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Sewa International

Service to Humanity is Service to the Divine

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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OneStar Foundation Spotlights Sewa’s AmeriCorps Program

Houston, TX (June 13, 2022): Sewa International Houston Chapter’s AmeriCorps program has been featured in the Partner Spotlight section by OneStar Foundation in its 2021 annual report. The recently released report with the theme “Rising to the Challenge” carried a detailed report on Sewa’s AmeriCorps program celebrating resilience of Texas communities addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Uri. The OneStar Foundation administers the AmeriCorps program in Texas.



Sewa AmeriCorps Volunteers at work in Rosharon, TX. Sewa helped rebuild the Rosharon community after Hurricane Harvey hit Houston in 2017.

The president & CEO of OneStar Foundation, Chris Bugbee, has sent Sewa a special note of appreciation. The annual report mentions that “As a haven for immigrants and refugees from around the globe, the city of Houston has experienced tremendous growth, which has translated into a steady increase in demand for Sewa’s services, especially in the areas of disaster relief and education. Many of the families served by Sewa are living at or below the poverty line and lack the resources and English language proficiency to thrive.”

SEWA INTERNATIONAL Sewa International serves humanity in distress, aid local communities, run developmental projects for the underserved, and assist people in transformational change.

and local expertise of its new AmeriCorps members, Sewa was able to promote readiness more effectively with messaging targeted to the most vulnerable populations.

Throughout the year, Sewa AmeriCorps members organized workshops and health fairs to address vaccine hesitancy and promoted mobile vaccination clinics across southwest Houston. Ahead of the record-breaking freeze in February 2021, the cohort provided Spanish-language information sessions to people who had never dealt with extreme cold, and in the winter storm's aftermath, they helped neighbors complete needs assessments and partnered with schools to provide resources for families. By the end of their first year, Sewa AmeriCorps members had assisted nearly 700

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 —Carole Juárez, AmeriCorps Program Coordinator, Sewa Houston

of Sewa AmeriCorps members has had a decided impact in the classroom, with 90 percent of students served showing academic improvement and 81 percent demonstrating increased attendance and class engagement. In addition to working with youth, AmeriCorps members also work with the families of students to provide a more stable home environment.

"It has been such a blessing to support students and administrators and teachers right now as we're all trying to figure out what education looks like," said Nathan Murphy, an AmeriCorps member serving at O'Donnell Middle School. "I get to be someone that they can look to for help, not only as they try to figure out how to maneuver through the lesson and assignments, but also as they place themselves in

me to not only develop my own career interests and prepare myself for the next stage of my education.

A page from the OneStar Foundation 2021 Annual Report featuring Sewa AmeriCorps volunteers in Houston.

The report quoted, Carole Juárez, Sewa AmeriCorps Program Manager, on how Sewa and OneStar work in tandem to serve the people in need. “Leveraging volunteer service showed us what we were capable of as an organization, but the demands exacted on our force of affiliate volunteers put our aspirations for greater capacity in sharp relief. We saw a synergy between AmeriCorps’ culture of ‘getting things done’ and Sewa’s core belief that ‘together we serve better.’ Partnering with OneStar offered the key to Sewa’s growth in Texas.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Sewa AmeriCorps team worked on disaster preparedness. “By tapping into the broad reach and local expertise of its new AmeriCorps members, Sewa was able to promote readiness more effectively with messaging targeted to the most vulnerable populations. Sewa AmeriCorps members organized workshops and health fairs to address vaccine hesitancy and promoted mobile vaccination clinics. Ahead of the record-breaking freeze in February 2021, the team provided Spanish-language information sessions to people who had never dealt with extreme cold. By the end of their first year, Sewa AmeriCorps members had assisted nearly 700 individuals in increasing their disaster readiness. They were also instrumental in recruiting and managing volunteers for Sewa’s food drives, which each served more than a thousand families,” the report said.

Lauding the impact of Sewa’s work on education, the report stated, “through the Alief Independent School District and the organization’s after-school academies, Sewa engaged 12 AmeriCorps members to provide individualized support to students— many who are new immigrants facing language and acculturation barriers. The focused attention of Sewa AmeriCorps members has had a decided impact in the classroom, with 90 percent of students served showing academic improvement and 81 percent demonstrating

increased attendance and class engagement. In addition to working with youth, AmeriCorps members also work with the families of students to provide a more stable home environment.”

“With funding from OneStar Foundation, we started Sewa AmeriCorps program in fall 2020 with 18 members. The program has been a phenomenal success and Sewa is able to serve the neediest people of Houston by promoting vaccine awareness and distributing groceries, milk and other essentials during the pandemic. Sewa is now expanding this program by adding another 42 additional members to the team,” Arun Kankani, President, Sewa International said.

In the OneStar report, Nathan Murphy, a volunteer at O’Donnell Middle School and Samiksha Deme, a disaster preparedness outreach specialist, voiced their happiness about being part of the Sewa AmeriCorps team and what they have been able to accomplish. “It has been such a blessing to support students and administrators and teachers right now as we’re all trying to figure out what education looks like,” said Nathan. “We’ve had such a great opportunity to meet different communities of Houston. “Being a part of the team has been such a great way for me to not only develop my own career interests and prepare myself for the next stage of my education, but also has taught me so much about what service means and how to make an impact in both small and big communities.” Samiksha said.

About Sewa International

Sewa International (www.sewausa.org) is a 501 (c)(3) Hindu faith-based charitable nonprofit that works in the areas of disaster recovery, education, and development. Sewa has 43 Chapters across the USA and serves regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin. Sewa serves humanity in distress, aid local communities, run developmental projects for the underserved, and assist people in transformational change.

