



Asha Jyothi

Asha for Education, Detroit Chapter Newsletter

Vol 4 Issue 1, Apr 2005

Thanks to our Donors!

We are pleased to present another edition of Asha-Detroit newsletter. This newsletter provides updates about the schools we support and fundraisers we conducted. In the last year, we increased our involvement with our projects, conducted events to reach a larger community and increased awareness about Asha and its cause. We had our first corporate sponsor in form of General Motors-Asian Indian Affinity Group for our Marathon and Walk for Education fundraisers, raised funds for Tsunami relief, and were rated among the best by a independent charity evaluator. All of this was done adhering to Asha's zero-overhead policy – no portion of donations were used for administrative expenses.

Going forward, we wish to work closely with our partner organizations in India to improve the quality of education for the children and living conditions of the villages they live in. We are grateful to all our donors and well-wishers that believe a change is possible in rural India. With out your support we would not have achieved our success. Thanks!

Asha Detroit Volunteers

BISWA – An Integrated Approach to Rural Development

Asha, in partnership with Bharat Integrated Social Welfare agency (BISWA) is supporting a number of activities in villages around Sambalpur Dist. Headquarters in Orissa. Asha involvement started with four schools in Jhankarbahalli, Budapada, Rathipada, and Tangarjuri villages. "These villages are so remote – they have no electricity, proper approach roads, and have seen little development in decades," says Sai Gopisetty, who visited the project in both Dec 2004 and 2005. When they started, they were the only functional primary schools in those villages. Subsequent to Asha's intervention, BISWA lobbied for Government-run primary schools to restart in two villages. Now, the children in these two villages attend both schools from 6AM to 2 PM.

For more than a year, an individual progress card is being maintained to track the effectiveness of the educational program. The students' progress is being tracked in their math, reading, and writing skills. Results after a year clearly show progress but methods to address deficiencies are still being worked out. A teacher training program and a library are being planned for year 2005.

Asha volunteer, Mrs. Ranu Mahanti, spends around three months every year in Sambalpur shaping the direction of the project. Through her dedication, she was responsible for implementation of several village development projects. The first initiative was to dig tubewells for drinking water. Seed money was supplied by Mrs. Mahanti and BISWA, and the villagers put in labor-hours (*shramdhan*) towards its construction. The Government reimburses

up to 80% of the cost of the well, and the money thus retrieved is put forth to build a new tubewell.

This was followed by supporting womens self-help groups to encourage small business. Money is lent to the women at market rate (much less than that they can obtain with the money lenders) to enable them to sell bamboo-based articles directly. Efforts are also underway to construct water harvesting structures to enable cultivation.

Yet another initiative – a soap making factory – has provided income to some villagers and promoted health and hygiene at the same time. A good quality soap is being produced for much lower price than commercial alternatives.

It is our hope to see a tangible change over the next few years in this area. If you are interested in helping this project, please contact ashavolunteer, Sai Manohar Gopisetty (586-447-0294).

Team Asha Marathon Training Program

Team Asha's marathon program provides the necessary coaching and support system to help both beginner and experienced runners achieve their athletic goals. Over 80% of our runners are new to running or any form of endurance sport. The runners have a great cause to run for in addition to their personal goals; each runner raises funds to support Asha-supported projects in India in the process.

The training period lasts over a duration of six months and includes weekend runs, strength training, and the services of a professional coach. Above all, the runners in the group prove to be great team builders.

Last year, Detroit and Flint chapters fielded 30 runners in various categories and raised around \$20,000 for Asha's projects. If you wish to participate in Team-Asha training program, please contact Annamalai Veerappan (248-506-9516) or write to ashadetroit@yahoo.com. For more information, visit, www.teamasha.org.

Asha in Charity Navigator's Top 10

Charity Navigator, an independent charity evaluator, recently released its latest report on the top charities in the US. Making its way into the list this year, along side the usual heavyweights like the American Red Cross and United Way is none other than Asha For Education! Charity Navigator ranked Asha for Education as the top charity operating on less than \$2 million a year, with a total score of 69.82 (out of 70) in the field of International Relief and Development. For more information, please visit

<http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm/bay/topten.detail/1stid/7.htm>

**Coming to a workplace near you
Work-an-Hour 2005
July 4-September 5, 2005**

Updates from Projects

Purna Pragna Trust

Purna Pragna Trust, also referred to as Purna Pragna School, is an alternate education school located at Alanahalli on the outskirts of Mysore in Karnataka. Purna Pragna School has a high teacher to student ratio at about 7 or 8 students per teacher. Purna Pragna School, run by Mrs. Tara Gopinath, uses the teaching techniques pioneered by David Horshborough – hailed as the Father of Non-Formal Education. Tara played a very active role in starting the school. Prior to her involvement with this school, Tara had 13 years of teaching experience at a formal school. Her sister, Malathi, currently runs a similar alternate education school (Vikasana) in Bangalore. Both Tara and her sister are part of a forum that periodically meets to review and adjust their teaching techniques.

The students at Purna Pragna School range from an age of roughly four to fifteen. Students are encouraged to learn at their own pace and the regular government syllabus is introduced only when the student is mentally prepared. For the academic year 2004-05, thirteen new students were admitted and four graduated, increasing the school's strength from 31 to 40. This spring, several of their students took internally administered 7th standard exams and received high marks and they are waiting to hear for the results for some of the government administered 10th standard exams.

In 2005, Jana Shikhana Sanstha, an organization recognized by UNICEF for its contribution to development, will conduct vocational training classes in various areas. Classes are planned in tailoring, greeting-card making, electrical appliance repair and maintenance, and computers. The approach is need based and flexible so that a holistic training of a particular program is imparted. For example, the tailoring course encircles machine repair, first aid and darning. Currently, twelve students are being trained in tailoring.

Purna Pragna School is expecting a challenging year ahead for 2005. The Mysore Urban Development Authority is planning to build a ring road through part of the school grounds. Within the next 2 months, the government will announce the start date for construction which will be sometime this fall. The government has assured a minimum of 3 months notice to the school with monetary compensation prior to initiating construction. This road construction impacts the school in two ways. Firstly, the school must shift its well water source to another area or utilize water from the municipal water system. Secondly, one of the school's three buildings will be torn down and the school will have to coordinate the erection of another building at another location on the current school grounds. Mrs. Gopinath plans to continue running the school without interruption during this construction phase with the limited facilities available.

If you would like to help, visit, or learn more about the school, please feel free to contact Asha-Detroit volunteer Deepak Aswani at tensor412@yahoo.com.



Tara Gopinath and students in a class

Shanti Sadhana Ashram

Shanti Sadhana Ashram's (SSA) headquarters is located on the outskirts of Guwahati city in Assam. The activities of SSA range from education training programs for children to weaving, food processing & preserving, nursery, mushroom cultivation etc. for income generation. With the help of Asha, it runs eight schools spread over multiple districts for the kids from the poor socio economic backgrounds and is aimed to build awareness in these areas. Each school caters to the children from at least 3-4 nearby villages. These schools follow the system of non-formal education for the children of ages 2½ to 12 years. The classes fall into 3 categories – pre-primary, primary (Class I to IV) and upper primary (Class V to VII). The pre-primary students are taught through activity-based classes and the primary students are taught according to the syllabus and textbooks provided by the State Govt.

There are about 411 students and 22 teachers in all of 8 schools. The main concentration is on pre-primary and primary sections which constitute about 380 students. These schools follow the curriculum of Assam State Board for primary and upper primary sections. The purpose of this is to give these children the right foundation and prepare them to be able to attend the government schools eventually. Here are some highlights for the 2004-05 academic year.

Site Visit: A site visit was done by Asha-Pune volunteer, Shriram Narasimhan, in May 2004. His report was favorable and found 'the location of the schools to be judicious to be catering to a need'. Some of his recommendations regarding SSA were to provide better learning materials and training for teachers.

Floods: In the months of August and September 2004, due to heavy floods in the area 3 schools have been affected. There was some loss of teaching & learning aids. Otherwise there was not much damage to the infrastructure of the school buildings.

Dropping of a school: At the start of the budget year, there were 9 schools which included JSVN-Napuk in Shivsagar Dist. In October 2004, JSVN-Napuk was merged with the Sarvo Siksha Abhijan program run by the government in the same area. Asha supports SSA's move to integrate its efforts with the Government's projects while affirming its cause and efforts towards continuing education.

Extra-curricular: During Bahag Bihu (mid-Apr) festival students participated in drawing, dance and song competitions organized by the community and bagged prizes/certificate of performance. During the last week of November and first week of December the Annual Sports was conducted. Games and cultural activities were conducted school wise according to the age level of students.

For more information, or if you are interested in a site visit, contact Shalini Siddhanti (shalinimail@yahoo.co.in).



SSA staff in front of a school building (L), Arun in a classroom (R)

Asha Detroit 2004 Events



Left to right: Ramesh Mangrulkar and Shubhangi Deshpande at Tarangini; Sandhya Athmakuri with students; Winners of table tennis tournament; Cricket double wicket tournament.

Tarangini 2004

Our third annual fundraiser, Tarangini, was held on May 1, 2004 at Troy High School. We had the privilege of Dr. Vyas as Tarangini's Master of Ceremonies. The evening commenced with a vocal performance by Mrs. Shubhangi Deshpande and Mr. Ramesh Mangrulkar. They were accompanied by Mr. Kishor Khankari on tabla. The program continued with a Jugalbandi performance among Mr. Joseph Lucido on sitar, Mr. Ramesh Mangrulkar on flute and Mr. Kishor Khankari on tabla. Jugalbandi was supported by Mrs. Carol Lucido on harmonium and Mr. Navnit Patel on percussion instruments. The evening ended by beautiful Indian classical dance performances, Shivanjali, Vishana Vinayaka and Tillana, by students of Mrs. Sandhya Sree Athmakuri and Mrs. Radhika Acharya.

The event registered an audience of 350+ and raised over \$4,000 in donations for Asha projects.

Summer Sports Events

We had a busy season of Sports last year with Volleyball, Cricket, Table Tennis and Marathon Training.

Cricket: Asha-Detroit in association with Troy Cricket Club conducted a double wicket tournament in August 22, 2004. Asha Detroit thanks the help extended by Troy Cricket Club for making this event a success.

Volleyball: The sixth annual Asha volleyball event was conducted on July 24, 2004 at Boulan Park, Troy. A record turnout of 21 teams was the highlight this year. The event was a big success and will continue in future as one of the long standing sporting events of Asha Detroit. Detroit Telugu Association team won the championship: for a second time in a row: Raghu Ravipati, Praveen Jettipalle, Prasad Dasari, Apparao Kavuri, Chinnam Reddy, Vamsdihar Devabakthuni, Ravi Vara, and Seethapathi Nelluri.



Volleyball Champions; kids selling fruit juice to raise funds for Asha

Table Tennis: We conducted our second annual table tennis tournament on April 17th 2005 at the Recreation Center, Northville, MI. Like most of the other Asha events, table tennis tournament was a platform where the donors were able to play their game of interest – as well as - help the projects supported by our chapter. It was an open tournament where kids, men and women played for singles and doubles rolling trophies. We are thankful to Mr. Subbaiya Kokkalera for partly sponsoring the facility John Kern for donating official balls.

There were 53 participants and a total of \$733.00 was raised through registration fees and donations. Singles championship was won by Ravi Kiran Kumar and the doubles winners are Anil K Ramachandran and Saurabh Kumar.

Walk for Education

Asha Detroit Chapter organized its second annual "Walk for Education" on October 2, 2004. Walk was held in the beautiful trials of Heritage Park, Farmington Hills. We found that it was an efficient way to interact with people to create awareness about unprivileged children.

Over a hundred people braved unseasonal chill weather to make this event a success. To encourage people of all ages the walk covered 1K and 5K distances.



Walk for Education participants; henna tattoo; younger supporters

Support a Project

Asha Detroit's "Support A Project" (SAP) program makes it possible for an individual to sponsor the cost of education and/or total living expenses for underprivileged children in India. You can choose to support a project from the projects listed below.

Asha selects and commits to projects only after careful site visits by volunteers and after analyzing the track records and historic overhead costs of a particular project. Key benefits to donors are:

- Quarterly updates on the project
- Annual financial report
- A site visit report including photographs

Participation in the SAP program is a very rewarding experience. The program provides a platform where a donor can see how his/her contribution has made a profound difference in the life of underprivileged children. Your small contribution can have a significant impact on a child's education.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>\$/6mos</i>
BISWA	Orissa	Basic education for first generation learners	181	100
Kuvempu	Karnataka	Evening tuition to stop dropouts from Govt. schools	671	120
Purna Pragna Trust	Karnataka	Alternative education until seventh grade	40	100
Shanti Sadhna Ashram	Assam	Pre-primary and primary (formal) education	411	120

To sign up for support-a-project, email ashadetroit@yahoo.com or call (248) 210-9512.

Computer Shipment Project

Asha-Detroit has taken a new initiative in 2005 to explore the bulk shipment of donated used computers to India by partnering with the non-profit group People to Support People (PTSP) Foundation. The Director of PTSP Foundation, Mr. Jiwan Prakash Sondhi, is chairperson of Bharatiya Temple Seniors and "India Club" Seniors community center in Troy. The PTSP Foundation has been collecting working used computers and monetary donations to fund the shipment of the computers to India. The PTSP Foundation is targeting a shipment of 200 computers for late 2005 to a rural development project that is part of DRI (Deendayal Research Institute) in Chitrakoot, India where the computers will be used at 4 schools and at an Ayurvedic Research Center. See the PTSP Foundation website at <http://www.peoplefoundation.org/>

Asha-Detroit has supported the PTSP Foundation by helping with hardware checks, clearing hard drives, and transporting computers from work sites to dedicated storage sites. Mr. Raj Jaggi, Technology Coordinator of the PTSP Foundation, has provided the facilities of his business Microwise, located in Southfield, as the work site for donated computers. Asha-Detroit is investigating the economics as well as the collection and disbursement process proposed by the PTSP Foundation as a potential means to do similarly for existing Asha projects spread throughout India.

The PTSP Foundation has reached about half of its goal of collecting 200 computers. If you would like to donate a working Pentium III or faster used computer to the PTSP Foundation, please contact Mr. Sondhi at jpsondhi@yahoo.com. If you would like to volunteer to support Asha-Detroit's involvement with the project, please contact Asha-Detroit volunteer Deepak Aswani at tensor412@yahoo.com.

Asha-14 Conference

May 28-30, Chicago

Asha-Chicago is proud to host Asha volunteers from around the world who are joining in Chicago for a weekend of discussion, analysis and creative thinking on the issues ranging from core activities to future direction. The aim of the conference is not just to sit and listen, but for volunteers from all different chapters to meet and exchange ideas. There is an immense pool of talent available within Asha - and that's something that each and every chapter should be able to utilize. For more information visit <http://www.ashanet.org/conferences/asha-14/>

Asha - Detroit Contribution Form

- o I am enclosing a check for \$ _____
- o I would like to make a monthly contribution of \$ _____

(Please make your checks payable to Asha for Education)

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Email: _____
 Tel: _____



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