

SEPTEMBER 2020 | ISSUE 1

# SUMMER INSIGHTS

*Asha for Education, Atlanta chapter*

## Message from the Coordinators

Dear friends of Asha Atlanta,

At the outset, thanks a lot for your continued support to our organization. This has helped us support more projects and reach more children over the years.

In this edition, we want to highlight our efforts in providing immediate relief as well as educational opportunities to our brothers and sisters in India impacted by the crisis brought about by COVID-19. You will also read about our projects, fundraising stories, volunteer highlights, and our roster of upcoming events. If you would like to volunteer, donate, or learn more about our initiatives, please write to us at [atlanta@ashanet.org](mailto:atlanta@ashanet.org).

STORIES INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE:

OUR IMPACT IN  
NUMBERS

PLANNED EVENTS

PROJECT IN  
FOCUS

ATHLETICS FOCUS

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

EXECUTIVE BOARD  
2020



# Our Impact IN NUMBERS

## ASHA Atlanta 2020 Funds Disbursements JAN-JUL

Support bicycle program

**Gram Vikas Trust**  
INR 4,04,000



Vocational training center  
& primary school teacher salaries  
School supplies and lunches

**Kalyania Prayas Center**  
INR 10,20,000

Total Disbursed  
**INR 48,26,000**  
4 Projects

**Hijli Inspiration Kamarhati**  
INR 4,00,000



Cyclone Amphan Relief  
• Dry rations & essentials  
Operational costs of 6 coaching centers  
Gender sensitivity training

**Nishtha Jagran**  
INR 30,02,000

Cyclone Amphan Relief  
• Dry rations & essentials  
• Rehabilitation  
• School & shelter materials

# PLANNED EVENTS

Join us every month for a virtual game night!



## MEET AND GREET GAME NIGHT

JOIN US VIRTUALLY - IT'S FREE!  
ONCE EVERY MONTH

FOR A FUN-FILLED NIGHT OF VIRTUAL GAMES!

 Asha for Education - Atlanta

 asha\_atlanta

### Listen to phenomenal artists!



**ASHA FOR EDUCATION**  
**WORK AN HOUR CONCERT SERIES**  
TO SUPPORT THE UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN IN THIS TIME OF COVID-19

Sep 12 - Oct 17

[bit.ly/wah\\_fb\\_link](https://bit.ly/wah_fb_link)

[workanhour.org](https://workanhour.org)



# Volunteer with us and LEAP foundation!

[tinyurl.com/  
ashaLEAP](https://tinyurl.com/ashaLEAP)



## NISHTHA



We're proud to collaborate with **LEAP foundation** in working towards providing additional resources and tutoring through project **Nishtha** which provides alternative education to children of sex workers in Baruipur, West Bengal.

In order to aid the efforts of LEAP foundation to teach these students the **fundamentals of the English language**, we are looking for **volunteers proficient in speaking and understanding Bengali** to help as secondary tutors/translators. Volunteers need to be available from **10:30 PM to 12:00 AM EST on Fridays or Saturdays**.

Please sign-up at <https://tinyurl.com/ashaLEAP>



## 12 WEEK VIRTUAL TRAINING

STARTING

SEPTEMBER 7th 2020

Register here:  
<https://tinyurl.com/ashaFallTraining>

**Run with us!**  
[atlanta.ashanet.org  
/team-asha-  
atlanta/](https://atlanta.ashanet.org/team-asha-atlanta/)

**Bike with us!**  
[bit.ly/TAAtl\\_bike](https://bit.ly/TAAtl_bike)

**TEAM Asha**  
Bringing hope through education

Introducing  
**Biking Program**  
Starting Sept 21

10 week training includes

- Bike Maintenance Sessions \*
- Workout sessions \*
- Bike rides \*

**Bike For a Cause**  
Register Today!

\*Virtual only

# PROJECT IN FOCUS: DIVYA JYOTHI CHARITABLE TRUST

At Asha Atlanta, we are proud to lend support to a project that is focused on creating equitable opportunities for the disabled through training, support and life-skill development.

**Divya Jyothi Charitable Trust for the blind, located in Mysore, Karnataka** is a unique NGO established in 2010 by Mr. Shivakumar, who is visually impaired himself. Their mission is to enable the visually impaired in Mysore and offer them opportunities to navigate their lives on their own terms. Asha Atlanta has been supporting Divya Jyothi's endeavors since 2019, after their proposal came up in one of the Journal Clubs held with local Atlanta volunteers.



“**In 2019, \$5789 (INR 4L) was disbursed, with allocations going towards facilities maintenance, upkeep and staff salaries**

”



## Programs

- Computer Training Center
- Braille Library
- Braille Transcription Center
- Travel Assistance (pickup and drop off services to the differently abled)
- Life Skills Training
- Sports and Cultural training

Divya Jyothi, with their standout cause, fortunately receives monetary support in the form of CSR and local donations. But there are long-term requirements including facility maintenance, salaries for staff, software purchases (like JAWS, a screen reader specifically designed for the blind) and the like that often go unaddressed by one-time donations.

**453**

Primary  
Beneficiaries

**458**

Computer  
Beneficiaries

**6345**

Braille books  
distributed

**7**

Staff  
members

**120**

Pickups/  
drop-offs

Asha Atlanta has contributed towards these necessities like paying salaries for 2 trainers, drivers and cooks, telephone and internet bills, and accommodation for students by disbursing Rs. 4 Lakh (USD 5,789) for 2019-20. "The allocations have been put to good use, with a new infrastructure - primarily built from donations - to serve as a hostel, along with upkeep of their facilities like the computer lab, library and the printing press for Braille books", reports **project steward, Anusha Harish**. While performing a site visit in July 2019, she was enthralled by a cultural event put together by the students and is in regular contact with Mr. Shivakumar.

### Success Story:

#### Chaitra

Soon after completing her training at Divya Jyothi, Chaitra got selected through a campus interview to work with a hotel chain as a desk operator.

Working in a respectful and supportive environment has also instilled a sense of self-worth in her as she is able to contribute her share for the family.



Divya Jyothi students performing at a cultural event

In this **unprecedented time due to the COVID-19 lockdown**, Mr. Shivakumar has updated Anusha about the challenges they have been facing and how they are overcoming them. Since transportation was closed, students have been staying in the facilities and qualifying exams have been postponed. Necessary social distancing and sanitization measures have been applied and their efforts to facilitate safe commuting of their college-going students with pick-up and drop-off service continues. This has, however, required them to hire additional drivers and staff to support the students, which ultimately racks up their expenses.

Given the remarkable ways in which the pandemic has affected us all, it is heartening to see Divya Jyothi making the best of their limited resources. They need all the help they can get to ensure that students' safety and long-term well being is taken care of. If you would like to contribute to their valiant efforts, please visit our project page for more details about Divya Jyothi and our other projects: [atlanta.ashanet.org/our-projects/](http://atlanta.ashanet.org/our-projects/)

# ATHLETICS FOCUS

The Asha Atlanta Athletics program was run over the summer months of social distancing. Coordinated by our Athletics coordinator Sushil, and led by four coaches - Mohit Agarwal, Arvind Krishna, Prasoon Suchandra, and Diego Vaca, this program aimed to culminate in a 5K or a 10K, and was aimed at both beginner runners and experienced ones. Hear more about it from two of our coaches and runners.

**FUNDRAISED**  
**1700 USD**  
through the  
summer training!

## Arvind

The Asha Atlanta Athletics program is a combination of a well-planned running routine, and strengthening exercises. The program is led by four student coaches who have several years of running experience, and a program co-ordinator. The program is designed to help people with no running experience train for a 5K/10K in a few months. Even though the program is designed for new runners, the coaches are always willing to customize it for experienced runners to help them achieve their goals.

“

Runners and coaches often share their experience with each other, which provides a feeling of community belonging to everyone.

”



Every week, goals are set for runners, who receive points on completing their goals. Based on the points received, the leaderboard is updated at the end of each week. This provides a healthy competition and also motivates the runners to ace the program. Coaches observe the running form and progress of runners and provide regular feedback. Runners also consult coaches about technicalities of running and their progress.

## Prasoon

Team Asha Atlanta's summer running program (virtual) consists of three virtual group workout sessions, of which runners are encouraged to attend any two (at least). This is in addition to running three times per week (at least). These regular strengthening sessions are really important for runners and are generally overlooked.



“ I have enjoyed conducting these sessions so far. In fact, these have made me revisit some of the exercises which I would otherwise neglect doing.

”

Because of the "group-activity" nature of these sessions and runners being given points for attending these, Team Asha Atlanta is making sure our runners are not missing these sessions. In addition to strengthening, these sessions also include some light cardio and dance, to make it fun :)

# A word from our runners

## Julia

I've enjoyed the summer training with Team GT Asha Atlanta so far. The coaches have been helpful with critiquing my running form and have led informative and great strengthening sessions.

“Even though the training has been virtual, there is still a sense of camaraderie and support among the runners!”



## Jagriti

I am a first year PhD student in Chemical Engineering department at Georgia Tech. I heard about Asha Atlanta on the very first day at Georgia Tech and their aim of creating a difference in lives of the underprivileged in our society resonated with me. I met with some amazing people in the Asha community and I have enjoyed hanging out with them in some of the social events. I hope that by making this small effort, I will be able to contribute towards the education of children in India.



“I joined the 5K training program to pursue my love for running, explore new neighborhoods in Atlanta as well as raise funds for Amphan and COVID-19 relief efforts.”

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

“

About Asha GT (Asha Atlanta was called so earlier), I love the community I got introduced to because of it. I think I met a better part of humanity because of this organization.

”

## Mayank Agrawal



Tell us about yourself and what you do.

I am a recent Ph.D. graduate from Georgia Tech and right now I am a postdoctoral research associate at Brown university in School of Engineering.

How did you hear about Asha?

During my first year of Ph.D. in the year of 2015, Arkadeep and Tapo were planning to restart the Asha for Education chapter at Georgia Tech which got closed around 2008 due to lack of volunteers. Arkadeep knew me from India Club GT and contacted me to be a part of it. I agreed.

When did you become a member of Asha and what prompted you to join?

It was around September 2015. I really liked the cause and I could use my skills in event management to this new chapter.

What is your favorite event hosted by Asha?

Board game night with karaoke. It has both board games and karaoke :D No close second.

Do you have a favorite memory/funny story while volunteering?

Favorite memory - during the year 2016-17, most of Asha Atlanta core team members were also a part of SAA (Student Alumni Association) which used to provide us with a coupon for free waffles every Monday. So we used to hold our weekly meetings on Mondays and go out for free waffles after almost all meetings in a group.

A fun fact about Mayank!

I am a big anime fan.

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

“

I feel good about contributing to the cause of education.

”

Tell us about yourself and what you do.

I am doing a PhD in Materials Science & Engineering at Georgia Tech.

How did you hear about Asha?

I joined Georgia tech in Fall 2017. My flatmate Mrunal, was the president of Asha that time. The other flatmate, Rohini was a member of Asha too. Posters for some of the events were made at our house and I got to know about Asha then.

When did you become a member of Asha and what prompted you to join?

I became a member in Fall 2018. I like the cause of education. I have been contributing to education in my individual capacity. But as a group, I felt we could do more. Also, as grad students, we tend to work alone most of the time and this is a good place to meet fellow grad students.

## Pragna Bhaskar



What is your favorite event hosted by Asha?

My favorite event was Strings of Hope, the music concert.

Do you have a favorite memory/funny story while volunteering?

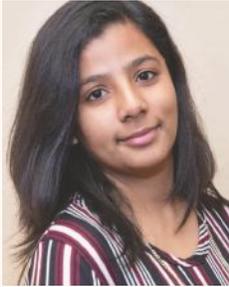
My favorite memory is associated with the pi-mile race. From not being able to run 0.3 mile, to completing the pi-mile race was wonderful. Thanks to Prason!

A fun fact about Pragna!

I learned to play the violin for a year when I was a masters student at IIT Madras.

# Executive Board 2020

on what Asha means to them



Giving the best possible gift to someone, the gift of education, and making great friends in the process.

Pavithra

CO-PRESIDENT INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Bonding with like-minded people and knowing that we're all motivated towards the cause of enabling access to education



Gareeyasee

CO-PRESIDENT EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

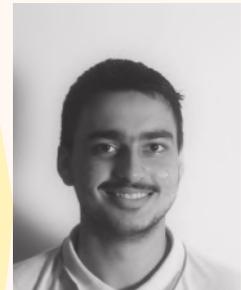


Meeting new people who end up being your support system

Sushil

ATHLETIC COORDINATOR

A place where I can support a cause very close to my heart: Education for all and still have loads of fun while doing so



Dhrumil

EVENT COORDINATOR



Making a change while making good friends

Shyam

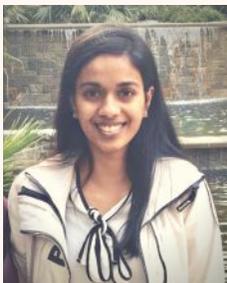
PR COORDINATOR

Helping children achieve their dreams!!



Manisha

SECRETARY



Helping develop the future creative minds back home and also having a family away from home here.

Sruti

TREASURER



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