

Planning of a conference “Energizing Dharmic SEVA”

My nine months of service as a VISTA opened my eyes to the poverty existing in the USA. In India, which is my country of birth, USA is referred as a land of plenty where you will never see beggars. In my 18 years of stay in the US, only in 2010 I came across the statistics of poverty and faced reality.

Ten years ago, my family along with a couple of friends' families started feeding the homeless in the Interfaith Inn, once a month. Meeting the same residents for a few months in a row or meeting new residents gave the feeling that people who became homeless had a place to turn to in such a dire circumstance. The compassion of the community touched my heart and I decided to do something for the community that I live in.

Being a VISTA working for HASC whose primary focus for this year is health and nutrition, I decided to discuss the importance of good food choices. Also a significant percentage of the residents in the Interfaith Inn were definitely above their suggested normal weight for their age and height. The enthusiasm to learn to make good food choices and also to practice Yoga was not very high. A struggle it was to engage them in small talk and gradually bring about the topic of nutrition. It took me many meetings and persistent messages of nutrition that convinced these residents to pay attention to what they eat and also do regular exercise in the form of Yoga.

Happy that my perseverant visits succeeded in communicating to the residents about good health and nutrition, I decided to write

about it to share with my manager. My supervisor in Wichita was overjoyed and Ved and Anju were thrilled.

Anju was very happy that Wichita has promoted Seva in a big way and proud that HASC is a known name in Kansas. Her unique program of UTSAV SEVA, planned for the whole year, inspired by one dharmic festival or other is bound to get a lot of attention. The conference, which is the second annual one of the organization will be held at the White house on July 29th. Anju has got a team putting together various aspects in place.

The idea of essay competition was floated and well acknowledged by the team and publicized all over the nation through social media, newspapers and email distribution. The Seva center module will be discussed at the conference and the seva journey of Wichita ,KS will be an interesting series of experiences.

My proposal to the team to have a classical dance drama depicting the 12 sevas commemorating the “Utsav Seva “ theme was well received. I started making arrangements with my contacts in Virginia, who readily agreed to dance and we are looking forward to a grand evening.

There is another good news to share. I received an email from the Kansas Leadership Center to participate in a discussion to foster civic leadership for healthier Kansas Communities. We had a great interaction of ideas on how Faith groups can build leaders in the community and improve the value system in the communities. It dawned on me that in the USA, faith and politics go hand in hand, unlike other countries in the world !

