



# SEWA-DC NEWSLETTER

Sewa International—DC Chapter: Together We Serve Better



<https://www.sewausea.org/Washington>

May 2024

## Inspiring Talk with Guest Speaker Shavini Fernando



April was a month bustling with activities for the Sewa DC chapter. Each of the Design to Lead (DTL) teams comprised of High School Students who presented their updates during Sewa's in-person monthly meeting on April 14th. The teams have just concluded their Phase 1 work and have moved to Phase 2 in their DTL program. In Phase 1, each team picked a local social need (or a problem) to address, Phase 2 will be all about coming up with possible solutions to address this need. While Team 1 has decided to focus on food insecurity, Team 2 is focused on the mental health crisis, and Team 3 wants to expand STEM education within local schools. Let us wish the best of luck to all the teams as they embark on their Phase 2 journey!



There was also an update from the Youth for Sewa (YFS) board. The board members shared information about the new programs they will introduce this year. They will be holding tree plantations, sandwich drives, Adopt a Highway initiative, summer tutoring, and more!

This month's guest speaker was Ms. Shavini Fernando, CEO and Founder of OxiWear. Ms. Fernando shared an incredible story about her life, her diagnosis of PH (Pulmonary Hypertension), and how her disease helped her create OxiWear. This device is designed to measure your oxygen levels. Her innovation of OxiWear will not only help save lives, it reflects what customers want and how they want to use things. She mentioned she didn't want to make her device look like a cochlear transplant but something more sporty that she and her customers can wear freely without being bullied or having any discomfort.

## Volunteer Spotlight



### Sai Sharanya Bhagavathula

Sai Sharanya started volunteering as a board member of Sewa International Washington DC chapter's Youth for Sewa in 2022 as a junior at Chantilly High School. She put an abundance of effort into organizing and hosting an oratorical and speech contest encouraging middle and high schoolers to make their voices heard. She participated in a number of drives to collect personal hygiene items and other Sewa events with dedication and enthusiasm. In high school, she was a mentor in DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America), Voice lead in her Show Choir, and President of the Bhangra club. Apart from volunteering for Sewa, she has done service for Asha Jyothi organization as well. Furthering her interests in business and investment, she participated in stock and pitch competitions relentlessly. Sharanya was the only girl in the top 25 traders out of 2,000 traders who participated in the stock competition for Steven's Business School. She was also an ambassador for the Foundation for Teaching Economics, the same organization where she attended precollegiate programs at the University of Chicago and Cornell. She also pursues her passion in singing and she has performed as Lord Krishna in musicals on several prestigious stages across the nation. Sai also teaches music to children in her neighborhood out of pure love for music, children, teaching, and above all, service.



## Sewa DC Holi Event

On Sunday, April 21, 2024, the DC Chapter of Sewa International hosted a fantastic Holi event complete with delicious food, colors, games, and an incredibly fun time. Around 120 people attended, including members of Sewa and others that came to know about the event through friends and family. At the end of the event, participants were handed out saplings. If you attended, please share your photos with us at [dc@sewausea.org](mailto:dc@sewausea.org). We look forward to holding similar events in coming years, as well as our next 9/11 environmental events!

## 9/11 Day of Service event: Park Cleanup and Invasive Plants Removal



About 57 enthusiastic and diverse volunteers including Sewa DC LEADs, Sewa friends & family, and Interfaith community members participated in the event on a beautiful Saturday morning. Volunteers worked along the walking trail that meandered through the park. Taylor Beach and her colleague Kelley Wagner from FairfaxReleaf ([trees@fairfaxreleaf.org](mailto:trees@fairfaxreleaf.org)) educated the volunteers on identifying the invasive plants and understanding their impact on the local ecosystem.



## Get Involved

### Volunteer

Sewa DC Chapter invites enthusiastic individuals to come forward and join us in volunteering for **community services, food donation (our Annapurna program), Tree plantation drives, and Adopt-a-Highway programs.**

### LEAD Program

The LEAD program is tailored to inspire and empower high school students, fostering essential leadership skills and a profound sense of social responsibility. Our mission is to nurture socially conscious leaders who not only excel academically but also actively contribute to creating a better world. We always need mentors for this program.

### Donate

Please click on the **DONATE NOW** link to make your donation.

## Upcoming EVENTS

**May 12th 10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon:**

Sewa DC Chapter, Monthly LEAD In-Person Meeting @ 7900 West Park Dr, Tysons, VA 22102.

**May 18th 10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon :**

Highway Clean-up - Fairfax County Parkway; gather @ 4810 Pleasant Ridge Rd, Fairfax, VA 22030.

**May 25th 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM :** Sandwich

Making for Reston Shelter @ 4556 Morningdale Dr Chantilly, VA 20151.

## About Sewa

Sewa International is a Hindu faith-based, humanitarian, nonprofit service organization registered under Internal Revenue Code 501 (c) (3). Founded in 2003, Sewa serves humanity irrespective of race, color, religion, gender or nationality. We specialize in disaster relief and rehabilitation. Our development programs focus on family services; child, tribal and refugee welfare; women empowerment; health; and education. Visit <https://www.sewausea.org> for more information.

For more DC chapter updates, visit our website and social media pages below



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