



Hindu American Seva Charities

E-Newsletter

Volume 1. No. 1. Dec 2010

Hindu American Seva Charities (HASC) is a progressive American organization advancing Seva (community service) while promoting interfaith collaboration, pluralism, social justice, and sustainable civic engagement. HASC aims to ignite grassroots social change to build healthy communities.

Hindu American Seva Charities is a registered 501(C)(3) not-for-profit organization. (EID 68-0625497)
53 Trocha Avenue, Livingston, NJ07039
Contact: seva@hinduamericanseva.org Tel: 732-972-1489 or 973-992-5210

December 29, 2010

Dear Friends

2010.... What an exciting year for HASC!As we close on the first decade of the 21st century, our first year of operation, we stand on the threshold of bringing the collective efforts of Seva in America to greater prominence.... And we need your [support](#) to sustain the progress as highlighted in our [year-end summary](#).

At inauguration, President Obama said, "***For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers.***" And with that Hindu Americans became part of the publicly recognized mosaic, secular and as well s faith based America, ready to strengthen our country. In 2010 we demonstrated our readiness to begin the journey.

The appointment in April 2009 to President's Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnership Advisory Council gave us an appreciation of the faith based organizations' role in serving the community and highlighted our gaps. The Council gave recommendations on six specific issues: Economic Recovery and Domestic Poverty; Environment and Climate Change; Fatherhood and Healthy Families; Global Poverty and Development; Inter-religious Cooperation; and Reform of the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

This understanding and the Seva infrastructure gap within the Hindu American community lead to the formation of Hindu American Seva Charities to bring Seva to prominence and connect with the U.S. agencies. Enthusiastic cooperation from many Hindu American and secular leaders, organizations, temples, and the talent of our Board, Advisors and volunteers to respond to the President's Call to Serve, enabled us to expand the sphere of Seva , collect data, analyze our needs, and develop the recommendations for inclusion of America's Religious and Cultural diversity which were presented on March 9th to the President and senior administration officials and shortly thereafter to many secular and Dharmic spiritual leaders.

Points of Light and Corporation for Community and National Service (CNCS) recognized our efforts and provided three AmeriCorps Vista members to support our work, a first for the Hindu American community. Though working with minimal resources, their guidance enabled us to develop strategies to implement the recommendations we made to the President. The attached report highlights our key achievements for 2010.

In the New Year, in collaboration with several Hindu American and interfaith organizations we hope to develop Seva Center prototypes to serve the many communities and assist the economically disadvantaged. Our signature Seva program [UtsavSeva \(FestivalSeva\)](#) has the support of many secular and spiritual leaders. This program augments the First Lady's [Let's Move Faith and Communities](#) initiative. Partnering with CNCS we hope to showcase our community's engagement in these important national initiatives. We request you to kindly [document](#) your participation in service programs and continue sharing it with us.

We have just begun the journey and are very grateful for the support we have received from the community. Please take a look at the attached list of our achievements during 2010. As we develop more partnerships to implement these important initiatives, we'll also need more support from you to build on the momentum as we move forward. There is much to be done. As the year winds down, we request you to send your tax deductible donations to HASC, 53 Trocha Avenue, Livingston, NJ 07039 or online through [pavpal](#).

On behalf of the entire Hindu American Seva Charities [team](#) we thank you and wish you a very Happy New Year. We look forward to advancing Seva programs all across America with your kind and generous support.

Thank you,

Anju Bhargava
Founder, Hindu American Seva Charities

White House recognition – We began 2010 on an up-note. On January 14, 2010 HASC organized an interactive conversation between Joshua DuBois, Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and key Hindu American leaders. Dubois said, "This was just tremendous work done by over 118 Seva centers and temples and ashrams and other organizations all across the country, completing over 1,300 Seva projects. We took note of that and want to make sure that we are working to engage your community to do that even more."

Call to Serve Report: On March 9th, HASC presented our report, "Hindu Americans Building Communities through Seva" to President Obama, and subsequently to Secretary Hillary Clinton, Vice President Biden, and other senior administration officials like USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah, Erin Soto, Sonal Shah, Kiran Ahuja and Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Subsequently, the report was presented to Dharmic spiritual leaders like Dalai Lama, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Dada Vaswani, Swami Adveshanand Giri, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Mata Amritanandamayi, Baba Ramdev, Morari Bapu. Swami Chidananda Saraswati, Rameshbhai Ojha and others.

Inaugural Summit – HASC held an inaugural summit on March 27, 2010 at the Siva Vishnu Temple in Lanham, MD. The **Summit** generated spirited dialogue about the Hindu American identity, faith and how the Hindu community's civic engagement strengthens America. The Summit yielded an "umbrella of common principles" to collectively build and sustain healthy American communities.

USAID-Indian Diaspora Engagement: On June 3, 2010, recognizing the need to include **America's religious and cultural diversity**, concurrently with the US-India Strategic dialogue, USAID, partnered with HASC to host the first workshop to begin a dialogue to engage and include the Indian American secular and faith based communities to address Global Poverty and Development

In November, 2010 HASC furthered the US-India strategic dialogues with (1) **Inaugural Lecture at BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute, Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi** "Social Services in Dharmic Dimension" and (2) Interfaith Foundation, Gurdwara Rakabganj, New Delhi, -

YogaSeva and Nutrition:

- Yoga has become a universal language of spiritual exercise in the United States, crossing the many lines of religions and cultures. Through a **national** Yogathon on August 29, 2010, HASC **assisted** more than **150 temples and sites** and **community** members opened their doors to **people** of all faiths. Many teachers including **Patanjali Yoga Peeth** and **Art of Living Foundation** actively participated and supported the President's active lifestyle initiative. Yogathon further transformed into YogaSeva.
- HASC, as **Let's Move Faith and Communities**" partner is promoting ongoing year round **YogaSeva** for peace and healthy lifestyle at public, private, faith based institutions, cities and college campuses

UtsavSeva: HASC launched a unique signature program "**UtsavSeva**" (FestivalSeva) to mobilize the Indian American community to perform **Seva** (selfless service) while invoking the essence of popular Indian festivals, It is a strategic initiative to bring Seva to prominence and encourage all Dharmic institutions and people of all Hindu sampradayas (congregations) to perform "UtsavSeva" **throughout the year**, as appropriate. This program augments the First Lady Michelle Obama's **Let's Move Faith and Communities** initiative.

- **YogaSeva::** In September, we celebrated **Janmashtami** with "**YogaSeva**" to honor Krishna, the great Yogi, with a Yogathon all across USA. On **Remembrance Day**, many **temples** invoked **peace principle** with prayers and also remembered the other 9/11: Gandhi's **nonviolence** movement launch (1906), Swami Vivekananda's 1893, Chicago welcome **address**.
- **ShaktiSeva** – In October we celebrated **Navratri** with "**ShaktiSeva**", a focus on women's empowerment, honoring many aspects of Devi, symbolizing **feminine strength**. We held a Conference call with **White House** Council on Women & Girls and served the **homeless**.

- **DhanaSeva**: In November we celebrated Diwali with “DhanSeva” when our theme was resource sharing: We honored Veterans, served the homeless, replenished food banks at Thanksgiving and shared the meaning of Diwali in an interfaith environment .
- **SarvaDharmaSeva**: Interfaith service and Inter-religious Cooperation in which Dharmic people (Hindus, Buddhist, Jains, Sikhs, other eastern faiths) continue to foster understanding and respect.

Seva Centers: HASC is working to augment Community Building in a Dharmic Environment through Seva (service) centers to assist the New Americans (Hindu Americans) integrate within their local, regional, national communities and address their own needs while serving the community at large. Seva centers and HASC’s signature program UtsavSeva (FestivalSeva) will expand civic engagement and address issues as Economic Recovery and Poverty, .Fatherhood and Healthy Families, food security, health, education, environment, etal.

Refugee Re-Settlement Program (SharnagatiSeva): HASC is developing a partnerships with national organizations (International Institute of New Jersey, Catholic Charities, Sewa International, Department of Human Services, etal) to provide services to refugee youth, students and seniors starting with Minneapolis and North Dakota As a partner of HHS (Health and Human Service), HASC promoted awareness of National Influenza Vaccine with Dr. Anand Parekh, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health, at SSV Temple.

Environment: HASC is partnering with the Bhumi Project at Oxford Center for Hindu Studies to advance the Green Temple initiative at temples and places of worship to implement the Council recommendations on energy.

Advancing interfaith in college campus Hindu American Seva Charities is assisting the White House in expanding its outreach to the diverse Dharmic community to implement the recommendation of the Council. HASC is collaborating with Hindu student organizations across America to advance interfaith cooperation and support Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC)’s Leadership Training initiative. HASC is developing Interfaith Roundtables and Service projects as part of HASC Young Scholars Program:

- **APARRI conference**: Asian Pacific American Religious Researchers Initiative: “Faith Matters: Religious Practitioners and/in Asian American Studies: A Roundtable”
- In partnership with the Desi Club, a student organization at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, organized an interfaith dialogue with HASC engaged to highlight the importance of Diwali from a Dharmic point-of-view—and a presentation by the Imam on the significance of Eid .
- **Religion, Peace and Development: Afghanistan and Pakistan**: HASC, the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University and the World Faiths Development Dialogue hosted a student-led roundtable to explore ways to actively bring peace in the region. .
- **Pakistan Flood Relief Efforts**: HASC joined in and supported the broader efforts to raise funds for the flood relief efforts in Pakistan on September 28th, 2010 in New York City.
- **Interfaith Dialogue Series**: The Interfaith Dialogue Series at Rutgers University (Newark) seeks to examine the role of religion and interfaith communities in advancing world peace, security, stability and prosperity. The outcomes of the project include: (1) engaging in service projects in Newark, Passaic and Jersey City area, specifically within the refugee communities (2) developing policy papers through regional working groups and (3) developing a web presence to communicate the project to the broader community.
- **Global Interfaith**: Roundtable discussion at Management Development Institute, Gurgaon, India

Washington Post and Huffington Post Blogs, Media Coverage, Press Releases: We shared our stories widely round the globe to bring awareness of the collective Hindu American Seva in many arenas. We urge the community to come together to help create Seva Centers; a social innovation and document participation