



Prakash

Asha - Princeton Newsletter

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Fall 2005

It is hard to believe that another year has scrolled by. Time does fly when you are having fun. We continue to have fun and challenging times at Asha Princeton. Speaking of fun, one noteworthy event - Sridhar Desikan, one of our volunteers, completed the Asha Marathon and met his fundraising goal. This should motivate more volunteers and supporters to follow suit in 2006. And speaking of challenges, we continue to have challenges finding adequate financial support from our donors. Notwithstanding that, Asha Princeton had another productive year - we continued to support and debate on our projects, several speakers shared their experiences through the year and we have started to work closely with AID in Princeton, an organization with similar goals as Asha.

Fundraiser: Utsav2005

Asha Utsav - the Asha Princeton annual fundraiser was held in late April at the Community Middle School in Plainsboro. A local group - Gitanjali entertained the audience with a variety of popular Indian music. The event netted over \$13,000 after expenses and including corporate and individual sponsorships.

Visitors and Speakers

Dr. & Mrs. P. Sudhakar, Harita Ecological Institute

Dr. Sudhakar and Mrs. P. Sudhakar created the Harita Ecological Institute in 1994 on a twelve acre campus in Khammam, Andhra Pradesh. The couple visited Asha Princeton in April. The Haritha Ecological Institute is an educational institution comprising a residential school and an R&D Center. The common thread running through all its programs is a

concern for the environment. Environmental education is integrated into their curriculum. They described the mechanisms developed at the Institute to harness cattle and bicycle power for generating electricity and wet grinding. They also described a lot of projects involving the use of bamboo as construction material.

Dr. Suresh Veeraraghavan, Activist.

Dr. Suresh, who visited us again in June 2005, is a well known activist in India who is working with the Indian government in several areas including water, education, good governance, Tsunami relief and human rights. Dr. Suresh is the General Secretary for the People's Union for Civil Liberties, He has spoken to Asha Princeton earlier in October 2004.

On this visit, he spoke about his tsunami-related and education-related work with the Tamil Nadu state government in India.

Netika Raval, Asha President

Netika visited several chapters on the East Coast in June 2005 including Asha Princeton. The discussions centered around Asha activities, the growth of the organization and challenges and our effectiveness in the mission. Netika pointed out that with the number of chapters worldwide growing to about 70, and the annual funds raised increasing by 40% in the last four years, there were a lot of new challenges faced by the growing organization. These included communications, public relations and decision making on an Asha-wide basis. Netika's tour did help energize the local volunteer base to think about the broader issues within Asha. Several of our volunteers including Hansa, Sridhar and Amrisha

participate on a regular basis on issues relating to the broader organization.

Selected Project Updates

Khajurdaha Project

Asha's relationship with the Khajurdaha Nabankar United Club continued to flourish and expand in a very fruitful way. In addition to our usual activity of funding the school (in 2005, we funded at a \$6,500 level), Asha Princeton has helped KNUC put together a bigger proposal for Asha-wide funding through the Work-an-Hour program (WAH). The WAH program in Asha funds larger proposals through an annual fund raising drive across the US.

The KNUC proposal for WAH is to improve the infrastructure of five government primary schools in the area. The total proposal was for about \$49,500. The goal, in the long run, is to be able to positively influence educational aspects and curriculum of the government schools. Good practices from the Asha model school could be introduced.

This cooperation and long term commitment is an example of what is required to make sure that some of the major goals of Asha's mission are accomplished. In the long term, the government infrastructure needs to be improved. Working closely with the local governments as a trusted partner may well be a very effective role for Asha.

Project Coordinator: Sridhar Desikan

Email: sridhar_desikan2003@yahoo.com

Website: <http://www.ashanet.org/princeton/projects/khajurdaha>

Vasundhara Project

Vasundhara - the science-on-wheels program continues to function very well. Asha Princeton has supported this project since 1999. Hundreds of children continue to enjoy the benefits of this program in the Konkan region

of Maharashtra. In 2005, we supported this project at the \$9,000 level.

We, at Asha Princeton, constantly debate the long term viability of this program given that there is no sustainability model in this project. The managing trustees of Vasundhara are aware of this issue and have reported their attempts and progress to get local support and also alternative sources of funding. While this debate is interesting, such projects (where we are trying to create an interest in science) need a recurring source of support that is often provided by a trust fund. This is a challenge in the long term for Asha and its supporters to solve. Asha Princeton is exploring the potential of setting up a corpus fund with US-based organizations that have a local interest in Vasundhara.

Project Coordinator: Vikas Sawant

Email: asha_dude@yahoo.com

Webpage: <http://www.ashanet.org/princeton/projects/vasundhara>

Chilla Project

This is a relatively new engagement for Asha Princeton which we initiated in 2004. It is intended to support a home for the children of sex workers. These children are at extreme risk due to the stigma attached to the profession and due to their constant exposure to the streets. Anil and Roja, who run the home in Tiruvanathapuram, Kerala, are a unique couple who have dedicated a good part of their lives to this cause. Currently, Chilla houses a dozen children whose complete needs are met including counseling. Chilla also distributes study material to many more children on sex workers in the city.

Manoj, the project coordinator, graduated this year (congrats!) and has moved to teach at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. He continues to monitor the project and is trying to secure support at the local Asha chapter. Regular logs of the activities of the children can be found on the project website. The

questions that the children ask are also captured and it makes fascinating reading.

Project Coordinator: Manoj M.P.

Email: mp@cs.princeton.edu

Webpage: <http://www.ashanet.org/princeton/projects/chilla>

Anu and Krishna - Asha Fellows

S. Anuradha and T. Krishna are two architects who, disillusioned with the formal education system, moved to the village community of Gandhigram in Tamil Nadu in 1988. They are currently supported with Asha Fellowships (they were each funded at a \$2,100 level annually) for their work in promoting and practicing an environmentally sustainable lifestyle, working in a children's learning center where children are offered alternate, fun, learning activities after school or given individual tutoring if needed. In addition, they are also involved with the development of technology for building construction using local materials.

In 1993, Anu & Krishna shifted to Gudalur, a tribal area in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu, where they worked with the NGO ACCORD to equip adivasi youth with various skills needed for managing their own community.

Anu & Krishna produce a quarterly newsletter (check our website for this) which is very informative on their range of activities. We continue to discover that supporting individuals on Asha Fellowships can be very rewarding for the overall learning experience for Asha volunteers and supporters.

Webpage: <http://www.ashanet.org/princeton/projects/anu-krishna>

Asha Sanctuary

Asha **Sanctuary** Focus Group for Children at Risk was formed in July 2003. The goal of the focus group was to foster sharing of information and resources among other partner

organizations working towards common goals. Sanctuary's partner organizations work with children of women in prostitution, runaway children, street children and children with drug problems. The partners operate half-way homes, after school programs, vocational training programs for women and young adults that have been rehabilitated from drug abuse cycles.

Sanctuary organized its first conference in December 2003, which was funded in part by Asha, Princeton, and hosted by Odanadi Seva Samasthe in Mysore. Since then, a quarterly newsletter is being produced and multiple workshops/meetings have taken place in different locations. **A second conference is being organized in Kolkata on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd January 2006.** This event will be hosted by Sanlaap and Tomorrows Foundation, both of which are based in Kolkata. The broad theme of the conference is the role of gender in sexual exploitation that will be woven into various discussions including recent development on the legal front and the various manifestation of the abuse. The goals of this conference are to understand and leverage recent changes in law in India that affect the gender equation, among other things.

Coordinator: Hansa Shah

Email: hansa@go2g2.com

Webpage: <http://www.ashanet.org/princeton/projects/sanctuary>

Marathon Report

Volunteers from Asha Central New Jersey and AID Princeton teamed up to organize a marathon fundraising effort this year. Team Asha has now become a nation-wide effort with as many as seven chapters participating in this successful fundraising program.

Here's how it works: Team Asha trains individuals achieve their personal goal of

running a marathon. In return, the runners raise awareness and funds for Asha's projects.

This year, 31 local runners trained together and 19 of them ran and finished the Philadelphia marathon. Sridhar, one of Princeton volunteers participated in this effort as well. If you have a long-term goal of getting fit and healthy and run a marathon, we may be able to help you achieve your goal. Please do get in touch with us.

Asha Internship Program - Apply today!

The highly successful Asha Internship program provides a unique opportunity for individuals who are interested in hands on volunteering in India to spend six weeks to a year at an Asha sponsored project in India. The Asha Internship program is currently in its third year of matching up interns across the world who want to get an exciting and intense experience in volunteering at a project (which have the infrastructure and desire to host interns).

Apply at www.ashanet.org/internship, fill up the application and submit it internship@ashanet.org. The Asha internship team will evaluate the application and if it meets the requirements, will interview the intern and will work with the potential intern to find a suitable project in India, interacting with the NGOs in the process. The whole process can take a month, but interns feel the experience lasts a lifetime! Apply Today!

Financial Report for 2005

The following table summarizes our financials for the year 2005. Asha is a zero-overhead organization. Volunteers bear all the administrative costs. Detailed financial reports are available on our website.

Income/Expense of Asha, Princeton-2005		
Category	Revenue	Expense
2004 Balance	\$26,680.28	
Fund Raiser 2004 Revenues		
Total Fund Raiser Revenues	\$16,620.00	
Fund Raiser Expenses		\$ 3,604.00
Net Fund Raiser Proceeds	\$13,016.00	
Other Donations	\$ 7,720.00	
Project Expenses		
Vasundhara		\$ 9,020.00
Asha Fellowships		\$ 4,200.00
Khajurdaha		\$ 6,500.00
Balance (Dec. 2005)	\$ 27,696.28	

Asha Princeton solicits your continued support for our projects. Please make generous contributions.

**Asha for Education - Princeton
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All contributions (non-marketing related) are tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). Federal Employee Identification number is 77-0459884.