



# Asha Sandesh...

The quarterly newsletter of Asha Atlanta

[www.ashanet.org/atlanta](http://www.ashanet.org/atlanta)

Issue 1, January - June 2009

## About Asha for Education

Asha for Education was started in the year 1991 by 3 young Indians and since then this organization has grown into 66 chapters worldwide: 45 in the US, 14 in India and 7 in Europe, Australia and Singapore - and it is still growing. Asha is a volunteer based organization with over 1000 volunteers who share the belief that education is a critical requisite for an effective socio-economic growth. Also, Asha is a 'zero' overhead organization, which means that 100% of donors' money goes to projects in India.

Asha's major goal is to provide education to unprivileged children in India. We help sustain projects seeking guidance & economic assistance to achieve their objectives. We also actively support and work with similar organizations to help exchange of information and knowledge for improved functioning of the whole organization.

**Asha Atlanta** was established in the year 2003 and currently has more than 40 active volunteers. We supported 14 projects this year and look forward for a sustained growth for the coming years with your help and support.

## A Note to Our Donors...

We apologize for a long break since you last heard from us. Our chapter has grown in the past few years and we welcome you to visit our website for an updated account of our activities and detailed description of the projects we are supporting. In this newsletter we have a brief update on four projects we are currently supporting. There is also a brief account of some of the events we have been involved in the year 2009. We welcome your suggestions and greatly appreciate your support. We are looking forward for a long relationship with you and we hope to actively perform and grow together. We are grateful for your support in sustaining our efforts. Thanks,

**Asha Atlanta Team**

## Asha Means Hope - 'Yes We Can'

I spent my childhood in one of the most populated regions in Kolkata in a lower middle class neighborhood. I witnessed families struggling for the bare necessities of survival and I understood what it takes to live in those circumstances. But I did hate the unfathomable struggle of some of the poorest part of the society, the children. Millions of kids in India sleep on dusty streets, cry from hunger, live life we would not dare to live. But there is hope (Asha) as I witness that people are more aware than before. I have been involved with Asha for Education for last three years and I have always wanted to be a part of an organization that tries to solve the poverty issues through education. I met people with common motivation and aspirations – a common goal. The decentralized structure of the organization makes me more comfortable and yes, I do get to work for the kids - our future.

Whenever I visited any project site in India, the dedication of the people involved was striking. It is not that they cannot choose an alternative lifestyle but some

people are born with the passion to solve others' problems. They suppress the peer pressure and continuous pull to go with the trend, to help the little hopes. This year, I visited several sites led by two NGOs I came to know through Asha. One of them is Trinita society for health education & social research. They work in the slum areas to educate the working children, the poverty-stricken children who have no means to go to formal schools. The secretary and founder, Ms Sampa Roy is very enthusiastic about opening new centers, reaching out to more children and more collaboration with other Asha chapters.

The second NGO is called Inspiration, a research based NGO that follows different models to make the alternative education more efficient. The director, Dr Chandreyee Das told me that the relation between Asha & Indian NGOs should not be a donor-recipient relationship. I understand why she stressed on that because it is very hard when someone gets attached to the kids and spends a considerable amount of time to make them happy. I can understand how it feels when they have to wait for someone far to make the decision for the amount of happiness they can offer to the kids, who suffer every day from starvation, abuse and exploitations.

In India, I see no change in most places. There is still a big communication gap between the different classes in the society. But, I believe we can make things better for the neglected part of our society in our own limits. I believe a group has the power to change when guided properly. Unity is strength and I believe we can bring change but everyone has to be eager to bring the change.

We cannot wait for someone else to do the job. We have to lead, we have to feed, we have to educate & we have to bring everyone to a common platform. It is not charity; it is our responsibility to our country, to our people, to humanity, this world we live in and I believe in "yes we can".

**Padmanava Sen**, Co-ordinator, Asha Atlanta

## Gram Mangal

Project Spotlight

Location: Rural area, Maharashtra  
 Project Steward: Jaideep Sahsrabudhe  
 Project Contact: Prerna Valimbe  
 Children Helped: 348 (178 Girls, 170 Boys)



To provide alternative education to children in rural areas. GramMangal is a registered NGO working in the field of education and was established by Anutai Wagh, the well-known educationist in Maharashtra, in 1982.

## The ING Marathon

### *The Runner*

Running a marathon is an extremely fulfilling experience. It is as psychological as it is physical and during the tough course you sometimes ask the question as to why you signed up in the first place. That's where a cause like children's education in India motivates and you realize that staying on the course is the only way to honor the commitments made to the people that have contributed. Looking back at the experience, it is no more than just a personal accomplishment but one whose impacts are felt around the globe by children who get fed and educated because of the money raised from for the event.

**Sang Venkatraman**, Volunteer, Asha Atlanta

### *The Bystander*

Many Asha Atlanta volunteers ran the ING-Half-marathon and collectively raised \$2267 for the chapter. High point after running the race was not that people were

relieved that it was finished, but instead everyone wanted to know when they can do it 'again'. I was a bystander, distributing flyers and looking in awe at the runners who ran on a chilly Atlanta morning. I could not help but feel proud for all the volunteers. They gave me encouragement to achieve what I have never dreamed of. I am now eagerly waiting for the next run, where I could also share the experience with others. Come, lets join in!

**Yash Kapoor**, Volunteer, Asha Atlanta

## Nishtha

Project Spotlight

Location: West Bengal  
 Project Steward: Padmanava Sen, Abhyuday Mandal, Kathakali Ghosh  
 Project Contact: Mina Das  
 Children Helped: 30



Nishtha is based in the remote village Baikunthapur of South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal, India. Nishtha runs a school for children of sex workers in the Baruipur red light area and provides shelter, food and health facilities to these unfortunate children.

## WAH - Work an Hour 2009

WAH is a summer-long, global fundraising campaign based on a simple concept: "Participants are asked to symbolically work an hour towards the cause of children's education by donating an hour's worth of their salary."

Donate at [www.ashanet.org/workanhour](http://www.ashanet.org/workanhour)

Timeline: **15th July 2009 - 15th September 2009**

## Sanskriti - The Dance Extravaganza

Sanskriti was a new endeavor towards a stage show from our chapter. The event showcased an evening of Indian classical dance focusing on the Bharatanatyam and Kathak style of dancing in its purest form. Both these styles reflect Indian traditions and this show portrayed them as a universal dance form that can be adapted and choreographed to various compositions – from the traditional to the popular music.

Anupa was the choreographer of the show. Her motivation for the event was to bring forth Bharatanatyam and Kathak to a very diverse audience and reflect the ability of these traditional Indian classical dance forms to adapt to contemporary classical and new age music. She choreographed her personal favorite - Chitra: the warrior princess – and used the dance drama to perform a cross-cultural experiment around the universally appealing theme of a woman's search for identity and self-definition. This show was also gave exposure to young students and showcased their talent and hard work.

A highlight of the event was a Jugalbandi (juxtaposition of Bharatanatyam and Kathak) performed by Anupa & Hemant Panwar that appreciated the two dance forms & showcased them in a narrative fashion. Another highlight of the act



was a Bharatanatyam composition called 'Good over Evil' to the beats of renowned tabla maestro Bikram Ghosh and santoor maestro Rahul Sharma. Music for the program was digitally mixed and mastered by Dr. Raktim Sen, a renowned musician from Atlanta.

The response from the community was overwhelming and volunteers were overjoyed with a house packed audience. It was a great evening that was framed with a very warm feeling that everyone's effort and presence had helped many underprivileged children in India! Asha was able to raise \$13,000 from this event.

**Senthil Ramamurthy**, Co-ordinator, Asha Atlanta

## Jeevan Gnanodaya

Project Spotlight

Location: **Tamil Nadu**  
 Project Steward: **Shankar Sadasivan**  
 Project Contact: **L. Devarajan**  
 Children Helped: **400 (130 Girls, 270 Boys)**



This school for the deaf and mentally challenged is a wing of the Jeevan Gnanodaya Charitable Trust. Functioning in Chengalpattu since 1989, the school shelters & educates special needs children from poor, rural backgrounds.

## Prayas

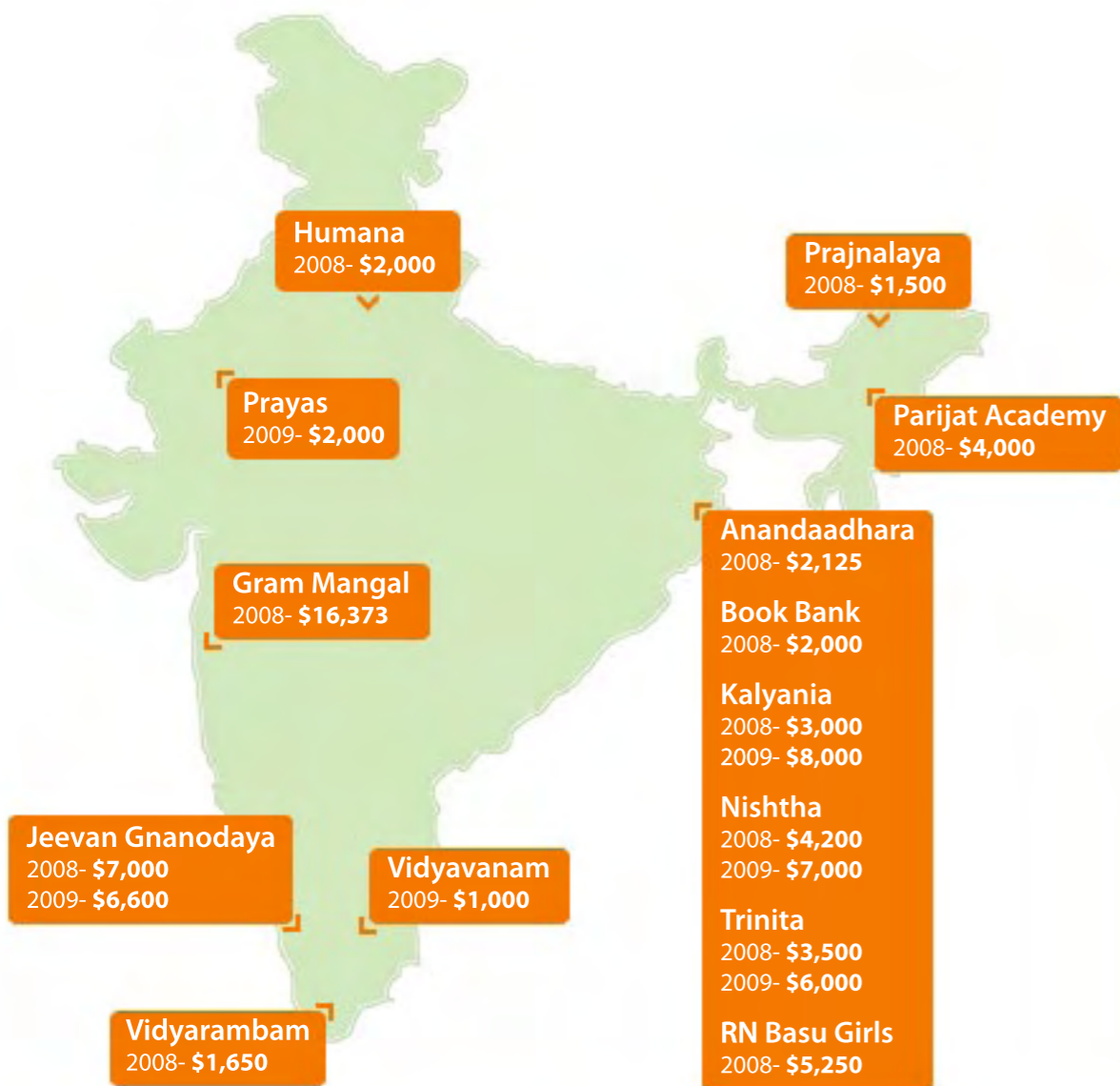
Project Spotlight

Location: **Rajasthan**  
 Project Steward: **Rekha Santhanam, Vineet Jain**  
 Project Contact: **Jatinder Arora**  
 Children Helped: **131 (147 Girls, 84 Boys)**



Project provides education, health care and nutritional support to children with special needs through the Integrated School and Community Based Rehabilitation Program.

# ASHA Atlanta Projects at a Glance



# ASHA Atlanta Fund Raising by Year

2008	Event	Amount
	Work-An-Hour (WAH)	\$2,635.00
	Marathon	\$18,882.00
	General Donations	\$2,128.00
	Projects-specific Donations	\$15,840.00
	Braves Raffle	\$1,189.00
	Merchandise	\$190.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$40,864.00</b>	

2009 (till date)	Event	Amount
	Registry of Hope	\$800.00
	Sanskriti 2009	\$13,000.00
	General Donation	\$285.00
	NetIP	\$300.00
	ING Marathon	\$2,267.00
	Calender Sale	\$640.00
	Project Specific	\$1,000.00
	Aila Relief	\$1,800.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20,092.00</b>	

## Special Thanks to our Corporate Sponsors:

- TSG Partners ([www.tsg-partners.com](http://www.tsg-partners.com))
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