



Press Release

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Voluntary Groups honoured as Sewa Pioneers Award Winners 2013

A range of voluntary projects including feeding a thousand underprivileged people in Hong Kong; clearing 80 sacks of litter from the Grand Union Canal towpath in Southall and sprucing up a hospice in Luton were among those honoured with a Sewa Pioneers Award on Wednesday 20th March 2013 at the House of Commons in London. The awards recognised those with the spirit of selflessness who devoted time to the service of others through global volunteering initiative Sewa Day. In October 2012, 50,000 volunteers in over 20 countries took part in Sewa Day projects that enhanced the environment, relieved poverty or brought joy to those less fortunate in their local community. Sewa Pioneers Awards recognise outstanding social action projects that create a positive impact on local communities and act as a catalyst to inspire further selfless action.

Also among the winners were five outstanding schools projects from Dubai and across the UK, warmly welcomed by Members of Parliament supporting the initiative, including: Gavin Barwell MP, Bob Blackman MP, Mike Freer MP, Barry Gardiner MP, Steve Pound MP, Virendra Sharma MP, Gareth Thomas MP and Baroness Sandip Verma. Representatives from Councils already committed to Sewa Day included Cllr Vidhi Mohan (Croydon), Cllr Julian Bell (Ealing), Cllr Muhammad Butt (Brent) and Cllr David Parry (Harrow). Partners include Amnesty International, UNESCO, The Big Issue, Guardian Teacher Network, BT, Lloyds Banking Group and The Woodland Trust, among many others.

Since its launch in 2010, global volunteering initiative Sewa Day has exceeded all expectations with tens of thousands of people rendering their service to others, selflessly. The first Sewa Day took place in November 2010. Over 5,000 people, of all ages and from all walks of life, participated in over 130 projects across the UK. By the second Sewa Day, which took place in September 2011, the initiative had gone global with 15,000 people taking part in projects across 15 countries. Sewa Day 2012 was even bigger with an estimated 50,000 people taking part directly and through new partners in over 20 countries.



The three principle aims for Sewa Day are to alleviate human hardship, improve the environment and bring a little joy. 'Sewa' involves performing an act of kindness without expectation of reward. It is performed selflessly and without ulterior motive. And yet the social return on sewa is directly measurable. Independent economic analysis of the initiative conducted in 2011 has shown that Sewa Day provides £4.40 of net benefit to Britain for every £1 expended, which approximates to £300,000 of monetized net benefit from a single day of volunteering!

"Whilst the inherent nature of 'sewa' is selfless service, we could not continue without acknowledging the excellent range of initiatives that Sewa volunteers have created, germinated and nurtured," said Arup Ganguly, Chairman of Sewa Day, "while every single person who took part in Sewa Day 2012 deserves our heartiest congratulations and deepest appreciation, ultimately, the judges were tasked with picking their favourite projects." The judging panel comprising Jon Aarons, Senior Managing Director in the Strategic Communications practice of FTI Consulting; Lopa Patel MBE, Digital Media Entrepreneur, Founder & CEO of Redhotcurry.com and Nupur Singh, Director of Human Resources (UK & Ireland), Tata Consultancy Services met in February 2013 to pick the shortlist and winners deserving of a Sewa Pioneers Award.

Sewa Pioneers Awards 2013 Winners

Voluntary Groups (in alphabetical order)

- ? **Exemplaris** – for organising a diverse range of activities including providing free professional advice & health clinics, feeding the homeless, and collecting clothes to benefit local charities in Southall.
- ? **Food for Life** – for encouraging 70 volunteers in Hong Kong to come together to cook and feed 1,000 underprivileged people.
- ? **Om Unity Group** – for involving 107 volunteers in making the Keech Hospice, in Luton, a more brighter, cleaner, and harmonious environment for its residents.
- ? **Reachout Now** – for organising a clean up on the footpaths of the Grand Union Canal in West London where 80 sacks of litter were collected by 60 volunteers on Sewa Day.
- ? **St. Philip's Centre** – for their commitment to multi-faith engagement in environmental & conservation projects in Leicester.



Sewa Pioneers Awards 2013 Winners – Schools (in alphabetical order)

UK

- ? **Barham Primary School, Wembley, London** - Pupils provided entertainment at the local home to the elderly.
- ? **Ealing Tuition Service, Ealing, London** - Pupils worked with the Ealing Council Park Rangers' Nature Conservation programme helping to clear a public footpath in the local area.
- ? **Radford Primary School, Nottingham** - Cooking meals and taking them to a homeless soup kitchen, going to a day centre and talking, entertaining and taking part in activities with the elderly day centre users.

Global

- ? **Our Own English High School, Dubai** - The school hosted a Tree Plantation Event as part of the One Million Trees Initiative and raised awareness among the students regarding the need to preserve the planet by planting trees.
- ? **The Kindergarten Starters, Dubai** - Students took part in a musical performance that addressed the existing social and environmental issues. The play engages with the audience to highlight how service brings peace and harmony.

About Sewa Day

The aim of Sewa Day is to provide people with a chance to give back to the community through volunteering on a single day to make a difference. As such each event organised must be based on at least one of the guiding principles below:

- To relieve hardship and poverty
- To bring a little joy
- To help the environment

All the events take place on the same day or for schools during the week and do not include any fund-raising activities. From infants through to pensioners, anyone can get involved and make a difference. Community groups, local councils, schools, temples, mosques and businesses have enlisted their support for this initiative. This year, **Sewa Day** takes place on **Sunday 6th October 2013** and individuals can volunteer for local projects through local partner organisations.

Sewa Day is a registered charity (no: 1146848). For further information visit www.sewaday.org | info@sewaday.org

For more information and images of Sewa Day projects that have taken place, please contact Sanjay Mistry on 07810 368 772/ sanjay@prlimited.co.uk

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