

Greetings All,

Welcome back. We start off this issue of Asha Kiran with a article that brings to attention the discrimination faced by women in Bhopal and the problems faced by Muskaan to acquire land for their offices in Bhopal. We also showcase the perspective of one of our very own Asha volunteer who trained for the Rock 'n' Roll marathon. Team Asha raised 7465\$ from the Rock 'n' Roll marathon and would like to thank you for your support!

Give Asha... Give Hope is our fundraising season, running from Labor Day to Thanksgiving. We are hosting several events and fund raisers in this season. We look forward to your support and participation in the upcoming events. We also request you to raise awareness about Asha so that we can raise the remaining \$454k of the \$975k target for this year.

- Asha Seattle Team

A Humble Plea

By Deb Kukreja

Dear Kind and Courageous Official,

Nearly five years ago, a visit to, Muskaan profoundly influenced my dedication to education and socio-economic development in India. Located in Bhopal, Muskaan is an exemplary example of how respect for all life can transform basti (slum) communities. Women deserve to collect trash from the roadside without fear of police harassment, to travel to immunization clinics without ridicule, to send children to school without taunting from peers, and tragically, teachers.

With incredible determination and loving spirit, Shivani Taneja initially started Muskaan in 1997 as an effort to provide meaningful education to twenty children from basti communities in Bhopal. Interactions with families residing in the slums revealed realities of the children's daily challenges. A child's path in education stems from family, convincing Muskaan to include programs that incorporate whole communities, 450+ children and their families. Community programs within the bastis include savings groups, income generation, and health care initiatives.

I first visited Muskaan in December of 2005. I was immediately struck by Shivani's warm and trusting hand extended to every individual walking through its doors. Children freely darted in and out of the office, playing on the sidewalks, shrieking with laughter, relaxed in an environment built of trust and love by

the dedication of Muskaan's workers. Personal possessions remained unlocked; true trust bestowed to the arms of all children and visitors passing through.

Unfortunately, innate faith and trust in a child's right to love does not extend to the neighboring communities in which Muskaan resides. Complaints are common. Although seldom victimized, years of conditioning create fear in landlords and tenants alike. Discrimination and distrust pervade. Our society finds it difficult to think beyond stereotypes, to trust nature's disposition of a child's innocence.

In the time I have known Shivani, Muskaan has shifted offices four times. They are in their fifth space within five years. Discrimination disrupts learning without regard, forcing Muskaan to relocate so children feel free to embrace education. Moving impacts the office as the well as Muskaan's nearby hostel which allows girls to pursue dreams unknown to their parent's generation.

In 2007, I visited the girl's hostel, a five-minute drive from the office's hustle and bustle of activity. Ten girls surrounded me. They craved learning, education is their wings to personal betterment. In animated voices, they revealed their dreams. Three voices continue to resonate in my ears. One girl wanted to be a preschool teacher, one an engineer, a third an artist. All three graduated 12th standard that year, the first children to do so in Muskaan. Two of them are currently in college, their paths infusing the dreams of others. The hostel closed last year, not due to financial constraints, but to discrimination.

Girls still study in close camaraderie the best they can, but they can no longer study in peace away from the temptation of boys, no longer from the pressures of pending engagements and calls of marriage. The girls help each other out. Families graciously extend open arms; some girls live with their friend's families to ease mounting pressure. But it's not the same as the hostel.

Discrimination more than finances inhibits Muskaan's ability to acquire subsidized land promised by the government caught in an endless circle of tape. For the last two years, Muskaan has searched for land to build their own teaching center, office, and hostel under one roof, a place where children can learn, knowing their home will remain.

Last year, a donor graciously pledged some money to purchase land and construct a permanent space. Private land is possible, but exorbitantly pricy. The \$300,000 + US dollars expended on private land would better serve Muskaan's extended educational plan, deepening the children's respect and commitment to education. From the beginning, Shivani has laboriously worked hand-in-hand with the government in both health and education. Muskaan provides health care services to more than 25 bastis in Bhopal. The Staff tirelessly works in government schools to support children from the bastis, educating teachers as well as students in an aging, underfunded school system. The government has graciously pledged land at subsidized rates on behalf of Muskaan's patient and persistent efforts. Somewhere, the pledged land spins circles in bureaucratic prose to no avail. Land awaits Muskaan's loving inhabitation, lost in hope. Somewhere discrimination still surpasses equality for all; humanly judgment of karma does not yet appreciate the hearts of people who deserve land the most, an organization that loves without limits.

Please hear my humble plea. To the sincere official tired with the ins and outs of routine in a locked system: Muskaan makes a tremendous amount of difference to many lives in Bhopal. They love without limits, from families residing in basti communities to tired teachers in government schools. Tata respects

their work as well as generous donors. Please review their request for land and come through with your pledge. They have stood by you in times of doubt, and I faithfully believe, that you will too.

My experience with Miles for Smiles

By Kalpana Sanghrajka, Asha Volunteer

March 2010,

A few weeks back, I woke up one morning and signed up for a half marathon. The thought of participating in one had been on my mind for a few years. Fighting the inertia one morning, I did sign-up and that was the beginning of the real fight with myself to give up an hour during the week day mornings to practice. It's been a week and it's not so bad at all. I say, where there's a will there is a way. That said, if there are hills on the way, I am breathless. So let's see if the hill or the will gets the better of me.

April 2010,

My first walk, was 20 minutes a mile. Walking was not the difficult part, it was forcing myself to make time for it. I was practicing on my own. Hard as it felt initially, I started enjoying it after a while. From 2 miles to 5.5 miles was my progress in one month. Not bad eh?

May 2010,

Early in May, I crossed the half-of-half marathon mark. By then, Team Asha was practicing regularly. Just seeing the level of dedication and enthusiasm put in by the coordinators, made me want to help them out. While timing never worked for me to join Team Asha during practice sessions, it became very clear the selfless bunch of coordinators and the coach were dedicated to a cause they truly believed in. Mid-May, I crossed the 9 mile mark! I kicked off my fundraising campaign. With a goal of 500\$ to raise, I wrote a poem for my campaign.

There is a difference I want to make

For those less fortunate

EVENTS

Wheels of Change - July 17th - 18th

Miles for Smiles - June 26th

Art For Asha - Sept 21st -23rd

AlGoRhythms - Oct 2nd

Asha SAT Classes - Oct 2nd - 3rd

*By participating in a half marathon
I want to help them advance
We must be the change we wish to see
Said the great Gandhi
You don't have to be great to make the change
Small donations can help bridge the disparity
For every 100\$ that you vow
Another 25\$ I will add
No donation is big or small
A total of 500\$ is my goal
I have an incentive to do my best,
God bless, I've been fortunate
To be where I am today
A good Samaritan once did the same
Education is the key to success
Your donation will help the underprivileged progress
So do your bit here and now
Go ahead and pledge your vow
June 2010,*

*On the day of the run, I was charged with the energy around me, 27000 people at 6.00am all getting ready to run! Wow! Had never before seen that kind of a crowd at that hour ever before. There was music, there was breakfast, there was water, there was cheer and excitement in the air!
Along the way, it was fun to see people of all ages running. From little kids to teenagers to those well over my mom's age! There was never a moment of being alone there were people cheering all along.
Completing the run was quite an experience! I clocked at 13 minutes a mile (down from 20 when I first started practice). Little did I know they gave a medal at the end! It was my very first ever! For all the children that will benefit from the donations, this medal is for you! For walking 13.1 miles while seemed long, it is nothing compared to the struggles you face and rise above. To those reading this article, do consider joining Team Asha, no matter what your endurance level is. Training is fun and healthy! You'll never feel left behind. There's always a first time and someone to support you.*

The 10th Annual Subeer D. Manhas Charitable Golf Tournament

Benefiting Asha for Education

Sunday, October 3rd, 2010 | Tee time: 8 am (reverse shot-gun start)

(Please arrive by 7am for registration and warm-up)

The Golf Club at Redmond Ridge, Redmond, Washington

www.redmondridgegolf.com

Lunch and Awards Ceremony to follow tournament, with prizes for:

** Gross Score Competition *Net Score Competition *Net Team Best Ball Competition *Various Skills Competition*

\$100 suggested donation per player

100% of proceeds to benefit Asha for Education

Please make checks payable to: Asha for Education

Mail to: Sonia Manhas, 7244 92nd Ave SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040

Please RSVP (with handicap) to Subeer ASAP as space is limited

Email: subeer.manhas@ubs.com

w. 425.990.2772 c 425.830.0002

Asha for Education

PO Box 2407

Redmond, WA 98073-2407



Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
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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!

September 1, 2010 Wednesday 7.30PM-9:30PM
RTC/LWSD No 414, Morton Johnson

September 15, 2010 Wednesday 7.30PM-9:30PM
RTC/LWSD No 414, Morton Johnson

October 6, 2010 Wednesday 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/

For specific requests and queries, please contact us at:

Email: seattle@ashanet.org

Phone: 425 890 8515

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

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Send an email to seattle@ashanet.org