

Sewa in Honor and Memory of Fallen Heroes

Memorial Day, a federal holiday observed in the United States on the last Monday of May each year is a day dedicated to honoring and remembering the men and women who have died while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

Many communities across the country commemorate the day by holding ceremonies to honor fallen soldiers and decorate their graves with flowers. These events were initially known as Decoration Day.

In 1971, Memorial Day was officially recognized as a federal holiday and was designated as a time for Americans to remember and honor all military personnel who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country. Traditions associated with Memorial Day include visiting cemeteries and memorials to pay respects to fallen soldiers, displaying the American flag at half-staff until noon, participating in patriotic ceremonies, and attending memorial events.



In addition to these traditional observances, Memorial Day has also become a time for families and friends to gather for picnics, barbecues, and outdoor activities. It unofficially marks the beginning of the summer season in the United States.



But it is important to remember that Memorial Day is a solemn occasion intended to honor the sacrifices of those who have given their lives in service to the country. It is a time to reflect on the true meaning of the holiday and express gratitude for the freedoms and privileges we enjoy due to the dedication and sacrifice of the military personnel.

Chapter Highlights

- ❖ Sewa on Memorial Day
- ❖ Sewa in support of Pediatric Cancer Research, Cure and Cancer Survivors
- ❖ Community Gardening, Organic Farming, & Reforestation
- ❖ Sewa Backyard Organic Garden
- ❖ Cleanups of Streets & Parks
- ❖ Plastic Bags/Films Recycling Drive
- ❖ SewaMeals for those in Need
- ❖ Sewa at Food Banks, Food Pantries & Soup Kitchens
- ❖ Sewa at Community Events
- ❖ Sewa at Temples

Volunteer Spotlight



Sujata Varshneya Mittal Ji has been an active parent volunteer with the Central Jersey Chapter since 2021. Within the past 18 months, Sujata Ji has actively participated in multiple Sewa events. She actively contributed in organizing the Sewa medical camp in Edison in early 2022. She liked working with various volunteers and doctors in setting up the session. Further she enjoys enabling LEADs in the various food drives, boat building and growing vegetables for donations. In the recent past she has spread the word on the Chapter's great work and encouraged increased participation from people in her network. Besides Sewa, she is also actively involved in her town's local community and is always willing to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. Sujata Ji lives in Clark, NJ with her husband and two daughters and loves to laugh and make others laugh and believes in that the journey is the destination.

The Central Jersey Chapter has over the years volunteered to serve the community on Memorial Day as a way of remembering and honoring these heroes.

This year too, on May 29, 2023, the Central Jersey Sewa LEADs honored the day by contributing their time and effort in service across townships – at the North Brunswick Township Memorial Day 5K Run/Walk event and the Franklin Township Memorial Day parade.

At the **North Brunswick Memorial Day 5K Run/Walk** event, the LEADs were involved in directing participants, handing out water, and in their commitment to making the event a success, offered encouragement to the 5k participants.

The event drew a diverse range of participants, including young children and elderly citizens, who were there to show their support in honoring the sacrifices made by those who lost their lives while protecting the nation.

The efforts of Central Jersey Sewa LEADs demonstrate the Chapter's appreciation and respect for these fallen heroes.



The **Franklin Township Memorial Day Parade** was a significant event where Central Jersey Sewa LEADs volunteered their services and actively participated in various activities.

They played a crucial role in setting up and wrapping up the parade, ensuring that everything ran smoothly. During the procession, the volunteers showcased their unwavering support by enthusiastically waving flags and warmly greeting spectators.

LEADs concluded the day by attending the closing ceremony. This ceremony was a way to pay tribute to those who have bravely served the country, honoring their contributions and sacrifices. It was a fitting conclusion to a day of remembrance and gratitude.

These events served as a powerful reminder of the appreciation owed to the selfless individuals who have dedicated themselves to serving the nation. It highlighted the sacrifices made by veterans and active-duty personnel, as well as their families.

Sewa in support of Pediatric Cancer Research, Cure and Cancer Survivors

Pediatric cancer refers to cancer that occurs in children, usually defined as individuals under the age of 18. Childhood cancers are diverse and can affect various parts of the body, including the blood, bones, organs, and tissues. Treatment for childhood cancer typically involves a combination of therapies, such as surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, targeted therapy, and stem cell transplantation. The specific treatment approach depends on the type and stage of cancer, as well as individual factors.

While childhood cancer can be a devastating diagnosis for both the child and their family, advancements in medical research and treatment have significantly improved the prognosis for many types of childhood cancers. Early detection, effective treatments, and supportive care have increased survival rates and improved the quality of life for pediatric cancer patients. It is crucial to raise awareness and funds for the education and research that help prevent or terminate childhood cancer, and provide the necessary financial and emotional support to families during such a challenging time.

The Central Jersey Chapter is glad to partner with local organizations and nonprofits for this important cause and has been for the last 2 years been supporting one such cause, the OM Foundation for their **OM Memorial 5k Run/Walk** event in Monroe Township in NJ, a fundraising and awareness event to support childhood cancer research and education.

This year in the month of May, the Central Jersey Sewa LEADs and adults volunteered at the 6th Annual OM Memorial 5K Run/Walk where they contributed in various ways to ensure the event ran smoothly and successfully.



Prior to the event, the LEADs assisted in distributing the race day T-shirts to both volunteers and runners, ensuring everyone had their shirts ahead of time. On the day of the event, they checked in participants and distributed bibs, ensuring that everyone was properly registered and prepared for the run/walk. The LEADs also took care of setting up the event area by arranging tents, chairs, and tables. They unloaded food items and arranged them on the tables, making sure that the participants and volunteers had refreshments and sustenance during the event.

During the run/walk, some LEADs led the participants to the starting point, ensuring that everyone was in the right place before the event began. Along the track, the LEADs cheered on the runners at various points, providing encouragement and support throughout the race. After the event, the LEADs took responsibility for cleaning up the area. They collected signs, banners, and other event materials, and helped in folding chairs and tables. Additionally, they loaded leftover supplies into cars, ensuring that everything was properly stored away.

The dedication and enthusiasm of the volunteers made a positive difference in the community, and their efforts in supporting the OM Memorial 5K Run/Walk was commendable and contributed to the overall success of the event. The Chapter also appreciates the LEADs' offer of time and skills to contribute to fundraising events, awareness campaigns, or supporting families affected by childhood cancer.

Sewa Community Gardening, Organic Farming, & Reforestation

This month of May 2023, the Central Jersey Sewa volunteers were actively involved in improving the landscape at the **Ramblin' Sol Farm**, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) organic farm by putting down landscape fabric on the pepper field. Landscape fabric, a black heavy tarp, is a material commonly used in agriculture to suppress weeds, conserve moisture, and provide a barrier between the soil and the plants.



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



By laying down landscape fabric on the pepper field, the volunteers helped to create a more controlled and efficient growing environment for the peppers. The fabric acts as a barrier that blocks sunlight from reaching the ground. Since weeds need sunlight to grow, this method can effectively prevent weed growth and reduce competition for nutrients and water with the planted crops. This will ultimately result in healthier and more productive pepper plants.

Secondly, the black tarp helps in retaining heat absorbed during the daytime. The dark color of the tarp absorbs sunlight and converts it into heat energy. By trapping this heat, the tarp creates a warmer microclimate around the plants, which can be particularly advantageous during cooler periods, such as chilly nights or frosty conditions. This protection helps prevent damage to the plants caused by low temperatures.

Additionally, landscape fabric can help conserve moisture by reducing evaporation from the soil, which is particularly beneficial in dry or arid regions. By retaining moisture, the fabric helps ensure that the pepper plants have a consistent water supply, promoting their growth and development. Sewa volunteers should be commended for their efforts to support plant growth and improve crop yield.

The efforts of the Central Jersey Sewa volunteers demonstrate their commitment to supporting local agriculture and making a positive impact on the community. Their work at the Ramblin Sol Farm will contribute to the success of the pepper field and ultimately result in a more sustainable and productive farming operation.

The Central Jersey Chapter volunteers have been supporting the **Bordentown Community Garden** since 2019 and have been involved in its development. The involvement of Sewa volunteers since 2019 shows a long-standing commitment to the garden and the community.

This month of May the Chapter LEADs were part of an initiative in preparing the community garden. Bordentown Deputy Mayor Mr. Eugene M. Fuzy was also present on the day in support of the initiative. His involvement and support is crucial for the success of community projects like the Bordentown Community Garden.



Sewa volunteers worked together to row the soil and place plastic sheeting to create raised beds and protect the plants from weeds, pests, and excessive moisture loss. LEADs then planted tomato and eggplant seeds and watered them through the holes in the plastic sheeting. The plastic sheeting was placed to retain moisture in the soil, control weed growth, and provide a warm and stable environment for the seeds to germinate and grow. Watering through the holes in the plastic sheeting was done to ensure that the water goes directly to the root zone of the plants, reducing water wastage and promoting efficient water usage. It also minimizes the risk of waterborne diseases by preventing water splashing onto the leaves, which can lead to fungal infections. This method of gardening with plastic sheeting and targeted watering can result in healthier plants, better water conservation, and improved crop yields.

Chapter LEADs also volunteered at the **Radha Gopinath Temple Garden** where they cleared debris, added new soil, and planted flowers and vegetables, all important tasks for maintaining a beautiful and vibrant garden.

LEADs not only contributed to the aesthetic appeal of the temple but also enhanced the overall experience of temple-goers. A well-maintained garden can create a peaceful and serene atmosphere, providing visitors with a pleasant environment for contemplation and spiritual reflection.





Every summer the Chapter LEADs volunteer at the **Kiddie Keep Well Camp Garden**. The produce that is obtained from the garden serves thousands of children, teens, senior citizens and their families completely free of charge, providing a fun place for county residents to learn, grow and stay connected to the community.

LEADs participated in garden cleaning, soil preparation, irrigation system repair, and timer adjustment at the camp. These activities are crucial for maintaining the camp's garden and ensuring that the plants receive adequate water.

Garden cleaning done by the LEADs helps create a clean and organized space for the plants to grow and thrive. Soil preparation involves tasks like loosening the soil, removing weeds, and adding compost or fertilizers to enrich the soil's nutrients, which promotes healthy plant growth. Repairing the irrigation system was essential to ensure that the plants receive sufficient water, which is vital for their survival and proper development. Adjusting the timer helped regulate the watering schedule, ensuring that the plants are watered at the appropriate times.

Sewa LEADs have thus contributed to the well-being of the camp and its visitors.

Chapter LEADs continued their support for the **Marlboro Community Garden** in the month of May to help maintain and improve the garden. They had a productive month at the garden, providing various services and gaining new insights.

LEADs shifted soil from closed soil boxes to finished soil boxes, a crucial task that ensures that the soil is ready for use in the garden plots. They pulled weeds and added mulch around the garden perimeter. By removing weeds, which help prevent them from competing with the desired plants for resources, and mulching helps retain moisture in the soil and suppresses further weed growth. LEADs also watered the beds essential for plant growth, especially during warmer days when plants require more hydration.

As is the case always at Marlboro garden, LEADs once again got an opportunity to learn something new from the master gardeners. This time they learnt about sweet potatoes and yams. This knowledge-sharing experience is valuable as it expands the volunteers' understanding of different plants and cultivation techniques.

Their efforts contribute to the success and sustainability of the gardens, benefiting the local community.

These are all wonderful opportunities for the Sewa volunteers to learn and implement such effective approaches to promote sustainable gardening practices.





In May, Chapter LEADs also volunteered at tree planting a reforestation initiative to help restore and maintain the natural environment of **Neshaminy State Park** in PA.

With the planting of the trees LEADs have helped combat climate change, since trees absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, and thus improve air quality. They also helped provide a habitat for wildlife, to stabilize soil, and prevent erosion. Additionally, these reforested areas enhance the aesthetics and recreational value of the park, creating a more enjoyable experience for visitors.

By planting trees, the LEADs have made a significant contribution to the long-term health and sustainability of the State Park. Their efforts will likely have a positive impact on the park's ecosystem for many years to come.

This month, the Central Jersey Sewa LEADs also teamed up with the Monroe Township Green Team at the **Water Retention Basin** near England Rd in Monroe. Their shared objective was to enhance the ecological environment.

The initial task of the LEADs involved identifying suitable planting spots of milkweed away from the water, with a particular focus on maintaining a minimum distance of 6 feet. A total of approximately 250 spots were marked for further action. Once the marking process was completed, the LEADs proceeded to plant milkweed plants in the designated areas. Milkweed is known to play a crucial role in supporting the survival of bees and butterflies, making it a valuable addition to the basin's flora. Additionally, LEADs maintain the plants by watering them 2-3 days a week until the roots are established. The LEADs recognized the importance of milkweed as a source of nourishment and habitat for these pollinators.

In an effort to further promote the welfare of bees in the area, the LEADs introduced bee houses around the basin. These bee houses act as artificial habitats, attracting and providing shelter for bees. By strategically placing them in different locations, the LEADs hoped to create a more inviting environment for the bees to thrive.



LEADs also learnt about the presence of beavers near the Water Retention Basin. They learnt of the significant impact of beavers on the biodiversity and dynamics of the ecosystem. They learnt of how beavers often selectively cut down trees for food and building materials and how this selective browsing can lead to changes in the composition and structure of the surrounding environment. While their activities can result in the loss of some trees, they also contribute to the creation of unique wetland habitats that support diverse flora and fauna. The impact of beavers on trees can be complex and varies depending on factors such as the local ecosystem, tree species composition, and the density of beaver populations. This new knowledge helped the LEADs understand the complex dynamics within the basin and the diverse influences at play.

Another commendable initiative by the Chapter LEADs is the **Backyard Garden Produce Project** to grow produce in their own backyards. The LEADs have utilized the skills and knowledge gained from community garden projects and reforestation efforts and have started to apply it at their homes. By learning from experts in these projects, the volunteers have enhanced their gardening abilities and are able to grow produce that will then be donated to contribute to addressing food insecurity across communities.

When this project initially started, LEADs purchased seeds and saplings themselves for their backyard gardening endeavors. However, starting from 2022, Ramblin' Sol Farm generously donated plants to the Chapter. This donation was a token of appreciation for the Chapter LEADs' volunteering efforts at the farm over the years, assisting in various farming activities.



This year, Ramblin' Sol Farm donated approximately **2000** saplings of various vegetables, including kale, beans, peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, lettuce, holy basil, and chard leaves.

The LEADs prepared their backyard sites by tilling the ground, mulching, and planning the planting based on the compatibility of different plants. Some LEADs opted for in-ground gardening, while others utilized containers for their plants. They ensured proper soil, manure, and irrigation for the plants.

In the coming months, as the plants grow and yield produce, the LEADs plan to donate the fresh organic produce to food pantries across different townships.

Alternatively, they may utilize the harvest in the SewaMeals project, where they prepare fresh homemade food to feed those who are food insecure.

The combination of learning from experts, receiving plant donations, and applying their gardening skills in their own backyards allows the LEADs to make a positive impact on food insecurity by providing fresh, organic produce to local food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens. This commitment to donating the yield to those in need exemplifies the Chapter's dedication to community service and addressing hunger in Central Jersey.

Sewa Cleanup of Streets and Parks

Amico Island is a wonderful park with diverse natural landscapes, providing a range of activities for outdoor enthusiasts. However, the park is dealing with the unfortunate issue of trash littering. The Burlington County Department of Solid Waste took a positive step by organizing a cleanup on May 6th to address this problem. Central Jersey LEADs volunteered for the **Amico Island Cleanup** to pick up trash throughout the park. They diligently went around the park which consists of forests, ponds, wetlands, and valleys, collecting any litter they encountered. As a result of their collective efforts, multiple trash bags were filled up, signifying the significant amount of waste that had accumulated.



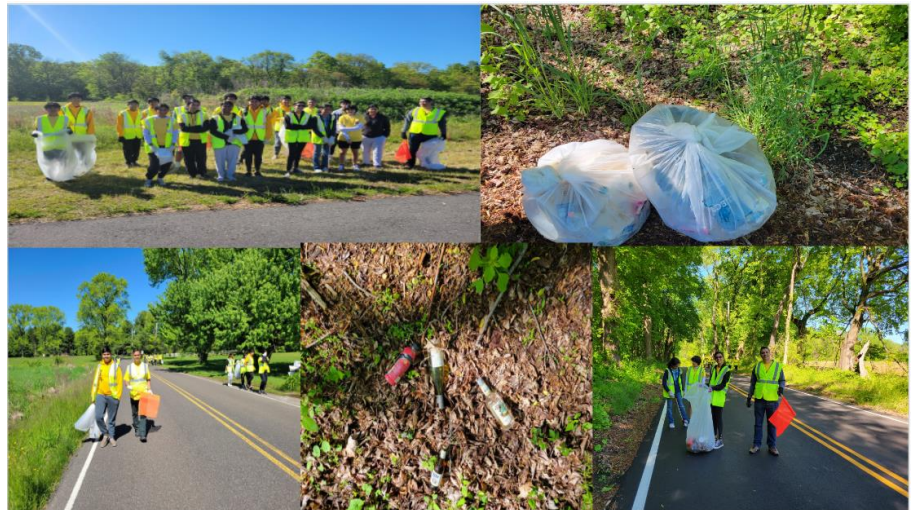
LEADs not only helped in maintaining the cleanliness of the park but also contributed to the preservation of the environment. By removing trash from inappropriate locations such as the ground, bushes, and riverside, the cleanup volunteers played a crucial role in safeguarding the natural beauty and integrity of Amico Island.

Activities like these bring to the fore the importance of community involvement in preserving and protecting natural spaces. By raising awareness about the impact of littering and actively participating in clean-up initiatives, LEADs ensure that parks like Amico Island continue to be enjoyable and sustainable for future generations.

In May, the Chapter LEADs also participated in a Chesterfield Community Cleanup, a commitment to making a positive impact on the local community. They cleaned up the streets and collected trash such as plastic bags, cans, glass bottles, and automobile parts to help maintain a clean and safe environment for everyone.

20 LEAD volunteers signed up for the event which demonstrates the collective effort and willingness of individuals to contribute to the well-being of the community. By disposing of the collected trash properly, the LEADs ensured that it was handled in an environmentally friendly way, minimizing the negative impact on the surroundings.

The outcome of their efforts is a clean park where families in the community can enjoy their time together during this season. A clean and well-maintained park provides a welcoming space for recreational activities and strengthens the sense of community pride. It also promotes a healthier and more enjoyable outdoor experience for everyone involved.



The Chapter LEADs' involvement in such community and park cleanups not only enhances the physical appearance of the area but also sets an example for others to follow. Their dedication to keeping the community clean fosters a culture of environmental stewardship and encourages others to take part in similar initiatives. Well done to the Chapter LEADs and all the volunteers for their valuable contribution to these cleanups!

Sewa Plastic Bags/Films Recycling Drive Continue

Central Jersey Chapter LEADs took up the important cause to address the issue of plastic waste and responsible recycling practices by starting a **Plastic Bags/Films Recycling Drive** in March 2023.

Upon observing that townships residents were still disposing of plastic bags and films in recycling bins, the Chapter recognized the necessity for additional efforts to address this issue. While the plastic usage had decreased, the improper disposal of plastic bags and films threatened the progress made in reducing plastic waste. This realization prompted the Chapter to take action and find solutions to mitigate the problem effectively.

By spreading awareness across townships and counties, LEADs have been taking a proactive approach to educate residents about the proper way to recycle plastic bags and films. This awareness campaign is crucial in preventing non-recyclable materials from being mistakenly placed in recycling bins.



LEADs have already collected around **800 pounds** of plastic bags and films thus far in the drive. The initial collection of materials were dropped off at the Chesterfield and Burlington County Recycling Centers, where they can be properly processed and recycled.

The dedication of the LEADs in collecting plastic bags, wrappers, bubble wrap, and other plastic items from various sources, including friends and families, demonstrates their commitment to addressing the issue of plastic waste. Their efforts not only contribute to keeping the environment clean but also raise awareness about the importance of recycling and reducing plastic consumption.

By continuing this recycling drive in the upcoming months, LEADs can make an even greater impact in reducing plastic waste and promoting sustainable practices. The Chapter encourages the LEADs to keep up the fantastic work, and hopes their efforts continue to raise awareness and encourage responsible recycling practices in the community!

SewaMeals for those in Need

SewaMeals is a Central Jersey LEADs' community effort to combat food insecurity across Central Jersey. It's unfortunate that so many people around the world struggle to afford a meal on a daily basis. Initiatives like SewaMeals play a crucial role in addressing this issue and making a positive impact on the lives of those in need. Community-driven initiatives like SewaMeals demonstrate the power of collective action and highlight the importance of individuals coming together to address social issues. By raising awareness, mobilizing resources, and actively engaging in helping those in need, such initiatives contribute to building a more compassionate and supportive society.

In the month of May 2023, once every week the LEADs gather to prepare nutritious food to feed families less fortunate. The work happens in three steps. The first step is more of an independent responsibility where the LEADs sign up and make the fresh dish assigned to them in their homes. The second step is where the magic of community happens. LEADs gather in a location and work together to assemble the meals and put it all together. Finally, the third step is where the magic happens. The food is delivered to multiple church recipients to feed the people in need. By preparing fresh home cooked meals and distributing them, the LEADs ensure that people who are experiencing food insecurity have access to a decent meal, which is essential for their well-being and overall quality of life.

The LEADs provided a delicious and diverse meal selection of Portuguese rolls, pita bread, vegetable salad, corn salad, 7 Layer Bean Dip, baked potatoes, pasta, burritos, Mexican Rice, pulao a rice dish with vegetables, chole a chickpea curry dish, a sweet dessert made of semolina, brownies, muffins, fruit custards, chips, pretzels and granola bars.



May Meals' Sponsors:

Srinivas Nalamalapu
Parul Gadhoke & family
Monika & Shashi Khurana
Pavani & Nag Motamarri
Puja & Sameer Jain
Malini & Muralidharan Krishnan
Dina & Bimal Visram
Bhawana & Mahesh Upadhyay
Shilpa & Mukul Rathi (State Farm)
LEAD Mahanth Komuravelli family
LEAD Srividya Mudaliar family
LEAD Anvitha Malepati family
LEAD Hrishik Epuru family

May Meals' Recipients:

Westminster Presbyterian Church-Trenton, NJ
United Methodist Church in New Brunswick
Cathedral Church

The Chapter are extremely grateful to all people involved, which include the LEADs, their parents, and the meals' sponsors. Together, we made a difference.



Sewa at Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Food Shelters

In the month of May, Sewa LEADs from Central Jersey were involved in various food banks, food pantries and food shelters in their commitment to serving the community.

At the **Jewish Relief Agency (JRA)** in the Philadelphia area, LEADs packed and distributed food, contributing to the organization's mission of providing assistance to those facing food insecurity. Additionally, their involvement at the **First Presbyterian Church Food Pantry** and the **Ozanam Food Shelter** allowed them to directly assist individuals in need by packing and distributing food. LEADs also utilized the food from their Chapter's SewaMeals to support the Ozanam Food Shelter. Their efforts extended to the **Franklin Food Bank**, where LEADs packed, distributed, and stocked food supplies. By participating in these activities, they not only provided immediate assistance but also contributed to the overall functioning and sustainability of these organizations.

Sewa activities like these allow LEADs to dedicate their time and energy to help those in need and it is also an opportunity for them to learn about the importance of giving back to the community. Collaborating with the respective food shelters allowed them to demonstrate support for the community and work together as a team to ensure people had access to food.

The contributions of the LEADs undoubtedly made a positive impact on the lives of many individuals and families facing food insecurity. Acts of kindness like these not only provide essential resources but also inspire others to get involved and create a ripple effect of goodwill in the community.



Sewa at Community Events

The Central Jersey Chapter took on a wonderful and heartwarming initiative on **Mother's Day at the Preferred Care: Nursing and Rehabilitation Center** in Old Bridge.

Chapter LEADs in a beautiful gesture of spreading joy and making the residents feel cherished decorated the subacute rehab center with balloons, writing thoughtful cards, and arranging beautiful flowers and creating a lovely ambiance for everyone involved.

The distribution of carefully prepared flowers and heartfelt cards to each resident shows the dedication and commitment of LEADs to ensuring that every individual felt valued and acknowledged on Mother's Day.

Such acts of kindness and thoughtfulness have the power to uplift spirits and bring joy to the lives of those in need of care and support. The commitment of the LEADs to making a difference in the lives of others is truly commendable.



Chapter LEADs actively volunteered at the **Marketplace at Aldergate United Methodist Church** where they assisted with packaging items such as bread, baked goods, as well as essentials like toilet paper and diapers, and ensured that those in need have access to necessary resources.

The efforts of the LEADs in setting up and organizing the food and supplies sections, as well as guiding shoppers through the marketplace, contributed significantly to a smoother and more organized experience for everyone involved. Their role enhances accessibility, facilitates efficient shopping, and promotes customer satisfaction within the marketplace environment.

LEADs were able to utilize their Spanish language skills to create a more comfortable environment for the Spanish-speaking customers and were able to make a significant difference in providing assistance and support to the diverse communities.

The dedication and commitment shown by the Chapter LEADs in volunteering twice this month demonstrate their compassion and willingness to make a difference in the lives of others. Their efforts at the Marketplace at Aldergate United Methodist Church were appreciated and have led to a positive impact on the community.

This month the Central Jersey LEADs also volunteered at the **Franklin Township Community Youth Center** for their anniversary.

LEADs assisted at food stations, set up painting stations, and organized workshop areas, all essential tasks that contribute to the smooth running of the event.

By taking on these responsibilities, the LEADs helped create a welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere for all attendees. The presence of esteemed community dignitaries at the event further highlights the significance of the Youth Center's anniversary.

The efforts of the LEADs in ensuring a successful anniversary ceremony demonstrated their dedication to community service and their participation in the anniversary celebration showed their commitment to serving the needs of the youth and empowering them.



Central Jersey LEADs also volunteered this month at a cultural and social event, the **NATS Sambaralu** in NJ, where the volunteers played an important role in various activities.

They set up conference rooms for seminars on various topics, including cybersecurity and entrepreneurship. This involved arranging chairs, tables, and other necessary equipment to ensure the smooth running of the sessions.

Additionally, some LEADs volunteered with food distribution, arranging sweet trays, and arranging furniture to prepare for other events at the venue.

The efforts of the LEADs contributed to the smooth operation of the venue.

Volunteers took the opportunity of raising funds for the Sewa International SAC and SHE projects by operating a Sewa booth that showcased hand-made bracelets made by LEADs. LEADs sold most of the hand-crafted jewelry and the rest they bought themselves to help with donating to the good cause!

LEADs also engaged with NATS attendees, spreading awareness about Sewa International and the service activities thus indicating the LEADs' dedication to making a positive impact beyond the event itself.

Sewa at Temples

Central Jersey Chapter LEADs volunteered at the **Om Sri Sai Balaji Temple in Monroe**, the **Sai Datta Temple in Edison** and also at the **Radha Gopinath Temple in Edison** this month of May 2023.

Chapter LEADs played a crucial role in supporting and assisting at temples in various ways. They helped with organizing flyers and seating arrangements, assisting with the dicing vegetables and cooking, packing and serving food and prasadam to the temples' devotees and visitors. They participated in tasks relating to the upkeep of the temple and helped maintain its sanctity as well as. Through this help, LEADs were able to relieve some of the work of temple staff thus ensuring the temple staff could focus on other responsibilities too.



At the Radha Gopinath Temple the LEADs were blessed to be part of the festive occasion of the Narasimha Chaturdasi.

Narasimha Chaturdasi, also known as Narasimha Jayanti, is a Hindu festival that celebrates the birth anniversary of Lord Narasimha, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Lord Narasimha is depicted as a half-man and half-lion form, symbolizing his unique avatar to protect his mankind from evil forces and restore righteousness. On this festive day devotees observe various rituals and ceremonies to worship and seek the blessings of Lord Narasimha. The celebrations typically include fasting, special prayers, recitation of mantras, devotional singing, and reading or hearing stories from the life of Lord Narasimha. Temples dedicated to Lord Narasimha are beautifully decorated, and special pujas (worship rituals) are conducted throughout the day. Devotees believe that observing Narasimha Chaturdasi with devotion and sincerity can bring protection, courage, and spiritual upliftment. It is an occasion to reflect on the significance of the avatar of Lord Narasimha and learn from his divine qualities.

The dedication and efforts of the LEADs in volunteering at the temples are commendable. Such events play a crucial role in bringing people from diverse backgrounds together, providing them with an opportunity to learn about Hindu traditions and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the community. By actively engaging in activities at the temples, the Chapter LEADs demonstrate their respect and support for the Hindu traditions, and by welcoming all visitors they also showcase their commitment to inclusivity and bridge-building among different communities.

It is through events like these that people have the opportunity to learn about different cultures, traditions, and practices. This exposure can lead to increased empathy, respect, and appreciation for diversity, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

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

Newsletter Team



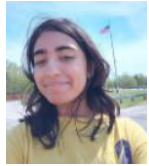
Aanya Patel
Grade: 9th
Interests: Reading, Volleyball
Favorite Sewa Project: Sewa Meals, Diwali Food Drive



Afia Shaik
Grade: 10th
Interests: Crafting, Painting, Reading
Favorite Sewa Project: MS Walk Hamilton



Devaj Desai
Grade: 11th
Interests: Tennis, Volleyball, Tutoring, and Chess
Favorite Sewa Project: Marlboro Garden



Dharika Verma
Grade: 9th
Interests: Art, Music, Badminton
Favorite Sewa Project: Earth Day Cleanups



Dharini Thriuvallur Elango
Grade: 10th
Interests: Music, Art
Favorite Sewa Project: Ozanam Food Shelter



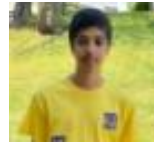
Gowtham Bakajikanan
Grade: 9th
Interests: Music, Reading, Basketball
Favorite Sewa Project: Ozanam Food Shelter, Park Cleanup



Krisha Patel
Grade: 9th grade
Interests: Reading, Volleyball
Favorite Sewa Project: Franklin Township Food Bank



Mahi Upadhyay
Grade: 8th
Interests: Music, Writing
Favorite Sewa Project: Chesterfield Street Cleanup



Pranav Vadlamudi
Grade: 9th
Interests: Cricket, Chess, Scouting
Favorite Sewa Project: Radha Krishna Gopinath Temple



Shreya Kalapatu
Grade: 10th
Interests: Reading, Art
Favorite Sewa Project: Amico Island Park Cleanup



Siddhart Kakaraparathi
Grade: 11th
Interest: Dance, Volleyball, Tutoring
Favorite Sewa Project: Marlboro Garden, SewaMeals



Sowmya Hemadri
Grade: 10th grade
Interests: Dance, Singing, Tennis
Favorite Sewa Project: Balaji Temple



Sreya Chaparala
Grade: 10th
Interests: Reading, Painting, Music
Favorite Sewa Project: Jewish Relief Agency

Upcoming Events

- ❖ Sewa for Uttarayan Kite Festival
- ❖ Sewa Blood Donation Drive
- ❖ Plastic Bags/Films Recycling Drive
- ❖ Community Gardening, Organic Farming, & Reforestation
- ❖ Sewa for Autism Foundation
- ❖ Sewa for Domestic Violence Survivors
- ❖ Sewa at Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Food Shelters
- ❖ SewaMeals for those in Need
- ❖ Sewa at Community Events
- ❖ Sewa at Temples
- ❖ Centers' Annual Picnic

REGISTRATION

- Central Jersey SewaMeal Sponsorship
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- Central NJ Chapter General Donation
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Register

Please use below QR Code or link and proceed to click 'Register' to donate



Click → <https://sewausa.org/event-5084580> and fill the information

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