

NEWSLETTER

Chapter: Central Jersey

May 2022

Sewa International's 'SHE' Project - An Update



'SHE' - Sanitation, Hygiene and Empowerment Project for the Girl Child

Sewa International's 'SHE' project for the girl child was conceived to provide sanitation and hygiene facilities for underprivileged girls who belong to vulnerable sections of Indian society. Along with sanitation facilities, the program focuses on menstrual hygiene, education, and empowering women and girl child through skill development workshops.



Social taboo confining young girls and women. Unhygienic menstrual products leading to various health issues.



Chapter Highlights

- ❖ 'SHE' program Update
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Center Highlights

- 'Bag Up NJ' Campaign
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Volunteer Spotlight



Monika Khurana Ji from Bordentown, NJ, has been part of Sewa International Central Jersey Chapter since 2018. Ever since she joined this organization as a parent volunteer, she has always volunteered herself for most activities requiring parents help, be it purchasing items from various stores for the Sewa Meal program, volunteering her home for Meal packing, coat/can drive collection and distribution activities etc. More importantly she spreads awareness about Sewa and brings in many new adult and LEAD volunteers. Outside of Sewa, she does event management and is quite creative in her skills at theme based decoration at various functions. She was born in Delhi, India and is blessed with 2 daughters and a loving husband who are also Sewa volunteers.

Sewa Central Jersey Chapter raised **\$6,000** funds for the 'SHE' program!

These funds were used to conduct eco-friendly menstrual hygiene awareness camps in villages across India. These camps educated women and adolescent girls about women's health and hygiene, and created awareness about menstrual hygiene. They also made them aware about environmental pollution and health hazards associated with disposable sanitary napkins.



1027 underprivileged adolescent girls and women benefited from this program!



Sewa Central Jersey Chapter is further motivated to engage in more outreach programs and fundraising events to continue to make a difference in the lives of underprivileged girls.

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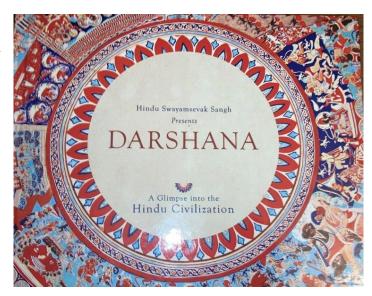
Sewa for 'Darshana' - A Glimpse Into The Hindu Civilization

The first of its kind travel exhibition, "Darshana – A Glimpse into the Hindu Civilization", presenting a colorful overview of Hindu philosophy and practices, was held throughout the US, offering everyone an opportunity to learn about one the oldest civilizations in the world that continues to have a global presence. American Hindu organizations across the country, representing a myriad of Dharmic religions and philosophies, came together to organize the exhibition.

Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh USA (HSS), in conjunction with numerous Hindu organizations including Sewa International USA, initiated this educational project as part of a year-long Hindu Dharma Awareness Campaign.

In April and May of 2022, over 200 events were organized across the country to educate political, civic, educational, and interfaith leaders about Hindu Dharma, or in other words, Hinduism. It provided glimpses into the Hindu way of life for everyone attending.

The exhibition displayed the rich storage of knowledge of ancient Hindu civilizations in areas such as architecture, sciences, mathematics, administration, time keeping, art, and the medical science of Ayurveda. The civilizations had schools and universities, diversity and representation, and established forms of leadership where even women could obtain positions of power and leadership. Many of these aspects of civilization have been adopted by modern societies, albeit centuries later.



The exhibition demonstrated how the knowledge that originated from the Hindu civilization has manifested in all aspects of human endeavors.



Education

Hindu universities were among the oldest in human history, drawing students seeking higher education from across the world. Of these universities, Nalanda and Takshashila were incredibly popular, offering specializations in the STEM fields, arts, and political sciences.

Administration

Mahabharata's Anushasana Parva chapter and the Artha-Shastra by Chanakya are two prominent works on warfare and administration, discussing military, trade and governance techniques that balance people's worldly well-being and spiritual pursuits.



Architecture

Hindu spatial science, or the science of vaastu, can be traced back to the Vedas and involves the disciplines of mathematics, acoustics, astrology, arts, philosophy, and a deep understanding of the environment. This holistic science finds its expression in the architecture of civic buildings and mandirs as well as in expert city planning, the construction of canals, and more.



Hindu Art

Divinity in Vedic philosophy is all-pervading, the representations of life, experience, and beauty are also representations of the Divine. The arts of rhythm, dance, sculpture, painting, warfare, etc. are founded with the intention of giving expression to the Divine and are detailed among 64 kalas, or art forms, in ancient scriptures.



Mathematics

The Vedic Hindu tradition made several key mathematical discoveries, like the concept of zero and the decimal system, and developed algebra, arithmetic, and geometry. This mathematics spread across the world through translation into Arabic, Latin, and eventually contemporary Western thought.

Sciences

The study of nature and the universe through the sciences of biology, metallurgy, physics, and other fields was deeply intertwined with the process of pursuing the Divine. Vedic texts, poetry, architecture, and rituals display a great interest and remarkable development within these sciences.

Calend The stud Juotisho

The study of the Vedas requires a prerequisite understanding of the Vedangas and of Jyotisha, texts which explain timekeeping through a study of the movements of the Sun, Moon, and Earth along with other astronomical phenomena.

Ayurveda

Ayurveda, the Hindu health science as explained several thousand years ago in the Vedas, takes a holistic approach to understanding life by basing diet, medicine, treatments, and practices on an understanding of the flow of energy through the body. The exhibition gave a glimpse of the Hindu sacred texts, temples, festivals, traditions, value systems, spirituality, yoga, meditation, service, and the Dharmic way of living. It also explained the profound meaning of Namaste, symbols such as Om, and the significance of the Bindi.



The Exhibition was created to raise awareness on Hindu thinking, contributions, and common practices. It aimed to clear misconceptions, introduce some key terms, and inspire further research into the rich culture that has found its home in the United States and globally.





Adhering to the Hindu belief of Divine Service, the Central Jersey Chapter volunteers took the opportunity to do 'Sewa' at the 'Darshana' event held at North Brunswick, South Brunswick & Chesterfield in Central Jersey.

LEADs & parents helped with setting up the posters, serving food, conducting craft workshops, drawing beautiful henna tattoos for visitors, managing the parking & various other activities. This was also a wonderful opportunity for the LEADs to learn about our ancient Hindu civilization.

Sewa Environmental Sustainability Effort: Plastic Bags Recycling Drive and 'Bag Up NJ' Campaign

In November 2020, Governor Phil Murphy signed S864, which prohibits the use of single-use plastic and paper bags in all stores and food service businesses statewide. This bill is a significant step to reduce harm and pollution that these products cause to our environment.

"Plastic bags are one of the most problematic forms of garbage, leading to millions of discarded bags that stream annually into our landfills, rivers, and oceans," said Governor Murphy. "With today's historic bill signing, we are addressing the problem of plastic pollution head-on with solutions that will help mitigate climate change and strengthen our environment for future generations."

Sewa Central Jersey, in preparation for the New Jersey ban on single-use plastic bags which went into effect in May 2022, started the Plastic Bags and Film Packaging Recycling Drive in the month of March 2022 and supported the 'Bag Up NJ' awareness campaign from the month of April 2022.

Central Jersey Sewa is happy to announce that the Chapter collected more than **600 pounds** of plastic bags & films since the beginning of the drive in March. Thanks to all LEADs & parents from all the Centers in their efforts in educating & encouraging the residents to

- 1. recycle the plastics
- reduce the plastic usage

The plastic drive initiated by the Chesterfield Center was carried out across all the Centers of the Central Jersey Chapter. The LEADs worked with their local communities, schools, libraries & townships to arrange the drop off of the plastics collected.

The LEADs continued with the Plastics Bags drive into May in an effort to help with environment protection and continuing to bring an awareness to communities at large on maintaining a sustainable lifestyle.

Parents from Somerset, Monroe, West Windsor & Cherry Hill drove all the way to Chesterfield to drop off their plastic collection from the drive carried out by the LEADs across the other Centers.



Chesterfield township had entered a challenge of plastic film recycling put up by Trex, a company that manufactures eco-friendly composite decks from a blend of reclaimed wood and recycled plastic film. The company had announced a free Trex bench to first place winners of this challenge and with the collection done by Central Jersey Sewa the Chesterfield township will be getting a free bench soon!

Though the plastic drive has officially concluded, Central Jersey Sewa Chapter requests everyone to reduce the usage of the plastic bags wherever possible & also, make sure to recycle the used plastics in the right manner.



With the ban into effect in May, stores no longer are using single-use plastic or paper bags, but instead are encouraging all to use reusable grocery bags.

The Central Jersey Chapter is always striving to seek opportunities to better our community! Sewa Monroe Center LEADs took this opportunity to assist as much as possible in the distribution of the reusable grocery bags at a local grocery store.

While distributing the reusable bags, Sewa LEADs also continued with educating the shoppers about the ban on single use plastic and paper bags and the harm that they cause to the environment.

Sewa at OM 5K Run/Walk for Cancer Awareness

On May 15th 2022, LEADs from the Monroe Center went to the 4th annual OM Foundation 5K run and 1 Mile Walk at Thompson Park, Monroe Township. The event was a fundraiser for cancer awareness, and Pediatric Cancer Research at Rutgers.

LEADs had volunteered at different stations, such as the opening booths, T-shirt distribution, water stations, and motivating runners along the track.

Approximately 900+ runners came to the event, and it was overall a great experience for the runners and volunteers for a good cause.



Sewa at Memorial Day Parade



On May 30, 2022, Central Jersey LEADs and parents had the honor of participating in Franklin Township's Memorial Day Parade!

The LEADs first helped with setting up and organizing the event beforehand.

The parade was led by a procession of cars, followed by members of the Sheriff Office as well as the police and fire departments. Our LEADs had the great opportunity of walking in the parade along with veterans and township officials. The event ended with the ceremony of veterans ringing the bell 21 times.

Post the event, the LEADs helped with cleaning up. It was an honor for Sewa Central Jersey to be a part of this amazing parade, and a huge thank you to all the LEADs for helping with the event!

Sewa at Youth Center Inauguration

On May 14th, Somerset, Monroe, and Edison LEADs helped Franklin Township open its new youth center to the community. They helped with the ribbon-cutting ceremony and welcomed the public for over nine hours!

The LEADs were in charge of running a few of the activity clubs such as painting club, creative arts, few fun games, audio-visual media room, and more. LEADs also helped with guiding the public to various activity-rooms, give more details on registration, and they also helped with the setup & cleanup for the entire event.

Thank you to all the LEADs who volunteered long hours to make this program a huge success!!



Sewa Fundraising at 'Savor India' Event



Central Jersey Chapter put up a vendor stall at 'Savor India' event in Middletown, NJ to raise funds for the Sewa International 'Sponsor A Child' program.

This event showcased arts, crafts and the culture of India, and had cultural performances by many dance and music schools.

Central Jersey LEADs sold handmade cards and bracelets at this event just in time for Mother's day. The funds raised will be used to sponsor a child in India.

Sewa Support for Domestic Violence Survivors of Manavi

In partnership with Manavi, an organization in New Brunswick, NJ, our Edison Center Sewa volunteers continued their efforts in addressing the needs of the South Asian women survivors. They helped with the shopping & delivering the groceries and other essential necessities to the needy.



Sewa AttachAvi Autism Foundation Program

Sewa AttachAvi Autism Foundation Program is led by Sewa LEADs from the Central Jersey Chapter. LEADs took the time to hold weekly classes in which children with disabilities or special needs had the chance to socialize and communicate. The LEADs planned many activities that incorporate teaching the children such as singing to build on their communication skills. LEADs enable the children to get more involved and make kids comfortable by teaching verbal and physical activities. It helps the children acclimatize to a classroom environment

⚠ Sewa at Om Sri Sai Balaji Temple



This month May, Sewa Central Jersey Chapter LEADs continued with their work on the ongoing project of building a 3D model of the Om Sri Sai Balaji Temple. For the past 3 months, they have been using materials such as foam boards, balsa wood, and various tools to construct a model of the Balaji temple's exterior.

This project is not only allowing the LEADs to demonstrate their existing skills, but it is also giving them an opportunity to learn new skills, including engineering, architecture, designing, and more!

So far, the team has made great progress with the model. Great job to all the LEADs who are putting in their time, dedication, and efforts into this unique project!

The Balaji Temple Kitchen has a large assortment of appliances needed for serving multiple functions, so the need arose to create an instructions manual for the staff of the temple to enable them to know how to use the appliances correctly.

Sewa LEADs from Monroe Center were assigned to note down all of the appliances, and understand how to use them and subsequently do a write-up on it. This will enable the temple staff to manage the kitchen in an efficient and safe manner during events at the temple.



Sewa for Balaji Temple Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Kalyanam



On May 29th, 2022, the Monroe Balaji Temple organized a religious commencement of God, Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Kalyanam during the TTA convention.

Throughout the day, Sewa LEADs assisted in various activities such as welcoming guests, arranging the stage, distributing religious offerings, seating the guests, taking care of their needs and queries and distributing pamphlets of the shlokas.

The LEADs did a great job and stepped up to carry out every task.

Sewa at Bridgewater Balaji Temple

On May 29th, LEADs from the Somerset and Edison Centers assisted in the setup and execution of a music concert held in the Balaji Temple, Bridgewater.

The purpose of this concert was to raise funds for the North Brunswick Sai Mandir. The LEADs were given the responsibility of ushering the attendees into the auditorium and helping them find their seats. Once all were seated, the LEADs then led the massive activity of packing 200+ meals for all the attendees and further on very responsibly and efficiently helped with the donation collection.



Backyard Produce, Organic Farming, Community Gardening, Trail Cleanup and Reforestation Efforts

Central Jersey Chapter volunteering efforts continue this month of May in farms and community gardens across townships in Central Jersey!



Ramblin' Sol Organic Farm once again provided Cherry Hill and Chesterfield LEADs an opportunity to engage in sustainable agricultural practices.

The farm in Cream Ridge asked Sewa volunteers to help out with activities like seeding, planting, and tilling the soil. This experience allowed LEADs to participate in the agricultural process without having to deal with harmful pesticides and chemicals.

The produce grown here with the help of LEADs provides healthy, sustainable food to the surrounding community and promotes organic farming. LEADs also get the benefit of using a variety of tools to maintain soil quality and ensure the plants' survival.

"Rolling along with sunshine on our backs, calluses on our hands, and Jersey soil at our feet!"



The Sewa Backyard Produce Garden is a new initiative from Central Jersey Sewa LEADs. As part of this program, LEADs are encouraged to grow vegetables in their backyard & donate some portion to the local food banks.

For the past two months this year, the LEADs have been helping out at Ramblin' Sol Farm. Recognizing their efforts, the farm was kind enough to donate about 400 plants which included tomatoes, broccoli, kale, cucumber, eggplant & onion.

About 50 LEADs have signed up for this program & have started vegetable gardens. This is a great opportunity for all the LEADs to apply the gardening skills they learnt from various garden projects.

Monroe Center LEADs continued helping out with gardening at Marlboro Community Garden. Here, LEADs helped remove weeds, move wood, plant trees, and more to benefit the garden. Sifting compost is a common task that LEADs do on a weekly basis. This helps the removal of unwanted materials such as rocks, plastic, etc. Additionally, each week LEADs receive a lesson on gardening from the master gardener, and this month LEADs learnt about rhubarb plant's history, life cycle and its habitat!





In May Edison Center LEADs and adult volunteers helped clean up the KKWC Camp Garden. This camp located in Edison, NJ grows delicious fruits and vegetables.

The LEADs worked hard to make beds for the plants, fill soil, and clean up the garden. The garden activity was a much needed activity as it helps not only promote agriculture, but also helps implement it in the daily life of a teenager.

The Neshaminy Park reforestation effort is a great experience for LEADs, not just for volunteering, but for learning how to plant and grow trees. LEADs were told to clean up weeds and make the area ready for planting at the beginning of spring. After some weeks passed and the weather settled, the trees were ready to be planted. LEADs were given small lessons on how to get the saplings properly planted.

Over a few weeks, more than 700 trees were planted in the area and many more to be done in the ensuing months thus contributing towards a better, fresher, greener environment.





In May Cherry Hill Center LEADs participated in a trail cleanup at Kresson Trails in Cherry Hill. LEADs helped weed the trails and make them wider. This type of maintenance makes it much easier for morning walkers to enjoy the trails as they are cleaner and wider.

The Cherry Hill Center has helped the Cherry Hill Environmental Board with the maintenance of their trails several times over the past year.

Sewa LEADs this month volunteered at The Watershed Institute for nest monitory activity. The institute has been regularly documenting details regarding birds of the area. With numerous nests and species around, Sewa LEADs excitedly joined the task!

The units disperse among the field as they record details about the birds, their nests, number of eggs, family and what the nest looked like. The collected nest monitoring data is then used to create a proper demographic of the birds and their environment by the institute.



Sewa Meals for the homeless and food shelters

In May 2022, Central Jersey Chapter LEADs once again prepared meals for the food shelters and for the homeless.

Chesterfield Center LEADs packed and delivered 150 meals to the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Trenton, which has partnered with Sewa International to feed those in need. The meal for the month included a veggie burrito (Mexican rice, beans, lettuce, cheese), as well as chips and brownies, all of which were cooked/baked by LEADs.

This month, May of 2022, marks the one year anniversary of the Sewa Meal. The Chesterfield Sewa Team started the Sewa Meal program in May of 2021, and since then have cooked and delivered more than 2100 homemade, healthy, and delicious meals. Thank you to the LEADs and parents who helped make this milestone possible!

The meals were generously sponsored by: Lakshmi Chitturi & Nageswara Rao Motammarri Monika & Shashi Khurana Smitha & Krishna Madireddy Shilpa Rathi & Muhul Rathi (State Farm)





On May 14th, and May 21st, the Edison Center LEADs and parent volunteers helped to make food for the Ozaman Food Shelter. The shelter provides food, and housing for homeless families. The LEADs made food at teir homes.

There were a total of 10 leads working to make sure the food was delivered on time, and the program was a success. Together, they helped to make food that helped 26 families. The Ozaman Food Shelter is one of the most important activities throughout the year, and the LEADs are doing an amazing job.

The Edison Center LEADs participated at the Hands of Hope Community Soup Kitchen in Edison, NJ for two Saturdays of the month.

Their activities included sorting donations, packaging food for distribution, and delivering it to the cars of those that came to the soup kitchen. The work the LEADs did helped many families by providing food to them along with other household items.



This month, Somerset Center LEADs made and delivered two meals that each feed 60 people to the United Methodist Church in New Brunswick.

On May 22, the meal consisted of jeera rice, a bean/veggie medley, sandwiches for the kids' meals, and cheese quesadillas. LEADs also made brownies as a special sweet treat!

The May 29th meal included pita bread, methi rice, jeera rice, and chana masala. The kids' meals included sandwiches, apples, chips, and juice boxes.

A huge thank you to all of the LEADs who helped make and deliver these delicious meals for people in need!



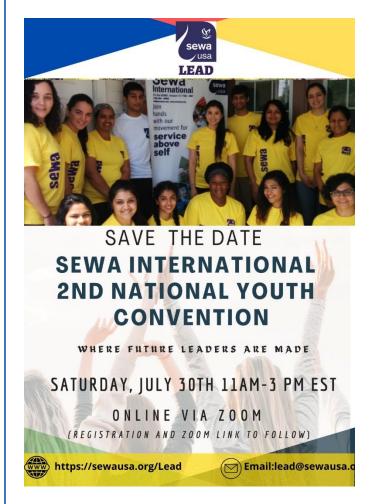


As part of monthly meals preparation, Monroe Center LEADs prepared and delivered 180 hot meal dinners to the United Methodist Church at New Brunswick in the month of May.

LEADs prepared and delivered a variety of meals three times this month. Menu included Black bean burgers, Mac & cheese, Caesar Salad, Granola bars and Grill cheese sandwiches for Kids Meals. Another menu included Vegetable Pulav, Dal Tadka, Pita Bread, Chana Masala, Cookies, Aloo Matar curry and Mango Cake.

A big thank you to LEADs Jabili and Kushal families for sponsoring this month's meals!

Save the Date: Sewa International 2nd National Youth Convention – July 30, 2022!



Sewa International's 2nd Annual National Youth Convention (NYC) will be an online event held this year on Saturday, July 30, 2022 from 11 am to 3 pm est.

The event is to celebrate the success and experience the power of the Sewa Youth – the LEADs and the 'Get Inspired' young adult volunteers.

'LEAD' Sewa's high school youth engagement program is geared towards students from 9th – 12th grade. The program aims at providing a platform for students to interact with community leaders and successful professionals through engaging symposiums. Students are provided with an opportunity to serve and develop leadership skills by networking with community leaders to discover special insights that will help them grow into well rounded citizens.

'Get Inspired' is a college internship program which allows young adults to explore and innovate new ideas geared towards community development.

The 2nd annual National youth convention program will be conducted virtually on Zoom will feature about 800 high school and college students' part of Sewa's youth cohort from across the US.

This year's theme is: Environmental Protection; Conservation or Protection of our Natural Ecosystems.

The purpose of the convention is to provide a platform to present the work done by them throughout the year, interact with each other, get motivated by listening to inspirational speeches, participate in a live panel discussion on the topic of their choice and pass a resolution to protect our environment.

Let's convene to celebrate their success and encourage our future leaders and change makers.

'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' – The World Is One Family Together We Serve Better

Newsletter Team



Raghav Akula Interests: Saxophone, Int'l Relations, Track and Field, Gardening, Physics Favorite Sewa Project: Reforestation



Ishaan Brahma Interests: Baskethall Football Piano Favorite Sewa Project: Franklin Community Center Grand Opening

Interests: Reading, Music, Going to the

Favorite Sewa Project: SEWA Meals



Anushka Dasari Grade: 10 Interests: Dancing, Badminton Favorite Sewa Project: AttachAvi Autism Foundation Holiday Party





Adwita Jagannathan Grade: 8 Interests: Reading, Writing, Singing Favorite Sewa Project: Punarjanm



* Reforestation Sewa Meals Sewa at Temples

Upcoming Events

Dad 5K

Program

Violence Survivors

Garden Tour

Bordentown Green Fair

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2nd National Youth Convention Kiddie Keep Well Summer Camp

'Adopt A Highway' Cleanup American Cancer Society's Run For

AttachAvi Autism Foundation

Manavi - Support for Domestic

Bordentown Historic Society -

Marlboro Summer Fest Colors

Watershed Solstice Trail Run

'Keep My Street Green' Project Backyard Produce Gardening Volunteering at Community Gardens and Farms



Grade: 11 Interests: Music, Tennis, Debate, Sleeping Favorite Sewa Project: Treats for



Akhil Kalepalli Interests: Running Track, Hanging out with my friends Favorite Sewa Project: SEWA Meals



Manavi Gupta

Grade: 11

Nandini Miryala Interests: Music, TV, and Baking Favorite Sewa Project: Beach Cleanup



Sahas Murthy Grade: 9 Interests: Video Games, Helping Community, Tennis Favorite Sewa Project: KKWC Camp



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Chapter



Suhas Murthy Grade: 12 Interests: Basketball Favorite Sewa Project: KKWC Camp



Dharmika Pendyam Grade: 10 Interests: Travel, Music, Psychology Favorite Sewa Project: SEWA Meals



Anjali Pyeddu Grade: 9 Interests: Tennis, Music, Travel Favorite Sewa Project: Marlboro



Shantanu Wad Grade: 9 Interests: Drums, Programming, Tennis Favorite Sewa Project: Watershed Institute Water Day Activity

