

# THE LOTUS

A Quarterly Publication of the Federation of India Community Associations (FICA)



September 2022- January 2023

Since 1967

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## FICA's Diwali Bash

BY SWATI DESAI

On October 8th, 2022, members of the FICA along with the Indian community and friends celebrated Diwali, the Festival of Lights. This was the first event hosted by FICA after 2 years of Covid. It was truly great to see our community in its finest glittering Indian attire at the Marriott in Beachwood for dinner and entertainment. Mr. Monte Ahuja was our Keynote speaker and Mrs. Usha Ahuja was our Chief guest for the evening.

The American National Anthem was played by DJ Jay Singh, and the Indian National Anthem was sung Mrs. Swati Sathe, Mrs. Uma Krishnan and Mrs. Harsha Rane. The president of FICA, Mrs. Ritu Mahna, expressed her heartfelt gratitude to the numerous sponsors and volunteers who helped make the event possible. The sponsors for this event were; Diamond Sponsors – Mr. Sudarshan and Mrs. Swati Sathe, Platinum Sponsors - Key Bank, Gold Sponsors – Kamla Bafna Foundation, Silver Sponsors – Mr. Jugal and Mrs. Sunita Vijayvargiya, Huntington Bank, Westfield Bank, Saffron Patch, Table Sponsors – Dingus and Daga, Dr. Satish and Mrs. Ritu Mahna, Dr. Mohan and Mrs. Jayashree Durve, Mr. Nitin and Mrs. Smita Samant, Mr. Sanjay and Mrs. Madhvi Patel, Dr. Homai Cupala, Dr. Kapil and Mrs. Anila Kwatra and Friends of FICA. The banquet room resounded with speeches and the felicitation of community members to whom awards were presented.

Mrs. Swati Sathe was also recognized for her passion and dedication to service of others and was honored with a Community Service and Philanthropy award. Awards for outstanding achievements in academics and volunteering were given to our young students; Janhavi Bhatt, Ritika Chavan, Janaki Nair, Roma Wankhede, Saija Shah and Anusha Bangalore.

Saffron Patch West catered delicious Indian Food for the event. There was exciting raffle drawing and the evening ended with the crowd dancing to the music of DJ Jay Singh.

Mr. Mahesh Desai and his team at TV Asia covered the event.

The keynote speaker, Mr. Monte Ahuja, CEO and President of Transtar congratulated the Indian community and applauded the efforts of the FICA's President and the team for having reached a great pinnacle of success. He was introduced by Mr. Sudarshan Sathe, a very honorable and esteemed member of the Indian community and BOT. Mr. Monte and Mrs. Usha Ahuja were recognized for their leadership and generosity towards the Indian community and were honored with Community Leadership and Philanthropy award.





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*Chairmans Message*



Dear Friends;

Hope all of you had a safe and enjoyable Holiday season. And wishing you a Happy and Healthy New Year, 2023!

• As FICA, and the world, emerged from the Covid shadow, in which many of our in-person celebrations were foregone, we held a “coming-out “ party for the Indian community:

- A Grand Diwali Event at the Marriott Hotel on Harvard.
- In the preceding years, FICA may have been quiet but was not dormant. Here, I must thank and commend the Executive Committee under the leadership of Mrs Ritu Mahna and her entire team, including the volunteers. They have done a fabulous job bringing the community together with all of its Sister Organizations and other FICA initiatives, such as, Project Seva (Chair - Mrs. Sangita Bafna), Shiksha Daan (Chair- Mr. Sanjay Garg), Helping Hands (Chair- Mrs. Poonam Punwani) and the Lotus (Editor - Mrs. Sangita Bafna), under FICAs

umbrella. These organizations continue to operate with purpose and vigor. Indeed, Avery Denison, one of our stalwart supporters, has acknowledged the tireless work of all FICA volunteers. We appreciate their support. A noteworthy change was in ICG: Under the leadership of Mrs. Sumita Kedia and with the financial assistance from Mr. Baiju Shah, ICG has become a showpiece, well lit, and picturesque. I urge each and every one of you to visit and see for yourselves as soon as the inclement weather passes.

- For the Republic Day, FICA held a smaller, boutique get-together to thank our donors. This event was held at the Lotus Banquet Hall and was attended by about 100people. We appreciated the Ahuja Family, Avery Dennison, the Bafna Family, KeyBank, Margaret Wong and Associates, the Sathe Family, and all of our Donors. We can never thank them enough!
- For the coming year, we will continue our search for a permanent home for FICA, streamline the constitution and commence with our roster of annual events, such as Holi, Diwali, One World day, Independence Day, Golf and Tennis tournaments.

I wish everyone good health and continued success!



*Save the Date – April 18, 2023 for the next Cleveland International Hall Of Fame induction ceremony, recognizing one of our own esteemed member of the Indian community...Mr. Sudarshan Sathe.*

“Since 2010, the Cleveland International Hall of Fame (CIHF) has inducted people who have made significant and lasting contributions to our multicultural society. Cleveland is home to people representing about 120 different ethnic groups. The CIHF exists not only to honor those special people but also to inspire a new generation of leaders to follow in their footsteps.”

**CLE INT'L FILM FEST 47 SAVE THE DATES**

**CIFF47 AT PLAYHOUSE SQUARE MARCH 22–APRIL 1, 2023**

**CIFF47 STREAMS APRIL 2–APRIL 9, 2023**

artsculture

**FICA Sister Organizations**

- Association of Asian Indian Women of NEO  
www.aaiwo.org | Lynette Sequeira
- American Federation of Muslims of Indian Origin  
www.afmi.org | Dr. Razia Ahmed
- Association of Indian Physicians of Northern Ohio (AIPNO)  
www.aipno.org | Dr. Dharmesh Mehta
- American Society of Engineers of Indian

Origin (ASEI)  
www.asei-usa.org | 440-734-1830

Bengali Cultural Society  
www.bsacle.org | Soumitra Ghosh

Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation  
Sreedhar Nair

Gujarati Samaj of Grtr. Cleveland  
www.clevelandgujaratisamaj.org | Nilesh Patel

Guru Gobind Singh Sikh Society  
www.clevelandgurudwara.org

Guru Nanak Foundation  
www.gurunanakfoundationrichfield.com

India-Ohio Chamber of Commerce  
www.indiaohiochamber.com | Radhika Reddy

Indian Christian Association, Michael Sreshta

Jain Society of Greater Cleveland  
www.jsgc.org | Jitu Shah

Kasturi Kannada Society  
www.kasturikannadasangha.org | Meena and Humchad, President

Kerala Association of Ohio  
www.kaoh.org | JayaKumar

NEO Marathi Mandal (NEOMM)  
www.neomm.org | Shekhar Ganore

Marwari Association | Sushila Mohanka

Orissa Society of America | Birendra Jena, (330) 544-1725 | birendrajena@hotmail.com

Punjabi Cultural Society  
www.guidestar.org | Burjinder S Dhanoa

NEO Telugu Assn (NEOTA)  
Telugu\_Mitra@yahoo.com | Prasad Muvva

NEO Tamil Sangam (NEOTS)  
www.neo-ts.org | Jayabalan Sankarasubramanian

South Asian Bar Association of Cleveland  
sabaohio@gmail.com | Ruchi Asher, http://ohiosaba.weebly.com/

NEO Sri Lankan Association (NEOSLA)  
Cleveland\_Lankans@yahoo.com



4410 W. Streetsboro Rd. • Richfield, OH 44283-0387  
Office: 330.659.9201 • www.richfieldvillageohio.org

**100,000 Meals to help work toward a world where Hunger doesn't exist!**

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, "I was a stranger and you invited me in (Matt 25:35-40)...as we approach the Holidays and the New Year the world is facing a hunger challenge of immense proportion. As Mayor of the Village of Richfield I am leading the effort on behalf of **Rise Against Hunger** to provide **100,000 meals** for the cause. I am asking for your time, talent, and resources in joining me to answer the call. As Americans, we know we are blessed to have our basic daily needs met. But in countries struck by war, famine and drought the struggle to feed families is unprecedented.

Our efforts begin with you, the most generous community in Ohio. We will be organizing, gathering, and assembling **100,000 meals on Saturday April 15th, 2023**. We are asking for 5 hours of your time, and will accept any financial support you want to provide. We are working with a team from Rise Against Hunger, and Please know your contribution is tax deductible. *The load lightens with many hands so won't you consider taking time with us to take a stand to Rise Against Hunger?*

As Mayor, it has been my honor to lead us in our growth as a community. But as a servant leader, I am compelled to answer the call to help in this cause. I thank you for your consideration, and pray all will find it in themselves to answer this call with me. Have a blessed and joyful Holiday Season and a very Happy New Year!

Respectfully,

Mayor Michael Wheeler  
Village of Richfield  
*Michael Wheeler*

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MICHAEL WHEELER, Mayor  
BOBBIE BESHARA, Council President

SANDY TURK, Finance Director  
SCOTT WALDEMARSON Service Director



**Mayor Michael Wheeler cordially invites you to help work toward a world where hunger doesn't exist by packaging 100,000 meals.**

**Be a Volunteer to Pack Meals and/or be a Sponsor: 40 cents/meal, \$200=500 meals, \$1000=2500 meals**

**DATE: Saturday, April 15, 2023**  
**PLACE: Revere High School Gymnasium**  
**3420 Everett Rd., Richfield, OH 44286**

For more information call Mayor Wheeler 330-659-9201 ext. 222



**TO PARTICIPATE PLEASE REGISTER WITH ONE OF THE INDIVIDUALS BELOW:**

- Ramesh Shah: 440-460-1037
- Sam Petros: 440-546-9000
- Bath-Richfield Kiwanis: 440-725-7382
- Mayor Michael Wheeler: 330-659-9201 x 222

*On November 16, 2022, as Project Seva was serving a Thanksgiving meal at a homeless shelter in Cleveland, it was presented a PROCLAMATION from the City of Cleveland and Mayor Bibb's office....recognizing the work of Project Seva with various homeless shelters around the city of Cleveland.*



**Obituary**



**Cleveland has lost a talented artist and a wonderful human being.**

One of the Cleveland old timers a lady by name Meera Subramaniam who was a president of the Tamil Sangam in the 1990s passed away in December 2022. She was very well known for her leadership and helping nature in The Tamil Sangam when it used to be called Bharati cultural Society and was a very well-known singer in the community.

**Shraddhanjali to Julka Uncle, the Bhisma Pitamaha of Cleveland Community.**

It is with a heavy heart, that FICA ( Federation of India's Community Associations ) bids an emotional farewell to a community stalwart and a centenarian, Shri. Om Julka ji, or Uncle Julka, as he was affectionately known.

He lived a full life of 104 years and was a pillar of Cleveland Community. A celebrated Lt. Colonel in the Indian Army, he enjoyed the distinction of being the only Clevelander to have heard Pandit Nehru's Tryst with Destiny speech on August 15th, 1947, LIVE. A constant presence in the Community as well as FICA functions, he had the rare quality of joie de vivre . Many will fondly remember him being the keynote speaker at the recent August 15th event and the Leader of the Indian contingent at the One World Day parade last year, at the Cleveland Cultural Gardens.

His smiling visage will be missed. Rest in Peace, Sir!





## *Manas: The Charioteer Within*

BY CHERYL D'MELLO



To convert the abstract relationship between the mind and the senses to a tangible experience while retaining the abstraction, and to lead the audience into a journey within and without while fully engaged in an intense sensory experience takes a high degree of genius – this was on full display at the debut of Guru Sujatha Srinivasan's *Manas: The Charioteer Within* at the Milton and Tamara Maltz Center Performing Arts Center at the Temple Tifereth-Israel at Case Western Reserve University as part their Silver Hall Concert

series. *Manas* draws from a lived understanding of the philosophies of the Veda and the Bhagavad Gita, infuses it with stories that buffet us from the front pages of the news, and then throws us back into introspection.

This Shri Kalaa Mandir production explored the perpetual struggle for control between the mind and the 5 senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Guru Sujatha's choreography fully engaged in the traditions and tropes of Bharathanatyam to convey ancient and modern musings via exquisite abhinaya and natya. Beginning with meditative music that moves on to a celebration of the senses, the production opens with verses from the Kathopanishad that establish the metaphor of the Charioteer mind tussling for control yoked to the 5 senses (horses) who explore pleasures that distract and overwhelm the mind. In the next act, the senses have taken supremacy. This is explored first as individual greed in the story of King Midas, and then moves outward to external social constructs that assault the self and mind – of oppression and subjugation of women, and society's tendency to put up borders and divisions, and man's inhumanity to man in this context. The 3rd act reinstates the mind in charge of the senses, a high goal in the spiritual journey of many traditions. The mind realizes the Self, and finally connects with the consciousness of the universe.

The auditorium is small and intimate, and the stage is small and jewel-like. The sound of the mridangam and nattuvangam reverberated to fill the auditorium without needing undue amplification. The result was an immersive experience. Shri Lalit Subramanian's effortless voice was the perfect accompaniment – filled with emotion when singing Subramaniam Bharati's or Perumal Murugan's poetry, and infused with the underlying rhythms of the recitation of the Vedas and the Gita. The delightful flautist

and violinist, Raghav Kasibhatla and Laya Raghav respectively, were teenagers who carried their parts flawlessly, able accompanists to the many teenage junior dancers in the troupe.

A special mention must be made of the intense and tight choreography of the motherdaughter duo of Guru Sujatha and Dr. Shriya Srinivasan. When exploring the iniquity of borders, there were 12-14 dancers on the stage, moving in complex interlacing patterns which evoked the complexity of people moving, settling, enlarging communities. As the mind understood one pattern of intersecting lines and squares, the eye was confronted with a new one. In that small space, young dancers sometimes moved backwards with scarcely an inch to spare, in tune with the music and talam, their fellow dancers, their space and the audience with remarkable performative maturity. That dense mass on the stage made it even more poignant that children were separated deliberately from parents with little attention from neighbors to the tragedy unfolding.

Through the performance, projection onto an unexpectedly tasteful jumbotron discreetly placed above the stage kept the mixed audience aware, with the verses from the Vedas and the Gita displayed both in transliteration and translation. Unfortunately, Perumal Murugan's poetry was only projected in translation. Including his simple poetry that strikes at the heart of the concept unerringly in the projection would have enhanced that segment.

What could have been done better? This program of slightly over an hour was sweeping in breadth and depth, as complex in presentation as the verses that formed the music. It was like drinking the ocean. The presentation would have been tighter without the allusion to the societal oppressions, but these are still constructs that can be reined in by a mind in control of itself. And the dancing and the choreography in those segments were brilliant. I would not want to miss those. Some minor irritants were the result of being a small company with not enough hands for all tasks – the junior dancers had a false start at the beginning; the jumbotron verses were out of sync with the performance a couple of times. And I wish Perumal Murugan's poetry had been printed in the original tamil in the program notes.

I dearly hope that this production is seen at other venues and other audiences. I would like to view this again to see portions that I missed because my attention was pulled in so many directions. An amazing, fulfilling performance, as rare as the brilliant sunny fall day in Cleveland when it debuted.



## Shiksha Daan 2022 Activities

By SANJAY GARG

Shiksha Daan continued to be strong in 2022 – thanks to the support we receive from the community. We continued our online tutoring program with 20 students enrolled in the program. Our volunteers provide free one-on-one tutoring to the students for two hours a week during the school year. Our focus is to help the students with their school work and provide extra support in English reading and comprehension as needed. Our volunteers spent over 1000 hours tutoring students in 2022. We also continue to have strong partnership with College Now, Refugee Response and Seeds of Literacy. We work with these organizations to get the members of the Indian community involved in their mentoring/ tutoring programs. We had over 15 mentors for college students through College Now who are helping the students successfully complete their college education. We also have 3 volunteers each supporting the Refugee Response Youth Mentoring Program and Seeds of Literacy adult tutoring program. Here are some updates regarding the recent 2022 Shiksha Daan activities - Open house, donations we have made to other organizations, award received by a Shiksha Daan volunteer tutor, and current volunteer opportunities.

### 2022 Volunteer Appreciation Lunch and Open House:

Shiksha Daan held its 8th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Lunch and Open House on Sept. 11, 2022 at the Lotus Banquet Hall. There was good attendance in person and also for the virtual part of the meeting. Sanjay Garg provided an overview of Shiksha Daan activities since Oct. 2021 – see [www.shikshadaan.org/news](http://www.shikshadaan.org/news) to view the presentation. In addition to our current volunteers and donors, we were pleased to see many new faces from the community. Some of our volunteers shared their experience with various programs, and we also had some of our students share their experience with the tutoring provided by our volunteers. Some pictures from the event are attached.

### 2022 Donations for Educational Support:

In 2022 Shiksha Daan made the following donations to our partner organizations to support the education of underprivileged youth and adults:

- Refugee Response – Donated \$2000 to help them get licenses for educational software to use in their Youth Mentoring Program.
- Seeds of Literacy – Donated \$1500 to pay for the Zoom license for the virtual tutoring program for the whole year, and also to support Testing for Adult Assessment.
- Salvation Army Homeless Family Shelter - Donated \$1500 worth of school supplies - paper, pens, pencils, crayons, glue, notebooks etc. for the children living in the shelter.

We will like to thank all our donors for their generous contributions which make it possible for us to support our mission.

### Award:



I am very pleased to share with you the information that our volunteer tutor - Saija Shah was among the recipients of the 2022 FICA Outstanding Young Achievers Award. She was recognized for her excellent contributions to Shiksha Daan tutoring and helping set up the website, and for overall academic achievement. The awards were presented at the Oct. 8 FICA Diwali function. Attached is a photo of Saija with the award plaque. Another recipient of the award, Janhavee Bhat, is also a volunteer tutor with Shiksha Daan.

**Current Volunteer Opportunities:** We are looking for more volunteer tutors for our online

tutoring program to help grow the program in 2023. The requirement for tutors is that they be over 16 years of age, be knowledgeable enough about the U.S. K-12 education system to be able to help students with school work, and be able to spend two hours a week on weekdays after school to provide online tutoring to the student. If you are interested in supporting this then please go to [www.shikshadaan.org](http://www.shikshadaan.org) and complete the volunteer



tutor form, or contact us at [shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com](mailto:shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com). Volunteer opportunities are also available with Seeds of Literacy for tutoring adults to help them complete their high school equivalency diploma, and with The Refugee Response to in-person mentor youth from refugee families. The commitment for each of these volunteer opportunities is 2 hours a week. You can visit [www.seedsofliteracy.org](http://www.seedsofliteracy.org) and [www.refugeeresponse.org](http://www.refugeeresponse.org) to learn more about the volunteer opportunities with these organizations. If you do decide to apply to be a volunteer tutor/mentor then we request that you please let us know at [shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com](mailto:shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com), so that we can keep

track of how the Indian community is helping with the education of the underprivileged youth and adults in the greater Cleveland area.

If you will like to donate funds to Shiksha Daan, you can do so at [www.shikshadaan.gov](http://www.shikshadaan.gov) or send a check made out to FICA – Shiksha Daan to Shiksha Daan, C/O Sanjay Garg, 28853 Woodmill Drive, Westlake OH 44145.

Have a Merry Holiday Season and a Happy New Year,





## Seva Project energizes Toddlers to Seniors to Help!

By SALONI KHATRI & RAMESH SHAH

**To give maximum happiness to the maximum number of people** for the maximum time is the inspiration that Chinmaya mission ignites in all its members from **toddlers to our aging population**. Practicing such messages helps us internalize this positive way of life. The **Cleveland Chinmaya Mission community** embraced such an opportunity on **SUNDAY, December 11th, 2022**.



The six-year-old, Arjuna scampered enthusiastically carrying the food packets to the team engaged in packing and sealing them in boxes. There was a smile on his face as he along with his eight-year-old sister Avani made multiple trips back and forth to help contribute to the Rise against hunger project, being organized by the **Cleveland chapter of Chinmaya Mission**. These children are not only learning about the values of Service (Seva) at an early age but also converting them into life long virtues by applying them in their routine.

Rise Against Hunger is growing a global movement to end hunger by empowering communities, nourishing lives, and responding to emergencies. Almost half of all childhood deaths worldwide occur in children with malnutrition. For many children, the meals provided by this project may be their only meal of the day. **These meals not only nourish their bodies but also allow them to focus and most importantly give them hope for a better future.**

RAH is turn-key project: RAH brings all plastic bins, grain, rice, soyabean, veggies, plastic bags, weigh machines, heat sealers, card board boxes, sealing tapes, transport boxes and ship overseas; all for 40c/meal; a bargain price!

Chinmaya Mission organized the Meal packing event in collaboration with Ramesh & Jaya Shah who are local humanitarians and have been organizing Medical Yatra for many years under the umbrella of **Association of Indian Physicians of Northern Ohio**, dedicated to arranging medical camps in rural India.

On a cloudy yet temperate Sunday morning of December 11th, more than **80 volunteers** of Chinmaya Mission gathered at Laurel School to

pack **10,000** meals to be shipped across the world to people who need them. Anju Kotwani whose commitment to this project is commendable spearheaded the event.

"I was one of the fortunate volunteers and on my table were 2 high school girls measuring the rice, and adding the dried vegetables with efficiency and cheerfulness." Nethra, a sophomore kept a keen eye on any supplies getting lower while diligently pouring the rice through the funnel with her gloved hands. Meanwhile Samyutha, also a sophomore handed me the filled packets with a joyful expression. "-

I looked around at our diverse community, some 3-year-olds and some above 70 years of age as they all engaged in this meaningful service. These dedicated Chinmaya members may be busy cardiologists, CEOs, accountants, entrepreneurs, internists, gastroenterologists, teachers, scientists, and software professionals in their secular life but in this sacred environment, they all come together for singular purpose of self-development and to serve society. There was palpable exuberance. **The gong sounded every time 1000 packets were completed. It was followed by loud applause from the volunteers. The time flew by as everyone stayed focused on the task at hand but kept their minds engaged with the thoughts of the divine.** The soothing chants played in the hall. The Laurel School in Shaker Heights provided a great venue to host this event. As I reflected quietly that day, I felt so grateful to be part of Chinmaya



Mission Cleveland which is helping transform the lives of many, acting as a catalyst in changing ordinary living into extraordinary. It has made available the ageless wisdom of Advaita Vedanta, the knowledge of universal oneness, providing the tools for everyone to live their life to its fullest potential. The biggest beneficiaries are our younger generation from preschool children to high school and University youths who grow up with the foundation of a happy and productive living based on **Vedantic teachings**, taking pride in their culture and heritage.

The Rise Against Hunger event gave our Chinmaya community another practical opportunity for spiritual growth and happiness enabling them to become positive contributors to society by serving the society.



The secret of  
change is to  
focus all of your  
energy not on  
fighting the old,  
but on building  
the new.

SOCRATES

## Helping Hands - A project of FICA 2022 – A year in review

### An Eventful Year

As we come to the end of 2022, on behalf of the Helping Hands Board, I wanted to take this opportunity to give you an update on how we at Helping Hands have been able to support members of our community, with the help of our volunteers.

The mission of Helping Hands is three-fold:

- Support **South Asian women**, their children and families, trying to break the cycle of domestic and sexual violence;
- Assist the **elderly in our community**; and
- Provide referral assistance for medical and non-medical needs for **visitors and/or new immigrants**

(All Helping Hands services are free and confidential)

For our first objective, we recognize that each situation is unique and confidential. To give you a perspective of the kind of assistance that we were able to provide, here is an example of what was done.

A client approached us to help solve a family legal issue. Helping Hands volunteers helped by acting as interpreters, assisted in engaging attorneys, even provided transportation when needed, until the issue was resolved, satisfactorily.

Unfortunately, such situations are not isolated, and we are assisting more women in related circumstances.

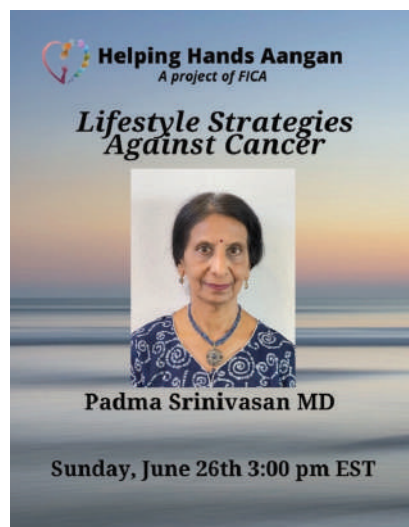


For our seniors, we held 8 “Aangan” webinar series, which were well attended and covered topics such as heart health, prevention of cancer, eye disease, Medicare, playing bridge, preventing falls in the elderly, county and city resources for seniors, COVID, gardening, financial matters and Ikebana. Based on the excellent feedback received, we continue to explore relevant topics for future series. We welcome additional ideas and speakers for 2023.

We are exploring ‘Assisted Living’ places that would make our Seniors comfortable and provide Indian cuisine. For assistance to Indian citizens, here are a couple of examples.

A family came to Cleveland who had a very sick child. They had identified a doctor at the Cleveland Clinic who could perform the required surgery. Unfortunately, they did not have the funds for it. During their stay in Cleveland, our volunteers helped with transportation to and from the Clinic. However, when the child travelled with them Helping Hands paid for Uber, to avoid any lawsuits, in case of an accident. Some of our volunteers even dipped into their pockets to help.

A situation arose when a student from India found herself temporarily homeless. A volunteer welcomed her into their home. Helping Hands gave the volunteer, a nominal amount for incidentals.



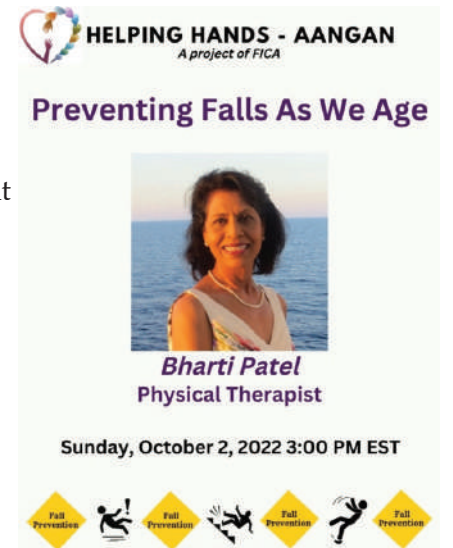
Another family brought their father for surgery to the Cleveland Clinic.

The family needed a specific diet. Until suitable help could be made available, our volunteers cooked and delivered their meals.

We combined our resources with other sister organizations under FICA’s umbrella, like Project Seva to collect coats for the Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. USCRI asked for help in mainstreaming Afghan women into the Cleveland community. Our volunteers helped by adopting a woman each, to guide her through the maze of American life.

We had a get together with our volunteers in June. Over ‘tea’ our enthusiastic volunteers exchanged ideas and phone numbers for future projects.

We did not conduct a formal fund raiser this year, relying on the generosity of board members and volunteers to help with specific situations, while using our endowment fund prudently. As our programs continue to grow, we look forward to your continued financial and volunteering support to strengthen and expand our assistance in all three areas. Our website is now complete and donations can be accepted online. We will go live on January 1, 2023. Helping Hands website: <https://helpinghandsneo.org/>



### Looking ahead at 2023

- In 2023, we will continue to build on our experience and support through:
1. Increasing our network by making ‘Helping Hands’ better known to Clevelanders.
  2. Creating Senior groups on the East, West and South sides of the city. The goal being that the group can reach out to one another for company - thus avoiding loneliness.
  3. Looking into Assisted care facilities and negotiating the serving of Indian food on their premises, for their Indian clientele.
  4. When connecting with the seniors in our community, we find that there is a growing need for information on support services for seniors which includes access to cooked food, and availability of physical and emotional support. Our team will continue to investigate how best to address these needs for the growing elder population in our community.

We will continue to work with FICA and our sister organizations to support the needs of our community – particularly as it relates to the needs of displaced South Asian women and children.

On behalf of the entire Helping Hands Board, I want to express my sincere thanks to all of our donors and volunteers for your support and faith in us. We look forward to meeting more of you (in person or virtually) in 2023.

Wishing you and your family a happy and healthy new year.

Poonam Punwani

Chair, Helping Hands

**For more information on Helping Hands please feel free to contact:**

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