



Press Release

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Sewa Day Awards recognise new generation of social action pioneers

David Cameron attends reception to recognise new generation of volunteers

Sewa Day, a global charity initiative that attracted record levels of youth participation, politicians from across the political divide and big business held an awards event at House of Commons yesterday (26 March 2014).

Sewa Pioneers Awards, hosted by BBC London 94.9 presenters Sunny and Shay, recognised the participation of 75,000 volunteers from the UK and 25 other countries on the international day of 'selfless service' Sewa Day 2013 (7 October). In attendance at the House of Commons were; MPs Bob Blackman, Mike Freer, Barry Gardiner, Steve Pound, Virendra Sharma; peers, affiliated organisations and celebrities including music producer Rishi Rich.

Prime Minister David Cameron presented an award to Karen Giles, Headteacher, and Ms Heaton from Barham Primary School. The school in Wembley has supported Sewa Day for the past three years. This year 900 volunteers at the school took part in projects across the week of Sewa Day.

The awards honour schools and voluntary organisations who, empowered by the ethos of Sewa Day, make a valuable contribution to help improve the lives of members within their community through organising inspiring community projects, either by relieving poverty, protecting the environment or by bringing a little joy.

Sewa Day 2013 was a record-breaking year with 250 projects globally and participation of young people at its highest level in the initiative's five year history. Sewa Day engaged and empowered people of all ages to volunteer. Schools pupils from all around the world and university students acted to make a positive difference to their community.

Arup Ganguly, chairman of Sewa Day said:

"Now in its fifth year, the aim of Sewa Day is to encourage people to offer their time to the community they live in. As important as fundraising is, we believe that carrying out 'Sewa' is an important tool to improve the society we live in.



“The awards are a great opportunity for us to honour true community pioneers: the inspiring groups and individuals who have worked hard to make a real difference in their community. I’m delighted that so many young people have embraced the key principles of our initiative; to relieve hardship and poverty, to bring a little joy and to help the environment.”

A recent study by think-tank Demos highlighted the attraction of social action to young people, over the traditional method of voting at the ballot box. Against a tough economic backdrop and increasing gaps between sections of society, the report identified the fact that young people find volunteering and social action the most important agents for positive change in their local communities. ‘Highly active and motivated citizens’ was the term Demos used to describe young people in their report.

“Sewa Day is an evolving charity project that grows bigger and bigger every year. With organisations like UNESCO, Guardian Teacher Network and Learning Possibilities, on board, our aim is to get even more young people involved this year for Sewa Day 2014”, commented Arup Ganguly.

The winners in the schools category: Kindergarten Starters, Dubai; Barham Primary School, Wembley; GEMS World Academy, Dubai; Our Own English School, Al Ain and Westminster School, Dubai

The winners in the voluntary organisations: Exemplaris, Southall; Om Group, Luton; National Hindu Students Forum, Manchester; National Hindu Students Forum, UK and URI International, Uganda.

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Sanjay Mistry on 07810 368 772/ sanjay@prlimited.co.uk

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Notes to Editor

Key facts of Sewa Day 2013:

- 75,000 volunteers from 25 countries (including Australia, Bosnia, Hong Kong Kenya, Russia, UAE and USA)
- 250 projects (UK/ World)
- Global corporate partners such as BP, Canal & River Trust, Deutsche Bank, Ernst & Young, Goldman Sachs, Lloyds, PwC & The National Trust amongst many others
- Involvement from Asian celebrities including Navin Kundra and Avina Shah



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 will take place on the same day or for schools during the week and will 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.

Visit www.sewaday.org for more information.

SEWA PIONEERS AWARDS 2014 WINNERS IN FULL

SCHOOLS

Kindergarten Starters, Dubai

The students of Kindergarten Starters participated in several large projects including a collection of clothes for Syrian refugees and organising ecology campaigns helping to raise awareness of saving water and electricity, Saving the Gaff tree and the Hawksbill Turtle campaigns. The school hosted the first DEWA (Dubai Electricity and Water Authority) Workshop on Conservation, which was open to parents, staff and students from all the schools in the UAE. All of the students created a human pink ribbon to raise awareness for Breast Cancer.

Barham Primary School, Wembley

Barnham Primary School has participated in Sewa Day for the last three years and this year nine hundred volunteers took part in projects throughout the week of Sewa Day.

The projects running through the week included: collecting old spectacles and clothes, toys, books and other unwanted items for St Luke's Hospice, a whole school cleaning initiative, two assemblies from the Sewa Day team and St Luke's Hospice staff.

GEMS World Academy, Dubai

GEMS World Academy organized a project to collect toiletries, food and other necessities from the students to give to the workers of a labour camp. The second project was to organize an Appreciation Dinner for the staff of the school. Thirty volunteers arrived early on their day off to distribute food and other supplies to over two hundred workers in the labour camp, in Sonapur. While one hundred staff from the school attended the Appreciation Dinner.



Westminster School, Dubai

Westminster students of all ages organised a recycling campaign, including collecting newspapers, plastic bottles and batteries for recycling. Assemblies were organised to teach the concept of sewa with talks and lessons running throughout the week of Sewa Day. They also ran awareness building campaigns for breast cancer and bullying. Younger students planted potted plants in the play area with tree planting running concurrently with this project.

Our Own English School, Al Ain

Pupils helped school staff clean the campus. Food items and clothing was collected and distributed to the vulnerable.

VOLUNTARY GROUPS

Exemplaris, Southall

Exemplaris used a collaborative approach to organize a range of projects with a wide variety of community groups and companies. Working with the Sikh Organisation for Prison Welfare, SWAT, British Heart Foundation, Specsavers, Brunel Sikh Society and Basics of Sikhi and with the help of more than fifty volunteers the team organised projects to benefit one thousand people.

Om Group, Luton

The 65 volunteers from the Om Group brought joy to others at many local organisations, including the Keech Hospice for the fourth consecutive year. At Keech Hospice the team worked to make the hospice a cleaner and brighter environment for both the residents and staff. At NOAH Enterprise, a homeless charity, volunteers helped re-arrange, clean and sort the food stock and storage facilities at the premises. Volunteers ran workshops on the Navratri festival at the Foxholes Carehome in Hitchin.

NHSF Manchester

The volunteers organized four projects in all that between them covered all of the Sewa Day criteria. They planted a tree in Whitworth Park, which will leave a lasting impact on the environment. Another environmental project involved the volunteers cleaning at the Fallowfield Secret Garden. The afternoon was spent at Overton House care home, bringing a little joy to the residents by running a Navratri festival dance workshop, teaching the residents traditional dance and putting a performance on for the residents. The last project saw a thirty strong volunteer team cook for the homeless and distribute the meals.



NHSF UK

Over one hundred students from Hertfordshire, Brunel, City, Queen Marys, Kings, LSE, Roehampton, Westminster, St. Georges, Kingston & Greenwich spent the day at Bhaktivedanta Manor temple in Watford working on a range of activities. These included: planting hyacinths, weeding, cleaning the pond, general ground cleaning and making cards for terminally ill children

URI International, Uganda

United Religions Initiative (URI) International ran a number of Sewa Day projects including one in Kampala, Uganda, planting trees, mangoes and potatoes at a school for the families of local prison workers and offered mentoring and career advice to the students.