

Bay Area Sewa International Marks a Milestone: Donates Supplies Worth \$1 Million



Bay Area volunteers getting ready to conduct a Food Drive on August 29, 2020 in Oroville, CA

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Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Families & Friends,

We are into the eighth month of the pandemic, and we are still not out of the woods, so to speak. We will have to keep wearing our masks when we go out, we will have to keep physical distance (please do not call it social distance), we need to wash our hands regularly, we need to avoid crowded places, we need to make doubly sure when we go to get our hair cut, our teeth cleaned, our blood pressure taken, and we do need to curb our tendency to hop in the car and go shopping simply because we have "cabin fever". Let us keep doing these things for at least another three months, by which time, I hope, we will have a vaccine that is available to us all, and that we can get some respite from this pandemic.

While this pandemic has forced us to limit our activities, one positive outcome has been that we have seen a remarkable improvement in the environment pollution. We see more birds in our yard, the air seems fresher, and the rivers have become cleaner.

I know that some of you may have already voted as I write this, and some of you who have decided to wait till November 3 to cast your vote. Whatever our individual choices are and whatever our reasons for our choice,

please let us keep in that we in Sewa will carry on our work based on the time-tested and fundamental principles of life, and will not swerve from our duty whoever may be in office. Let us act out of principle and let us keep at a distance the predilections and foibles of individual politicians and party politics.

It is soon going to be a new festival season, and Diwali/Deepawali is round the corner – November 14. Deepawali is celebrated on the darkest night by lighting lamps signifying there is hope and reason to celebrate even during the most difficult situations. Let us take the inspiration from the lamp of Deepawali, emulate its quality to pursue higher goals, bring light into lives of others by serving the community with renewed vigor.

I pray that Deepawali will usher in a new era with a new ray of hope, a new beginning, and that the world will begin to mend after this trying, tumultuous year. I wish you all a Very Happy Diwali/Deepawali.

Keep safe. Be joyful.

Sincerely,

Ashwani Garg

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Vice President (Administration)



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The Bay Area Chapter has been diligently and aggressively responding to the coronavirus pandemic since early March, and has served approximately 20,000 families across Northern California by distributing essential supplies such as fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, and groceries valued around one million dollars, and given away \$300,000 to 300 families affected by the pandemic.

The Bay Area volunteers have distributed more than 200,000 pounds of essential items to vulnerable populations by organizing donation drives and give-away events in San Jose, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Hayward, Livermore, Concord, Oroville, and Santa Cruz. Over the past six months, 90 Sewa volunteers have spent 15,000 hours serving people affected by the pandemic and California wildfires.

“Our volunteers have been working hard to support and help families across the Bay Area that have suffered innumerable losses through the recent unforeseen events. Many of the families being helped have been hit doubly hard: quite a few are currently living in their cars or in tents because their homes were destroyed in the wildfire that hit the area hard in November 2018, and now, to make matters even worse, many have lost their jobs because of the pandemic,” said Sewa International Bay Area Chapter Coordinator, Guru Prasad.

Providing details of the help Sewa International has provided, Guruprasad said, “food, essential supplies, and monetary donations have been distributed to individuals of all ages and ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. About 42 percent of it has been given to low-income families, 25 percent to the homeless, 12 percent to seniors, 10 percent to wildfire victims, five percent each to poor children and first responders such as firefighters”.

Food, essential supplies, and monetary donations have been distributed to individuals of all ages and backgrounds. Since the start of the pandemic, the Bay Area Chapter has donated close to 100,000 KN95, N95, surgical masks, FEMA masks, and face shields to beneficiary institutes including the United States Postal Service, Valley Medical Center, Kaiser Permanente, San Ramon Police Department, City of Sunnyvale, and the City of Cupertino, San Quentin State Prison, and many others. The Bay Area Chapter has also played an instrumental role in helping stranded passengers and students.

Northern California fire victims' relief work: The Bay Area Chapter has been instrumental in distributing food and essential items to victims of the fire who are now sheltered in evacuation centers since the start of lightning fires in August. Distributions were made at the following shelters: Salvation Army shelters, Motel 6, Comfort Inn in Vallero Butano Canyon Fires, Half Moon Bay, and around Santa Cruz and Pescadero, Napa Valley, Vallejo. Other donation events planned include the distribution of medicines, batteries, food, sleeping bags, and household essentials to families affected by recent lightning fires.

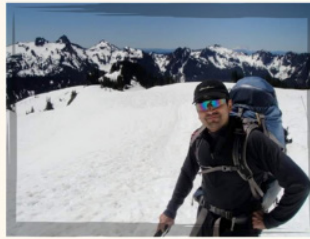
USA Sewa Dharma Coalition Report

COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us, rich and poor countries, the developed and the developing, and wrought much havoc on individual lives. Year 2020 will be remembered as the year that changed our world in profound ways. However, 2020 will also be remembered for bringing people and organizations together to respond to this global threat. Sewa International USA was one of the organizations that was first off the blocks to begin responding to the pandemic globally.. Many other organizations also rose to the challenge. Sewa International USA is compiling the efforts of all the organizations into a digital report. The report will offer the thumbnail sketches of organizations that have worked with us at the local, regional, national, and international levels, contributing money, time, volunteers and resources to the collective Sewa bucket. The Sewa Dharma Coalition Report will be released soon.

Atlanta Chapter Launches "Know Your Healthy SELF" Program



Srikanth Gundavarapu,
President Sewa Atlanta



Dr. Prasad Garimella,
Vice President Sewa Atlanta

Launch of Know Your Healthy S.E.L.F Guest Speakers

Andrea Velasquez

Paralympic swimmer Olympic
Champion

Dr. Jagdish Sheth

Sewa Advisor & world renowned
marketing advisor

Dr. Sreeni Gangasani

Georgia Physicians of Indian
Origin

Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda

President of the AAPI

Contact for more Details: Vikas Arora: 678-576-7864

Sunday October 25th 2:00pm EDT



Scan for
Zoom Meeting

Phone: (646) 558-8656
Meeting ID: 4043040563#
Password: 2020

In a webinar hosted by the Atlanta Chapter on Sunday, October 25, which was attended by about 90 people, it was announced by Srikanth Gundavarapu that what started as a small group activity during the early part of the coronavirus pandemic had grown to become the "Know Your Healthy SELF" program, which they planned to share with at least ten other Sewa chapters soon.

Greeting the attendees on the auspicious day of Vijayadashami amidst the Dasara Festival, Gundavarapu said that a few friends initially began to get together for some exercise and sharing ideas on healthy living, and soon family members, colleagues, and friends joined and doctors pitched in to advise and guide the group.

The webinar was addressed by Dr. Prasad Garimella, Vice President of Sewa Atlanta, and Pulmonary, Critical care and sleep Medicine specialist; Dr. Jagdish Sheth, Professor of Marketing at Emory University and an advisor to Sewa Atlanta; Andrea Velasquez, Paralympic Swimmer and Olympic Champion; Dr. Sreeni Gangasani, Cardiologist, and Member, Board of Trustees, American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI); and Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda, Gastroenterologist, and President of AAPI.

Dr. Garimella explained briefly the four aspects of the SELF program -- Sleep, Exercise, Living in the Present, and Food – and how they all contribute to a holistic approach to life and to healthy living. A healthy amount of sleep each night, avoiding distracting messages and high-intensity light before going to sleep, exercising regularly, living in the present and focusing on positives, and eating healthy food is the combination that will add both to the quality of life and longevity, he said. Prof. Sheth, the Charles H. Kellstadt Chair in Marketing at the Goizueta Business School of Emory University, and busy and engaged as ever at the age of 82, shared his life experiences briefly and told the audience that without a clear purpose in life and being engaged and active would lead to disease and unhappiness.

Andrea Lucia Velasquez de Luca, originally from Panama, who had represented her country in Taekwondo but who suffered a stroke as a teenager, took to swimming, and shared her thoughts about overcoming disability, working with a purpose, and achieving one's dreams. She has said that "when I faced the challenge of having a disability and wanting to do sports again, at the beginning it was hard because I was mad with myself and the entire world. When I learnt that Para swimming existed, I was born again. I feel alive when I swim. I feel like I don't have any limits in the water."

Dr. Gangasani and Dr. Jonnalagadda reiterated the importance of the four aspects of "SELF" and complimented the Sewa Atlanta team for their initiative, for bringing awareness about health and the healthy pursuit of life, and expressed willingness to share their expertise and support for "Know Your Healthy SELF" program.

Sewa International President Among 35 to Win New York Life's "Love Takes Action" Award worth \$ 50,000



It was this past May when Ramesh Cherivirala of Houston, a Sewa supporter who is a Registered Representative for NYLIFE Securities and a Licensed Agent of New York Life Insurance Company, proposed that Arun Kankani, President of Sewa International, be one of the applicants for New York Life's "Love Takes Action" award. Thirty-five applicants for the award would each receive a \$50,000 grant. This initiative of New York Life was announced as part of their 175th anniversary celebrations. The "Love Takes Action" initiative was also in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each selected nonprofit, represented through their volunteer/worker of choice, would receive a \$50,000 grant from the "Love Takes Action Awards Fund" administered by The New York Community Trust.

The Awards Fund invited both part-time and full-time employees and agents of New York Life to nominate "extraordinary individuals in their communities who are 'good at life', embody the value of selfless love, and are serving their communities in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic". The nominees would be recognized for their community service, and in turn the winners would select a nonprofit to be the recipient of the Love Takes Action grant award. The 35 community members would be recognized for "agápē" – selfless action/love – which indeed is the embodiment of the spirit in which Sewa volunteers work. Sewa International will be using the award money to help the underserved community in Harris County, Texas, by providing food kits, distributing personal protective equipment (masks), hand sanitizers, and offering education and edutainment support to schoolchildren.

On September 24, Sewa International received notification from Kerry McCarthy, Vice President for Philanthropic Initiatives, The New York Community Trust, that Arun Kankani/Sewa International was one of the 35 winners from among 130 applicants. "This is both exciting and humbling," Arun Kankani said. "We take the principle of selfless action seriously, and our volunteers embody the spirit of nishkama karma (working without seeking the fruits thereof). This award is a recognition of the spirit of our volunteers. I am just the humble, formal recipient. I thank New York Life for recognizing the work we do and for the spirit in which we do our work". Sandeep Khadkekar, Vice President, Marketing and Fund Development, Sewa International, said: "The supporters of Sewa International know the work we do, and the spirit in which we do it. Our thanks to Ramesh Cherivirala for taking the time and the initiative to nominate Arun Kankani for this award. In the midst of a very challenging year it is satisfying to know that our people and our work are being recognized by the public."

Upcoming Events

Dec 19, 2020 : Annual Gala Dinner | Hotel Twelve Midtown, 361 17th Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30063

Sewa International

P.O.Box 820867
Houston, TX 77282-0867

(708) 872-7392
info@sewausea.org
www.sewausea.org



Editorial Team: Vidyasagar Tontalapur, Denver, CO (Director, Communications), Inchara Kumar & Shreya (Interns),
Consultant: Prof. Ramesh Rao

