

Quarterly Newsletter of the Cleveland Chapter of Asha for Education

www.ashanet.org/cleveland/

Spring 2012

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Notes of Hope 2011 - Asha Cleveland's charity concert

Asha-Cleveland was honored to host flute maestro Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia at its annual charity concert "Notes of Hope 2011" on October 29th at the Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) Metro Campus auditorium. Over 350 patrons attended the concert, making it a grand success, and raising \$9,000 towards our chapter's projects back in India. Panditji was accompanied by Pt. Subhankar Banerjee on the tabla, and Dr. Shyamala Rajender on the tanpura, with his student Jay Gandhi accompanying on the support flute. They played to the galleries, by rendering a couple of raagas based on audience requests, leaving them mesmerized with their mastery.

Overall, the event was a success thanks to the tremendous effort put in by the organizing team, and donations from the community, along with sponsorships from numerous local businesses.

We are indebted to the following sponsors:

Premier Patrons

Mrs. Bhavana & Mr. Vijay Patel
Mrs. Mala & Dr. Sanjay Garg
Mrs. Simi & Dr. Yogenthiran
Mrs. Swati & Mr. Sudarshan Sathe

Grand Patrons

Mrs. Sheela & Mr. Narayan Dravid
Mrs. & Mr. Gautam Rajan
Mrs. Ila and Dr. Ranjit Tamaskar
Mrs. Hema & Dr. Suresh
Dr. Vidya & Mr. Lal Lalwani

Here's what some of the attendees had to say about the concert:

"It was an enchanting experience to listen to the mellifluous tunes springing from the 'Celestial Bansuri' of Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia"

"I had never imagined I would be able to hear his live performance - not the least be part of the organizing committee and get to meet him in person. We enjoyed meeting and interacting with the artists, especially Panditji, who kept us in splits with his wisecracks. Finally, the looks of satisfaction on the faces of the audience as they walked out after the event and the words of appreciation from our esteemed donors and supporters made all the hours of hard work completely justifiable"

"The strokes on the tabla by Pandit Subhankar Banerjee added vigor to the lilting notes of the flute and I found myself unconsciously tapping my feet in accompaniment to the mesmerizing music which filled the auditorium and transported the entire audience to a different world for two hours on the evening of the 29th - an evening I will never forget"

Asha-Cleveland's sincere thanks goes out to a multitude of people who helped us :

Sathya, Sahithya & David, Puja & Vivek, Smruta, Nemath, Aparna, Anuj, Amith, Durba, Abhishek, Rohan, Raghu, Tirth, Nirmala, Smitha, Deepak, Chirag, Mallika, Sandeep, Sonia, Pradeep, Sharad, Punit, Pratik, Trupti, Kartik.



Photographs courtesy
David Wintrich



Running for Hope - "Team Asha"

"Team Asha" comprising Anshuman, Partha, Lavanya, Amit, Sohani, Aparna, Amith, and Ram, conquered the Akron Marathon on September 24, 2011. One of our donors, Dr. Sanjay Garg ran the Cleveland Towpath half-marathon with his daughter Aditi on October 9th, 2011. Having trained through the summer on a strict regimen, these inspirational trail-blazers ran to raise awareness about Asha and its activities, while raising \$10,000 for our projects.

Every step they ran gave them the supreme joy of a progressive step towards promoting the education of less-privileged children, in addition to enjoying the magical benefits of keeping themselves fit. The continuous support and encouragement of various donors and well-wishers went a long way in helping them achieve their goals, and cross the finish-line in glory!

You can visit our Marathon home page at <http://www.ashanet.org/cleveland/home/marathon/team.php> to read more about each runner and also make your contribution to Team Asha. We already have committed runners for the next year. If you want to let your legs do the talking and feel like running 5 hours to support 50 children for 30 days, please join Team Asha. Just write to us!

Perspectives from new volunteers about our chapter

The date was August 4, 2011...the place...Cleveland. I had just arrived in the United States, and was being hosted by three Indian students at their apartment till I could find a place of my own! One of my hosts, I noticed, always went out for a run in the morning. When I asked her about it, she said that she was training for a marathon. It did not immediately occur to me to ask her for the purpose of this marathon, as I was still excited about being in the United States, and coming all the way from India to pursue my dream - graduate school at Case! In the evening however, when I asked her about the marathon over dinner, she told me that she was part of a team called "Asha for Education", which worked towards raising funds for the education of underprivileged children back in India, for which the marathon was a major fundraiser. Sponsorships for every runner helped raise the amount required to fund an educational project back in India. It is only human to be touched by the amount of hard work the runners put in, and the dedication of the other members of Asha Cleveland, who worked hard to make this event a success. They worked together out of compassion, rather than compulsion. Their high spirits and noble minds truly moved me. I made up my mind that very day that I wanted to be a part of this group that was working to provide the joy of education to the children back home, for whom education was so far a distant dream!

Vaishnavi is a Ph.D. student in Computer Engineering at Case.



Vaishnavi



Raghavender

When I first met Partho, the treasurer, I had absolutely no idea what Asha was, or what it did. It was not till I met the members and attended the meetings that I saw the sheer passion and drive that the existing members had to support worthy causes that I decided to help out in whatever way I could. Being part of a group of friends working for a worthy cause was never going to be a drag, and I was not let down! Most importantly, it is not only the fun we have while organizing fundraisers that makes me truly happy, but the knowledge that everything done here, for Asha, directly helps the condition of less privileged children back home.

Raghavender is a M.S. student in Computer Engineering at Case



Sneha

Volunteering is the perfect way to feel connected to your community. The simple act of offering your skills and enthusiasm will positively impact the lives of others, as well as your own. Each individual brings a unique perspective, which fosters relationships and interaction with others. Several factors drive me into community service, but the powerful force behind my volunteering in ASHA is that the organization is trying to bring the social change that will make a difference to those in need. Education is a powerful tool which can change life and ASHA gives this chance to them.

Sneha is a M.S. student in Nutrition Sciences at Case.

An Evening of Hope with "Samarthanam"



The Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled is a Bangalore-based organization formed in 1997 by Mr. G.K. Mahantesh, which in their own words has the mission of "empowering the visually impaired, disabled and underprivileged through developmental initiatives focused on educational, social, economic, cultural and technological aspects". Their cultural troupe called "Sunadha", was established a few years ago to encourage visually impaired youth, and provide them with a unique platform to undergo special training in dance and music, and perform in India and all over the world.

They have performed at many prestigious events in India like the Hampi Utsava and the Vishwa Kannada Sammelana, as well as abroad at locations in NY, NJ, CT and MA here in the USA. Asha-Cleveland was honored to host them for "An Evening of Hope", on August 20th, 2011 at the India Cultural Center in Cleveland Heights. In addition to their classical Bharatanatyam pieces, they also covered folk and contemporary dance pieces, which left the audience spellbound!

Our interactions with Mr. Mahantesh and the troupe were extremely enriching, fulfilling and inspiring, enabling us to better understand the challenges they have faced and overcome. One of their primary initiatives has been a business process outsourcing (BPO)/call center training unit for people with disabilities called "Shrishti", set up with the help of IT firms in Bangalore. Overall, their efforts have gone a long way towards helping persons with disabilities to be an integral part of mainstream life.

For more information on Samarthanam and its activities, please visit <http://www.samarthanam.org/>. At Asha we always believe in the spirit of hope. We were privileged to organize this event, at the end of which we saw teary eyes and a sense of self-belief instilled in the audience and the volunteers alike. Ticket sales and donations collected from this event were utilized for our Work-an-Hour campaign (see below).

The Siragu Montessori School

This school was started in 2003 by two committed individuals Uma and Muthuraman, for rehabilitating and providing quality Montessori-based education for 34 children who were earlier begging on the streets. Despite the initial resistance from parents of these children, their perseverance paid off, with the success of the initial batch of student helping other parents to send their children as well. A full-fledged school was started in locally rented premises, and has moved into their own premises with over 10 classrooms.

Today the school comprises over 35 staff, taking care of over 400 students, with 175 of them staying in-house at the school premises. The wholesome education provided has yielded tremendous results, with children now participating in international competitions, such as Science Olympiads and Spelling Bees, clearly illustrating their "transformation of IMPOSSIBLE to I-AM-POSSIBLE".



Uma (extreme left) and Muthuraman (extreme right), the stalwarts spearheading Siragu.

Muthuraman's words of gratitude

We have been happily associated with Asha from 2005, beginning with support for our Tsunami rehabilitation projects. Over the past 7 years, we have worked closely with them for our Siragu school, and also received support from them for our fellowships and funds for our operating costs. The support has been at multiple levels, and includes hospitality extended to us on our visit to the US chapters, which has gone a long way in helping us gain confidence and be motivated.

We are grateful for their contributions both monetarily and also through periodic visits of Asha volunteers to the projects, their patience in understanding our needs and teleconference call presentations.

Our salutations to all the donors who contribute to Asha and our way of showing gratitude is by improving our standard of quality service to the humanity in all possible ways.

With regards, we remain

Uma, Muthuram & Children of Siragu

Asha-Cleveland's Work an Hour (WAH) campaign

Asha's Work an Hour (WAH) was a summer-long, global, online fundraising campaign, based on a simple concept where participants symbolically work an hour towards the cause of education by donating an hour's worth or more of their salary. This year, Asha-Cleveland supported the **Siragu Montessori School in Chennai**, as its flagship project for this campaign. We raised \$7000 towards the construction of a new classroom, as well as lab supplies and apparatuses.

To learn more about this year's WAH campaign or donate to Siragu, please visit us at:

<http://www.ashanet.org/workanhour/2011/projects/siragu.html>
or <http://bit.ly/ASHACLE>.



WORK AN HOUR 2011
HELP EMPOWER. WORK AN HOUR.

Kadam - an Asha success story!



Center for Development (CFD; Kadam) was established in 1996 to address the rampant increase in child labor in the poorer areas of Ahmedabad (Gujarat). It was not easy convincing impoverished parents to send their children to school, as these children brought in incomes which were crucial for the subsistence of these families. The sustained efforts of CFD with these children and their families deepened its understanding of the urban poor of Ahmedabad.

Asha-Cleveland has been associated with Kadam since 2008, when they started supporting education centers (ECs) for underprivileged children set up by CFD in Piplaj, one of the most disadvantaged areas in Ahmedabad. These ECs are run by trained teachers called “Bal Dosts”, who develop the learning materials based on mainstream curriculum with the help of educationists. They report to a parents’ committee (set up by CFD) regularly, regarding the progress of their children, while inviting them over to the centers to watch their children’s progress.

Over the past 3 years, they are proud to have retained more than 88% of the children, and helped them join mainstream schools, while affording their parents the pride of watching their children learn to read and write, and perform in cultural programs, towards improving their quality of life. CFD has always believed that the ECs are transient arrangements until the children can join mainstream schools, and has been working closely with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation to ensure that the government can take care of the education of the children, so that they don’t have to fall back into child labor, when they leave the care of the ECs. Their efforts have borne fruit, with the establishment of a municipal school in Piplaj this year., thus making Kadam a heartwarming success story for Asha!

Further, they have been actively involved in an Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) program towards early childhood care, nutrition and pre-school education. Through Bal Dosts and volunteers in the community in Piplaj, CFD got sanction and developed a fully functional “Aanganwadi” or a pre-school education center where children are taken care of for 4-6 hours a day, and are provided supplementary nutrition. Workers at the Aanganwadi, also monitor the health of pregnant women and enable them to have a safe delivery. Through CFD, the community in Piplaj has benefited tremendously with improvements in potable drinking water facilities, drainage, roads, and even the establishment of a Fair Price shop in 2010. It is very encouraging to see the difference CFD has made in the lives of people in Piplaj!

Aragati - Asha’s latest project

One of the newest projects in Asha-Cleveland’s portfolio, “Aragati” is a school (up to 8th grade) for children from underprivileged families in the villages of Kashmuli and Musthafapur in West Bengal. The school was established in 2007 in a rural village in the Egra block of West Midnapur district by a donor from Canada, and is administered by the Sarvik Vivekananda Gram Seva Sanstha, a non-governmental organization (NGO) dealing with education and other socio-economic issues, with branches in eleven districts in West Bengal, Orissa and Tripura.

The NGO approached us early in 2011, as the school had closed in 2009 due to a lack of funds, and after a thorough project review, we sanctioned \$2250 in June for the first 6 months to appoint teachers and get the school up and running. Today, the school is running with 48 students and 3 teachers from class I to class IV, on the West Bengal government board syllabus. The school has all the facilities, including a concrete building, electrical connections, tables and chairs, as well as a tube well. We propose to continue funding based on their progress over the first six months of our funding, and hope the school will be able to secure funding from the government in the near future.





Tee be-Cause

The Rotary Club of Strongsville is organizing its 21st Annual B'laster Chili Open Golf Classic on **February 25th 2012 from 9am to 4pm at the Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds** to raise funds for charity. Since 1992 the Rotary Club has raised over \$2 million for charity through this tournament. The Chili Open Golf Classic is a full day of fun, including golf, celebrity auctions, hourly raffles including one for a dugout loge for 10 at an Indians game, great food and beer, contests, games and prizes. Over the years this all-volunteer event has become a February tradition in Northeastern Ohio, drawing nearly 1,000 golfers who tee off into blasts of frigid air, putt across frosty greens and warm up in a hall full of hot food and sizzling activities! Registration is only \$40 and if you register before February 15th there is an additional discount of \$5. To learn more about the Chili Open or register, please visit their website at <http://www.chiliopen.org>

This year Asha for Education has been selected as one of the eleven charities that will be supported through this fundraiser. The funds provided will be used to support the construction of a stable school at the Siragu Montessori School in Chennai. Funds raised from the Chili Open will be utilized to support construction of a stable and safe school for these children.

Don't wait for summer to dust off your clubs. Indulge in a game of frigid golf and enjoy a day of fun and games while supporting eleven worthy charities. And don't forget to bring your friends!

FEHMIDA KAPADIA

Project disbursements in 2011-2012

Over the course of this past year, our chapter has disbursed a total of ~\$27,000 to our projects.

- \$2400 to Kadam, to provide families with winter kits to help tide over unexpected extreme cold weather
- \$6000 to the Siragu Montessori school, as part of our annual funding to them in 2011
- \$2240 to Agragati, as the first installment of our support to them, to be utilized for salaries for teachers
- \$9000 to Kadam, as the second installment of our funding, to meet their operating expenses
- \$7000 raised from our "Work-an-Hour" campaign was sent to the Siragu Montessori school, in February 2012

Bollywood Party 2012

It's here.....

The 2012 Bollywood Party, our first fundraiser for this year, will be held on **February 10th, from 10 pm onwards**, at the **Anatomy Nightclub, located at 1299 W. 9th Street in downtown Cleveland!**

We will have free food, along with beers for \$3 and cocktails for \$4, from 10pm until midnight for all patrons.

The event is co-sponsored by Satrang, the Indian students association at Case Western. Proceeds from the event will be used towards activities to run our projects.

Details are up on our website at <http://www.ashanet.org/cleveland>

Tickets can also be purchased online via Sulekha.com at: http://mycity.sulekha.com/cleveland-bollywood-party-valentines-day-theme_event-in_cleveland-oh_274528

Just bring the email receipt with your dancing shoes to Anatomy!





We are Asha-Cleveland , and so are YOU!

In 2012, we look forward to continue our efforts to make a difference in the lives of the less privileged back home, with renewed fervor. As always, we request your continued support and encouragement in the coming year. The ASHA-Cleveland team is brimming with fresh ideas, and looks forward to another successful year ahead. So please join us, donate or get involved in your own way to help underprivileged children in India have a better tomorrow. We will continue working as a committed, productive and enthusiastic team to fight illiteracy and give our children the most important tools for a better tomorrow – the gift of education.

We wish you all a very happy and prosperous 2012! We have Asha Calendars available for sale (limited number), which are price at \$10. We intend to utilize this amount towards running expenses at our chapter level, making sure that every penny of your donations go directly towards funding projects. To make a donation to any of our projects, please click on the "Donate" link on our website (below). Asha for Education is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

For further information, please do contact us at cleveland@ashanet.org, or visit our webpage at <http://www.ashanet.org/cleveland>, or visit our blog at <http://ashacleveland.blogspot.com/>. Calendars may be purchased at: <http://www.ashanet.org/cleveland/home/calendar.php>

A new year, a fresh start

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