

# Annual Report

2019

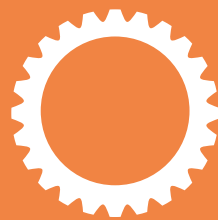


Asha for Education



Asha for Education  
Bringing hope through education

Team Asha Climbers  
summitting Mt. Shasta



Our  
Programs  
& Events



# Our Programs & Events

## What We Do

Asha for Education brings a range of programs and events to the communities it serves as a vehicle for fundraising and bringing people together.

From our Team Asha running, climbing and other fitness programs; to our bi-coastal Junior Asha Programs; to the various on-the-ground fundraising events - Asha chapters have created a variety of ways for its community members to enjoy time together while raising funds for Asha's cause.

20 active Team  
Asha programs in  
2019

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3 chapters -  
Seattle, Danbury, &  
Yale - with formal  
Junior Asha  
programs in place







# 01 Asha-28: Celebrating 28 Years of Asha

## Asha for Education Biennial Conference

*We provide a recap below of the Asha-28 biennial conference, drawing from a wonderful Conference write-up by Asha Chicago volunteer, Natalie Foster. Special thanks to the Asha-28 Conference Committee - this Conference would not have happened without your hard work!*



*Photo: Asha-28 Conference attendees gathered at Millenium Park in Chicago, IL for the biennial Asha Conference*

Asha for Education hosted its' biennial conference from June 22-23, 2019 in Chicago, IL. This conference marks the 28th year Asha has been catalyzing socio-economic change via educational initiatives in India. We had more than 50 volunteers gather from chapters across the US, Canada, and India to exchange ideas and challenges - all around the central theme of "Theory of Change."

Asha-28 kicked off with a look at Asha's journey over the years, celebrating Asha's accomplishments over a 25-year period, with 291,708 children supported over that timeframe. We had a number of speakers share their experiences and provide insight into the work conducted by Asha's core teams. This was followed by discussions around current challenges faced by our organization and opportunities for Asha over the next decade.

The Conference featured special guest speakers, including:

- Nandlal Master: [Asha fellow](#) and social activist, and project partner for [Navjoti Swawalamban Sewa Sansthan](#).
- Rajaram Krishnan: The Chapter Coordinator of [Asha Chennai](#), which both funds and implements its own projects.
- Aparna Pardesi: founder of [Friends of Children](#), a project that provides college scholarships to students in need.

In addition, many long-term Asha volunteers too shared their experiences and perspectives, providing an enriching session for the participants.



Photos: i) Asha Board members and volunteers present at the conference, ii) Group brainstorming session on key challenge and opportunity areas



**"IT IS SO OVERWHELMING TO SEE SUCH DRIVEN PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER AND WITH...GENUINE CARE. HONESTLY, I HAVE NOT SEEN MANY GROUPS WHO COULD DO THIS...UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM TO THE ROOT LEEL, CONTINUOUSLY REVISIT[ING] [IT] TO MAKE [SURE] YOUR UNDERSTANDING [IS] RIGHT, [AND] WORK[ING] WITH GENIUNE CARE TO ADDRESS IT BY BEING ON THE SIDE OF THE UNDERPRIVILEGED...YOU ALL DESERVE A GREAT BIT OF APPLAUSE."**

**- RAVIKUMAR, ASHA CHICAGO VOLUNTEER AT ASHA-28**



*Photo: Asha-28 Conference Committee members and attendees pose for picture at the end of Day 2 of the conference*

You can also hear other Asha-28 Conference attendees share their conference experiences first-hand [here](#).

***The next Asha for Education biennial conference will take place over the summer of 2021. Stay tuned for details on this in the upcoming year!***





**Team Asha  
Coach Bipul @ UTMB'19**



**Team Asha Silicon Valley Biking team @ Tour de Tahoe**



**Asha SF Holi**



**Asha Dinner by  
Cornell chapter**



**Team Asha Atlanta**



# 02

## Team Asha San Diego

### Asha San Diego Chapter

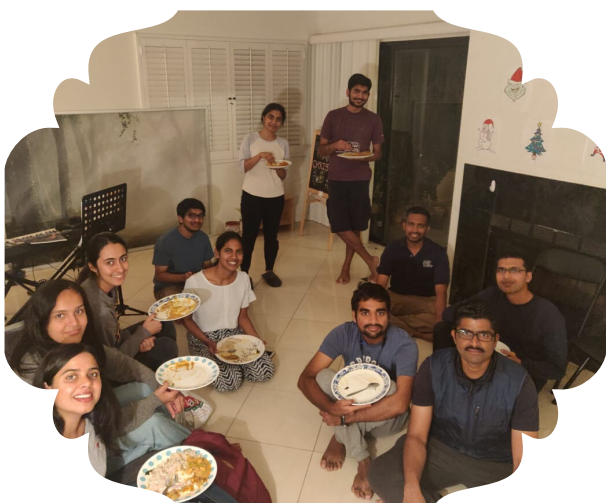
*Asha San Diego Chapter Coordinator, Vignesh Srinivasan, shares with us the chapter's success with their inaugural Team Asha San Diego running program in 2019. This story highlights the important role that Asha alumni can play in sharing their knowledge of past successes and empowering new volunteers to bring ideas to fruition. It also showcases how the efforts of a small group of volunteers can turn a new idea into a reality.*



*Photo: Team Asha San Diego runners at the San Diego Silver Strand Half Marathon*

The Asha San Diego chapter had one of our best years in 2019 with our volunteers coming up with innovative new ideas, new council members, better fundraising activities, and sustained support for our four projects.

The San Diego chapter council consists of few culturally influenced individuals who had previously organized Asha ki Diwali - a cultural evening during Diwali filled with music, dance and food. However, having organized the event in 2017 and 2018, we realized that interest in the event was dying down and the ratio of efforts expended to money raised wasn't high.



*Photo: Team Asha San Diego Carboload dinner - day before Half Marathon*

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## **"...OUR RUNNERS TRAINED OVER A PERIOD OF 11 WEEKS, RUNNING TOGETHER ON SATURDAY MORNINGS AND BRUNCHING AT SAN IDLI TO VENT OFF THE TIREDNESS"**

For the Team Asha 2019 Program, our runners trained over a period of 11 weeks, running together on Saturday mornings and brunching at San Idli (a local south indian restaurant) to vent off the tiredness. In the end, we managed to **raise \$7000**, which was \$2000 more than our \$5000 fundraising goal for the event, despite two runners having to back out due to injuries. The fundraising effort definitely helped us with our Asha General Funds split for 2019-20 year and match the funding requirements requested by our projects.

*For more information about the Asha San Diego chapter, please visit <https://sd.ashanet.org> or email [sd@ashanet.org](mailto:sd@ashanet.org)*



# 03

## Team Asha Coach: Krishna Dase (KD)

### Team Asha Seattle - Climbing Program

*In 2016, Krishna Dase, who goes by KD, joined the Asha Seattle - Team Asha Climbing Program as a participant. In 2020, KD is not only in his 4th year as a Lead Coach of the program but has also mentored the Team Asha Silicon Valley Program, enabling them to run their first successful Climbing Program in 2019. Below, he shares with us the history of Team Asha Climbing Program, what motivates him to come back as a coach in the Team Asha Climbing Program, milestones achieved, and expansion goals.*



KD was already an avid hiker and backpacker even before getting involved with the Asha Seattle - Team Asha Climbing Program. He had had an interest in climbing for many years prior to joining, but it wasn't until a friend introduced him to Team Asha in 2016 that he decided to actively train to complete his first official climb. That year, KD completed two treks up Mount Baker and Mount Rainier - the highest peak in Washington State and in the lower 48 states - alongside 5 coaches and 20 other climbers.

By 2017, KD had demonstrated enough interest, leadership, and commitment to take on the Coordinator role for the full Team Asha Seattle Climbing Program. Over the years that followed, he worked with mentors and other members of the coordination team to create a more rigorous structure and training program to help climbers better prepare for various aspects of a climb that they would encounter.

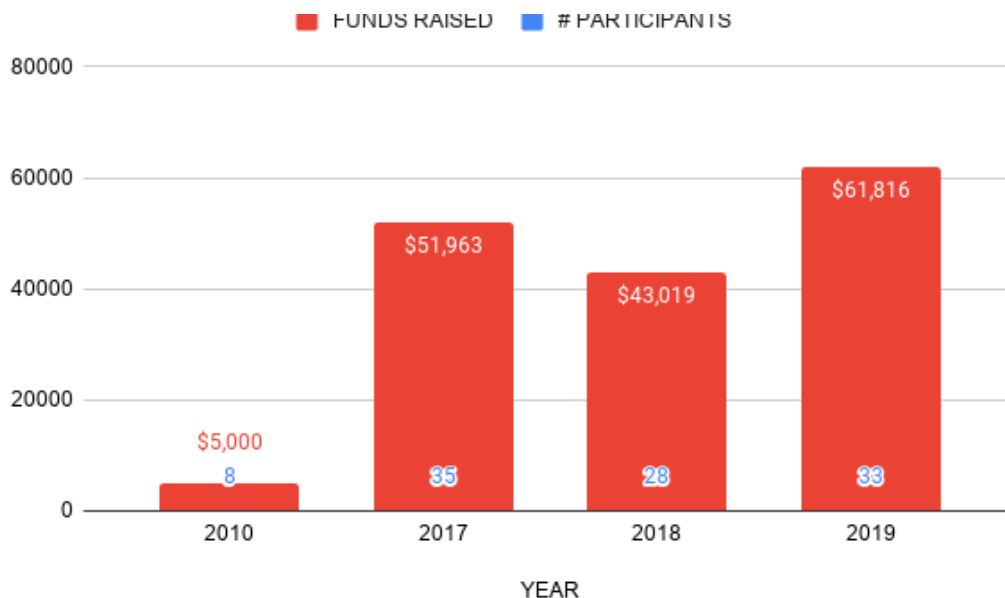


Photo: Team Asha Seattle Climbing Program  
coach Krishna Dase (KD)

This led the coordination team to enhance their focus on the physical and fitness elements of the training, outsource the treks up the mountains to external guides, introduce a mental training component to the program, train climbers on the unique risks inherent to climbing & help them learn how to manage for those adequately, and solidify the insurance and fundraising components of the program.

KD's commitment to Asha for Education stems from his interest in Asha's work of supporting underprivileged communities and women in regions of India with poor outreach towards these groups. As a coach, KD has enjoyed engaging participants who have never climbed before (who he estimates to be 2/3rd of Team Asha climbers) and guiding them as a mentor and as a role model. He also enjoys helping individuals, who are feeling stagnated in their training, find ways to overcome obstacles that come their way. In the coming years, KD seeks to expand the Climbing Program to other Asha chapters.

### *Team Asha Climbing Program - By the Numbers*



In light of the current COVID-19 crisis in 2020 and corresponding stay-in-place orders, he is leading a team to conduct a Virtual Team Asha Training Program. His aim with this Program is to get Asha community members across the U.S. engaged with at-home training regimens that allows them to set and achieve fitness goals, and fundraise for Asha projects from the safety of their homes.



## TEAM ASHA CLIMBING PROGRAM MILESTONES: THE LAST TEN YEARS

### 2010

A group of friends (Sandeep, Srijan, Apps, Tulika, Veera, Miles, Lawrence and Kaeli) decide to train and gather skills to climb Mount Rainier, the highest peak in Washington State and the lower 48 states, and seek to climb for a cause.

### 2012

The Climbing Program becomes an official part of Team Asha Seattle.

### 2014

The Climbing Program coaches decide to enhance their focus on the physical / fitness component of training. The Climbing Program Coordination team hires American Mountain Guide Association (AMGA) certified guides knowledgeable about mountain trails to lead Team Asha climbers up the mountains ; Team Asha Climbing coaches focus efforts on training climbers.

### 2016

KD joins the Team Asha Seattle Climbing Program as a participant and does his first climbs up Mount Baker and Mount Rainier.

### 2017

KD became the Lead Coach and Coordinator of the Team Asha Seattle Climbing Program. The Coordination team incorporates mental training and skill-focused experience trips as a component of the Climbing Program e.g. preparing the trainees for the experience of traveling and staying overnight on snow.



*Photo: KD leading Team Asha Seattle climbers on a trek*

## 2018

The Coordination team adds more mountains to the program and creates a more structured and rigorous training program.

## 2019

The Climbing Program gets expanded to incorporate a new Rock Scramble Training Program for a mountain in the Cascades. The Climbing Program is expanded to Team Asha Silicon Valley. KD coordinates with the Team Asha Silicon Valley Climbing mentors remotely, guiding them to put on their first successful Climbing Program.

## 2020

The Climbing Program gets expanded to add trek to climb Mount Kilimanjaro (both trips successful earlier in the year). The Climbing Program gets expanded to add trek to hike Grand Canyon Rim-to-Rim (postponed to October due to COVID). In spite of COVID challenges, the program continued its training virtually and hosted online seminars to get participants ready to climb mountains.



Photo: Team Asha Seattle climbers

For more information about the Asha Seattle chapter's Team Asha programs, please visit <https://seattle.ashanet.org/team-asha/>. You can also reach the chapter's Team Asha volunteers at [seattle.teamasha@ashanet.org](mailto:seattle.teamasha@ashanet.org).



# 04

## Junior Asha Program Asha Seattle Chapter Asha Seattle Chapter

*The Asha Seattle chapter celebrated the 10th year of their 'Junior Asha' Program in 2019. Dheepa Ramani, one of the Coordinators of the Junior Asha Program, shares with us some of the history, highlights, and accomplishments of their Program over the past decade. The Junior Asha Program is a success story showcasing how the Asha Seattle chapter was able to get young people engaged with Asha for Education initiatives and motivate them to support the local community, and provides a framework of how we can maintain Asha's continuity through future generations.*



*Photo: Asha Seattle - Junior Asha Youth Volunteer Group for the 2018-2019 School Year*

Junior Asha is the youth wing of the Seattle chapter of Asha for Education, and functions under its umbrella. Junior Asha has been in existence since 2009. Kavita Sharma, one of our long-time volunteers with the chapter, was instrumental in starting the youth wing as a way to get her daughter involved in Asha, which led to more youth being interested. Today we have about 60 kids, aged between 12 and 18, in Junior Asha.

The Junior Asha Team was started by Kavita Sharma and Priya Nagar and currently has 4 mentors. It is being led by Dheepa Ramani, beginning this school year, who helps run the program and provides opportunities to our volunteers. Junior Asha hosts its own events to raise awareness and funds for Asha Seattle. Junior Asha volunteers also support the local community by volunteering at non-Asha related events. In return, Asha Seattle gets to talk about Asha's cause, spread awareness, and help support our community. Junior Asha volunteers also support Asha's causes by volunteering at various fundraising events of Asha for Education.

Junior Asha volunteers chose to support one of Asha's projects, Adruta Children's Home, with their fundraising efforts. Adruta is a home for destitute girl children in Bhubaneshwar, Odisha. The Seattle Chapter has been supporting them for a long time now.

## **"JUNIOR ASHA VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY BY VOLUNTEERING AT NON-ASHA RELATED EVENTS."**

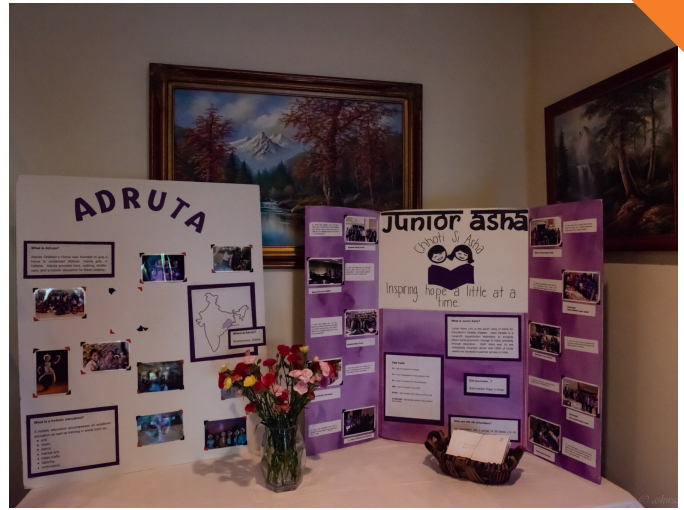
The youth volunteers, as part of their contract, also undertake a personal project and fundraise for Asha for Education. They do a variety of activities like participate in running or biking events, conduct bake sales, sell art pieces made by them, provide photography services, tutor neighborhood kids and engage in a host of other activities to raise funds. Asha Seattle raises an average of around \$7000 each year by the kids' personal projects alone.

Junior Asha recently commemorated their 10th year by hosting a British Tea Fundraising event. It included an afternoon of a formal British tea set up, along with games, a silent auction, and some yummy food and drinks. This was a huge success and we were able to raise close to \$8500 for the cause.



**RAISED BY JUNIOR ASHA EACH YEAR  
BY THE KID'S PERSONAL PROJECTS**





Photos: British Tea Fundraiser to commemorate Junior Asha's 10th year. Left-to-right, top-to-bottom: i) Food spread, ii) Information boards on Adruta (Asha Seattle project being supported by Junior Asha) and Junior Asha Program, iii) Junior Asha youth volunteers, iv) Dheepa Ramani, Ranjini Rajan and Kavita Sharma, who help coordinate the Asha Seattle Junior Asha Program, v) Attendees mingling at the event, vi) Saris put up as a part of the silent auction



Junior Asha has been partnering with the Seattle Asian Art Museum for a decade, and we are thrilled about this partnership. Being a partner in the Museum's Family Diwali event has let us explore our culture through the art at the museum while having the opportunity to interact with a wide diaspora of people. The Seattle Asian Art Museum had a grand reopening and we were honored to be invited to officially cut the ribbon at the opening ceremony and talk about Junior Asha and our partnership. The event got a lot of press, especially in the local media, and it helped showcase our cause further.



*Photo: The Junior Asha youth volunteers at Northwest Harvest, which provides food for local food banks. The kids packaged bins of oats into 2 lb packets for individuals needing food from food banks.*

We hope more Chapters emulate this program and get the next generation involved in giving back to the community.

*For more information about the Asha Seattle chapter, please visit <https://seattle.ashanet.org/> or email [seattle@ashanet.org](mailto:seattle@ashanet.org)*



# 05

## Diwali Fiesta Event Spotlight Asha Arizona Chapter

*Asha Arizona volunteer Rashmi Krishnamurthy shares with us the success of the Arizona chapter's 3rd annual 'Diwali Fiesta' event in 2019, consisting of all-around fun with Diya lighting, a live DJ and musical performances, stalls with various crowd attractions such as Henna and photobooths, Bingo, and even a raffle!*



The Arizona chapter of Asha for Education was re-established in 2015 and obtained affiliation with Arizona State University as a student organization the following year. Since the beginning, the chapter has had volunteers from across the Phoenix valley, comprising professionals and students from Arizona State University. Our volunteers work closely with project partners in India, while organizing local fundraisers and community awareness events in the valley. One of our most popular events every year is 'Diwali Fiesta'.



Asha Arizona organized its 3rd annual Diwali Fiesta on November 2, 2019, at Basha High School in Chandler, AZ. More than 100 people from various backgrounds and cultures attended this fundraising event. The event kicked off with the Indian tradition of lighting the Diya, marking the beginning of the evening.

This was followed by a beautiful musical performance by Spic Macay from Arizona State University. Kriti's dance group from the valley lit up the evening with their jaunty Bollywood dance performances.

At the event, the team set up various stalls, virtually transporting the crowd to the quaint markets of India. These stalls included diya painting, henna, a photo booth and a jewelry stall. The booths attracted both adults and children during the cultural celebration. It is important to note that all purchases made at these stalls went towards funding projects in India.



The participants also engaged in a Bingo game and a raffle. With a short presentation about the organization and its projects, the event attracted additional volunteers to join Asha's good cause. Dosa Grill, a new Indian restaurant in the valley, also supported us by serving amazing food to the crowd. DJ Kumar entertained everyone with his upbeat Indian music, and the crowd danced the evening away.

With the help of generous donors, supporters, and volunteers, the fundraiser was a great success! Asha Arizona focuses strongly on its humanitarian goals; and the organization's diligence and consistency stands as a testament to this.



*Photo: Asha Arizona core members at the 3rd annual 'Diwali Fiesta' event*

*For more information about the Asha Arizona chapter, please visit <https://arizona.ashanet.org/> or email [arizona@ashanet.org](mailto:arizona@ashanet.org).*





**Team Asha Triathletes at  
Lake Tahoe**



**Team Asha Seattle  
Climbing Group**



**Team Asha Seattle Biking  
Group at Seattle to Portland  
Ride finish line**



**Team Asha Family Biking**



**Team Asha East Bay Running Group (Silicon Valley Chapter)**