

## Indiaspora



### **Dedicated Sewa International Volunteers Keep the Spirit of Service Alive**

April, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020

These days, it's quite normal to start the conversation with "We live in strange times, don't we?" Yes, indeed, we do live in very strange and challenging times.

COVID-19 has caused unprecedented global challenge and has many unique aspects. It's a global health and economic disaster along with being an invisible and seemingly invincible enemy. The coronavirus has leading authorities and administrations scrambling to find solutions against this novel threat.

It's during this time of confusion, that Sewa International's volunteers have once again come together to provide relief, information, and more to the community. I am immensely happy and proud that I work with a dedicated group of volunteers across the 43 Sewa chapters in the USA that have been able to provide much needed services to the community. In less than two weeks, the whole organization was working together effectively in multiple cities across the country. Some of the efforts are highlighted below. (<https://www.sewausa.org/covid-19>)

- Seven helplines in different cities across the country to provide answers and solutions.
- More than 15 webinars conducted by renowned doctors, global health experts, family counsellors and legal experts that have been viewed by more than 50,000 people so far.
- More than 20,000 masks distributed to first responders, doctors, medical facilities, and hospitals.
- Providing services to the seniors including delivering groceries and medicines.
- Providing free meals to first responders like police and health worker.
- Helping international students by answering their visa questions, providing temporary housing, meals, groceries etc.

During initial brainstorming about relief efforts, we thought that our reach would be limited due to social distancing restrictions. However, as we launched helplines in four cities to cover all time zones, on the very first day we realized the drastic needs of the community that remained unfulfilled. We launched a series of webinars to educate people and answer their questions. On our request, over 20 doctors from the Houston area came forth to volunteer

their time and knowledge. The very first webinar was viewed by over 6000+ people. The volume and nature of requests and needs have shaped the plans for providing immediate and long-term relief.

Currently, there is an immediate financial need of \$3.5 million nationally that we are fundraising to continue to support our communities at every level during this pandemic. Of course, generous donors may donate directly at the Sewa International USA website ( <https://www.sewausea.org/Donate>) or on Facebook ( <https://bit.ly/FBDonateSewa> ).

As we discussed on how to address the anxiety and fear across the community, we came up with idea of the campaign “Pledge for Service” (“Sewa Sankalp”) to build confidence which is the antidote to fear. We are now taking up this nationwide campaign, with two main focuses:

- Build the confidence within community
- Help build the capacity of Dharmic and Sewa organizations in the US to effectively reach out and help their community members.

In next 2 weeks, we are planning to reach out to over 1000 organizations in more than 50 cities with this campaign. I encourage all of you to join hands to fight this pandemic together. Please find more details on [www.sewausea.org/sewasankalpa](http://www.sewausea.org/sewasankalpa). Our collective conscious and confidence will pave the way for our collective success against this huge challenge.

Knowing the dedication of the team, it is no surprise to me that Sewa International has been recognized by Charity Navigator – the premier nonprofit rating agency – as the number five among the “10 Highly Rated Charities Relying on Private Contributions”. We have, for the last three years, continuously scored the highest rating from Charity Navigator, and have earned perfect scores for our *Financial Health, Accountability, and Transparency*.

Sewa International volunteers work on the time-tested Hindu principles of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (“The world is one family”), *Sarve janah sukhinau bhavantu* (“May all be happy”), and *Nara seva, Narayana seva* (“Serving humanity is serving divinity”). Our committed volunteers don’t expect personal recognition or glory. We simply do what needs to be done; we serve. We organize people, collaborate with other organizations and institutions to collectively achieve the results. We truly believe “Together, we serve better”.

Recent news reports:

<https://abc13.com/6067202/>

<https://abc13.com/blood-of-recovered-covid-patients-could-be-key/6064255/>



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