

*Greetings All,*

*In the first issue of 2010, we bring you the two success stories from Door Step School in Maharashtra. With persistent efforts, the Door Step coordinators, managed to make big changes in life of Shenaj and Komal. We at Asha Seattle have always believed that a significant socio-economic change can be brought about in India by educating the underprivileged. These two success stories reinforce our belief and indicate we are on right path, making progress with small yet firm steps.*

*Also featuring an article on a volunteer's tryst with climb on Mount Rainier, to raise funds for Asha Seattle. The climb was not easy but Alok made all the way to top.*

*Thank you all the volunteers and donors for your determination to support our projects and all the hard work to make our projects a success. We look forward to your support and encouragement along with your feedback on newsletter articles.*

*- Asha Seattle Team*

## Changing Lives with Education

By Vidyanand Rajpathak, Asha Volunteer

"Door Step School" ([www.doorstepschool.org](http://www.doorstepschool.org)) is an NGO working in Mumbai and Pune. It was established in Mumbai, India in 1988 and later expanded to Pune in 1989 with the aim of addressing literacy amongst the marginalized sections of society. In spite of wide spread infrastructure of formal education a large number of children remained uncovered by the system. The school provides education and support to the often-forgotten children of pavement dwellers, slum dwellers, construction-site families and many other underprivileged families. Many of these children are not enrolled in school and have limited access to books and a place to study. Additionally, many children drop out of school to work or care for younger children. DSS is trying to bridge this gap by bringing education to the "Doorstep" of these underprivileged children. Programs divided into two main categories:

**Direct Education Program (Project Foundation):** The program caters to children in slum communities, pavement communities and construction sites, where the classes are set up where the children are. For children living in pavement communities or at locations where there are no rooms for classes the School on Wheels works as a mobile classroom.

The Direct Education Program offers:

1. Non-Formal Education (NFE) – For non-school going children in the age group of 6 to 14 years.
2. Study Classes – For school going children in the 1st and 2nd standard.
3. Balwadi – For preschoolers in age groups of 3 to 5 years.
4. School on Wheels - Buses that serve as mobile classrooms to reach difficult areas or to collect children from smaller sites to one location.
5. Crèche – Caters to children in the age group of 0 to 3 years.
6. School Transportation – An added service provided for bringing children to municipal schools and also collect them from different construction sites to one.
7. Age certificate, school enrollment and external examination

**School Intervention Program (Project Grow With Books):**

This is a 90 minutes per school week program that caters to students of Municipal Schools. The main goal of this program is to enhance reading abilities of the children and to inculcate reading habits in them. Currently Door Step School has its School Intervention Program in 131 schools In Pune and Pimpri Chichwad area.

**Success Stories :**

*Sehnaj* of Pashankar center has been attending the NFE clas-

ses from 2007. In April 2007 she appeared for the 1st Standard external examination and stood first in the exam. In spite of her success, her parents were not keen to enroll her in a Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) School and the concerns of the DSS coordinator failed to convince her parents otherwise. Afterwards she went to her native place but since she was so sincere she carried books with her. When she returned from her native place she had completed most of the syllabus of the 4th Standard. The external examination for the 4th Standard was to be held on 18th April 2009. Due to some difficulty Sehnaj could not reach Pune before the examination but she reached the next day. The DSS coordinator requested the authorities of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan to cooperate and allow Sehnaj to appear for the exam. She was allowed to appear for the examination and passed the 4th Standard with 62% marks. Sehnaj's determination and success in the examination, made her mother agree to let her enroll in a Pune Municipal School but her father was still reluctant. With relentless efforts over a period of 2 years, DSS coordinator finally convinced her father to enroll her in school. In June 2009 she was enrolled in the 5th standard in Saint Tukaram School, Pashan.



*Sehnaj (Left) and Komal (Right)*

*Komal Adagale* stays in a community slum adjacent to the DDS center at Pashankar Vitbhatti. After relentless efforts by DSS teachers and coordinators her parents were finally convinced to enroll her in the Non Formal Education classes when she was 9 years old. She was enrolled in a Municipal School at Pashan in the subsequent year. Her performance in school was excellent. Though she was older than her other classmates, she continues her education without any hesitation and was determined to complete her education. Now her

parents are also convinced and they support her education whole heartedly. Today Komal is 13 years old and is studying in the 4th standard. She stood 1st in the annual examination of the 3rd standard and this year she was selected for scholarship exam by the school.

## It takes a step to climb Mt. Rainer

By Alok Shriram, Asha Volunteer

### **Epilogue:**

July 17th 2009, 8:30 AM : We stood on the top of Mt Rainier (14,411 feet). The body was tired and broken, the mind reveling in the fact that we had made it all the way to summit, the view was "SPECTACULAR" says Alok, who climbed mount Rainer last year to raise funds for Asha Seattle. Below is an account of his journey.

### **The Climb**

**Day 0:** Alok and his team reached the campground at around 9:00 pm the night before, set up camp quickly near a river and crashed for the night. Their plan on day one was to hit the trail head by 8:30 and getting to Emmons flats by the evening.

**Day 1:** Due to certain logistics issue the team winded up hitting the trail-head at 11:15 am, by that time the sun was out in full force. Two hours into the hike Alok started feeling a little pain on the lower part of his shin, where his boot was digging into his leg. The pain in his leg would bother Alok on and off for the next two days. After another hour of hiking to the toe of the Inter-Glacier the team took a break for lunch. The team roped up and started up the steep Inter-Glacier slope and reached the head at about 6:15 pm. They decided to camp at Camp Curtis before it got too dark. The days hike/climb took a toll on Alok and no matter how much he drank he still felt dehydrated.

**Day 2:** The team had an early start by 8:00 am and the first order of business was to get down to the Glacier from where they had pitched camp. This was easier said than done, since the only way to approach the glacier was a down climb on a really loose scree and rock filled slope. Things got even more intense after getting to the Emmons glacier which was filled with cracks and crevasses all around and they could not af-



*Alok (Left) Setting up a crevasse rescue system*

ford the slightest of mistake or risk serious injury. The climbing on that day was relatively easy and they made good progress on the glacier. As they neared Camp Schurman the team hit a veritable maze of crevasses, that were yawning chasms which went deep into the ground. The team was now 5 hours away from the summit and Alok was starting to get anxious. Everything looked perfect otherwise, the weather was holding up great, snow conditions were good and the route was well travelled. The only unknown to Alok was if he would be able to complete the hike. He played the scenario of reaching the summit over and over again in his head and convinced himself that everything was in place for tomorrow. Alok recalled barely getting any sleep that night because the adrenaline rush kept him up all night.

**Day 3:** The team started with great enthusiasm, Alok was however unable to put his fears to rest because he was nervous about being the slowest member in the team. 45 minutes into the climb Alok's shin explodes with pain, he gasps and stumbles for a second, but continues up the trail. The pain was causing him to take hurried steps and breathe faster. After enduring the pain for 15 minutes the team looked at his leg and we relieved to find nothing serious with his leg. Three hours later at about 12,000 feet and Alok recalls being reduced to a series of good steps followed by a series of

doddering ones to ease the pain. He was painfully guilty of slowing the team down and asked them to go ahead without him. The team's response was to change positions and encouraged him all the way up. Alok remembers focusing on his team mates shoes though the next 2000 ft. climb and reciting "Right...Left...Right...Left...Breathe..". Somewhere in the distance Alok hears the radio crackle to announce that two of his team has reached the summit. Alok summoned courage to look up - skyline now has a brown rocky ridge and the summit 300 feet above him. Spent.. exhausted.. but someplace at the back of his mind it registered to him that "we are here.. we made the summit !!!!".



*Alok (Right) and John (Left) on the summit of Mt. Ranier*

### **Prologue:**

Alok recovered from his injury and has already plans to do another climb!!! Alok managed to raise 2500\$ for Asha Seattle as a part of his climb to the summit to Mount Rainier. For all his efforts the Asha Seattle team would like to say "Thank you". In the words of Alok "The training for such a climb is a long and painful process, working my way up to carrying a 60 pound pack on fairly steep slopes can become a chore and at times monotonous. However this discomfort is probably nothing compared to the daily struggles that under-privileged kids in India face on a Daily basis".

## **EVENTS**

Geetanjali - April 10th

Wheels of Change - July 17th - 18th

Miles for Smiles - June 26th

**Asha for Education**

PO Box 2407

Redmond, WA 98073-2407



Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Redmond WA  
Permit Number  
1282

Return Service Requested



**Asha Contribution Slip**

- I am enclosing:  \$25    \$50    \$100
- I would like to make a quarterly contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your checks payable to 'Asha for education'

*You can mail your contribution to:*

Asha for Education  
PO Box 2407, Redmond, WA 98073-2407

*100% of your contributions go towards Asha's projects in India. Your contributions are Tax deductible.*

**To learn more join us at our bi-monthly meetings. All are Welcome!**

April 07, 2010 Wednesday 7.30PM-9:30PM  
RTC/LWSD No 414, Morton Johnson

April, 21 2010 Wednesday 7.30PM-9:30PM  
RTC/LWSD No 414, Morton Johnson

May 05, 2010 Wednesday 7.30PM-9:30PM  
RTC/LWSD No 414, Morton Johnson

May 20, 2010 Thursday 7.30PM-9:30PM  
RTC/LWSD No 414, Morton Johnson

Contact Ken (206-706-8158)

For additional meeting dates and information  
[www.ashanet.org/seattle/resources/meetings/](http://www.ashanet.org/seattle/resources/meetings/)

For specific requests and queries, please contact us at:

**Email: [seattle@ashanet.org](mailto:seattle@ashanet.org)**  
**Phone: 425 890 8515**

**Donations are welcome, and will go a long way in changing many lives in India.**