About Sevathon

The event, coordinated by co-chairs A.G.K. Karunakaran and Anu Jagadeesh, consists of a 5K/10K/Half-marathon race timed by a professional timing company along with entertainment programs and booths to showcase participating non-profits. Because an event of this magnitude is difficult to arrange by a single non-profit independently, several non-profits join forces with ICC to host this event on a yearly basis. In order to promote the concept of giving back, key volunteers have put in countless hours of dedication and time towards the success of the event.

“The hard work and passion demonstrated by volunteers who lead the various committees to organize Sevathon is phenomenal and contagious. Everyone learns from each other and applies these lessons to improving their non-profits,” said Karunakaran, co-president of ICC and co-chair of Sevathon.

Since its inception, Sevathon has grown from an event with a handful of non-profit partners and 150 participants in 2009, to a grand total of 62 non-profit partners and 2,000 participants in 2012. This year, over 1,200 runners and 90 non-profits have signed up for the event so far; however, Karunakaran and Jagadeesh say they aim to register 100 non-profits and 3,000 runners by the time of the event.

Anyone can sign up as a runner or a walker to support a cause of his or her choice by paying a nominal registration fee of $25 for 5K/10K or $40 for half-marathon. Half of the registration fees go to the non-profit of the runner’s choice, and the other half goes toward event expenses covered by ICC.

SEVA
THE JOY OF SERVICE

Sevathon, an annual walkathon organized by the India Community Center (ICC) and non-profit partners to take place on July 14 at Baylands Park in Sunnyvale, CA, brings together members of the Bay Area community to join in a combined effort to promote the importance of giving back. Inspired by the concept of “seva” or service, the sevathon gives every participant an opportunity to learn about various non-profit organizations in the area and help further their causes, writes Deepti Kannan.

About the Non-profits

Participating non-profits include 5th Pillar, which works to remove corruption; Maitri, which helps victims of domestic violence; Akshaya Patra Foundation, Freedom from Hunger and Akshaya, which all work to eliminate hunger; and ASSET India Foundation, which rescues victims of sex trafficking. All such organizations recruit runners and walkers to register, donate, and raise awareness about their causes.

For example, Isha Vidhya, a non-profit education initiative, works for the economic and social empowerment of rural children in villages across the south-
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ern state of Tamil Nadu in India. Through Sevathon, the organization took the lead in fundraising last year, collecting a total of $28,458. Every dollar donated makes a significant impact when it comes to the literacy problem in India, an issue that organizations including Isha Vidhya, India Literacy Project, Pratham, Asha, Ekal Vidyalaya, Foundation for Excellence and Vertivel Foundation are working to solve.

This year, Jeena, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of parents and children with developmental disorders, is leading the pack when it comes to recruiting runners. Their dedicated volunteers have rallied 232 people to register in support of Jeena. Jeena provides a friendly and safe environment for children to learn essential life skills in a culturally sensitive manner.

Another organization that benefited greatly from its participation in the Sevathon last year was Families for Children (FFC), a non-profit orphanage for special needs children in India and Bangladesh. Last year, FFC registered 18 runners for Sevathon with the help of several young volunteers, including Jessica Dornhofer, a student of the International Business at California Baptist University.

Dornhofer got involved with FFC through the Best Semester’s India Studies Program, during which she had the opportunity to work with the children once a week.

“It was a perfect fit because my brother has special needs, so it was easy for me to get along and know how to interact with the children there,” Dornhofer wrote in an email to FFC.

Motivated by her rewarding experience in India, Dornhofer decided to raise awareness for FFC by recruiting a bunch of her friends to run for her cause at Sevathon. She also set up a booth at the event, and helped collect a list of 53 people who learned about FFC by visiting the booth. As a result of the effort of volunteers like Dornhofer, hundreds of young people have been able to experience the positive impact that service can have, both personally, and globally.

Call to Action

When a participant signs up as a runner or walker and pledges to fundraise, he or she not only experiences the joy of service, but also gets physical exercise while training and preparing for the race. Information on how to register or donate can be found at sevathon.org.

“Sevathon is a platform that gives everyone an opportunity to come together to support [his or her] non-profit, donate, fundraise, get healthy and have fun on a nice summer day,” Karunakaran said. “I strongly urge members of the community to stand up for their causes, and do their parts to change the world one step at a time.”