

Annual Report

2019



Asha for Education
Bringing hope through education



Asha for Education
Bringing hope through education



Our
Chapters

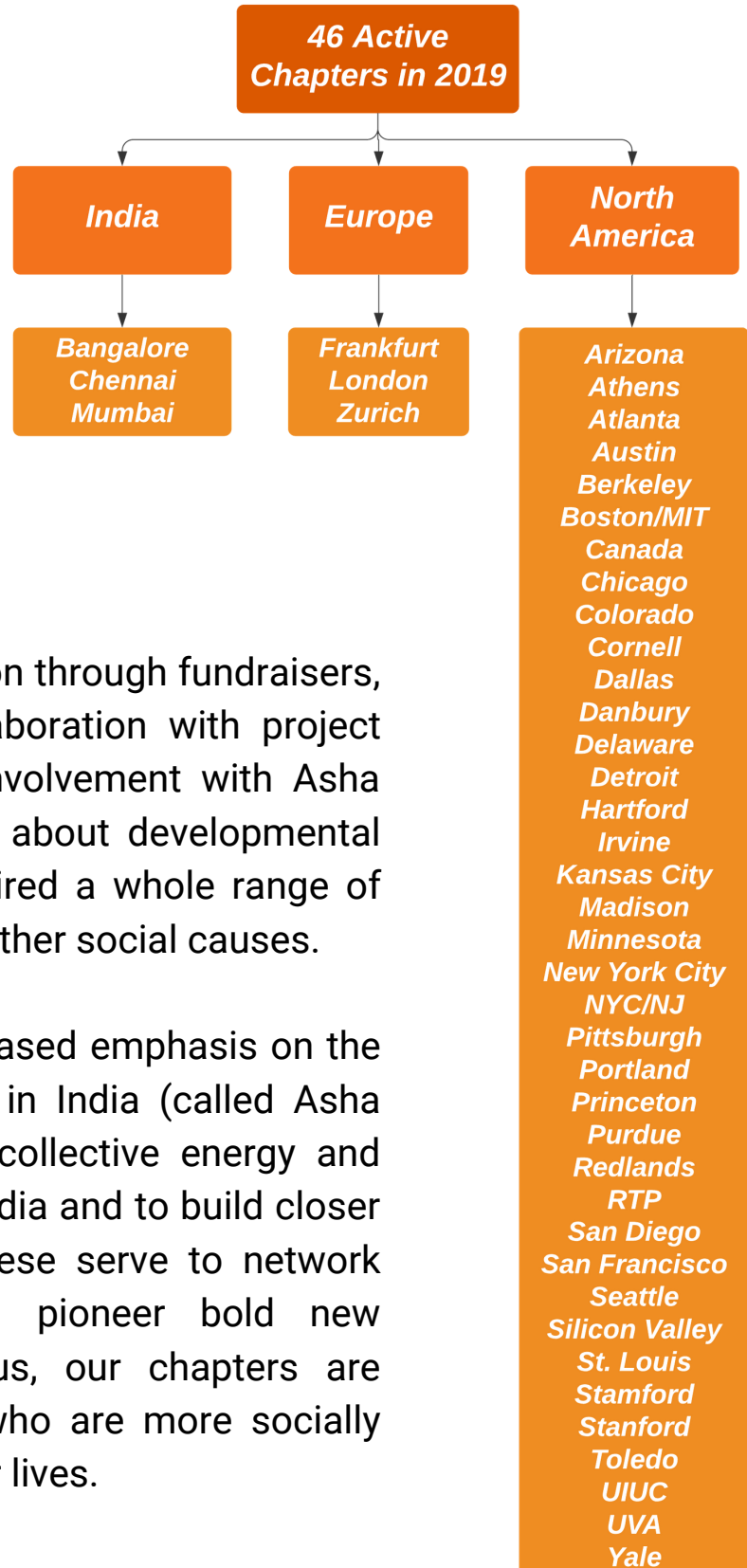
Chapters

Who We Are

Asha for Education has 45+ chapters across three continents (North America, Europe, and Asia) – all working towards Asha's core mission of achieving 'socio-economic equality through the education of underprivileged children'.

Chapters carry out this mission through fundraisers, awareness events, and collaboration with project partners throughout India. Involvement with Asha has produced an awareness about developmental issues in India and has inspired a whole range of volunteers to get involved in other social causes.

There has also been an increased emphasis on the formation of more chapters in India (called Asha Centers) to draw upon the collective energy and experience of volunteers in India and to build closer bonds with our projects. These serve to network like-minded individuals and pioneer bold new initiatives in education. Thus, our chapters are helping prepare volunteers who are more socially aware and responsible in their lives.





Asha Purdue



Asha San Francisco



Asha Madison



Asha Cornell



Asha Detroit

01 Journey to changing lives

Chapter Spotlight: Asha Danbury

Asha Danbury celebrates its 10th year as an Asha chapter in 2020. Below, Asha Danbury co-founder and Chapter Coordinator, Lalitha Podila, shares some of their chapter events and highlights from 2019, and showcases how the chapter has been able to engage with and support the local Danbury community.

Since the launch of Asha Danbury in 2010, we've incorporated local volunteering into our vision, while leveraging resources to support the education of underprivileged children in India. As we celebrate our 10th anniversary and reflect on the previous year, 2019 was another year in which we engaged with the Greater Danbury community.



Photo: Danbury community support



Photo: Danbury Asha Idol 2019 poster

Asha Idol, a music and dance competition, continues to be a popular event at Asha Danbury. For the fourth time, we organized Asha Idol, and for the first time we saw a significant increase in adult participants wanting to be on stage in order to support our cause. The event, as in previous years, brought together donors, supporters, and children who believe in the mission of Asha for Education.

2019 was also the first year that we had organized a 5K walk/run fundraising event. The town of Bethel and police were very supportive of this event, and we were honored to have Bethel's First Selectman, Matt Knickerbocker, kick off the event for us.



A new local Indian restaurant shared the ground with us and provided warm Indian food and drinks. As part of the event, we had also organized a food drive and were able to donate 77 lb of food to the Bethel Community Food Pantry.

In 2019, Junior Asha Danbury teams donated books and read in classrooms at a Danbury preschool, funded by the state of Connecticut and which caters to the needs of children from low income families. They also volunteered at community fairs, did face painting, and brought smiles to the faces of more than 100 children.

In Fall 2019, when the Center needed help, eight adult and Junior Asha Danbury volunteers arrived early on a Saturday morning and spent more than four hours painting the classrooms and hallways. This act of giving time helped the Center realize savings of approximately \$20,000, which they can now put to better use towards educating young children. It is a wonderful feeling to be giving back to the community that we live in while staying focused on the mission of Asha for Education.

We were honored to be invited to GE's 2019 Diwali event. It gave us an opportunity to network and showcase Asha Danbury's work. There was great energy towards Asha at the event, with attendees wanting to contribute and make a difference. 2019 was also a year when we established a connection with students who run the Asha for Education student club at the University of Connecticut. The student club raises awareness about the mission of Asha for Education while highlighting projects of Asha Danbury on their campus.

Photos: i) First Selectman of Bethel, Matt Knickerbocker during kickoff of first 5K event in 2019 along with community member, Suneetha and team members, Ashok and Anindita, ii) Junior Asha of Brookfield volunteering at 5K event

\$20,000

Amount saved by a local preschool after Asha Danbury volunteers came in and painted the school's classrooms and hallways

4

Projects funded in 2019

2475

Total number of children/equivalent supported over 10 years

5K Run

First 5K Run organized in 2019

77 lb

Amount of food that was donated to a local food pantry as a result of the food drive organized alongside first Danbury's 5K run event

10 Years

Asha Danbury celebrates 10 years as a chapter in 2020

In 2019, Asha Danbury provided support to 420 children across 4 projects serving both rural and urban slum areas, and approximately 60% of our disbursed funds were used to support teachers' salaries. As we celebrate the year of our 10th anniversary in 2020 in the midst of the pandemic, we continue to demonstrate good citizenship in Danbury, CT while making an impact on projects that we support in India. We know it will be another year of bringing hope at Asha Danbury.

For more information about the Asha Danbury chapter, please visit <https://danbury.ashanet.org/> or email danbury@ashanet.org



Project In Focus: *Thulir started as an after-school learning centre catering to the needs of tribal children in the village of Sittlingi, Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu. Over the years, it has grown into a full-fledged primary school and their new campus, which was constructed with the active involvement of past Thulir students, was inaugurated in January 2019. The project has been supported by Asha Bangalore since 2008 and managed by Asha Fellows Anuradha and Krishna. For more information about this Asha project, please visit <https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=967>.*

Asha Atlanta



Asha Pittsburgh

Asha Silicon Valley



Asha UFlorida



Asha Princeton



Asha UIUC



02 Asha Delaware: 2019 Year-in-Review

Chapter Spotlight: Asha Delaware

By Sai Praneet Batchu, Vivek Subramanian, Abhishek Iyer, Sanjana Srinivas, Vidhika Damani, Yagya Gupta, and Stuti Gupta

While one of the smaller Asha chapters, relatively speaking, Asha Delaware still ranks as being one of the top 5 active student organizations run by international graduate students at the University of Delaware in terms of activity. The University chapter has done an incredible job of tripling their volunteer base from 6 to 18 in the past year alone. Below, Asha Delaware volunteers give us an overview of Delaware chapter highlights from 2019 and share with us the range of innovative fundraising events that the chapter put on over the course of the year.



This article is a highlight of the key contributions made by the Delaware chapter of Asha for Education, located at the University of Delaware, over the past year through conducting several innovative fundraisers and publicity events. The chapter consists of a group of volunteers comprised of enthusiastic graduate students from various disciplines.

Highlights

- We supported two projects in 2019 - SVV Lodhar (\$1,539 disbursed) and Bhumi (\$1,479 disbursed).
- In 2019, we increased our volunteer strength from 6 to 18 full time volunteers and brought in a few local community members to help us gain traction in the Delaware Indians community.
- By tackling the issues of volunteer retention associated with University based chapters, we've worked very hard and raised an excess of \$1,800.
- In terms of activity, Asha for Education-Delaware Chapter is one of the top 5 active International Graduate Students run Organizations at the University of Delaware.

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Delaware Premier League Cricket All Star Weekend Event

Team Asha Delaware put up a stall at the Delaware Premier League All Star Cricket Event conducted at the Lums Pond State Park, DE on July 7, 2019. Matt Meyer, a local county executive, was the chief guest for the event, which was attended in large numbers by cricket enthusiasts from the tri-state area.

Asha volunteer Abhishek Iyer spoke about the work Team Delaware was doing and about our future fundraisers. There were also kids present at the event who agreed to help raise funds for the Asha Delaware by preparing and selling lemonade to the cricketers. *We raised \$245 from the event through the sale of lemonade and from donations.*



Photos: Asha volunteers and event attendees at the Delaware Premier League All Star Cricket Event in July 2019

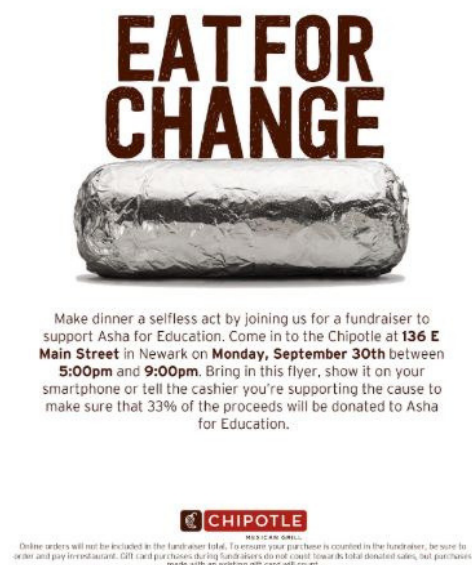
DELMA Onam

The Delaware Malayalee Association hosted its annual Onam celebrations on September 14, 2019 at the Hindu Temple of Delaware. Asha Delaware volunteers set up a stall and spoke about our projects in order to reach out to the larger community of Delaware.



Photos: i) Asha volunteers at the Asha booth at the DELMA Onam event, ii) Volunteers at the DELMA Onam event

People at the event appreciated our efforts and expressed their willingness to help, and also provided suggestions to our chapter. Many of them also wanted to be a part of future fundraisers, and a few even donated. We received a total of **\$120** in donations from this event.



Chipotle fundraiser

Can there be anything better than having a meal at Chipotle? Perhaps, if also, the same meal pays for an underprivileged child's education. That is exactly what we tried to bring to the table by organizing this fundraiser on September 30, 2019 in partnership with Chipotle, who generously agreed to donate 33% of the proceeds to Asha's cause of educating the underprivileged.

Since there was a minimum sales threshold we needed to hit to qualify for the Chipotle donation, we needed help from as many energetic volunteers as possible to spread the word about the event. There was a great turnout and we raised **\$191** from this fundraiser. We plan to consistently hold this fundraiser every six months to have some source of sustainable funds coming in for our projects.

Movie Night

Team Asha Delaware hosted its movie night on November 21, 2019. For this event, we screened the movie 'Super 30,' which was based on events from the life of Mr. Anand Kumar, a math genius who spent the prime of his life tutoring underprivileged children. The chief guest for the event was Mr. Sudhanshu, a student of Mr. Anand Kumar who now works as an IT professional in Delaware.

Before the screening, Mr. Sudhanshu addressed the audience and inspired them with his journey and Mr Anand Kumar's contribution to his success. The event had a great turnout, with a significant number of non-Indian participants as well. We raised **\$338** in the form of donations from this event.

Photo: Asha Delaware Movie Night attendees



Overall, Asha for Education- Delaware Chapter is working enthusiastically and relentlessly; by increasing its volunteer base, promoting educational events and organising fundraisers; to bring an impact to the society. Our sincere thanks to all those donors and volunteers who have cooperated with us, and special thanks to Asha Central for their guidance and support.

For more information about the Asha Delaware chapter, please visit <https://delaware.ashanet.org/> or email delaware@ashanet.org



Project In Focus: Rescue junction, the railway children rescue project run by People First, is a 24 hour centre for homeless abandoned and lost street children in Koderma junction in Jharkhand and Gaya junction in Bihar. It provides shelter, food, counselling, education and support for children in a safe and caring environment. In 2019, they have rescued more than 1000 children from all over India. For more information about this Asha project, please visit <https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=985>.

03 Distributed Models and Towards Sustainability

Chapter Case Study: Asha Austin

By Ranga Srinivasan, Mohit Sood and Subra Nathan

After a few years of a slowdown in terms of fundraising, discontinued active support of projects and volunteer attrition, the Asha Austin chapter volunteers decided to shift their approach to better align to their strengths as a smaller Asha chapter. Asha-Austin began by setting up a fixed 7-year term for their project engagements and worked with project partners to adopt a distributed fundraising model, a model the chapter was able to also successfully extend to their fundraising and volunteer retention efforts. Here, they share with us how a 'distributed model' can help in enabling a chapter to become more robust and better manage for risks faced previously.



Distributed models are principles that help spread out the effort to make work sustainable so as to not completely exhaust or overburden one resource in the process. In the case of Asha's work, eternally funding a project partner with it being heavily reliant on chapter funding support is not sustainable. This often leads to high support budgets, and thereby creates a fundraising burden for the chapter, along with a potential lack of connectedness amongst volunteers. Unfortunately, in some cases, it could also lead to closure of the project partner despite years of engagement with Asha. This is a setback to the chapter as all of the volunteer hours towards project reviews, fundraising and donor support would not have had the greatest long-term impact. Asha-Austin would like to share our insights into distributed models for chapter projects, chapter fundraising, chapter volunteer engagement and Team Asha programs all working towards sustainability.

"AS A RELATIVELY SMALL CHAPTER, WE REALIZED THAT OUR STRENGTH WAS IN HELPING NEW, LOW BUDGET INITIATIVES GET OFF THE GROUND INSTEAD OF SUPPORTING ESTABLISHED, LARGE BUDGET PROJECTS FOR A LONGER TIMEFRAME."

History

Asha-Austin had to wind down funding of all of its projects in 2012 due to back-to-back years of poorer fundraising outcomes and volunteer attrition, and thereafter went into a dormant phase from 2013-14. Funding projects at less than 20% of previously supported budgets was also demotivating to the volunteers. Without active volunteers and projects, most chapter activities came to a stall. We later came to realize that a few of our projects had stopped operations completely, partly due to us not being able to continue supporting them and them not being able to find another funding partner.

Before volunteer attrition began in 2012, we had redefined our chapter vision, which has been our guiding light to date. As a relatively small chapter, we realized that our strength was in helping new, low budget initiatives get off the ground instead of supporting established, large budget projects for a longer timeframe. There is often a latency in funding new initiatives by big organizations, and this is where we sought to play an important role.

New Approach

We decided to work with new initiatives for three years, while helping our project partners seek other funding sources, so we could wean projects off completely by year 7 as an exit strategy. Our project partners are made aware of this funding model when we start working with them. This helps the project partner to proactively work towards a distributed fundraising model incorporating all avenues of funding e.g. Asha for Education's support for recurring expenses, their crowdfunding for recurring expenses and CSR efforts for infrastructure needs, grants from foundations, individual donations, and so on, so as to not become heavily reliant on one primary funding source for support.

In 2015-16, with help from the Asha-wide General Funds split, we began funding three projects and one fellowship with this vision in mind. We've found that as we wean-off a project from chapter general funds, it frees up resources that can be utilized to organically bring in new projects to be stewarded by new volunteers, without an additional financial burden to the chapter. This helps grow a 'connected' volunteer base and frees up experienced volunteers to move to other chapter roles and Asha-wide responsibilities. During the wean-off phase, supplemental funds can come from project-specific funds or support-a-child programs for sustainability. Self-sustaining support-a-child projects could continue beyond the seven years.

Today, we have eight projects and one fellowship that allow us to maintain diversity in our work while allowing us a focus on special needs and/or alternative education in rural parts of India. A few of these projects are primarily reliant on Asha's support with a working capital ratio (WCR) of < 0.5. This regularly puts these projects in high-risk categories, as the schools would stop functioning in less than a year if Asha were to back out. Our chapter's focus is to help them build both credibility and a distributed donor base while tapping into online crowd-funding (e.g. Global Giving, Give India, Give Asia, Milaap, Ketto, Concern India Foundation), as this would go a long way towards sustainability with respect to recurring expenses and operational needs.

Other Implementations

Asha-Austin is moving towards implementing other avenues of fundraising to minimize dependence on its Team Asha program, its primary fundraiser from 2017-19. Additionally, the chapter has support-a-child programs and corporate fundraisers since 2019. It regularly seeks donations in the range of \$25-300, with meaningful support line-items to improve connection with a donor. Thus, a distributed model of chapter fundraising helps the small donations grow to the required big targets of 100k USD (as an example) by allowing many donors without over-burdening one avenue or dependency on a single donor, as was the case for us with the Asha-wide General Funds split that kept us operational from 2015-19.

Small focus groups and ideally, one chapter role per person, would greatly help volunteer engagement and minimize burnout. For Team Asha programs, having coaches and mentors work with small groups of runners can help distribute the effort across more volunteers, and importantly, can help build a stronger team.

Conclusion

Distributed models can be applied towards chapter projects, chapter fundraising, volunteer engagement and retention, strengthening of Team Asha programs, and so on, and would be applicable and of interest to other chapters as well. Such models would greatly help a chapter towards its own sustainability. Asha-Austin has a long way to become sustainable, and is on the path through working on the above objectives.

Acknowledgments

We would also like to thank all active chapter volunteers, project stewards and Team Asha runners, and acknowledge all of the discussions had amongst active and alumni volunteers when we revisited chapter vision conversations.

For more information about the Asha Austin chapter, please visit <https://austin.ashanet.org/> or email austin@ashanet.org



Asha Chennai



Asha Berkeley



Asha Austin



Asha St Louis



Asha Boston



Asha Athens



Asha Seattle



Asha Zurich