



# ASHA KIRAN

The Asha for Education Newsletter

Vol. 2, Issue 4, July-Aug 1999

## About Asha

Asha for education is a non-profit voluntary organization dedicated to the support of basic education in India. Asha strives to provide financial assistance to educate underprivileged children in India and to increase awareness within the local community about these issues. Asha's actions are based on the firm belief that education is a critical and effective catalyst for social and economic change in India.

## Donate Online!

The Asha E-commerce team has enabled online donations at <http://www.ashanet.org/donate/>. You can donate instantly through a secure server provided by i-Check if you have a checking account with an U.S. or Canadian bank.

## Shop the web!

Visit <http://www.ashanet.org/shop.html>. Use the iGive virtual mall and help Asha every time you browse or buy. Give gifts (India Gift Shop) or flowers (GreatFlowers) through the website and donate 10% of the sales to Asha. Buy books, CD's, or videos from Amazon.com and upto 5% of your purchase will go to children in India due to Asha's affiliation.

**All this at no extra cost to you!**

## The 2<sup>nd</sup> Asha Conference

Asha's phenomenal growth over the past two years necessitated an all-chapter meet to discuss various issues. The activities, decisions and volunteer responsibilities are summarized in this article. Please refer to the Conference website (<http://www.ashanet.org/Dbase/conference/>) for specific details.

**Growing in Strength:** Presentations by 16 chapters covering their major accomplishments and concerns revealed that although the chapters were varied (in terms of size and age), they were facing many common issues (volunteer attrition, transferring knowledge to new volunteers). These issues were covered in a set of mini-workshops, which led to the formation of teams working on coordination, fundraising, web and finance. These teams are compiling a list "do's and don'ts" to help streamline chapter operations.

**Working Together:** The recent increase in national level activities is bringing all Asha chapters closer together. It is also providing a motivation to refine our decision making process at the national level. A small team of volunteers is working to establish efficient decision making processes while retaining Asha's open framework.

**Asha 2000:** After completing his studies in the US this year, Shanmuga (Asha Princeton) is planning to return to India and spend a year travelling across the country

visiting the various NGOs supported by Asha. The goal is to provide:

- An in-depth analysis of the projects supported by Asha
- A comparative study of projects
- A measure of Asha's impact over the past 10 years
- Better understanding of issues faced by the NGOs

**Beyond a Service Provider:** Venu Govindu started off the session on "Asha Roadmap" with the message that Asha should strive to be more than a "service provider" and aim towards a deeper relationship with our projects. After hours of discussions, volunteers compiled a list of what they would like to see in an ideal project. Among the points listed: education as a part of community development, utilizing and improving upon the existing formal education system, self-sufficiency, emphasis on educating girls, and projects with clear financial reporting.

**Asha Fellows:** Volunteers are evaluating a promising new initiative; an "Asha Fellows" program to provide financial and moral support to individuals interested in social work. We are learning about other organizations' programs to decide on the best implementation model for Asha.

The conference ended on a high note with Dr. Parameshwara Rao's moving, thought provoking speech. On the whole, the conference achieved its purpose; passionate volunteers from across the country met face to face and exchanged views. Having synced up and recharged, the Asha community is well set for the next millennium!



The 60 volunteers (40 from out of town!) posing for a group photo at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asha conference hosted by Asha MIT over the Memorial Day weekend.

<b>Chicago</b> , July/August, Contact Mukund (847 781 1724)	The Cricket World Cup may be over, but the mania continues at Asha Chicago's IV annual cricket tournament.
<b>Delaware</b> , August 28 <sup>th</sup> , University of Delaware, Contact Roopesh (302 737 3069)	Mrs. Nomita Chandy, the founder of Ashraya, one of Asha Delaware's projects, will be giving a talk at the University of Delaware. Volunteers from nearby chapters (Philadelphia and Princeton) will also be attending the talk.
<b>Kentucky</b> , July 13 <sup>th</sup> – August 3 <sup>rd</sup> , Contact Shruti (502 852 3183)	The Kentucky chapter will be raising awareness by participating in the Freshman Orientation information fair at the University of Louisville.
<b>New York</b> , August 15 <sup>th</sup> , The streets of Manhattan, Contact Ranjeet (201 795 2193)	Asha NYC/NJ will be participating in the annual India-Day parade in New York. Last year volunteers received TV coverage and got to see Anupam Kher and Manisha Koirala at close quarters! They had so much fun that participation this year was a no brainer.
<b>Seattle</b> , July 17 <sup>th</sup> , Lake Sammamish State park, Contact Archana (425 882 1899)	Asha Seattle's annual picnic will be held on Saturday, the 17 <sup>th</sup> of July at the Lake Sammamish State park. Over 200 people are expected for this fundraising event. There'll be food, interesting games and hopefully lots of sunshine!
<b>Washington DC</b> , July 24 <sup>th</sup> -25 <sup>th</sup> , Univ. of Maryland, College Park. Contact Sukumar (202 667 6299)	Dr. Parameshwara Rao continues on his quest to unite the various volunteer groups in the US. This 2 day brainstorming session at Washington DC will be attended by volunteers from Asha, AID, CRY, ILP, IDRFB among others.

### Work An Hour for Education '99

On the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of India's independence, 38 % percent of her children are illiterate. On August 16<sup>th</sup>, thousands across the globe will donate an hour's pay or more to the cause of education in India. Let us pledge together: an hour of our pay, the gift of education for a child. For more information, please visit [www.ashanet.org/workanhour](http://www.ashanet.org/workanhour).

The \$30,000 raised by Work an Hour'98 was used to fund the following projects:

#### ASTHA, Delhi

Alternative Strategies for the Handicapped (ASTHA) provides professional services to persons with disabilities (such as cerebral palsy and autism). It seeks to raise awareness and increase the acceptability of people with disabilities in society.

Work an Hour'98 funds are being used to set up a permanent research and communication center, to produce training and awareness raising materials in the area of disability. Asha-Seattle is funding the recurring expenditure which takes care of transport facilities

for children, salaries for its educators, physiotherapists, pediatricians and pediatric neurologists. Himabindu Thota ([hthota@microsoft.com](mailto:hthota@microsoft.com)) has more information about ASTHA.

#### Asha Center, Lucknow

The Asha center will be multidimensional, providing primary education and vocational skills, while emphasizing core values of trust, love and harmony with nature. More than 100 children, mainly from the socio-economically weak fisherfolk community living in nearby villages, will be provided free education. The school will be run by teachers engaged in self-reliance activities: herbal garden cultivation, bee keeping and making chyawanprash and agarbathis.

The center will be used to train volunteers and teachers for the purpose of launching a movement in alternative education. It will also serve as a base for doing volunteer work or for research by part-time volunteers. Dr. Sandeep Pandey (one of the founders of Asha) will be leading this effort. Work an Hour'98 funding is being used to

procure land for the Asha center. Please contact Neeta Deshpande ([neeta\\_asha@hotmail.com](mailto:neeta_asha@hotmail.com)) for further details.

#### Economically Disadvantaged Migrant Workers' Children, Kanpur

Access to education is extremely difficult for children of poor migrant construction workers and agricultural labourers, given their migratory life and adverse socio-economic conditions. To tackle such problems, Vijaya Didi and Asha-India are operating centers in Kanpur to enroll 5-10 year old children in formal schools and to provide non formal education to those unable to attend schools.

In addition to basic literacy, vocational training will be provided for older children. A crèche for taking care of babies and education for the labourers, to increase their awareness of health, legal rights and democratic institutions, will also be undertaken. Work an Hour'98 funds will cover expenses of these centers for the next three years. You can contact Sanjay Chandran ([schandran@pardesign.com](mailto:schandran@pardesign.com)) for more information.

*By the year 2000 every second illiterate person in the world will be an Indian.*

### We need you!

Join Asha	Give Asha	Partake Asha	Buy Asha
Be a part of a motivated group of people	You can make tax exempt donations to Asha	Participate in various Asha events and programs	Buy Asha merchandise (calendars, mugs and cards)

You can make checks payable to "Asha for Education" and mail them to: Asha for Education, Anthony Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. 100% of your contributions go towards supporting Asha projects in India. All administrative expenses are borne by Asha volunteers. Asha for Education is a non profit organization.

Visit Asha on the web at <http://www.ashanet.org/>