local community in Clark, NJ. Sujata lives with her husband and two daughters in the Central Jersey area.

Bay Area Chapter President Prof. Anurag Mairal Meets Prime Minister Modi



Anurag Mairal meets PM Modi

Distinguished academics met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New York on June 20 to discuss India's education and healthcare sectors. Among those present was Sewa's Bay Area President and Adjunct Professor of Medicine at Stanford University, Anurag Mairal.

Mairal, drawing upon his expertise as the Director of Global Outreach Programs at Stanford University, discussed with the prime minister the potential to bring positive change in these sectors.

With this exchange of innovative ideas, Anurag Mairal said that a brighter and more prosperous future lies ahead for India's education and healthcare landscape.

Bay Area's SELF Team Observed International Yoga Day



Bay Area SELF team performing surya namaskar

Sewa International's Bay Area SELF (Sleep, Exercise, Living in the Present / Lifestyle Practices, Food and Diet) team celebrated International Yoga Day to enumerate the benefits of yoga.

Nearly twenty people gathered at the Sewa Community Center (SCC) to perform 108 "surya namaskars" (salutations to the Sun) with other refreshing asanas (postures), led by yoga teacher, Ms. Poornima.

Despite being a workday, people actively partook in this health benefit event. The participants exceeded expectations, demonstrating a growing interest in yoga and holistic well-being. In addition to the attendees present in person, several more joined the session virtually. Bay Area's SELF team aims to expand the reach of this event, envisioning larger-scale participation.

Upcoming Events

- July 8, 2023: Sewa Serve @ Tri-Valley Haven Food Pantry | Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/SVzLv99Lc5MiHoqs5>
- Jul 11, 2023 - to Aug 3, 2023: Introduction to Competitive Math | 8 sessions schedule d | Location Virtual
- July 15, 2023: Sewa Serve @ Tracy Interfaith Ministries | Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/3MfKcyTVw6o9rjtZ9>
- July 22, 2023: Sewa Serve @ Second Harvest of the Greater Valley | Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/dEg5A6D9GdHc3qTq7>

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