

# THE LOTUS

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



October 2023 - December 2023

Since 1967

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Please email us at:  
[Lotus.ficacleveland@gmail.com](mailto:Lotus.ficacleveland@gmail.com)



## NOMINATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FICA Cleveland is currently seeking nominations for the Executive Board (12 elected members) and Board of Trustees (9 elected members). Each member of the Executive Board will serve for a period of 3 years. Each member of the Board of Trustees will serve for a period of 5 years.

You may nominate yourself or others by sending your nominations to the following email address. All nominations are due by December 10, 2023.

Executive Committee Nominations – [ecnominations2024.ficacleveland@gmail.com](mailto:ecnominations2024.ficacleveland@gmail.com)

Board of Trustees Nominations – [botnominations.ficacleveland@gmail.com](mailto:botnominations.ficacleveland@gmail.com)

Following individuals will serve as members of the nomination committee:

Mrs. Poonam Punwani, Mrs. Guniya Bafna, Mrs. Seema Sharma, Mr. Gaurav Kapoor, Mrs. Gauri Masurekar

The nomination committee will solicit and compile nominations from the membership for all Executive Board and Board of Trustees. The elections shall be conducted by secret ballot and simple majority shall govern. If the nomination committee does not receive enough nominations before the due date, then nominations received before the due date shall be considered elected and remaining nominations will be solicited. The nomination committee shall determine other detailed procedures for the election. All nominated candidates will be presented at the Annual General Body Meeting on December 17, 2023.

### Eligibility Criteria

#### 1. Executive Board

- a. All members nominated for the Executive Board are required to be one of the following paid members of FICA.
  - i. Annual Membership: \$50 per year
  - ii. Lifetime Membership: \$500

#### 2. Board of Trustees

- a. All members nominated for the Board of Trustees are required to be lifetime members of FICA.
- b. All members nominated for the Board of Trustees are required to commit to raise or donate \$5000 during their 5-year tenure.

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## Dazzling Diwali Delight: A Night of Lights and Festivities

Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights, is a vibrant and joyous celebration that holds significant cultural and religious importance in Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. The festival usually spans five days, with each day marked by various rituals, decorations, and festivities.

The first day of Diwali, known as Dhanteras, involves the worship of Lord Dhanvantari, the god of health. It is customary for families to clean and decorate their homes, illuminating them with diyas (oil lamps) to symbolize the triumph of light over darkness.

Naraka Chaturdashi, the second day, is dedicated to the vanquishing of the demon Narakasura by Lord Krishna. People wake up before dawn, take an oil bath, and light lamps to commemorate this victory of good over evil.

The third day, which is the main Diwali day, is celebrated with grandeur. Families come together to perform Lakshmi Puja, seeking the blessings of the goddess of wealth. Exquisite rangoli designs adorn the entrance of homes, and fireworks light up the night sky, creating a spectacular display of colors.

The fourth day, Govardhan Puja, is observed to honor Lord Krishna's lifting of the Govardhan Hill to protect the villagers. Devotees build miniature mountains of food, representing Govardhan, and offer prayers.

On the final day, Bhai Dooj celebrates the bond between brothers and sisters. Sisters perform aarti for their brothers, applying tilak on their foreheads and exchanging gifts as a gesture of love and protection.

Diwali is not just a religious event; it is a time for family gatherings, feasts, and the exchange of gifts. The streets come alive with the glow of lamps, colorful decorations, and the spirit of unity. The festival transcends religious boundaries, fostering a sense of community and togetherness.

In essence, Diwali is a celebration that radiates positivity, symbolizing the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. It's a time to reflect on the triumph of righteousness and the importance of spreading joy and happiness in our lives.

FICA celebrated Diwali 2023 event on 03rd November at Lotus Banquets, North Olmsted, Ohio. The event hall sparkled with joy as guests came together to celebrate the much-anticipated FICA's Diwali event, a night of lights, colors, and cultural richness.

The event brought people from diverse backgrounds under one roof to partake in the festive spirit.

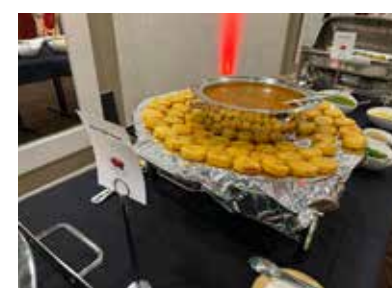
The evening kicked off with breathtaking sparklers. Everyone enjoyed lighting the sparklers, painting it with a kaleidoscope of colors. The night progressed with a vibrant cultural program showcasing traditional dances, mesmerizing music that depicted the essence of Diwali. Event hall had a perfect backdrop for the cultural extravaganza.

One of the major highlight of the event was the spectacular center pieces with diya in it. All the centerpiece diyas,

meticulously arranged between flower petals, were lit simultaneously, illuminating the venue, and symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness. The sight left attendees in awe, capturing the true spirit of Diwali. Families and friends enjoyed a diverse array of delicious traditional dishes, from mouth-watering sweets to savory snacks..

Another highlight of the event was a local vendor showcasing their crafts, offering attendees a chance to indulge in some festive shopping. From vibrant clothing and jewelry to traditional handicrafts, the market added a touch of authenticity to the celebration.

The organizing committee expressed their gratitude for the overwhelming turnout and thanked the sponsors, participants, and the community's active participation in making the Diwali function a resounding success.



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## Introduction to Helping Hands

By POONAM PUNWANI

Helping Hands began as a “cottage industry”, about 25 years ago. A group of friends wanted to help their friends and neighbors and be a safety net for them, in times of need. The idea being that as Indians we understand Indians best. They did just that. Friends talked to other friends who needed help, thus spreading the word.

Four years ago, the founders of this safety net decided to formalize their effort. Thus, Helping Hands was born. A mission and charter for this fledgling volunteer group was created. A ‘Board’ of working volunteers was assembled. FICA took Helping Hands under its umbrella. People from the community at large were invited to participate in this venture, as volunteers. The goal being three-fold:

1. Help people in crisis due to domestic abuse. Give them a safe haven and guide them in the direction of their choice.
2. Reach out to the elderly in our community with talks and information through our very popular Aangan programs. Helping Hands Volunteers visit patients in nursing homes. Seniors are introduced to their peers in an effort to alleviate loneliness.
3. Help Immigrants to Northeast Ohio, such as patients and their families, students and newcomers with meals, contacts, friendship and household items, when needed.

Most importantly, ALL OUR SERVICES ARE CONFIDENTIAL.

## Understanding Depression

By LILIAN GONSALVES EBRAHIM M.D.

Depression is a common, serious but treatable mood disorder. About 1 in 6 persons will suffer from a depressive episode in their lifetime. It is a disorder of young adults but can occur in children and the elderly. It is twice as common in women.

What are the symptoms of depression?

Common symptoms include fragmented sleep, loss of appetite, fatigue, persistent sadness of mood, loss of joy and pleasure, feelings of guilt and poor concentration. These symptoms must persist for at least 2 weeks and interfere with the person’s level of functioning. It’s important to distinguish depression from grief which occurs after a loss, for example, job, divorce, health, death. Grief generally gets better with time, comes in waves and the person’s self-esteem is preserved unlike in depression.

What are the risk factors for depression?

The exact cause for depression is unknown but a family history, chemical imbalance of neurotransmitters especially serotonin, medical conditions such as thyroid disorders, hormonal changes during pregnancy and

menopause, medications (sleeping pills, anti-hypertensives) and alcohol abuse can all be triggers. It is therefore important to see your primary care physician first for an accurate diagnosis of depression.

What is the treatment for depression?

70- 80 % of patients respond to antidepressant medications. Talking with a counselor is recommended to deal with life stresses and grief. Maintaining an exercise routine, healthy diet, yoga and a network of family and friends are also beneficial. Most importantly, remember that depression is a treatable illness and not a moral weakness or character flaw.

Helpful resources

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Call 1-800-950-NAMI (6264), text “HelpLine” to 62640 “Feeling Good” book by David Burns M.D.

### Helping Hands Contact # 216-260-5025



## HELPING HANDS

A project of FICA

### MISSION STATEMENT

Helping Hands supports South Asians who are trying to break the cycle of domestic and sexual violence and take back control of their lives. We recognize that immigrant survivors of gender violence in the United States face unique challenges, including limited access to medical, legal, social, protective and support services. We provide personalized, confidential support to empower individuals by connecting them with local counseling, advocacy and crisis intervention services.

#### SERVICES

- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- SENIOR SERVICES
- AANGAN

#### Our Team

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 Swati Sathe – Secretary  
 Sumita Kedia – Treasurer  
 Mala Garg  
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 Mona Alag  
 Dr. Jaya Shah  
 Dr. Gita Gidwani  
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HAPPY NEW YEAR





## Shiksha Daan Update - 9th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Lunch and Open House, Select Volunteer Profiles and Volunteer Opportunities

BY SANJAY GARG AND JANHAVEE BHAT

Shiksha Daan (Gift of Education) is an activity of FICA with the objective to get the members of the local Indian community more involved with the education and development of youth and adults from under-privileged background in the Greater Cleveland area. We achieve our objective through our own online tutoring program and partnering with other local organizations with the missions aligned with our objectives. For more information visit our website: [www.shikshadaan.org](http://www.shikshadaan.org).

Shiksha Daan was started 10 years ago in Sept. 2013. We held our 9th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Lunch and Open House on Sept. 10, 2023 at the Lotus Banquet Hall. We had 45 people in attendance including many of our volunteers and various students that we tutor/mentor through our programs. It was great to not only have our regular supporters attend but also to see many new faces. The program started with social interacting with snacks followed by a presentation by Dr. Sanjay Garg on our activities since Sept. 2022. Over the year, Shiksha Daan volunteers contributed over 1700 hours to help with under-privileged youth and adult education. Some highlights of the volunteer activities include:

- 25 Refugee/Low Income family students tutored online through our own program
- 13 College Students mentored through College Now program
- 3 students mentored through the Refugee Response program
- Multiple adults tutored through the Seeds of Literacy Programs
- Over 50 active volunteers giving their time for tutoring/mentoring

During the presentation, as Dr. Sanjay Garg talked about our specific programs, the students and volunteers in attendance shared their experiences on tutoring/mentoring with the audience. One of the students who spoke is part of a single mother Palestinian refugee family and has three other brothers also enrolled in our online tutoring program. The mother had come to us in Oct. 2017 when we had just started our in-person tutoring program on the West side of Cleveland. She brought the school report cards of her 3 older sons (the fourth was too young for school at that time) and was crying because her sons were doing poorly in school. Since the Shiksha Daan volunteers started working with these students, they have made tremendous improvement in academics and all of them are now getting all As and Bs in their courses. The students are in Grades 5, 6, 9 and 11. Gita Gidwani who is the Shiksha Daan coordinator for the College Now mentoring program gave an overview of the program, and a college student who is being mentored by one of our volunteers talked about how the mentor is helping him with successfully handling the challenge of attending college. We also had an Afghan refugee couple in attendance – the wife is being tutored in English by one of our volunteers through the Refugee Response Adult Mentoring program. The husband talked about how the Shiksha Daan tutor is helping his wife become more confident with reading, speaking and understanding English. We had the volunteer coordinators from College Now and Refugee Response also in attendance, and they were able to see first hand how Shiksha Daan is helping students in their programs.

Dr. Sanjay Garg also provided an overview of the Shiksha Daan finances. So far this year we have donated \$3500 to charitable organizations in the Cleveland area. This includes \$2000 donated to Refugee Response to help them renew licenses for educational software to use in their Youth Mentoring Program, and \$1200 donated to Salvation Army Family Homeless Shelter for school supplies for the Back to School Carnival for the benefit of 71 kids who were staying in the emergency family shelter.

We are very grateful for the generosity of the local Indian community in donating funds to Shiksha Daan which enable us to perform our mission. After the presentation and a Q&A session, all the attendees had a wonderful buffet lunch prepared by Saffron Patch West. We are grateful to Neeti and Vijay Sharma for

sponsoring the lunch, and to Lotus Banquet Hall for providing us the facilities for our event. Below are some photos from the event.



We are very grateful for all the hours and effort our volunteers put in to help the students. Below are the profiles of some of our volunteers including two who have been members of the Shiksha Daan Committee since its inception and two of our high school student volunteers. We specially appreciate the support from high school students since they are more familiar with how courses are taught in schools here and they are able to better help students in higher grades.



**Gita Gidwani:** I retired from Cleveland Clinic after working as a gynecologist for 35 years. I have been a board member of Shiksha Daan since its inception. Education of young people is very important to me & therefore the mission of Shiksha Daan appeals to me. We tutored Nepali students every Sunday in person for a number of years - it was a very rewarding experience. At present I am involved with College Now - have mentored 2 college students through

their college years. It gives me great pleasure to see these young women progress confidently through their college years. I look forward to the expansion of Shiksha Daan in Cleveland & its model being replicated in other cities in the USA.

**Meera Kansal:** I have lived in the Greater Cleveland community for the past 47 yrs. This is where we have raised and educated our two children. I have taught biology at Tri C and CSU as an adjunct instructor. In the 80's, a group of us started a "school of Hindi language and culture" for our neighborhood Indian children from different cultural backgrounds of India. We taught them written Hindi script primarily. The students also put up an impressive annual show of reciting poetry and performing drama on stage. I am currently also volunteering for the Seeds of Literacy, College Now, and Refugee Response organizations. It has been extremely humbling when you meet children or adults arriving in the US without basic language skills to navigate their lives in a foreign land. With our help they begin to get more confidence and their voice back. I have been part of Shiksha Daan since its inception.

**Saumya Mahajan:** I am a junior at Revere High School in Richfield, Ohio. Despite being born in Myrtle Beach, I've spent most of my life freezing in Cleveland! I have an older sister, Sarisha, who also volunteered with Shiksha Daan and introduced me to the program. I live with my parents and two grandfathers. Also, I am a part of many clubs at school including Girls Golf, Mock Trial, Academic Challenge, Students Demand Action, and more. I love to volunteer and make a difference in the community, and am able to achieve this goal with Shiksha Daan. I have thoroughly enjoyed tutoring Smarika Pokhrel in math throughout her sophomore year and will continue to do so this year as well. In addition to Shiksha Daan, I volunteer with hospice patients to provide them with companionship and support. I have developed a passion for working with the elderly after working at a nursing home in the dietary department and taking care of my grandparents. I am very appreciative and inspired by Mr. Garg's compassion and initiative in creating Shiksha Daan, and I aspire to follow his example to one day make a positive impact in the community as well.

**Janhavee Bhat:** I am a senior at Solon High School in Cleveland, Ohio. In school, I participate in many clubs including Gymnastics, Science Olympiad, and Track & Field. I also play trumpet in marching and concert band. I live with my parents, Priya and Deepak Bhat. I have been volunteering for Shiksha Daan since April of 2021. I tutor a third grade girl who came from Afghanistan, Arzo. When we finish with homework help, some of my favorite activities to do with Arzo are reading books from the library and writing our own anecdotes for pictures we draw.

Continued on page 5





## Shiksha Daan Update - 9th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Lunch and Open House, Select Volunteer Profiles and Volunteer Opportunities

My tutoring experience with Shiksha Daan has been very rewarding and I have seen much progress with Arzo.

With this, not only is Arzo learning but I am too. Tutoring for Shiksha Daan has taught me patience, empathy, and truly has sparked my passion for volunteering.

We have many volunteer opportunities available and are looking for more members of the Indian community to support our programs. The available volunteer opportunities are listed below. Please feel free to reach out to us at [shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com](mailto:shikshadaan.fica@gmail.com) if you are interested in any of these volunteer opportunities and would like to learn more about them.

### Shiksha Daan Online Tutoring:

We provide one-on-one online tutoring to Grade 2-12 students from low income families. We currently have 25 students in the program some of whom are still looking for tutors. We will like to have more tutors so that we can increase the student enrollment.

- Tutoring commitment is 2 hours a week during the academic year – preferably 1 hour sessions on 2 different weekdays after school.
- Tutoring is done online – tutor and student/parent decide on mutually agreeable days/times and use Zoom or similar platform.
- Tutors should be 16 years or older by the end of 2023 – great opportunity for high school students to get social work credit.

If interested, please complete the tutor registration form at: <https://www.shikshadaan.org/tutor-registration>

### Partner Programs:

**Seeds of Literacy:** Seeds of literacy provides tutoring to adults to help them complete their high school equivalency diploma. Tutoring is done online as well in person at two different locations. Tutoring times are Mon. to Thurs. 9-11 am, 1-3 pm and 6-8 pm. Tutors are requested to commit to

at least 1 two-hour session a week. Tutors need to be 18 years or older and should have successfully completed high school – college degree is preferred. If interested please see <https://www.seedsofliteracy.org/get-involved/volunteer/> for information as well as to apply to be a tutor. They are specially in need for tutors for the evening 6-8 pm sessions.

**College Now College Student Mentoring Program:** College Now provides mentoring to college students who are graduates of Cleveland Municipal School District and have received a full Say Yes scholarship to attend college. Some of these students are the first person from their families to go to College. So the role of the mentors is to provide some guidance to the students to help them succeed in their college studies. Time commitment is very minimal – have 2 interactions with student through phone, e-mail etc. and attend 2-3 in-person meetings with the student. If interested please see [Become a Mentor | College Now Greater Cleveland \(collegenowgc.org\)](https://www.collegenowgc.org)

### Refugee Response Youth Mentoring Program and Adult Tutoring Program:

Refugee Response is looking for volunteers to support its Youth Mentoring Program (YMP) and Adult Tutoring Program (ATP). For both the programs, volunteers have to be 21 years or older. The YMP program requires a commitment of 2 hours once a week from 3-5 pm – Mon., Tues., Wed. or Thursday. Mentors work one-on-one with an assigned mentee and also do social activities with other students and mentors. Mentoring is done at the Refugee Response offices. For the Adult tutoring program, Refugee Response is looking for women volunteers to help recently arrived Afghan refugee women with English learning. The commitment is two hours a week, and the tutoring is done typically at the home of the person being tutored. If interested, please see: [Refugee Response | Get Involved](https://www.refugeerresponse.org)

## Indian Cultural Garden

Below Picture Mahatma Gandhi, 1869 -1948, Led non-violent movement to win freedom for India from British rule. Influenced many others, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### History & Design:

The most prominent feature of the Indian Garden is the statue of Mahatma Gandhi. On either side of Gandhi are six pillars that depict different aspects of Indian heritage. The descriptions are listed below.

### Six Heritage Pillars

- Universal Brotherhood – Inscriptions include ancient text stating that the whole world is one family.
- Legacy -India's contributions to humanity.
- Artistic Traditions – India's visual and performing arts traditions and major artists.
- Leadership – Major leaders in both ancient and modern India.
- Modern India – Status of modern India and Indian diaspora in

America.

- Connections – Historical connections between India and America.

### Water feature:

The India Garden borders Doan Brook. and steps leading to Doan Brook are reminiscent of steps (known as ghats) leading to rivers—a common sight in India.

### Other:

Inscriptions on the walkway at the entrance to the garden say “welcome” in 15 of India's major languages as well as English. All heritage pillars depict a lotus flower in relief. The lotus is the national flower of India.

### Plantings:

An eastern redbud was planted at the India Garden in 2008 by Prof. Rajmohan Gandhi, the grandson of the Mahatma.







## 2023 Diwali Thanksgiving Meal Giveaway Event

Free Stamp by the side of City Hall building

This event is the result of collaboration between volunteers from Project SEVA, a service arm of Federation of Indian Community Association (FICA), the local non-profit agencies listed below and CRB Department of City Hall. Boxed dinner, hygiene packets and blankets will be loaded into volunteers' vehicles and delivered to these local organizations, so the homeless and the refugees will have some needed items for this winter.

- Family Promise of Greater Cleveland
- Journey (Domestic Violence)
- NE Ohio Coalition for Homeless
- St Herman's House of Hospitality
- West Side Catholic Shelter
- Y Haven of YMCA
- Zelma George Family Shelter
- Hope and Healing

Both Mona Alag, the founding member of Project SEVA and Sangita Bafna, current President of Project SEVA will be recognized at this event for 36 years of continuous service work to the needy in Cleveland.

### FICA Project Seva Initiatives

- Serve meals in 4 local churches every month in underprivileged areas.
- Distribute blankets, winter wear (gloves, jackets, socks, caps) to local homeless shelters for adults & kids.
- Distribute hygiene care packages (soap, shampoo, dental care, detergent) and feminine hygiene packages to local homeless shelters.
- Arrange a photo session with Santa for children from these communities.
- Join hands with 'The Haven House' – Emergency shelter for Homeless Women and Children to provide clothing for adults and kids, infant care products and hygiene packages.
- Join hands with 'West Side Catholic Center' – Emergency shelter for Homeless Women and Children to provide meals, clothing for adults and kids and hygiene packages.



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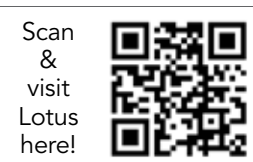


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### Interview with FICA President – Mrs. Ritu Mahna

**Deepa Rao - Tell me your experience with FICA and let me know about FICA like when it was established and what is the FICA mission.**



**Ritu Mahna** -Like in many cases, I was drafted into this role, but my experience has been fabulous. And that, first and foremost, is because of the strong Executive committee team we have. Everyone works together for a common goal, which is to promote FICA, and through FICA, the Indian community in NE Ohio. FICA's Mission when it was established and now is to become the umbrella organization for the various ethnic, religious, and work-related subsets of our community.

After you count all of our sister organizations with a narrow mandate, some space remains, which can only be filled by a pan-Indian organization, and that is what FICA does.

**Deepa Rao -Tell me about the different wings of FICA and what they do.**

**Ritu Mahna** -FICA has several wonderful initiatives to engage with the larger Cleveland Community.

Project Seva is the oldest and has the following

- Serve meals in 4 local churches every month in underprivileged areas
- Distribute blankets, and winter wear (gloves, jackets, socks, caps) to local homeless shelters for adults & kids
- Distribute hygiene care packages (soap, shampoo, dental care, detergent) and feminine hygiene packages to local homeless shelters
- Arrange a photo session with Santa for children from these communities
- Join hands with 'The Haven House' – An emergency shelter for Homeless Women and Children to provide clothing for adults and kids, infant care products, and hygiene packages
- Join hands with 'West Side Catholic Center'– An emergency shelter for Homeless Women and Children to provide meals, clothing for adults and kids, and hygiene packages

ICG looks after the Indian part of the larger Cleveland Cultural Garden complex. The India Garden is part of the Cleveland Cultural Gardens, a hidden jewel within Rockefeller Park– a two-mile tranquil stretch north of University Circle. To reach the India Garden, take the Martin Luther King Rd. exit off I-90 and go south towards University Circle. The India Garden is situated on the west side of Martin Luther King Blvd. between Superior and St. Clair Avenues, adjacent to the Finnish Garden and directly opposite the Syrian Garden.

The Cultural Gardens were conceived for the purpose of honoring and celebrating Cleveland's cultural diversity and to symbolize peace, brotherhood, and harmony among people of all nations. They were built in the early 1900s and are the result of a joint effort between the various ethnic communities, the City of Cleveland, and the Federal Government. They continue to remain a major landmark in the city of Cleveland.

**Shiksha Daan** tutors underprivileged children in Cleveland irrespective of color, caste, creed, or religion. Shiksha Daan (Gift of Education) is an activity of FICA with the objective to get the members of the local Indian community more involved with the education and development of youth and adults from underprivileged backgrounds in the Greater Cleveland area. We achieve our objective through our own online tutoring program and partnering with other local organizations with missions aligned with our objectives. For more information visit our website: [www.shikshadaan.org](http://www.shikshadaan.org).

Shiksha Daan was started 10 years ago in Sept. 2013. We held our 9th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Lunch and Open House on Sept. 10, 2023, at the Lotus Banquet Hall. We had 45 people in attendance including many of our volunteers and various students that we tutor/mentor through our programs. It was great to not only have our regular supporters attend but also to see many new faces. The program started with social interaction with snacks followed by a presentation by Dr. Sanjay Garg on our activities since Sept. 2022. Over the year, Shiksha Daan volunteers contributed over 1700 hours to help with underprivileged youth and adult education. Some highlights of the volunteer activities include:

- 25 Refugee/Low-Income family students tutored online through our own program
- 13 College Students mentored through the College Now program
- 3 students mentored through the Refugee Response program
- Multiple adults tutored through the Seeds of Literacy Program
- Over 50 active volunteers giving their time for tutoring/mentoring

The newest is Helping Hands, which helps women who are trying to break the cycle of domestic and sexual violence and assists them in learning to become independent and regain control of their lives. Helping Hands is also set up to assist the elderly in our community. The Helping Hands - Aangan initiative engages the 50-plus members of the community by bringing to them topics of interest through Zoom sessions.

**Deepa Rao - FICA has many sister organizations under its umbrella. Let me know the advantages of organizations that are associated with FICA.**

**Ritu Mahna** -To put it simply, united we stand, divided we fall. When we stand together, in large numbers, we mean something to the larger Cleveland community. There are other practical benefits like insurance coverage for their individual programs.

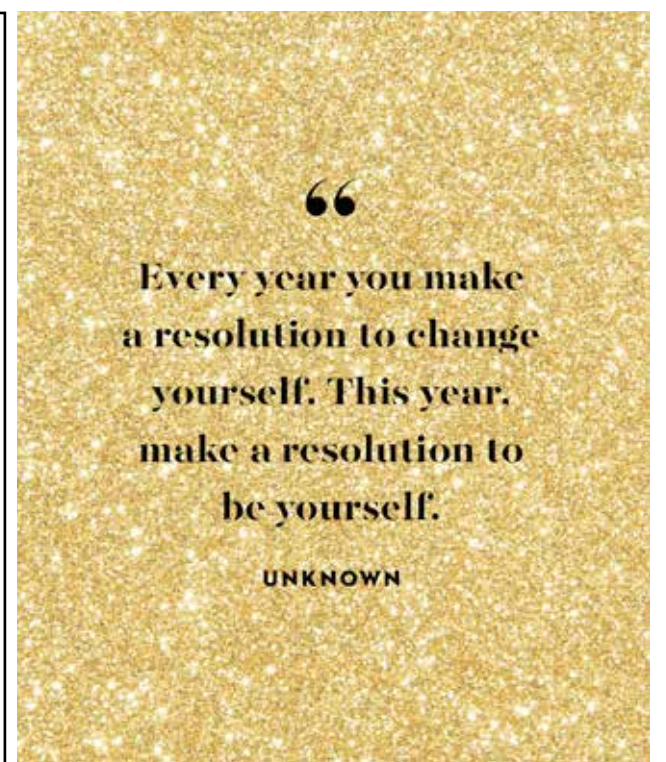
**Deepa Rao -What is your message to the Indian Community?**

**Ritu Mahna** -Support FICA! The Indian community has a much higher profile now. It is also the most affluent community in the USA. *We need our own home, an Indian Community Center that is commensurate with the status and elan of our community. So generously support the building fund, which will be rolled out soon!*

### New Lotus Ad Rates

| NEW Rate List and sizes |              |                |             |
|-------------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| Description             | Size (W x L) | Quarterly Cost | Annual Cost |
| 1/16 page               | 2.5" x 3"    | \$ 25          | \$ 75       |
| 1/8 page                | 5" x 3"      | \$ 50          | \$ 150      |
| Quarter page            | 5" x 6"      | \$ 75          | \$ 250      |
| Half page               | 10" x 6"     | \$ 125         | \$ 400      |
| One full page           | 10" x 13"    | \$ 200         | \$ 700      |

<https://checkout.square.site/merchant/GRKN3BWZC9B7S/checkout/Q52AZ6OZVGBJWB3BLREVUXHF>







## Richfield Temple Cultural Programs

Growing up in America, it is difficult for the Indian American children to know their roots and their Indian heritage. Parents who realize this, connect their children to their culture through Indian classical music and Indian classical dance. Engaging in these arts can be a great confidence booster, a lot of fun, and helps give these children an Indian identity. The board of directors of Sree Venkateswara Temple had recognized the importance of these activities for children, and so, in conjunction with the cultural committee have instituted several cultural programs for the children of this community. The temple has provided a platform for all the students of music and dance to perform and offer their arts to the almighty.

Nrityanjali, a community dance program was conducted on Oct. 1st. It was a successful program where all the dance teachers and their students in Cleveland participated. They showcased several dance forms, like Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi and folk. A very colorful and entertaining program!

All Composers Day, a community music program was organized on Oct. 8th and was also very successful. All the Cleveland teachers and their students participated, rendering an entertaining and spiritual musical program.

The theme of both the programs was Lord Shiva. The enthusiasm and

teamwork of all the teachers, both dance and music, resulted in quality programs, and importantly, helped to integrate and unite the whole community.



## Bathukamma Celebrations Cultural Event Conducted by NEOTA

Bathukamma or originator of Life is a unique festival celebrated by Telugu people all over the world during Navaratri times where 'Nature' is worshipped by offering prayers to 'Flowers' that symbolize Goddess "Parvati". Women play an active role during this festival by creatively making the flower arrangements and joyfully dancing around them. It is followed by "Nimajjanam" where the flowers are immersed in water that teaches us to let go something very dear to you and accept what nature has planned for us. NEOTA hosted this festival on October 21st at Nordonia Highschool. It was a huge success attended by over 600 people.



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### Hypertension

By DR. SALONI KHATRI, M.D  
STAFF PHYSICIAN, CLEVELAND CLINIC.



**Introduction:** Hypertension also known as high Blood pressure is a condition in which the blood vessels have persistently raised pressures. It is a serious medical condition that can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease. Normal BP is 120/80 mmHg. If it increases above 140/90 it is termed as hypertension. It is known as a silent killer as most people may not have any symptoms, though sometimes it can cause headaches, dizziness, palpitations, shortness of breath, and chest pain. More than 1 in 5 adults worldwide have raised BP. It is the most common primary diagnosis in the USA. According to the American Heart Association, approximately 86 million adults in the United States are affected by hypertension.

**Prevention:** All adults should have their BP checked routinely. Lifestyle modifications including regular exercise, a low sodium and high potassium diet, maintaining a normal weight, stopping tobacco use, and avoiding alcohol usage help lower the BP. Managing stress is essential too.

**Asian Indians and Hypertension:** Data shows that Asian Indians have higher odds of hypertension than non-Hispanic whites. Increasing routine BP testing in Asian Indians in younger adults may allow for earlier detection of high-risk individuals.

**Treatment:** Hypertension can be controlled effectively with a simple low-cost medication regimen. Regular access to affordable medication is necessary. There are several options to treat BP which is not controlled by lifestyle modification. Consult your health care regarding what treatment regimen will be best for you.

### Attention Highschool Students

If you have a student in high school, we would like to invite you to consider the South Asian Leadership Bootcamp, led and facilitated by Cleveland area entrepreneurs of Indian backgrounds.

Last year, the first formal year of the program's existence, 17 high school students participated in the program, which involved 4 philanthropic service projects including Laura's home, the Cleveland Botanical Garden, Ohio Guidestone, and St. Herman House men's shelter.

The group also met biweekly for formal leadership education and workshops. The program culminated with a 'color walk' at Lakewood Park, in which the students planned and executed a festive summertime event that raised over \$10,000 fully donated to the Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland, and to the Cleveland City Mission.

Applications for this program are now open and are due by December 31, 2023. The application is copied below:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdUCnpylA-1cvSyRTtuY6Voxpv1yHyviiIfZyXUVd5DvwHw/viewform>

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to one of the program coordinators: Ankur Gupta - drgupta@northridgevillefamilydentistry.com



*This year we as Sindhu Shakha parivaar from Cleveland have donated 1795 pounds to the Akron food bank. Sindhu Shakha appreciates all our Balas and Kishors for their volunteer services and all those families who came forward to donate food to SEWA Diwali. Thank you all for showing kindness and gratitude and taking a step ahead in giving your time this holiday season.*



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## Banana Streusel Bread

By SUSHMA LOHIT

*Crunchy on the outside and fluffy on the inside, this most amazing banana bread with streusel topping is a must try bread !*

### Ingredients

All-purpose flour – 1 cup  
Wheat flour – 1 cup  
Baking powder – 1 tsp  
Baking soda – 1 tsp  
Cinnamon – 1 tsp  
Unsalted Butter – ½ cup  
Brown sugar – ¼ cup  
Eggs – 2 large  
Ripe bananas – 3  
Buttermilk – ¼ cup  
Vanilla extract – 1 tsp  
Pecan or Walnuts chopped and toasted - ½ cup

### Streusel topping

Flour – 3 Tbsp  
Brown sugar – ¼ cup  
Butter – 2 tbsp  
Chopped nuts – ¼ cup

### How to do

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F, spray the loaf pan with butter and set aside.
2. The streusel topping - Add the flour, brown sugar, in a medium bowl and mix until combined. Cut in the butter using your fingers or pastry cutter until coarse crumbs. Stir in chopped nuts. Set aside.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and cinnamon. Set aside.
4. Cream the butter and sugars in a large bowl, add eggs, add in buttermilk, vanilla and mashed bananas. Slowly stir in the dry ingredients. Mix until well combined, the batter will be thick.

5. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan. Sprinkle the streusel topping evenly on the batter.
6. Bake the bread for 50 – 55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
7. Remove from the oven and cool for 15 minutes in the pan on a wire rack.

### Blueberry Jam

This delicious homemade Jam is made with fresh blueberries and sugar. Beautiful dark color with a sweet, tangy and perfectly spreadable homemade blueberry Jam!

### Ingredients

Blueberry fresh / frozen – 5 cups  
Sugar – 1 cup you can more (my fruit was very sweet)  
Cornstarch – 1 Tbsp  
Cinnamon powder – 1 tsp optional

### How to do

1. Rinse blueberries with water and pat them on a towel to dry.
2. In a large bowl add washed berries and sugar mix until well combined, set aside for 15 mins.
3. Transfer to a pan, add berries, bring to a full rolling boil over high heat, stirring constantly.
4. Stir in cornstarch and cinnamon powder, return to a full rolling boil, stirring constantly.
5. Reduce the heat and simmer for 15 mins, covering the lid or until thick, stirring in b/w.
6. Once cool, refrigerate for up to 3 weeks or freeze for up to 12 months.



## RECIPE OF THE SEASON - Mango Cheese Cake

By MRS. SHWETHA CHANDRU

*Mango Cheesecake Parfait: Tropical Bliss in Every Bite! Indulge in the richness of ripe mangoes and creamy decadence. Our Mango Mousse is a heavenly treat for your taste buds. Perfectly sweet, velvety, and topped with fresh mango slices. Dive in!*

Here is a delicious recipe for Mango Cheesecake Parfait:

**Ingredients:** 100 grams (0.5 cups) Heavy Cream, 225 g (1 cup) Mango Puree (Using fresh mangoes optional), 225 grams (1 cup) Cream Cheese at room temperature, 50 g (1/4 cup) Caster Sugar + 2 tablespoons (if you like more sugar) 1 teaspoon Vanilla Extract, 1 cup Granola, 2 1/2 tablespoons Butter melted, Chopped mangoes and other fruits for topping.

**Instructions:** In a mixing bowl, beat the heavy cream until soft peaks form. Add mango puree, cream cheese, 1/4 cup caster sugar, and vanilla extract. Whisk until well combined. In a food processor, pulse the granola until it resembles breadcrumbs. Add melted butter and 2 tablespoons of sugar and mix until combined. To assemble, divide the granola mixture into 6 jars or serving glasses, pressing it evenly with a spoon. Pipe the cheesecake mixture into each jar, dividing it equally. Refrigerate the jars for at least 2 hours. Just before serving, top the jars with chopped mangoes and other fruits of your choice.

Enjoy this delightful Mango Cheesecake Parfait as a refreshing and creamy dessert!



## Beauty Tip for Winter

By SUSHMA LOHIT

In Ayurveda, Ghee is suggested for skin care benefits as it has hydrating and nourishing qualities. Have you ever heard the benefits of ghee for skin? Here are some benefits  
\* Works as a skin moisturizer. \* Serves as a skin moisturizing agent. \* Therapy for dry or chapped lips. \* Enhances the area surrounding your eyes. \* Delays the aging of the skin. Here are some face masks which I have inherited from my grandma and it works amazing for any type

of skin.

1. Face mask for premature aging and fine lines - All you need is raw milk, honey, and ghee. Mix the ingredients together and apply them over the face. Let it sit for 25 minutes and wash with cold water. This mask will help you get rid of wrinkles, blemishes, and fine lines plus, it also makes the skin super elastic and tight.

2. Face mask for healthy and glowing skin - You will need Ghee, turmeric \* Ghee and turmeric must be combined in an equal amount. \* Make sure to massage the mix till it makes a paste. \* Apply the mixture gently throughout your face, paying special attention to any delicate areas. \* Rinse it off with cold water after this mixture has completely dried. \* Use a cloth to pat your face dry. \* Antioxidant properties both in turmeric and ghee aid in skin

whitening.

3. Face mask for acne skin - You will need Ghee, Sandalwood powder, and Honey. Mix half a tablespoon each of ghee, powder, and honey. Apply this mixture on your face and leave it on for about 20 minutes. Then, wash it off with lukewarm water.



## Margam: A Journey of Discovery

By Sri Vishnu Pasumarthy



Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan and her talented team delivered a mesmerizing performance that left the audience spellbound at the Maltz Performing Arts Center early November. The evening commenced with a "Wonderful Prayer" in the majestic Atana ragam, set to the rhythmic Aadi Talam, composed by the illustrious Mysore Jayachamerajendra Wodeyar.

Following this was "Ananda Narthana Ganapathim" in the enchanting Naatai ragam, also in Aadi Talam, composed by the renowned Oothukadu Venkata Subbaiyer. The dancers exuded joy and celebration in their performance, capturing the essence of the piece.

A refreshing rendition of the "Natesa Kavuthuvam" in Hamsadhwani ragam, set to Aadi Talam, showcased the energy and dedication of Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan's budding students. Their enthusiasm and precise execution were commendable.



The "Alarippu" in Kalyani and "Jathiswaram" in Vasantha by Tanjore Quartet were beautifully choreographed and seamlessly executed. The dancers displayed their technical prowess with finesse.

The performance reached its pinnacle with the "Amba Stuti" in ragamalika by Adi Shankaracharya. The intricate steps and the emotional depth brought goosebumps to the audience. Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan and her team portrayed the divine connection with sheer brilliance.

The "Varnam" in Khamas, performed by her senior disciples Shriya Srinivasan and Sita vakkalanka, was a burst of energy that captivated the viewers. Their dedication and vigor were truly praiseworthy.

The "Nandanar" story was a masterpiece, depicting the yearning of a devotee to witness Lord Shiva. Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan's performance was filled with grace and emotion, leaving a lasting impact. This was followed by a Javali - Smarasundaranguni by Subbarama Aiyer, further enriching the experience.



An exceptional item was "Ardhanariswara Stotram," a divine portrayal by Shriya Srinivasan and Sita Vakkalanka. They entranced the audience with their depiction of Shiva and Parvati's sacred union. Their performance was truly remarkable.

The dance recital concluded with a lively "Desh Tillana" and the auspicious "Mangalam." The entire team's coordination and execution were praiseworthy.



The live orchestra was exceptional. Lalit Subramanian's soulful vocals, SreeKrishna Pasumarthy's enchanting flute, and Sam Jayasingham's rhythmic mastery of the mridangam, kanjira, and morsing along with special effects elevated the performance to new heights. Their contribution was invaluable in creating a memorable experience for the audience.

Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan's exceptional ability

to seamlessly intertwine the intricate musical aspects of Carnatic music with her captivating dance choreography deserves special recognition. Her talent in harmonizing Raga, Tala, and Bhava, while maintaining a perfect balance in Laya and Vinyasa, is truly rare and remarkable. It is evident that her profound understanding of every facet of the art form shines through in her performances, making her an artist of unparalleled depth and expertise. Her capacity to connect these diverse elements into a cohesive and enchanting spectacle is a testament to her dedication and passion for preserving and advancing this beautiful tradition. Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan's artistry is a true gift to the world of dance and music.



In conclusion, Smt. Sujatha Srinivasan, and her team, including her senior disciples Shriya Srinivasan and Sita Vakkalanka, delivered an outstanding performance that transcended the boundaries of dance. The team of dancers Sudhiksha Ramesh, Srishti Ithychanda, Sneha Upadhyayula, Yuvha Karthikeyan, Arushi Shinde, Nandita Srikumar, Aaryaa More, Samyutha Polaconda, Smriti Anand, Shashini Mohan, and Deekshitha Swaminathan displayed excellent coordination. Their dedication, artistry, and the live orchestra's contribution made this evening an unforgettable masterpiece.

\*\*\*\*\*

Srivishnu Pasumarthy, a versatile artist in the realms of Carnatic music, writing, and composition, emerges from a heritage steeped in artistic tradition. He has garnered esteemed awards, guided by illustrious mentors including the Malladi Brothers. Srivishnu has performed at numerous stages, both as a solo performer and in tandem with his brother as the "Pasumarthy Brothers," amassing accolades in India and the United States. He currently serves as the chief technology officer for a prominent hospital in the Cleveland area and trains budding music students.







**Did you come up with a better idea? Here is what you do next...**

By DR GOPAL NADKARNI, UNIVERSITY OF AKRON



In my class of budding entrepreneurs, I frequently encourage students to come up with better ideas to solve everyday problems. They ask me how they can convert their clever idea to something that they can make money! Here are tips on how you do it:

**First, start with the question:** So, what, who cares, and why? The world is full of clever people, and most people never go further than just having an idea, because they don't put in the hard work to figure out "who needs it" and "why do they need it". It is not enough if you think they need it, you need to go out and pound the pavement and talk (yes, face to face) about their problems around your idea. At least 20-100 people to get a good sample. If you find that people have issues but are living with it, that is a good sign that maybe they are willing to pay for it to reduce their "pain" with your idea. The same goes for whether there is a significant benefit to them in adopting your idea. Here is an example: You observe that Grandma has difficulty opening bottle caps. You come up with a clever device that makes it much easier. You even make a prototype that works! Now, you need to go talk to lots of people in that age group and find out

whether they all have similar issues.

How do they open bottles today? Which bottles have the biggest problem? What is the benefit of having your device? If they can do without it, they are not good paying customers! However, if they say that their arthritis pain increases because they tried too hard, now, that is a very good reason to validate this idea further through more interviews because if they hurt themselves, it costs 100X more money than the \$10 bottle opener. You now have a solid foundation to do the next steps: raise money, form a team around you, trial your products, and even start a company around your product ideas. But for each of these steps, you will be successful if and only if you use the same technique that I explained earlier: Talk to people with experience. Talk to people who have formed good teams, people who have raised money, people who have experience building products, and people who have experience marketing and selling. That is the last step (not the first step) to be a successful entrepreneur. Lastly, remember that this is a rewarding journey, with ups and downs, and your life will be enriched by improving your grit, resilience, and communication skills, and in doing so, you will make an impact on all around you. Good luck on your entrepreneurial journey.

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Episode 1 (Dec 2023) – What is Public Speaking?

Public Speaking is a unique skill that's categorized as a hard and soft skill. Like singing, dancing, typing, or coding which are hard skills, it's a dedicated field of study requiring intentional practice. On the other hand, like character traits and interpersonal skills that impact relationships, connections, and productivity, it's a soft skill that is a true complement to hard skills.

Fear of public speaking is natural, yet, did you know that it could be overcome? The first trick is to not associate the feeling with the sense that you will perform poorly. Instead, use the nerves to pay attention to developing a clear message, understanding the needs of your audience, and why your speaking may be important to you and them. Once you do that, it's time to prepare, practice, and present. In our next episode, learn how to organize your material to prepare a clear and purposeful message for your audience. Happy Speaking!

Contributed By Sravanthi Vallampati  
Distinguished Toastmaster  
To learn more, contact [svallampati@gmail.com](mailto:svallampati@gmail.com)  
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FICA - Lotus team wishes you all  
A Merry Christmas and A Happy New year 2024

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AND  
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