

Kailash Kher's Online Concert to Raise Funds for Sewa's COVID-19 Relief Work



Houston, TX (May 14, 2020). Sewa International and the Association of Indian Physicians of Northern Ohio (AIPNO) have partnered to organize a live concert – to be streamed online -- by well-known spiritual singer Kailash Kher on Saturday, May 16. The concert will help raise funds for COVID-19 relief efforts. This concert is dedicated to “Front line and Healthcare Workers” who are working day and night to keep the country safe against COVID-19.

Kailash Kher, a playback singer from India is a winner of the “Padma Shri” award, one of the top civilian honors given by the Government of India, for his achievements in the field of music.

Contd. on Page 2

Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Families & Friends,

The learning all of us are undergoing -- on a personal, social, and professional level -- will give a new meaning to the idiom “hindsight is 2020”!

The widespread affliction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the USA in the last couple of months is taking its toll on all communities. At the Disaster Relief wing of Sewa International, we have our work cut out. These pertinent questions keep our minds busy and define our actions: what can we do? How can we alleviate the suffering? How far can we spread our efforts in combating COVID-19? I am highly indebted to and immensely proud of you all -- my 3000+ fellow Sewa volunteers -- as you are leaving no stone unturned across all of our forty-three chapters for helping out with the response.

Sewa's multi-pronged response to COVID-19 includes at least a dozen major initiatives, from activating helplines to supplying Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); from supporting stranded international students to providing

Case Management for individuals and families requiring long term assistance; from conducting webinars on health, wellness, lifestyle, and employment issues to assisting vulnerable people by delivering essentials; from mask-making at home to starting the first national plasma registry; and from starting the “Neighborhood Sewa” initiative to working with over 5,300 women physicians and health professionals for rendering effective and fast assistance to Covid-19 patients.

The unprecedented and troubled times have led the Disaster Relief wing to come up with innovative approaches to tackle the problems at hand. I am thankful to the unwavering support and resolve of the volunteers, patrons and partners in combating COVID – 19. True to our motto, Together, We Serve Better!

Sincerely,



Achalesh Amar
Director, Disaster Relief



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He likes to call himself a mystical nomad and his music is influenced by Indian folk music. Kher says he was born into the world of NirgunSangeet and his childhood was filled with music and compositions from PanditMeher Singh Kher (his father) and teachers from India's famed spiritual and music tradition such as Kabir Das, Guru Nanak, Ravi Das and Guru Goraknath.

The event is scheduled from 1 to 2 PM EST on May 16 and hosted as a Facebook Live event on the Sewa Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/sewainternationalusa/>). Sewa is planning to pitch five COVID-19 specific projects during the fundraiser: Emotional Wellbeing, Mental and Spiritual Health; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for First Responders & Healthcare Workers; Food & Support to the Vulnerable; and COVID-19 General Relief Efforts.

More than 2500 Sewa International volunteers from 43 chapters are working in 22 metro areas across the country to provide relief to the community beleaguered by the COVID-19 pandemic. To help the frontline workers, Sewa has distributed 300,000 N95, KN95 and surgical masks so far. Supported by 275 community organizations Sewa is running eight helplines to provide non-medical help. Sewa's online COVID Plasma Registry has 75 registered donors and 30 recipients. Four matches have been performed until now by the registry.

Arun Kankani Blogs for Indiaspora



Indiaspora, an Indian-American non-profit organization, was founded in 2012 "to unite the professionally, geographically and religiously diverse Indian diaspora community toward collective action worldwide". Observing and appreciating the work Sewa had initiated in responding to the COVID-19 epidemic, the founder, MR Rangaswami, invited ArunKankani, Sewa's Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, to submit a blog to be featured on the Indiaspora website.

In his blog post, early April, ArunKankani highlighted the fact that Sewa volunteers "across the 43 Sewa chapters in the USA... have been able to provide much needed services to the community..." and "in less than two weeks, the whole organization was working together effectively in multiple cities across the country".

Indiaspora launched its own campaign - "ChaloGive" -- on April 10 to help communities both in the US and India fight the pandemic, raising \$500,000 immediately: "Sixteen million people are out of work in the U.S., and there's a horrific migrant worker crisis in India with millions of people lacking food, shelter, and health care. Our founders' circle members said 'we have to do something'," MR Rangaswami told the media, and we at Sewa acknowledge that work of other community organizations in this time of crisis and desperate need is imperative if we are to respond effectively and get past the challenges posed worldwide by this pandemic.

Houston Chapter Steps Up to the Plate: Distributes 30,000 Masks



India's Consul General in Houston, Aseem Mahajan (second from right), and Councilwoman Martha Castex-Tatum (fourth from right), were present when protective gear was distributed to San Jacinto Sheriff officials.

One of the greatest challenges frontline workers and doctors have faced during this pandemic has been the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE). For a variety of reasons, the United States, which is usually the best prepared for disasters, has found itself wanting in meeting some of these basic requirements. Many organizations around the country have stepped in to do their best to help the doctors, nurses, medical staff and first responders, and Sewa International's chapters across the country have stepped up to the plate to do their best.

Sewa's Houston Chapter donated 30,000 N95, KN95 and 3ply masks and 20,000 ounces of hand sanitizer on Saturday, April 25 to first responders such as healthcare workers, police officers, fire fighters, and hospital staff in an invitation-only drive-through event as part of its COVID-19 relief efforts. The PPE distribution drive was from 11 am but vehicles started lining up from 9 am itself, stretching for more than half-a-mile long in two lanes by the time distribution started at 11 am, indicating the dire need of PPE's in the Houston area.

Dr Randeep Suneja, one of the doctors who acknowledged this effort, said, "Thanks to Sewa International for providing free masks and sanitizers to physicians in the Houston area including our practice. Sewa is doing an incredible job! Keep up the good work!" Amity Home Health, a Houston area home health agency also appreciated Sewa's efforts, saying, "We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Sewa International USA. Kudos to your humanitarian efforts and tireless volunteers who helped make this distribution a reality. Thank you!" "Not all angels have wings. Thank you Sewa International," said Health Choice Clinic personnel on their social media site.

"It is our mission to support people on the frontline in our fight against COVID-19 pandemic. Our physicians, healthcare workers, the fire fighters and police officers are putting their lives on the line to protect our country and we thank them," said Sewa International Houston Chapter President Gitesh Desai.

Sewa distributed the protective gear to about 100 local agencies including county officials and the Sheriff's Department. About 20 volunteers took part in the drive and a few key donors made this drive possible. Sewa is planning to continue this drive every week until the situation improves.

India's Consul General in Houston Aseem Mahajan, Houston City Council Members, Councilwoman Martha Castex-Tatum from District K, and Councilman Edward Pollard from District J were present during the drive.

Bay Area Chapter Reaches Out: Distributes 28,000 Masks



Sewa International's Bay Area Chapter volunteers ready with masks and other personal protection items to distribute to COVID-19 first responders on Sunday, May 3 in Milpitas, California.

Crises offer opportunities to do good, and those who fail to respond to crises leave their “life-ledger” incomplete. Sewa volunteers have risen to the call, understood the nature of the coronavirus pandemic, and have been working day and night to make a difference. So it was that the Bay Area Chapter donated 28,000 surgical, N95, and KN95 masks to first responders such as healthcare workers, police officers, fire fighters, and hospital staff on May 3, along with distributing 1500 meals to families in need in an invitation-only drive-through event as part of its COVID-19 relief efforts.

“We pledge to support the healthcare workers, firefighters, police officers, and many others who are working hard to make our community COVID-19 free. Sewa has committed to provide these front-line workers with the personal protection gear (PPE) they need to stay safe,” said Sewa’s Bay Area Chapter President Jayant Somani.

San Mateo Medical Center, Oakland Children’s Hospital, City of Sunnyvale, City of Cupertino, and the Mountain View Police Department were a few of the 20 agencies that took part in the drive. Mayor of Cupertino Steven Scharf, Mayor of Sunnyvale Larry Klein, San Mateo Medical Center CEO John Jurro, and the City Manager for the City of San Mateo Drew Corbett were present during the drive.

“I appreciate Sewa for handing out masks and food to organizations and people in our community who really

Contd. on Page 5

Bay Area Chapter Reaches Out: Distributes 28,000 Masks



need it. I appreciate everything they're doing around the bay and around the world," said Larry Klein, Mayor of the City of Sunnyvale. "All the cloth masks Sewa donated today will be delivered to our vulnerable senior population who are not able to get their own masks right now. They are helping serve a tremendous need in our community, and, I thank Sewa for its generosity during this difficult time," said Drew Corbett, City Manager for the City of San Mateo.

Sewa volunteers also distributed over 1500 food packets and meals to the Oakland and Mountain View homeless communities, Fremont families in need, the Muslim Community Center of Pleasanton, the Alcosta Senior Center in Livermore, and many others. "Sewa and the Mountain View Police Department have been partnering to help our homeless population get the food that they need," said Police Sergeant Wahed Magee with the City of Mountain View.

The Masks We Make & The Care We Take

Sewa International, through its thousands of volunteers world-wide, has reached out to millions of people during the Coronavirus pandemic delivering much needed personal protective equipment, food and medicines, and offer advice and help to those who have been left stranded, alone, or vulnerable. Since March 11, Sewa has reached out to 150+ community organizations, raised more than \$500,000 for relief work, and engaged more than 3000 volunteers in COVID-19 relief projects. One of the relief projects that has picked up a lot of steam is Sewa's "Mission Mask Making" project, which has become a huge success thanks to more than 500 volunteers across the US who have been spending their 'in-shelter' time supporting local hospitals and frontline workers fighting the pandemic. Sewa volunteers, especially women with sewing skills who have taken up this project with a gusto, have managed to produce over 20,000 masks in the span of just three weeks. Other volunteers donate cloth and sewing machines to mask-making volunteers and distribute masks to nearby hospitals. Instructional videos and PowerPoint slides on how to sew the masks have been released by Gajanan Dhapodkar, a professional fashion designer and instructor, and his team. Currently, these videos are in the process of being translated into Hindi and Nepali by Shiv Mishra to share the information on mask-making to other countries.

In India, Sewa International's *Task4Mask* project has promoted the importance of wearing masks in public. Sewa has raised funds to help women who are making OPSCA-approved masks earn wages to support their families. Women coming forward during these difficult times to serve their community have become the backbone of support earning money for their families who are dependent on daily wages. Every mask sold through *Task4Mask* will go to support the families of these women.

Sewa International's Kutch (Gujarat) team has produced over 15,000 masks thanks to 15 women trainees and have serviced the 12,000-mask request from Hyderabad. With the surge in demand for masks, they are receiving more requests across the country. More than 2,000 masks have been distributed to a variety of government institutions, post offices, and banks who have been providing essential services. Sewa volunteers who are actively working in Alipurduar, West Bengal, and North Bengal regions have distributed more than 8,000 masks in rural areas and shanty towns.

Sewa's *Mission Mask Making* project strengthens the cohesiveness of our community as hundreds of volunteers serve as a support system for the wellbeing of humanity in these challenging times.

Meals, Masks, Food Kits: Sewa Volunteers Provide Relief Around the World

Sewa International volunteers are involved in COVID-19 relief operations in many countries on different continents. Their work ranges from helping stranded students and senior citizens with food, groceries, and medical supplies to conducting informative webinars, and from distributing masks to the frontline workers to feeding the homeless.

Here we provide a round-up of various Sewa activities around the world:

India: Sewa volunteers in Delhi, Uttarakhand, Telangana, Karnataka, West Bengal, Gujarat, Tripura, and other states are distributing Stay@Home food kits that contain groceries, vegetables and other essentials to migrant labors, tea estate workers, and poor families. In Hyderabad, a community kitchen set up by Sewa has served meals to more than 30,000 families and food to more than 1,200 stray cows and dogs.

In Bangalore, Sewa volunteers have been serving freshly cooked meals and distributing food packets to the migrant workers and the poor in the south of Bengaluru served 1600 meals & 400 food packets.. They are also honoring Corona Warriors -- people who have been fighting to stop the pandemic and helping the poor and needy -- in these food distribution events. Hundreds of people are served food and Sewa has teamed up with a few physicians to spread awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic during these events. Sewa volunteers are also conducting online Sanskrit Speaking classes in partnership with Samskita Bharati to engage people during the lockdown.

In Uttarakhand, Sewa has provided its medical support vehicle and support staff to the state government and in Karnataka more than 3,000 families are being supplied with their daily need of milk packets. In West Bengal, Gujarat, and Tripura thousands of masks have been stitched at home and distributed.

United Kingdom: Sewa volunteers in the United Kingdom have launched three programs -- *Help Your Neighbor, Replenish the Food Banks, and Care for the Carer*. About 2,400 Sewa volunteers are involved in COVID-19 work and till date 6,000 meals have been served, 268+ accommodations offered, and 36 hospitals and 24 food banks have been replenished with essential supplies.

Trinidad & Tobago: Sewa International is involved in extensive awareness-building campaigns through social media and webinars. Free live streaming of yoga classes is helping people reduce stress. More than 70 volunteers are involved in making masks and 7,000 home-made masks have been distributed so far.

Australia: Sewa volunteers have set up helplines to provide counselling, offer living accommodation to the stranded and needy, and extended support to the people who have lost jobs. They are also serving food packets and essential medicines to the needy at their door steps and spreading awareness about COVID-19.

Canada: Responding to an appeal by the Indian Consulate in Canada, Sewa released \$5000 to help international students. Sewa is providing students with guidance and counselling, groceries, freshly cooked meals, and over-the-counter medication. Sewa is also connecting them with volunteers from their respective cities for local support.

Sewa International

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