THE LOTUS

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

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Seminar on Rational Dating of India's Great Epics

By Mr. Somnath Roy

The event was organized by FICA, Cleveland, at the Solon Public Library on the 23rd of July, 2026 between 6:00 pm & 9:00 pm. About one hundred people from different educational backgrounds attended this unique, thrilling event. Snacks and tea were served at the end of the event.

FICA President, Mr. Shekhar Ganore, welcomed all the attendees at the beginning of the program and requested Mr. Shrikant Limaye to introduce the keynote speaker, Mr. Nilesh Nilkanth Oak. Mr. Limaye told the audience that Mr. Oak holds a BTech degree in Chemical Engineering from the Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai and an MS in Chemical Engineering from the University of Alberta, Canada, as well as an Executive MBA degree. Mr. Oak worked for GE company for many years and took voluntary retirement in 2009 and was completely involved in the scientific research on the rational dating of India and its great epics and started writing books based on his research findings. He has published three revolutionary books: 1. When Did The Mahabharata War Happen?, 2. The Historic Rama, and 3. Bhishma Nirvana. His books have been and are being translated into various other languages. Mr. Oak is an original researcher and adjunct faculty at the Institute of Advanced Sciences, Dartmouth, Massachusetts, USA. He is also a TEDx speaker, UAA-ICT Distinguished Alumnus, and sought-after keynote speaker.

Referring to his book, "When Did The Mahabharata War Happen?" published in 2011 and "Bhishma Nirvana: Restoring Truth of Indian History" published in 2018, Mr. Nilesh Oak explained the chronology and astronomy evidence of the Mahabharata text against the background of modern astronomy. Beautiful explanations and calculations led to 5561 BCE as the year of the Mahabharata war. The meticulous evidence-based research falsifies all existing claims for different time periods of the Mahabharata war.

Mr. Nilesh Oak emphatically told the audience that the Mahabharata text is not a mythological story but a true history of the Indian Hindu civilization of that time period. He also confirmed that there were a total of one hundred thousand verses in the Mahabharata text. Mr. Oak also told the audience that the Rigveda era is more than 21,000 BCE as per his scientific research and the Indian civilization is older than that time period.

Mr. Nilesh Oak's methodology involved analyzing over 300 celestial references from the Mahabharata texts, challenging conventional timelines and integrating different disciplines like astronomy, archeology, and history, to argue for the historicity of these narratives. Mr. Oak also discussed the "Arundhati (Alcor) anomaly" or the mystery of Arundhati star position with respect to the Vasistha (Mizar) star position at present compared to the reverse position description in the text. As per the Mahabharata text, the Arundhati star leads the Vasistha star, contrary to their actual position at present, which Mr. Oak interprets as evidence of a reversal visible around that era when simulated by astronomical software. As per his scientific study, Arundhati was walking ahead of Vasistha from 10,000 BCE through 45,00 BCE.

Referring to his book, "The Historic Rama: Indian Civilization at the End of Pleistocene" published in 2014, Mr. Nilesh Oak applied archeo-astronomy to scrutinize celestial observations described in Valmiki's Ramayana, arguing for a precise dating of the Rama-Ravana conflict to approximately 12209 BCE. This much older timeline for Indian civilization and the events of the epic placed them at the end of the last Ice Age (Pleistocene). Mr. Oak explained the scientific basis for the antiquity of Indian civilization and challenged the conventional timelines by analyzing the astronomical observations in ancient texts. Mr. Nilesh Oak applied scientific precision, logic, and intuition to analyze ancient texts, aiming to establish a scientific understanding of the Ramayana's timeline. At the end of the presentation, there was a session of questions and answers, in which most of the audience took an active part, and was followed by the solo and group picture session with Mr. Nilesh Nilkanth Oak.

Disclaimer :
FICA is not endorsing or promoting this rationale. This is just a synopsis of the seminar.

International Yoga Day Premiere with Kenneth Crumpton - Fox 8 News



FOX 8 News Kenneth Crumpton and his crew did a premiere on International Yoga Day at Vadtaldam Richmond Heights, Cleveland. The yoga instructors Nandini Sriram, Sachin Deshpande, and Santosh Khandelwal showcased a few asanas to Fox 8 Channel, like sun salutations and breathing techniques. Breakfast and tea were served to all 25 people gathered to do yoga by the Vadtaldam Hindu Temple.



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AIPNO Association of Indian Physicians of Northern Ohio
Prakash Chand

Association of Asian Indian Women in Ohio (AAIWO)
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Cleveland State University Indian Student Association
Surabh - 2167133865

Case Western University
Amala Penumaka
http://community.case.edu//uisa/contact-us

International Yoga Day - Vadtaldam Richmond Heights, Cleveland



The word "Yoga" means "union" – to join. This was a collaboration of various organizations in Cleveland. FICA, Sewa, and Vadtaldam joined together to celebrate International Yoga Day.

The program started at 8.30 am. More than 100 people, young and old, joined to perform yoga on a nice, warm sunny morning at the Vadtaldam premises. It's worth celebrating that on this occasion as we honor the day Adiyogi gave Yoga to this universe, a gift carried forward by humankind through his disciples.

It was Father's Day, and what a great coincidence that both fell on the same day. Yoga Instructors and breathing instructors who led the sessions were Seema Motwani. Nandini Sriram, Sachin Deshpande, Santosh Khandelwal, Vijay Shah, Rajan Singh, and Dipali Desai.

Mahesh Desai from Krishna Photography did a wonderful job capturing beautiful moments using his drone and other equipment.

The program started with a welcome speech by Mr. Shekhar Ganore, President of FICA, and was followed by yoga sessions. This was followed by breathing techniques.

The end was a fabulous yoga demonstration by students of Santhosh. Kudos to parents and kids for their dedication and for encouraging kids and helping them practice yoga.



Guardians AAPI Resource Fair



FICA participated in the Guardians AAPI Resource Fair on May 12th, 2026 at Progressive Stadium. There was a dance showcase by Cleveland Bollywood on the same evening.

FICA Akron Food Bank Volunteering June



FICA team of volunteers gathered at the Akron Food Bank facility around 8.30 am. Instructions were given, and the volunteering started around 9.00 am. For the next two hours, they sorted the food and placed it in the containers and boxes that were labeled to hold the food.

Wildwood Cultural Center - Immersive Art Night

Wildwood Cultural Center Mentor invited FICA to showcase the rich, vibrant culture with art and dance. It was a hot, almost summer-like evening with cool breezes occasionally brushing us. People gathered to witness the Bollywood dance performed by San's Dance Vibes - Mrs Sangeeta Teegala's group and an art exhibit by Mrs Santosh Bhandari. Mrs Sangeeta Teegala did a surprise flash mob, to which the audience reciprocated with enthusiasm and danced to Bollywood tunes and melodies. The evening ended with fun and rejoicing in Indian art and Culture.





Asian Heritage Month at City Hall, Cleveland



Cleveland City brought together community members, leaders, and organizations to recognize & celebrate the rich cultures, traditions, and contributions of Asian American communities. The event celebrates and honors the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in recognition of AAPI Heritage Month. The contributions of our Asian and Pacific Islander neighbors deeply enrich Cleveland's strength and vibrancy. Mrs. Parul Bafna represented FICA.



Wildwood Cultural Center Indian Art Exhibit by Mrs Santosh Bhandari

Rooted in India and inspired by a lifelong passion for creativity, art has been a part of her journey since she first picked up a pencil at the age of nine. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts from Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, one of India's renowned institutions for visual arts, where she refined her artistic foundation and deepened her love for creative expression.

Before moving to the United States, she spent nine fulfilling years as an art educator at a hob in school in India, nurturing young minds and encouraging creativity through art. Teaching not only strengthened her technical skills but also taught her patience, storytelling, and the emotional connection art creates between people.

While charcoal remains her favorite medium for its depth, realism, and emotion, she also enjoys working with oils,



acrylics, pencils, textured art, and mixed media. Whether she is sketching a portrait, creating an abstract composition, or designing a custom commission piece, her goal is always the same: to create something authentic, heartfelt, and unforgettable.

For Santosh, art is more than a profession or passion; it is a language that connects people, tells stories, and celebrates life.

Project Seva second quarter initiatives



June 7th, 2026, Project Seva served a meal at the WSCC shelter with support from Sanathana Dharma class members of Shiva Vishnu Temple Cleveland.

June 24th, 2026, Project Seva delivered socks and bedsheets to Family Promise of Summit County Shelter.

June 27th, 2026: Project Seva also delivered food supplies to Haven of Rest Ministries in Akron

July 3rd,2026 Project Seva served the meal at the WSCC shelter with support from Sunday school kids and Moms. If you want to donate meals to the WSCC center, please contact Mr.Satish Parik at 216-577-1628

July 11th - Project Seva Ahana Kataria, along with her friends, has taken the initiative to do something meaningful and give back to the community this summer.



They are raising funds for Project Seva by collecting gently loved Indian clothing, giving it a new purpose through upcycling, and selling the creations to support this wonderful cause. Please support and encourage these young girls by following their Instagram page, liking and sharing their posts, and cheering them on. Every bit of encouragement means so much to them!

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/fromsareestosuccess?igsh=MWpia3VmNW5lbHBmcA==

These young girls have come up with some wonderful ideas, and it's inspiring to see them using their time, creativity, and compassion to make a positive difference.

ICG Clean-Up



A few members of the community gathered at India Cultural Garden on the morning of June 6th, 2026, to clean the ICG and add flowering plants and shrubs as part of a beautification project of ICG for upcoming India's 80th Independence Day celebrations.

At ICG (India Cultural Garden), we are getting ready for 15th August to hoist the Indian flag to celebrate our Independence Day. On Sunday, 9th August at 2 pm, we will gather at the garden to do a cleanup & plant some shrubs. We are requesting everyone interested in helping out to spend your time with us from 2 pm to 5 pm. Please reach out to the ICG committee if you are interested in helping. We will have all the tools required.
Sunday, 9th August, from 2 to 5 pm at ICG.

Contact:
Hira Rane 614-356-0015
Satish Parikh 216-577-1628
Ramesh Pandya 440-336-3420



Fox8 Stuff the Bus 2026

FICA Shikaasha Daan donated around $4000 worth of school supplies, including 50 backpacks with supplies:

- Pocket Folders
- Notebooks
- Composition Notebooks
- Loose Leaf Paper, both wide and college ruled
- Markers
- Colored Pencils
- Pens
- Glue/Glue Sticks
- Scissors
- Mini Pencil Sharpeners
- Crayons
- Pencils







Shikaasha Daan started a collection drive in June of 2026 through an Amazon registry. Shiksha Dan collected $1300 through the registry: a donation check of $500 and $5000. Golden State Food Company funded $500. Shikaasha Daan gave $1600 worth of supplies, amounting to $4000 worth of the above-mentioned supplies. Fox 8 could load 20 buses of school supplies. Thanks to our volunteers and donors who supported this initiative. When the kids have a smile on their faces with new supplies needed for education, it would fill our hearts with emotion and satisfaction of helping the needy. These items are essential for students to engage fully in their education, and your donations will make a tremendous difference. By providing these supplies, you are helping to create a positive learning environment where students can thrive and reach their full potential. Every year, families in our community face the challenge of affording school supplies. Your generosity helps to alleviate this burden, ensuring that all students start the school year with the tools they need. It's more than just pencils and paper; it's about giving every child a fair chance to succeed academically. Helping each other and being part of each other's lives makes it even more special. Thanks to the donations we received from the following:

Guniya Bafna, Smita Sawant, Pratibha Ghatage, Esha Wankhade, Harshad Kulkarni, Satish Gupta, Abhinav Gupta, Vidya Ramchandran, Bharat J. Shah, Ashit Upadhyay.
Your donations made a difference in the lives of underprivileged kids and parents.

Thanks to Mahesh Desai and Yogini Desai for covering Stuff the Bus.

Message from Mrs.Harsha Rane, Program Chair - Shiksha Daan



Thanks to the generous donations from the community, Shiksha Daan was able to contribute to the 'Stuff the bus' effort of the Shoes and Clothes for Kids, a nonprofit organization that helps students and kids from the underprivileged communities of Cleveland. We were able to buy $4000 worth of school supplies, including Pocket Folders, Notebooks, Composition Notebooks, Loose Leaf Paper, both wide and college-ruled, Markers, Colored Pencils, Pens, Glue/Glue Sticks, Scissors, Mini Pencil Sharpeners, Crayons, and Pencils. This effort was led by Deepa Rao, working closely with the Shoes and Clothes for Kids staff and volunteers. This initiative was supported by our Shikasha Daan team: Mahima Rao, Parul Bafna, Keyuri Hazarnis, Yogini Desai and kids Anika Rao and Ameeya Gargesha. We could not have done this without the generous support of all our donors mentioned below. We also had some anonymous donors.

Thanks to all these donors: Guniya Bafna, Smita Sawant, Deepa Rao, Pratibha Ghatge, Esha Wankhade, Harshad Kulkarni, Satish Gupta, Abhinav Gupta, Ramchandra Vidya, Bharat J Shah, Ashit Upadhyay.

Thank you, Mahesh Desai Krishna Photography and Video, for the wonderful pictures

Harsha Rane, Chair Shikasha Daan

NEOMM Events

By Meenal Surve

PuLanchya Athvani – May 9th 2026



An evening dedicated to celebrating the timeless wit, wisdom, and literary brilliance of Purushottam Laxman Deshpande (Pu. La. Deshpande). Where Jayant Deshpande and Deepa Deshpande shared their cherished memories of Pu. La. Deshpande. Through captivating stories, personal anecdotes, and heartfelt reflections, they brought to life the humor, wisdom, and warmth that defined Pu. La.'s extraordinary personality. The program offered the audience an intimate glimpse into the life and legacy of Marathi literature's most beloved icons, leaving everyone with a deep sense of nostalgia and admiration.

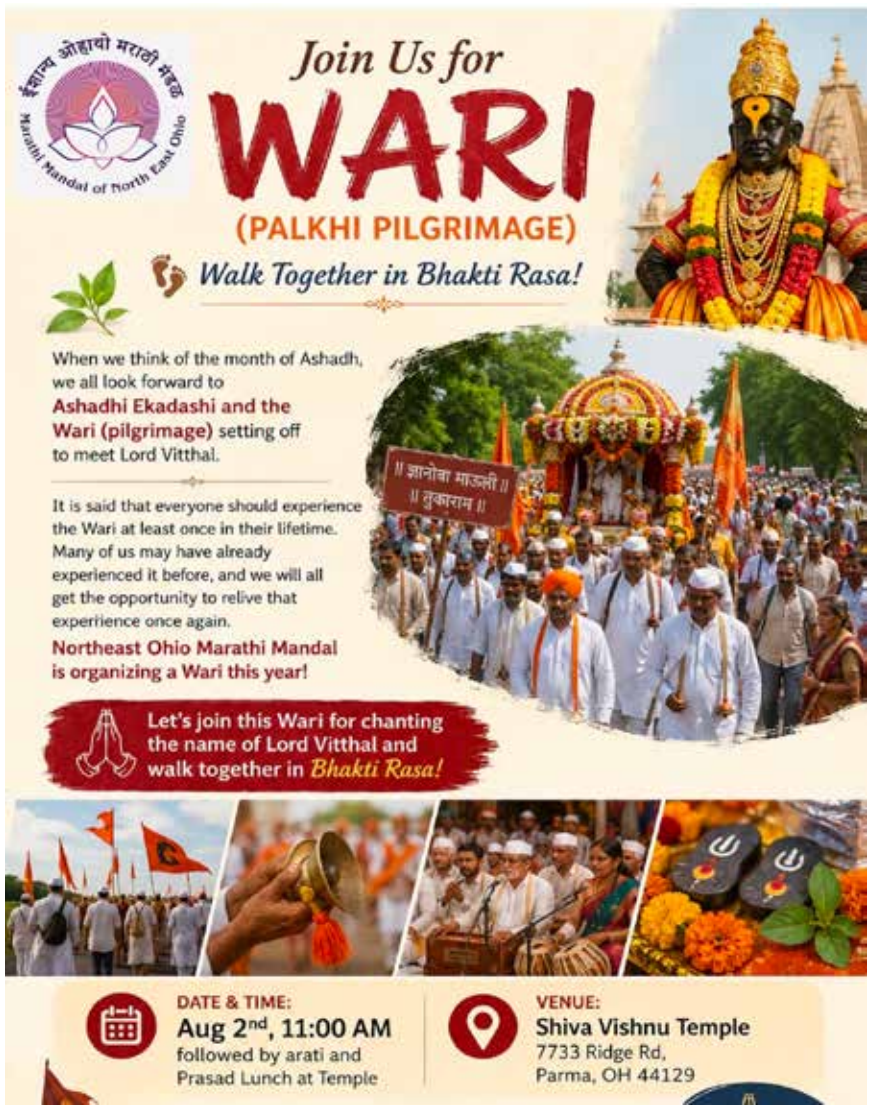
NEOMM Picnic in the Park – June 28th 2026



Held at the beautiful Sunny Lake Park in Aurora with a July 4th theme, the NEOMM Picnic in the Park brought together families and friends for a fun-filled day of community bonding. Members enjoyed a variety of games and activities for all ages, relaxed over lively conversations, and shared delicious food in the great outdoors. The highlight of the day was a visit from the ice cream truck, which delighted both children and adults. Filled with laughter, friendship, and unforgettable memories, the picnic was a wonderful celebration of togetherness and the vibrant spirit of the NEOMM community.

Northeast Ohio Marathi Mandal* is organizing a Wari (*Pilgrimage*) this year at Shiva Vishnu Temple!

You all are invited! Let's join this Wari for chanting the name of Lord Vitthal (Krishna Avatar) and walk together in Bhakti Rasa!
Date & Time: Aug 2nd, 11:00 AM, followed by arati and Prasad Lunch at the Temple
Venue: Shiva Vishnu Temple, 7733 Ridge Rd, Parma, OH 44129
Dress Code: - Indian traditional



Gujarati Samaj of Greater Cleveland



It is with immense pride and joy that we share the *outstanding success of the Gujarati Samaj of Greater Cleveland at the Rangtali Competition in Columbus, Ohio.* Both of our participating teams delivered spectacular performances and brought home top honors across multiple categories:

First Place– Garba Competition
Second Place – Folk Dance Competition
Special Award– Best Costume
Special Award– Best Choreography

This remarkable achievement is a true reflection of the relentless hard work, discipline, dedication, and passion of all our participants.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our talented choreographers, *Rupaben Parikh and Bhumi Patel*, for sharing their exceptional skills, creativity, and leadership with our teams.



We also sincerely appreciate our *President and Managing Committee* for their successful collaboration with fellow associations and for helping create this wonderful opportunity for our community.

Please join us in congratulating everyone involved for bringing these trophies home and representing Cleveland with such pride and excellence.

BAPS Cleveland Community: 354 Walkers for Brunswick's First Responders

By Nitya Patel



On June 7th, 2026, 354 walkers got together at Edgewater Park in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised significant funds for the Brunswick Police and Fire Department. The walkathon was the temple's way of honoring their spirit of selfless service.

This year marks the 250th anniversary milestone for America's independence. BAPS Cleveland chose to recognize and support the first responders who continue to do what the founding fathers asked of their citizens: protect their neighbors and take care of each other.

BAPS Charities organizes walkathons like these across the country, harnessing the efforts and collective spirit of volunteers to serve individuals, families, and communities in five key areas: Community Empowerment, Educational Services, Environmental Protection & Preservation, Health & Wellness, and Humanitarian Relief. But the Cleveland event's real story was not just about the organization behind it. It was about the people who fundraised for the cause.



Fundraising can be very challenging, but a young boy named Jay Patel in second grade persevered to meet his fundraising goal. He confidently explained the cause to his teachers, principal, and assistant principal of his elementary school. His consistent efforts helped him raise hundreds to contribute to the walk. Many other women, such as Vibha Patel and Darmishtha Patel from the temple, also raised money through their efforts, signifying again just how involved the BAPS community is.

Prominent corporate and community leaders represented their organizations at the walkathon such as Megan and Rani from Raymond James, dentist Dr. Daxesh Patel, Rita Patel from First National Bank, Dr. Adityanjee from Hindu Physicians international, Tom Moore from Janus Hotels and Resorts, Rajesh Patel from New York Life, and Dr. Vikas Jain, Dr. Salim, and Shalani Choudhry from Association of Indian Physicians of Northern Ohio (AIPNO). Even State Representative Juanita Brent joined the community.

Three Decades, One Devoted Sisterhood: Cleveland BAPS Turns 30

By Nitya Patel



On July 12th, 2026, Cleveland BAPS Hindu Temple celebrated 30 years of connection, trust, and a community that keeps showing up for itself. The women of the temple wrote, staged, and performed in the celebration that showcased sacrifice, service, and sisterhood.

The program included cultural dances, heartfelt speeches, and skits. These weren't just performances; they intended to show the women in the audience how to find others carrying the same struggles and how the temple community became their key support system.

Four women who grew up in the temple took the stage to perform, as themselves, a script reflecting what the temple had actually given them growing up. They highlighted how the temple was a "home away from home" built due to their Guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj's vision to nurture future generations and help them grow up with Hindu traditions that would deepen their spirituality.

The four women reminisced about how women have supported the growth of this temple through sacrifice, sisterhood, and service to the community. Growing up, they volunteered in the kitchen, decorated the temple, and participated in blood drives and food drives each year to support the community at large.

The skit highlighted the things they appreciate in their present but hadn't recognized as gifts at the time: values, stability, friendship, a habit of service, a connection to God.

The celebration continued to highlight the women who shaped the temple community. A temple isn't its structure. It's the people who keep walking through the doors to hold it up. Their Guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj planted the vision; the families of this community spent thirty years nurturing this gift that will continue to elevate spirituality and the spirit of service.

NEOTS Hosts Its First-Ever Pickleball Tournament

By Maha Ramaswamy



On June 27th, NEOTS successfully hosted its inaugural Pickleball Tournament in response to the growing popularity of the sport within our community. Held at the Mayfield Hts Community Park, the event brought together 20 teams competing in Doubles and Mixed Doubles categories.

It was wonderful to see participants of all ages and backgrounds take part, including husband-and-wife pairs, best friends, and parent-child teams. The tournament was supported by NEOTS Executive Committee members and volunteers, who helped manage scoring and match coordination using online apps.

Many matches in general and the semi-final match and the final matches in particular provided a lot of excitement to a day filled with competitive play and great sportsmanship.

Tournament Results

Champions: Sriram Krishnan & Gurucharan Ganapathi
Runners-Up: Arnav Gopinath & Gopinath Alagirisamy
Third Place: Advaith Anand & Rishith Kapoor

Trophies were awarded to the champions and runners-up, while the third-place winners were awarded medals.

Participants and spectators enjoyed food provided by Great India Kitchen, and the event received overwhelmingly positive feedback from players, families, and supporters.

The success of this first tournament has made it clear that pickleball has found a strong following within the NEOTS community, and we look forward to making it a regular part of our summer event lineup.

The Jain Society of Greater Cleveland: A Home for Ahimsa in Ohio



Nestled in Richfield, Ohio, the Jain Society of Greater Cleveland (JSGC) traces its roots to a handful of Jain families who first gathered informally in 1974. Encouraged by Acharya Shri

Sushil Kumarji, the community organized into the Jain Association in 1976, formalizing further with a constitution in 1978 that established the name "Jain Society of Greater Cleveland." The society earned 501(c)(3) non-profit status in 1979 and was one of four founding Sanghs of

JAINA (Federation of Jain Associations in North America) in 1981. The community's long-held dream of a dedicated temple was realized in 2010, when the temple and community center at 3226 Boston Mills Road, Richfield, OH, were consecrated over several days of celebration.

JSGC's affairs are overseen by a nine-member Board of Trustees, elected by the general body, who in turn select the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer for one-year terms leadership rotates annually, so current officeholders are best confirmed directly via jsgc.org.

The temple hosts both Digambar Pooja (Nitya Niyam), held the third Sunday of each month, and Swetambar Pooja (Snatra Pooja), held the fourth Sunday reflecting the society's inclusive embrace of multiple Jain traditions. Children's and adult Pathshala classes run on the first and third Sundays, alongside major festivals like Paryushan Parva, Das Lakshan Parva, and Mahavir Janma Kalyanak.

Beyond worship, JSGC is active in community service notably its "Compassion in Action" initiative, where volunteers packed 10,000 meals for refugees, embodying Jainism's core value of concern for all living beings.

Listening In: The Kabir Bhatia Story

By Mahima Rao



For many listeners across Northeast Ohio, Kabir Bhatia is first known through the familiar resonance of his voice on public radio, steady, measured, and warm. But behind that microphone sits a reporter whose craft is rooted less in being heard, and more in knowing how to listen.

Long before he ever put on a broadcast headset, sound was the ambient backdrop of Bhatia's childhood home. It drifted from his father's expansive record collection and hummed softly from public radio speakers, filling rooms without demanding visual attention. Sound, he discovered early, invited imagination. It taught him that a narrative didn't always need a screen to feel alive; it could take root in rhythm, silence, cadence, and mood.

Bhatia's cultural roots offered a rich, sensory education in listening. Family road trips were soundtracked by a vibrant mix of 1960s and '70s Hindi classics, Hollywood scores, and eclectic pop. Childhood trips to India in the 1980s and '90s added another layer; the booming acoustics of cinema halls and the ubiquitous charm of Indian television, where iconic jingles for Nirma washing powder and sentimental sodas like Limca and Gold Spot left lasting impressions. These memories were more than mere nostalgia; they revealed how deeply media, memory, and culture interweave.

Parallel to his love for culture was a natural pull toward logic and mechanics. By his years at Hudson High School, his fascination with technical systems began to blend seamlessly with his passion for music. He pursued that intersection through audio engineering at Case Western Reserve University before earning a Master of Public Relations and Mass Communication from Kent State University, a sequence that brought technical precision directly into the newsroom.

Bhatia's path at WKSU began early as a student employee, alongside reporting work in print, radio, and television across Cleveland and Chicago. Stepping into his role as Senior Arts & Culture Reporter for Ideastream Public Media, he brought a documentarian's restraint to the beat. Arts reporting on the radio requires a delicate kind of translation: capturing purely visual or physical experiences a vibrant canvas, a dramatic pause on stage, the kinetic energy of a street festival and painting them vividly for the ear.

"I see myself not as the center of a story, but as a conduit," Bhatia reflects.

His workdays rarely follow a linear script. A morning editorial huddle can swiftly give way to field interviews, transit, field recording, writing, and tight editing deadlines. Whether he is perched in a studio or sitting in his car with a laptop and portable recorder, the core challenge remains the same: sifting through hours of tape to find the precise details that make a story both accurate and human.

That discipline is anchored by a deep commitment to public trust. In an era saturated with synthetic media and hyper-fast news cycles, Bhatia views transparent, verified reporting as non-negotiable. For him, journalism relies on fundamental clarity, ensuring listeners know exactly what has been sourced, checked, and responsibly delivered.

Whether editing under newsroom deadlines or gathering field audio near his favorite local haunts from nostalgic memories of Geauga Lake to the quiet trails of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Bhatia's immersive approach has consistently earned top regional honors, including Central Great Lakes Emmy, Murrow, and SPJ awards. Yet if given unlimited airtime, his dream remains simple and reflective: long-form, documentary conversations that give community memory, personal heritage, and local culture the breathing room they deserve.

VadtalDham Cleveland, the Community Health Fair 2026



As part of the 1st Temple Anniversary Celebration of Shree Swaminarayan Hindu Temple – VadtalDham Cleveland, the Community Health Fair 2026, held on June 27–28, 2026, was a tremendous success. Organized in collaboration with AIPNO, Medical Yatra, and the City of Richmond Heights, and inspired by Pujya Sadguru Shree Nityaswarupdasji Swami, the event united healthcare professionals, community leaders, volunteers, and local families with a shared commitment to promoting health and wellness.

More than 50 medical professionals, representing over 15 specialties, generously volunteered their expertise by providing free health screenings, physician consultations, medication reviews, and preventive health education. Hundreds of individuals and families benefited from these valuable services, gaining access to quality healthcare resources and early detection opportunities.

VadtalDham Cleveland extends its sincere gratitude to every physician, volunteer, sponsor, partner organization, and attendee whose dedication and support made this event possible. Together, we celebrated our temple's first anniversary by serving the community with compassion, care, and the true spirit of selfless service.

The Soil of Freedom, the Soul of service- An incredible Story of Ambalal Patel

By Mahima Rao



In a remote village near Unjha, Gujarat, surrounded by sprawling farmlands, the warm glow of oil lamps, and bustling families, a fifth grader named Ambalal heard the word Azadi for the very first time. He was in the middle of a game of gilli danda when his friends began talking about how Azadi would bring a better life, abundant resources, and electricity to their village.

Curious to understand this powerful word, Ambalal woke before dawn the next morning and secretly followed his older brother to a nearby open field. There, a few Seva Dal karyakartas (volunteers) had gathered. Instead of political speeches, they encouraged the village boys to practice physical fitness and spoke about how discipline, a positive mindset, and personal integrity could spark a revolution from within.

This was 1943, and India's freedom movement had reached the grassroots. The Quit India Movement was inspiring communities across the nation, and even in the Gaekwad princely state of Gujarat, the spirit of sacrifice was strong. Ambalal absorbed the teachings of local reformers like Motibhai Chaudhary, who encouraged young people to think independently and live with purpose. He learned that true Azadi was not just freedom from British rule, but a spiritual awakening the responsibility to build a self-reliant nation through education, self-respect, community service, and respect for every grain of food and drop of water.

Born on April 15, 1933, Ambalal's early life was shaped by resilience. When his father passed away unexpectedly while he was just ten years old, the responsibility of supporting the family fell upon his mother and her five children. After long days working in the fields, Ambalal studied by the light of an oil lamp, realizing that discipline was not a burden but a duty to honor his family's sacrifices.

When India gained independence on August 15, 1947, 14-year-old Ambalal witnessed a nation reborn. The celebration left a lasting impression, reinforcing the values that would guide him throughout his life. When financial hardship later forced him to forgo higher education after matriculation, he chose instead to work so his younger brother could pursue a degree in civil engineering. To Ambalal, success held little meaning unless it helped uplift others.

Ambalal eventually joined the Indian Railways, serving the nation with pride alongside the steadfast support of his devoted wife. Over the decades, he witnessed the world transform from oil lamps to electricity and from telegrams to smartphones yet he remained grounded in simplicity.

In 1982, he first visited his brother in Cleveland, where he saw a small but growing Indian community longing for a sense of home. In 1998, he permanently settled there with his son and daughter-in-law, Bharat Kumar and Veena Patel, founders of IFUSA. Retirement never slowed him down. Through FICA and the local temple, Ambalal quietly dedicated himself to community service. Even in his later years, he could be found vacuuming temple floors, cleaning the kitchen, or distributing prasad. To him, no act of service was too small if it served the divine.

Now, after nearly a century of life, Ambalal's journey bridges the rural farmlands of pre-independence India and the vibrant Indian diaspora in America. Having made many trips between India and the United States, he has witnessed extraordinary changes from oil lamps and scarce resources to electricity, effortless global travel, and modern technology.

Through it all, his foundation has remained unchanged. He continues to live by the values of discipline, moderation, and gratitude. He believes deeply in using resources wisely and never wasting food. Even today, he finds joy in preparing simple Gujarati meals like kadhi, chawal, dal, and sabzi for his family. With gentle wisdom, he reminds others not to envy another person's success, but to share their own blessings and serve whenever possible whether physically, financially, socially, or emotionally.

His message to the younger generation is timeless: cherish your freedom, manage your resources wisely, and never take your opportunities for granted. To him, Azadi is not a historical event frozen in 1947; it is a daily responsibility to strive for personal excellence while uplifting humanity.



Medha Lalit Iyer: A Young Composer Finds Her Voice

Beachwood Middle School is home to many talented young musicians, but few have had a year as remarkable as violinist, vocalist, and composer Medha Iyer.

Medha is one of two Beachwood Orchestra students in the school to earn honors at the state level this year and she did it twice. She secured *second place at the state level of the National PTA Reflections competition*, a prestigious arts program that celebrates creativity across the country. Shortly after, she earned *second place at the state level of the Ohio Federation of Music Clubs (OFMC) Junior Composers Competition* for her original quartet composition, "Flying North in D Major."

For that achievement, Medha will be featured in the *2026 Ohio Junior Composer Booklet*, set to be published this June, and has been invited to *perform her winning piece at OFMC's Junior Day* this October.

Her musical roots run deep in Indian classical music. This past season, Medha won top honors in both *Carnatic vocal and violin competitions at Dhvani Columbus and the Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival*, two of the most respected South Indian classical music platforms in the country.

That versatility is opening new doors. Medha was recently inducted as a violinist into *Infusion, a Cleveland-based jazz fusion band*, and has already performed with them at both the *Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival and the renowned BOP STOP*.

Beyond her own performances, she has been providing *violin accompaniment for vocal concerts and dance performances* across the region. From composing original works to bridging Carnatic, Western classical, and jazz fusion, Medha Iyer represents the next generation of boundary-crossing musicians — and she's just getting started.

Photo Credits: Kshitija Kolvankar



Best of Olmsted Awards to Neha Kulkarni and Anika Rao

Creativity has the power to inspire, connect, and tell stories—and this year's 2025–2026 Ohio PTA Reflections State Winners have done just that.

The National PTA Reflections Program receives more than 300,000 student entries each year, encouraging young artists to explore their talents through creative expression. Students compete in six artistic categories: Dance Choreography,

Film Production, Literature, Music Composition, Photography, and Visual Arts.

Olmsted Community Center is proud to recognize the following Ohio PTA Reflections State Winners:

- Neha Kulkarni – Film Production
- Anika Rao – Literature

Congratulations to all of these remarkable student artists for sharing their creativity, passion, and imagination with the world. We are proud to celebrate your achievements as part of the Best of Olmsted! Anika Rao and Neha Kulkarni are 8th graders at Olmsted Falls School District.

Bhavin Patel's Blueprint for Next Chapter

By Mahima Rao



Despite being recognized as a Crain's Cleveland 40 Under 40 honoree and a 2024 Notable Real Estate Leader, Bhavin Patel measures success not by awards but by the impact he leaves on communities. His story is one of perseverance, family sacrifice, and a commitment to building lasting value.

Bhavin immigrated from Gujarat, India, to Northeast Ohio in 1994 at the age of nine. His family's journey required years of sacrifice. While his mother navigated the immigration process, his father, a former teacher, came to the United States alone, working tirelessly to establish a future for the family before they reunited nearly five years later.

"My mother believed entrepreneurship was possible for us," Bhavin says. "She encouraged us to explore opportunities beyond traditional career paths."

That mindset shaped his future. While still in college, at just 20 years old, Bhavin purchased a 27-unit apartment building. Managing the property taught him valuable lessons in finance, operations, and leadership, while showing him how real estate could strengthen communities as well as generate opportunity.

Today, Bhavin leads Green Harvest Capital, a real estate investment and property management company focused on revitalizing residential communities throughout Northeast Ohio. His approach combines strategic investment with a commitment to creating practical, comfortable housing that supports how people live.

As Cleveland experiences renewed growth through downtown revitalization and office-to-residential conversions, Bhavin has helped transform underutilized buildings into vibrant residential communities. One of his signature initiatives, Project Scarlet, part of Spark GHC, is converting a former downtown office building into residential and mixed-use spaces in partnership with a nationally branded hotel. The project preserves Cleveland's architectural character while addressing modern housing needs through hospitality-inspired amenities.

"Cleveland has strong bones," Bhavin says. "The challenge is honoring what's already here while making it relevant for the next generation." After more than three decades in Ohio, Bhavin believes Northeast Ohio is entering a period of tremendous opportunity, driven by manufacturing, logistics, technology, and renewed investment in mid-sized cities. He is especially optimistic about the region's potential for young entrepreneurs.

His journey also reflects the evolving aspirations of Indian Americans, with more young professionals pursuing entrepreneurship beyond traditional careers. Throughout his success, Bhavin has remained grounded in the values of hard work, humility, and integrity.

Outside of work, family remains his highest priority. He credits his wife, Shivani, as his greatest partner and emphasizes making time for family despite a demanding schedule. Looking ahead, Bhavin is focused less on growing his portfolio than on strengthening neighborhoods and expanding access to quality housing.

"Recognition comes and goes," he says. "What stays is the impact you leave behind and the communities you build." For Bhavin Patel, success is measured not by buildings alone, but by creating places where people and communities can thrive.

Aigerim Alibek - Bollywood dancer and Ambassador of the Kazakh community



Aigerim Alibek is an Ambassador of the Kazakh Community in Cleveland, and she is the founder of the nonprofit organization Kazakh Cultural Garden. Through dance, music, and cultural events, she works to preserve Kazakh heritage while building connections between people of different backgrounds. She believes that art is one of the most powerful ways to bring communities together, promote understanding, and celebrate the cultural diversity that makes America so special.

Dance has been part of her life since she was six years old. She began her journey in a folk dance ensemble, where she was trained for seven years and performed traditional dances from many countries. Growing up with a mother who is a professional ballerina, she was surrounded by music, dance, and creativity from an early age.

Her passion for world cultures led her to study Bharatanatyam at the Indian dance school under the direction of Akmarak Kainazarova at the Embassy of India in Kazakhstan, where she was trained for about two years. She also dedicated many years to studying flamenco, training with respected teachers in Kazakhstan, Russia, and Spain. Learning from different schools and traditions has greatly influenced my artistic style.

About ten years ago, she opened her own dance studio in Almaty, Kazakhstan, specializing in world dance and flamenco. She is especially proud that many of her students have become winners of international dance competitions.

Indian dance has always had a special place in her heart. She first discovered Bollywood through folk dance and later deepened her knowledge by studying classical Indian dance. Today, she enjoys creating fusion choreographies, especially combining Flamenco and Bollywood, while also drawing inspiration from the classical Indian style of Kathak.

In Cleveland, she teaches Character Dance at Cleveland Ballet Theatre, introducing students to traditional dances from many cultures. Through her nonprofit organization, Kazakh Cultural Garden, she also organizes performances and multicultural events that encourage cultural exchange and bring communities together.

My concert group, Aya Folk Dance, performs dances from cultures around the world. Every performance is an opportunity to share traditions, celebrate diversity, and inspire people to appreciate different cultures.



She truly believes that dance is a universal language. It connects people beyond borders, creates lasting friendships, and reminds us that our cultural differences are something to celebrate.

Youth United for Vision by —Ishika Chand & Danya Swain



Youth United for Vision is an organization run by a group of teenagers ages 12–21. Our mission is to educate future young adults on important topics such as dealing with mental health, building healthy habits, keeping our environment sustainable, and our most recent topic: equipping young minds for college.

On Sunday, April 26, Youth United for Vision hosted an event at the Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple. We invited Dr. Rajlakshmi Ghosh, an associate dean at the undergraduate advising support at Case Western Reserve University. She explained to a full crowd of high-schoolers and parents about the college process and what each student needs to focus on. She recommended students pay attention to their GPA; test scores, such as the SAT and ACT; rigorous classes, like AP, IB, and CCP; extracurriculars; and leadership opportunities. Having just one of these qualities is not enough, according to Dr. Ghosh. To be a promising candidate for any college, you must be a 'whole student '-or a well-rounded student. One attendee says, "I learned so much from this event, and I feel so prepared for college applications now. After hearing what she [Dr. Ghosh] said, I'm way less nervous about it!" Another vital factor admissions officers value is the essay. Dr. Ghosh tells us that the essay's main idea should be about who you are, and how you should show that in your writing. The bottom line is it should be all about you. She also said you should "show, not tell." While writing your college essay, it should flow like a story; like every story, it should have a beginning, middle, and end to keep the college admissions board hooked, making you the applicant they put on the top of the pile instead of one they throw away. We are so grateful that Dr. Ghosh was able to join us and make this event possible!

In addition to this, Youth United for Vision has hosted other events. For instance, we have hosted fundraisers, like bake sales and lemonade sales, as well as volunteering opportunities at Edgewater Beach cleanup and the Botanical Gardens. We also have hosted craft sessions to engage with our younger members. If you are interested in keeping up with our events, our Instagram is @youthu4v, and our number is 216-978-9745. We hope you join us for future events!

VVS Foundation -a spectacular Musical Extravaganza

The VVS Foundation is thrilled to present a spectacular Musical Extravaganza! Join us for a memorable evening of South Indian Classical Music featuring three masters of their craft.

We are honored to host:
Palghat Ramprasad (Vocal)
Vijay Natesan (Mridangam)
Thirucherai Karthik (Violin)

This is more than just a concert—it's an evening of divine melody and rhythm!

Date: September 26th , Time: 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM
Venue: Barlow Community Center, Hudson, OH
Admission: Free!

FUN FOR THE FAMILY!

There will be Fun Contests for Kids! All are welcome, whether they are currently learning music or not.

For information, contact +1 (330) 212-8960
Let's come together to celebrate our musical heritage!

Please feel free to forward this message to friends and family who love music.

See you there!

VVS Foundation

Link:
https://forms.gle/rCNziCs7dXWutdJ1A



SHRI JAGANNATHA RATHAJATRA: A Celebration of Faith, Unity, and Tradition

By Dr. Prasanta Kumar Raj



The Shri Jagannatha Rathajatra in Puri, Odisha, is one of India's largest and most celebrated festivals, drawing hundreds of thousands of devotees each year. Rooted in the ideals of inclusiveness and universal brotherhood, the festival welcomes people of all castes, communities, and faiths to participate in devotion.

Puri is one of Hinduism's four sacred Dhamas, established by Adi Shankaracharya. The temple is dedicated to Lord Jagannatha (Lord of the Universe), Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Sudarsana. The unique presence of the two brothers and their sister symbolizes harmony, equality, and the timeless principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"—the whole world is one family.

According to tradition, after Lord Krishna's earthly departure, His divine heart remained untouched by the funeral fire and was carried into the ocean. It was later discovered as a sacred blue stone and eventually brought to King Indradyumna, who built the Jagannatha Temple. The king commissioned the divine architect, Lord Vishwakarma, to carve the deities from sacred wood under the condition that no one interrupt his work. When the doors were opened prematurely, the deities appeared unfinished, giving Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra, and Sudarsana their distinctive form that continues to be worshipped today. The sacred blue stone is believed to remain within Lord Jagannatha and is ceremonially transferred to a new deity during the Nabakalevara festival, held approximately every twelve years.

The annual festivities begin with Snana Purnima, when the deities are bathed with 108 pots of sacred water. According to tradition, they then retire to Anasara Ghara for 21 days to recover from illness under the care of the Daitapati community, descendants of the original tribal devotees. After the rituals of Netroutsava and Naba Jaubana Darshana, the Lord emerges to bless all devotees during the grand Rathajatra.

Rathajatra is unique because it is one of the few occasions when the deities leave the sanctum, allowing devotees to see them up close and participate in pulling the magnificent chariots. The deities travel to the Gundicha Temple, where they remain for nine days before returning during Bahuda Yatra. Several traditions explain the significance of Rathajatra. It commemorates

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SHRI JAGANNATHA RATHAJATRA: A Celebration of Faith, Unity, and Tradition

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Lord Jagannatha's visit to Gundicha Temple, honors the Daitapati community's service, and celebrates the enduring bond between Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra, and their sister Devi Subhadra, who journey together each year.

The festival also reflects cherished family values and the living traditions of Sanatan Dharma. During the return journey, the playful reunion between Lord Jagannatha and Maa Lakshmi is celebrated, ending with Her welcoming Him back by offering Rasgoola. Upon His return, Lord Jagannatha appears in the magnificent Suna Vesa (Golden Attire). In Puri, the deities are adorned with over 200 kilograms of gold ornaments, while symbolic golden attire is offered at temples around the world. Beyond ISKCON, the first Jagannatha Parivar installation in North America was in Nashville, followed by the Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu Temple in 1998. Since then, the temple has celebrated Rathajatra annually—even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each year, hundreds of devotees gather to participate in the procession, preserving this sacred tradition and sharing Lord Jagannatha's message of unity, compassion, and universal love. May Lord Jagannatha bless all with peace, health, happiness, and spiritual well-being, and may His divine grace continue to guide and protect us all.



ISSO Hindu Temple in Strongsville - Jaganatha Ratha Yatra



The ISSO Hindu Temple in Strongsville came alive with devotion and celebration as hundreds of bhaktas gathered to observe the sacred Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath on Sunday, July 19th. The vibrant festival brought together families and devotees from across the community to honor the Lord with faith, joy, and unity. The beautifully decorated chariot procession was accompanied by uplifting kirtans, traditional music, and energetic devotional dances, creating an atmosphere filled with spiritual enthusiasm. A special abhishek of Lord Jagannath was performed with great reverence, allowing devotees to participate in the abhishek. Volunteers and temple priest Shastri Swami Gyanjivandasji worked tirelessly to organize the event, ensuring a memorable experience for all who attended.



Ramayana: The Crucible of Honor at the Cleveland Museum of Art

By Sujatha Srinivasan

I'm Sujatha Srinivasan, Artistic Director of Shri Kalaa Mandir Dance Company, and I'm very excited to be presenting Crucible of Honor at the Cleveland Museum of Art on August 2nd. When I first envisioned Crucible of Honor, I wanted to create more than a dance production—I wanted to create an experience that allows audiences to step into the living world of the Ramayana. This is an epic that has inspired millions for thousands of years, and yet its message remains just as relevant today.



As the Artistic Director of Shri Kalaa Mandir Dance Company, it has been an incredible privilege to work alongside 20 of my senior and junior company dancers, along with an extraordinary team of musicians, to bring this vision to life. Through the timeless language of Bharatanatyam, we tell one of the world's greatest stories. On stage, you'll journey alongside Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, and Ravana, and other important figures as this story unfolds through dance, music, and theater. Through expressive storytelling, emotionally charged performances, and exhilarating battle sequences, we bring to life universal themes of love, sacrifice, courage, devotion, and the eternal triumph of righteousness over evil. Surrounding these central figures is a vibrant ensemble of princes, queens, sages, warriors, vanaras, and rakshasas, creating a theatrical world that fully immerses audiences in the epic.

We are honored to present an exceptional live orchestra featuring internationally acclaimed musicians, including Kaniyal Hariprasad, who served for many years as the Music Director of Kalakshetra. Performing live alongside our dancers, the orchestra brings an extraordinary depth and energy that makes every moment come alive.

Crucible of Honor is presented in collaboration with the Cleveland Museum of Art's exhibition, Epic of the Northwest Himalayas: Pahari Paintings from the "Shangri" Ramayana. While the exhibition preserves this timeless story through breathtaking paintings, our production brings those same scenes to life through movement, music, and emotion, creating a unique dialogue between visual art and live performance.

For millions of people, the Ramayana is far more than an ancient epic—it is a living tradition. Its themes of duty, compassion, leadership, sacrifice, and justice continue to shape our lives and resonate in the world around us today. That is why this story has endured across generations and continues to inspire audiences everywhere.

Whether this is your first introduction to the Ramayana or a story you have cherished your entire life, I hope Crucible of Honor will move you, inspire you, and remind you of the enduring power of storytelling. We are honored to share this journey with the Cleveland community, and we look forward to welcoming you to this unforgettable experience.

Event page: https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.clevelandart.org/events/crucible-honor-indian-dance-theatre-live-orchestra&source=gmail&ust=1784483129245000&sa=E

Exhibition page: https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/epic-northwest-himalayas-pahari-paintings-shangri-ramayana&source=gmail&ust=1784483129245000&sa=ERama

Sujatha Srinivasan
Artistic Director | Shri Kalaa Mandir

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Letter from Indian Consulate, New York, USA

Dear Friends,
The next generation of global supply chains is being built today, and India is at the center of that transformation.
As companies across the United States seek to diversify sourcing, build more resilient supply chains, and access high-growth markets, India has become one of the world's most compelling destinations for manufacturing, innovation, and investment.
To help U.S. businesses seize this opportunity, the Consulate General of India in New York is pleased to invite your members to join the India - USA Trade Facilitation Portal - a next-generation digital platform designed to help businesses source smarter, expand faster, and trade with confidence.
Whether you are searching for trusted manufacturers, exploring new sourcing destinations, or looking to establish long-term partnerships in India, the portal serves as your 24/7 India Trade Desk, bringing together cutting-edge digital tools with expert government facilitation.
Members will gain access to:
Verified Indian exporters, manufacturers, and suppliers across high-growth sectors of goods & services.
AI-powered Business matchmaking and curated B2B meeting opportunities.
Immersive product showcases to discover products, capabilities, and emerging opportunities.
Virtual Exhibitions & Buyer-Seller Meets to have a real-time connect
Dedicated support from the Consulate General of India and its network of trade and industry partners.
This is far more than a supplier directory - it is a strategic platform built to help businesses reduce sourcing risk, accelerate supplier discovery, navigate market entry, and unlock opportunities in one of the world's fastest-growing major economies.
For your association, the portal offers a powerful value-add for members seeking to strengthen supply chains, identify new sourcing partners, and stay ahead in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.
We look forward to partnering with you to create new business opportunities and strengthen commercial ties between the United States and India.
Registration Link: https://indiausatrade.mea.gov.in/register

Warm regards,
Ms. Rajlakshmi Kadam
Consul (Trade)
Consulate General of India
New York

Akshaya Patra

The Akshaya Patra Youth Ambassadors of Cleveland are organizing the "Miles for Meals" run to support the Akshaya Patra Foundation.

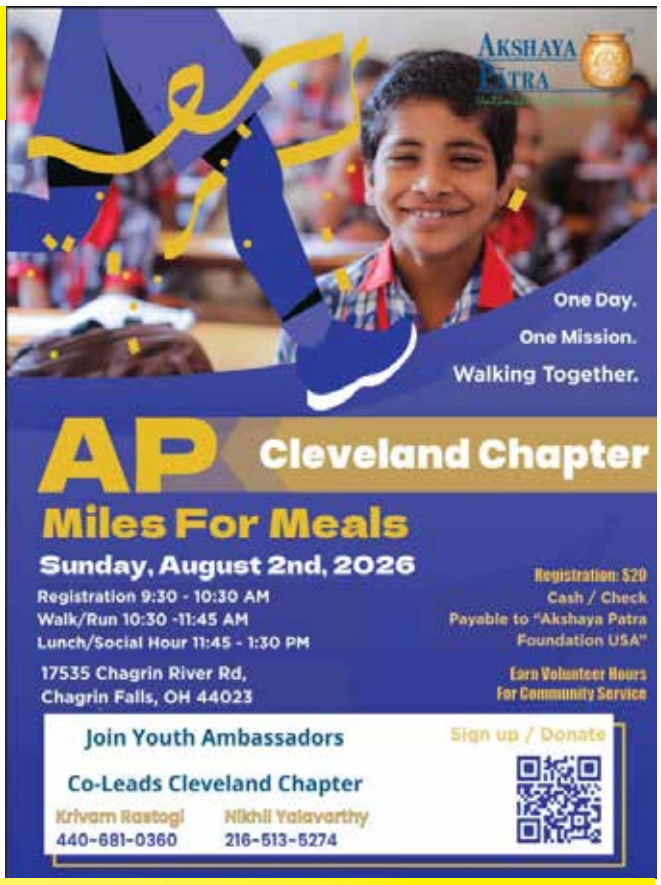
Date: August 2nd
Venue: 17535 Chagrin River Road, Chagrin Falls, Ohio 44023

"Miles for Meals" is a 1-mile walk or 5K run with a $20 registration fee to support one child in India for the entire school year. There will be a social hour and refreshments after the run, so don't hesitate to bring your family and friends to enjoy themselves and support this noble cause.

Your support by registering for the run at This Link can make a meaningful difference in a child's life by helping improve nutrition, health, and access to education.

Please take a moment to review the flyer below and consider supporting this wonderful cause. If you are busy and can't make it to the run, a donation, no matter the size, helps create a brighter future for children in need.
Thank you for your generosity and support!
With gratitude,
Krivam Rastogi and Nikhil Yalavarthy on behalf of the Miles for Meals team

Link: https://give.apusa.org/event/akshaya-patra-usa-miles-for-meals/e801357



Women Faculty of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine



More than 200 faculty members, physicians, researchers, and healthcare leaders from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and its affiliated institutions gathered this spring for the Women Faculty School of Medicine (WFSOM) Spring Dinner 2026, an annual event celebrating leadership, professional achievement, and the advancement of faculty in academic medicine. Held at the Linsalata Alumni Center, the evening brought together faculty from across the region's academic medical community to recognize accomplishments, foster connections, and inspire future leaders.

In her presidential address, Dr. Mona Gupta, President of WFSOM and Director of Supportive and Palliative Oncology & Palliative Care Education at University Hospitals Seidman Cancer Center, reflected on a year marked by significant organizational change and growth. Despite these challenges, what stood out most was not disruption, but this community, Gupta said. A community that showed up, supported one another, and led with resilience, commitment, and purpose.

Dr Gupta highlighted several initiatives that strengthened faculty engagement and professional development, including the organization Fall Mixer, which brought together more than 80 faculty members from across affiliated institutions, and the continued expansion of the WFSOM Peer Coaching Program. Developed in partnership with the Weatherhead School of Management, the Peer Coaching program engaged 75 faculty members in structured peer coaching cohorts focused on leadership development, mentorship, and career advancement.

The evening keynote speaker, Dr. Igho Ofotokun, Chair and Physician-in-Chief of the Department of Medicine at University Hospitals and Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, delivered an inspiring presentation titled Building the Biomedical Workforce, One Woman at a Time." Drawing on his own experiences as a physician, researcher, and leader, Ofotokun emphasized the critical importance of mentorship, sponsorship, and creating pathways for faculty to thrive in medicine, science, and healthcare leadership. " Investing in women is not only the right thing to do, but also essential to the future of healthcare, innovation, and discovery, he noted.

The event also celebrated faculty excellence through recognition of

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Women Faculty of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine

...Cntd From Pg 12...
promotions and presentation of the President Award, Toyoko Yamashita, and Behind-the-Scenes Impact Awards. Honorees included physicians, educators, researchers, and leaders whose contributions have strengthened patient care, education, research, and organizational culture throughout the region.

Among those recognized, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine faculty were Dr, Heidi Moawad, Dr. Kimone Lightford of University Hospitals St. John Medical Center, Dr, Reema Gulati of MetroHealth Medical Center, Dr Fouseena Pazheri of VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System, Dr. Gunnur Karakurt of University Hospitals, Dr Cynthia Kubu of MetroHealth Center, Dr Usha Steifel of VA Northeast Ohio Healthcare System and Dr. Monique Robinson of University Hospitals Harrington Heart & Vascular Institute.

As the evening concluded, Dr Gupta reflected on the organization's enduring mission to advance professional development, advocate for issues that disproportionately impact women faculty, and foster meaningful connection and collaboration across academic medicine.

Even in the face of change, we did not stand still," Gupta said. " While structures may evolve, our purpose remains constant: to create growth opportunities, amplify the voices of faculty, and strengthen the relationships that help our academic community thrive."

The Spring Dinner served as a powerful reminder of Northeast Ohio's commitment to cultivating an environment where current and future generations of physicians, scientists, educators, and healthcare leaders can flourish.

A Dream Come True

By Ameyaa Gargesha

The Men's FIFA World Cup is more than just a soccer tournament; it is one of the most significant sporting events in the world. Held every four years, it brings together the best national teams from around the globe to compete for the most prestigious trophy in soccer. With billions of viewers tuning in and millions of fans traveling hundreds or thousands of miles to support their favorite teams, the World Cup has an impact that lasts and reaches so many around the world. It unites people of different cultures and leaves lasting effects on the host nation.

One of the many reasons the World Cup is so important is its ability to bring people together. Regardless of language, religion, or nationality, fans share the excitement of cheering for their favorite teams and celebrating the sport they love– regardless of whether they call it football or soccer. For a few weeks, the tournament creates a sense of global unity that little to no other sporting event can achieve. Families gather to watch matches, children at school and colleagues at the workplace discuss match results, and entire countries celebrate their victories together. Shared experiences like these strengthen national pride and also encourage appreciation for different cultures and traditions.

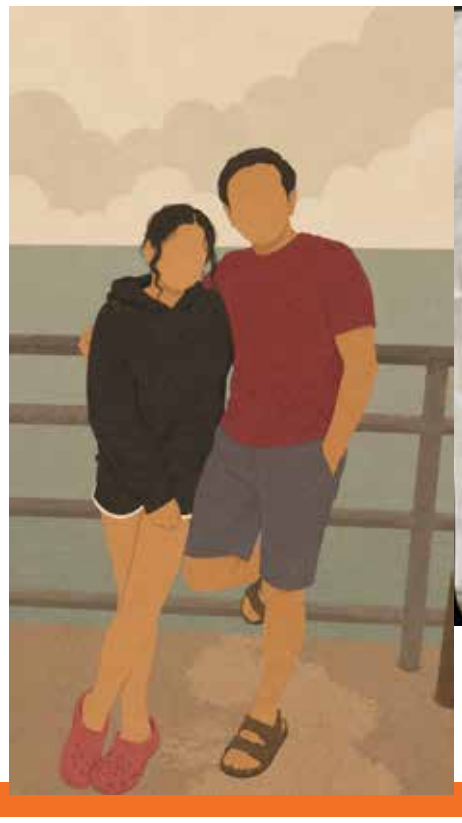
Beyond economics, the World Cup inspires millions of young athletes. Watching the world's greatest players compete motivates children to begin playing soccer and dream of representing their own countries one day. Amazing performances often become defining moments in a player's career and create role models who show that dedication, teamwork, and perseverance can get you to the highest stage. The tournament also showcases the importance of fair play and friendly competition, showing that sports can build friendships even between rival nations.

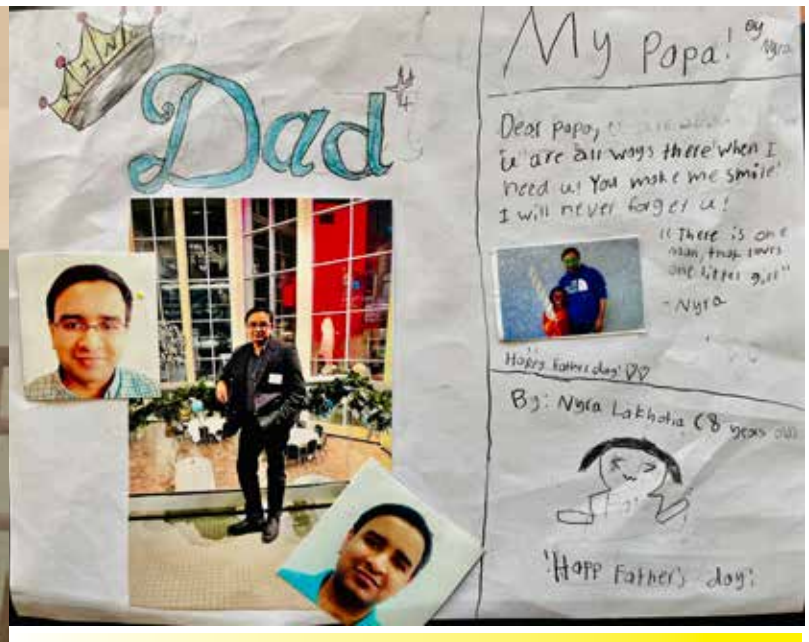
For me, the World Cup is especially meaningful because it allows me to get together with my family to watch every game. As someone who enjoys the sport enough, watching players perform at the highest level reminds me that hard work and determination can lead to extraordinary achievements. The World Cup is more than entertainment to me and so many others; it is an event that creates unforgettable memories with family and friends.

Ultimately, the FIFA World Cup is far more than just a soccer tournament. It is a celebration of culture, passion, and human connection that captures the attention of the entire world. Its influence extends beyond the final match, leaving lasting memories and demonstrating the unique power of sports to unite people across the world.

Three Shanti

Three Shanti is a practical spiritual nonprofit dedicated to awakening and self-realization. They promote peace and holistic well-being across body, mind, and spirit for all people, regardless of faith, race, gender, or background. Inspired by Sree Narayana Guru, the spiritual and social reformer of India's caste system who taught about the oneness of all. "One Caste, One Race, One God for Mankind." 3 Shanti offers classes, personalized spiritual coaching, Reiki energy healing sessions, and conducts mindfulness meditation outreach programs to community groups in northeast Ohio and online. Helping to ground in the energy of the inner self to discover inner peace, joy, and the harmonious connection we all share globally. Swamini Chinmayee Devi and Swami Brahmananda are mental and physical renunciants and the first of the order of 3 Shanti (peace of the body, mind, and spirit). Brahmananda means dwelling in the 'bliss of ultimate reality'; his spiritual journey spans decades of meditation, study, and service. A Reiki master for over 30 years and founder of 3 Shanti, he guides seekers toward peace, self-realization, and compassionate living. Chinmayee Devi means 'blissful divine consciousness'; a yoga practitioner for over 3 decades, master energy healer, nature mindfulness guide, and retreat manager. Vice President of 3 Shanti, she organizes and leads classes, outreach, and heart-centered spiritual support. Both have been ordained in the lineage of Sree Narayana Guru. 3 Shanti can be contacted by email at threeshanti@yahoo.com.





ART CORNER

Artists: Avika & Nyra Lakhotia

Consumer or Creator? Why We Need to Make Time to Think

By Sachin Deshpande

We live in an age where consuming information has never been easier. Every waking moment can be filled with something to watch, read, listen to, or scroll through. News, podcasts, YouTube videos, social media posts, online courses, and now even AI-generated content compete for our attention.

There is tremendous value in learning from others. Our scriptures encourage us to seek knowledge, and lifelong learning is one of the greatest investments we can make. The problem is not consumption itself.

The problem begins when consumption becomes our default mode of living.

Many of us have become experts at taking in information but beginners at producing original thought. Every human being is born with creativity. It may not be the creativity of an artist, musician, or writer. It may be the creativity of solving problems, building a business, raising children, leading a team, serving the community, inventing a better process, or simply bringing kindness into someone's day. Creativity is nothing more than expressing something unique that already exists within us.

But creativity needs space.

Imagine planting a seed and covering it with concrete. The seed still has life inside it, but it never gets the opportunity to emerge. Our creativity is much the same. If every spare minute is occupied by consuming someone else's thoughts, our own thoughts rarely have a chance to surface.

This is particularly relevant in today's digital world. We often know what everyone else thinks about politics, parenting, health, success, or spirituality before we have taken the time to ask ourselves what we truly believe.

Without reflection, we slowly begin to borrow our identity from the world around us. The ancient Indian tradition has always emphasized introspection. Whether through meditation, prayer, journaling, svādhyāya (self-study), or simply sitting quietly, the goal has never been merely to collect knowledge. The goal has been self-discovery.

Questions such as Who am I? What do I stand for? What is my purpose? How can I contribute? cannot be answered by another podcast or another social media feed. They require silence, patience, and honest reflection.

Ironically, this process is also essential for success. The most effective leaders, entrepreneurs, professionals, and community builders are not simply consumers of ideas. They are people who think independently, form sound judgment, and express their ideas with conviction. Innovation has always belonged to those who first made time to think.

There is another important distinction between pleasure and fulfillment. Consuming information, entertainment, or social media often gives us immediate gratification. It feels good in the moment. But the feeling quickly fades, leaving us looking for the next video or the next notification.

Creating is different.

When we write, build, teach, mentor, volunteer, solve a difficult problem, or create something meaningful, we experience a much deeper sense of satisfaction. We are no longer merely reacting to the world—we are contributing to it. This is true whether the audience is millions of people or just one child, one student, one client, or one neighbor.

Not everyone needs to become a social media creator. But everyone should become the creator of their own life. Perhaps the simplest practice we can adopt is to intentionally create small pockets of silence each day. Before reaching for the phone in the morning, spend a few minutes thinking. Take a walk without headphones. Keep a journal. Reflect on the day's experiences. Ask yourself difficult questions. Give your inner voice an opportunity to speak. The world already has billions of consumers. What it needs are thoughtful human beings who know themselves, think independently, and express their unique gifts with authenticity. Because real happiness is not found in consuming more. It is found in discovering who we are and having the courage to express that person in the world.

Sonya Rhie Mace - George P. Bickford Curator of Indian and Southeast Asian Art



1. Tell us about your childhood and how this field caught your attention

I grew up in western Massachusetts, where my mother was a professor of Art and East Asian Studies at Smith College. She specialized in the history of Buddhist art from China. Her research interests combined with my father's Korean heritage brought us as a family to Asia every couple of years. When I was ten, in 1982, they took me to India for the first time, and I was enthralled. We stayed mainly in Varanasi, where I spent time at temples and bookstores, learning about the iconography of Hindu religious imagery.

2. Tell us about your tenure as the curator of Indian and Southeast Asian art at the Cleveland Museum of Art

I began my tenure at CMA in September of 2012 as only the second curator of Indian and Southeast Asian Art in the museum's history. The atrium and new wings had just been completed, and I was responsible for installing the new permanent-collection galleries of Indian, Southeast Asian, and Himalayan art. Soon, I focused on expanding the collection of Indian paintings from Mughal, Deccan, Rajasthani, and Pahari courts. The new acquisitions have been celebrated in a series of exhibitions, notably Mughal Paintings: Art and Stories in 2016, and publications. I also worked to strengthen and formalize a cultural cooperation agreement with the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia and conducted research that resulted in the transfer of a 10th-century sandstone sculpture of Hanuman to the National Museum in Phnom Penh. Working together with conservators and colleagues in Cambodia and France, I oversaw the reconstruction of the monumental sculpture of Krishna lifting Mount Govardhan from around 600 CE—a masterwork in CMA's collection. Thanks to our museum's formal cooperation with Cambodia, I had the privilege of curating two major international loan exhibitions of Cambodian art in 2017–2018 and 2021–2022. The Cleveland Museum of Art is an extraordinary institution that supports curatorial research and international collaborations.

3. Your PhD is in Indian and South Asian art at Harvard University, where your dissertation focused on early Indian sculpture. Tell our readers more about it.

My dissertation and related book, History of Early Stone Sculpture at Mathura, ca. 150 BCE to 100 CE, present the visual evidence to establish that Mathura, about 100 miles south of Delhi, had been a flourishing cosmopolis before it became a capital of the Kushan Empire during the 100s CE. Multiple inscriptions and fragments point to the existence of extensive monuments and large-scale stone sculptures that no longer survive in situ. Creating a visual history of pre-Kushan Mathura, I noticed the prominence of a localized sect of Jains, whose monks were distinctively only partially clad, and who promoted the worship of stupas, temples, and figural images of Jinas. Soon, Buddhists in Mathura began to depict images of the Buddha in human form, probably in response to competition for lay support. Images of heroes and divinities associated with the Brahmanical Hindu populations also outnumbered those made in other regions of the subcontinent. Overall, Mathura emerges as an influential center of image production from the time of the outset of stone sculptural production in India.

4. Tell us about the current special exhibition featuring the Ramayana at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Epic of the Northwest Himalayas: Pahari Paintings from the "'Shangri' Ramayana" presents the story of Valmiki's Ramayana in forty paintings made about 300 years ago in the Pahari kingdoms of Himachal. The paintings are all from the same dispersed series and have been reunited through loans from twelve different collections. Originally numbering about one thousand paintings, the "Shangri" Ramayana may be the most extensive pictorial Ramayana known. Three selected episodes are presented in digital animations of sequential paintings that show how the series was made to be cinematic, with narrative emphases and climaxes that go unrecognized when paintings are viewed individually. One climactic scene has more gold than all the rest, and it introduces the villain, Ravana. CMA acquired that painting from the collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, whose Pahari paintings are published in a new catalogue, Pahari Paintings: Art and Stories, published on the occasion of the exhibition. This exhibition contextualizes the works from the "Shangri" Ramayana from the Benkaim Collection, two of which are in the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art. Programming associated with the exhibition includes a classical Indian dance performance with live music, Crucible of Honor, on August 2nd at 2:00 pm. Mark your calendars!

For more information, visit clevelandart.org.

AAIWO's Annual Summer Picnic-A Joyful Getaway !

By Mahima Rao



Sunshine, greenery, fresh fruit, and laughter set the perfect scene for the AAIWO Annual Picnic on June 28, 2026, at Huntington Beach Wolf Canopy. What began as a simple summer gathering quickly turned into a joyful celebration of friendship, fun, and connection.

Members, friends, and guests, including women who traveled from Columbus, came together to relax, recharge, and enjoy a well-deserved break from everyday routines. Tables were filled with lovingly prepared dishes, crisp salads, and colorful fruit platters, making the picnic feel warm, welcoming, and full of flavor.

The afternoon was packed with cheerful conversations, games, and plenty of smiles. A special thanks goes to the wonderful kid volunteers who helped with setup, cleanup, and keeping the games running smoothly. The crowd favorite was the icebreaker game, which brought out surprise fun facts, hidden talents, and lots of laughter.

More than anything, the picnic created space for meaningful connection. Senior members, new members, and friends shared stories, offered support, and celebrated the spirit of togetherness that makes AAIWO special.



As the summer heat rose, everyone wrapped up just in time for an afternoon tea break, leaving with full hearts, refreshed spirits, and happy memories. It was exactly what the AAIWO leaders had envisioned: a fun, relaxing day to connect, laugh, and recharge with friends!

Professor Nita Sahai - Fulbright-Nehru Distinguished Scholar Award



Prof. Nita Sahai's research focuses on the physical–chemical aspects of biomolecular and inorganic ion interactions at mineral surfaces in processes relevant to the origins of life and astrobiology, environmental geochemistry, and biomaterials science. She earned her PhD from Johns Hopkins University in 1997. Following an NSF postdoctoral fellowship from the University of Maryland, Prof. Sahai became a full professor in the Department of Geoscience, University of Wisconsin–Madison, from 2000 to 2011. She has been with the School of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering, University of Akron, since 2011, and holds joint appointments in the departments of geosciences and biology, and in the Integrated Bioscience Program. Prof. Sahai holds the Ohio Research Scholar Endowed Chair, Biomaterials, and is a fellow of CIFAR (Canadian Institute for Advanced Research). She was also a fellow and a distinguished lecturer of the Mineralogical Society of America. Her research has been supported by such prestigious institutions as the NSF and NASA. She is also the recipient of the NSF CAREER Award and the Romnes Faculty Fellowship. Prof. Sahai has served on the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine's Committee on Astrobiology and Planetary Science, which advises NASA. In 2020, she was featured in Fireball, an award-winning documentary on meteorites and the evolution of life and human society on Earth. She has been interviewed on the National Public Radio and on the Public Broadcasting Service. Prof. Sahai has served/is currently serving on several editorial boards, including those of Astrobiology, Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta, and American Mineralogist. She has guest-edited a volume, Medical Mineralogy and Geochemistry (in the well-known Reviews in Mineralogy and Geochemistry Series), and two thematic issues of the Elements magazine. She is a keen history buff and studies philosophy as a hobby.

Dr. Sahai's Fulbright-Nehru project is exploring how, before life and enzymes, protometabolism emerged. It is exploring mechanisms to synthesize the ATP molecule using metal-ion catalysts. The project is collaborating with the microbiologist Prof. Amitesh Anand (TIFR, Mumbai) and the chemist Prof. Sudha Rajmani (IISER Pune).

Watermelon Coconut Refresher

By Sushma Lohit



Sip into summer with this refreshing Watermelon Coconut Refresher!

Made with just a handful of fresh ingredients, it's naturally hydrating, light, and perfect for hot days. Cheers to simple summer sips!

Save this recipe for your next sunny afternoon!

Ingredients

- Fresh watermelon juice
- Ice cubes
- Coconut water
- Lemon wedges & Fresh lemon juice

Method:

Fill a glass with ice cubes.
Add a few lemon wedges.
Pour in the coconut water.
Squeeze in fresh lemon juice.
Top it off with chilled fresh watermelon juice.

Stir gently and enjoy!

Optional: Garnish with a lemon slice or watermelon wedge for that perfect summer look.

A visit to SC4K - Shoes and Clothes for Kids



Shoes and Clothes for Kids is a nonprofit organization in the Cleveland area. They supply shoes, clothes, backpacks, and school supplies for teachers and kids in the area. This organization started from the thought of "no kid should skip school because of shoes". One of the founders stumbled upon three brothers. He saw only one of them go to school each day and wondered why. He asked, and the kid replied that there's only one pair of shoes for all of them to share. He suddenly decided in his heart to start an organization to help these kids.

Link: https://sc4k.org/



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