



FOOTPRINTS

PEHCHAAN'S Annual Newsletter

2016 volume 7

President's Message



Manjusha Naik

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"In early 2014, while I was being appreciated for my work, one morning, I woke up feeling different. I felt a strange emptiness in my stomach." Deepika Padukone, the famous Bollywood actor broke her silence for the first time to tell the world that she was struggling with anxiety and depression. Yes, it can happen to the best of us. That is why PEHCHAAN was created – to address the mental health issues that plague a majority of the population.

This organization's seed was planted by 3 of our community members with a goal to improve the psychosocial quality of life of Tampa Bay community through education, awareness and support. Even if PEHCHAAN is a voluntary organization; to give it structure and to be able to function effectively, we have directors and officers.

As PEHCHAAN steps into its 2nd decade, it is time to share some of our achievements and a time to talk openly about the challenges.

We began our journey as a small group with a common goal of raising awareness about an issue that is usually suffered silently- mental health, especially in our South Asian community.

We are a volunteer driven organization and we have worked extremely hard to raise awareness about mental health issues. Over the years, we have provided several psycho educational workshops on various topics, special events with guest speakers, youth competitions and awareness walks.

Over the past few years we have established a PEHCHAAN Helpline and we receive calls from people suffering different mental health issues. We have also offered workshops for grief support, Alzheimer's and dementia. These are just a few of our achievements. Like most organizations we had our growing pains. We too had to deal with many challenges. We are eager to provide more direct services, however we are finding that we need more support from the mental health professionals in our community.

We have a few psychologists who have graciously stepped forward to assist and provide discounted service, however the need has increased in our community. We are receiving calls every month on our helpline and we need more mental health professionals to come forward to help us. Additionally, we are really looking to offer more support groups and expand into other areas. In the past years, we have assisted more than 30 families with variety of issues.

We recognize that speaking about emotionally draining issues, is not an easy task. I do want to reach out to all those who have been hesitant to break the barrier and seek help. We understand that the South asain community in The Tampa bay area is a closed one, but we respect the confidentiality of our clients.

Our board members and volunteers are people who feel very strongly about psychosocial health in our community. They are volunteering their time because they deeply care about raising awareness about mental health and providing support to the cause.

To offer any help, we need the awareness and the infrastructure to provide the needed services. We have focused on establishing that over the past years.

I would like to close this message with a huge thanks to our supporters and donors who have always been there for us. Without their financial help and their encouragement, PEHCHAAN would not exist.

Our work is not done. Actually, it has just begun.

Visit us at www.pehchaantampabay.com

or drop us an email at
pehchaantampabay@gmail.com



Board Of Directors 2015 -2016

President – Manjusha Naik

Vice President - Tharangini Raman

Immediate Past President – Vandan Kamath

Secretary – Muktha Ravi

Treasurer – Manjiri Tanksale

Founding Member- Sushama Kirtikar

Committee Members

Program – Nandini Bandyopadhyay

E-Information Resource- Ujwala Dumbre

Newsletter- Tharangini Raman

Public Relations

Volunteers - Sangeeta Rao, Vijay Garimella, Nisha Madnani

Upcoming Events

Senior Event At ICC – Jan 20

FIA Booth- Jan 31 and Aug 21

Psychosocial Work shop – March 5

Youth Event - April

Transition to college workshop - July

Book Discussion – August

SAALT Event- October

November – Mental Health Awareness Walk

PEHCHAAN FUNDRAISER: JAGADAMBA AND TUFAAN



PEHCHAAN of Tampa Bay hosted its 4th Biennial Fundraiser on April 18th, at the Hillsborough Community College, Brandon Campus. This year boasted, Tufaan, a stellar cast of energetic a cappella singers from the University of Miami, who effortlessly blended pop and Bollywood tunes to delight and enthrall. Jagadamba, a play about Kasturba Gandhi, gave the audience a rare peek into her very private life. Enacted by Yashodhara Deshpande Maitra, the play delved into the psyche of a wife caught between her traditional upbringing and her ever-changing world as the wife of the Mahatma. Forced to grapple with an absent husband, raising three young boys, and a son's public conversion to another faith, coupled with his alcoholism, was heart wrenchingly portrayed by Yashodhara D Maitra.

This fundraiser served as a testament and reminder of Pehchaan's ambitious goals to increase awareness and provide support for social issues that touch our growing South East Asian community. Pehchaan continues to be a dynamic presence in our midst and a catalyst for positive growth.

Bijaya Bose



PEHCHAAN FUNDRAISER: JAGADAMBA AND TUFAAN



ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: THE JOURNEY



PEHCHAAN was honored to host Dr. Meera Purushottam, PhD, Fulbright – Nehru Fellow, Johns Hopkins university and senior scientific officer, NIMHANS, India on August 15, 2015. The occasion was a workshop on Alzheimer's Disease: The journey.

Dr. Prushottam is a researcher focusing on the genetic aspects of Alzheimer's disease in India and was visiting the US for conducting research at Johns Hopkins University.

The workshop was held at the Jimmie. B. Keel Library. There was a very good turnout of around 50 people of all ages – ranging from young adults to seniors. Dr. Purushottam enlightened the participants on the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease in the US, UK and India and the symptoms of dementia. She highlighted the importance of aging, along with a positive family history, high blood pressure and high cholesterol as risk factors for developing the disease as well the positive factors of physical activity, education and cognitive activity in preventing the onset of Alzheimer's disease. She also educated the attendees on the warning signs and progression of the disease. The people assembled were also informed about the genetics surrounding Alzheimer's disease including ApoE4 carrier status. Dr.Purushottam also gave an overview of her research in India and the US.

The talk was followed by a question and answer session. The participants had an enormous amount of questions – on the progression of the disease, the familial and societal effects and also on the different therapies and natural remedies available. There was a lively discussion and Dr. Purushottam answered all the questions in detail.

The workshop was an eye –opening introduction to an important disease and the participants returned home with a better understanding of Alzheimer's disease and its effect on society.



SAALT - BE THE CHANGE EVENT



PEHCHAAN partnered with SAALT (South Asian Americans Leading Together) for the annual “Be The Change” event. PEHCHAAN had an opportunity to send 6 volunteers at St. Joseph Children's Hospital, Tampa , Florida on Saturday October 3, 2015. All the volunteers were there from 9:00am-1:00pm. The tasks included cleaning the playroom, toys and filling up the containers with different colors., so that the patients could use them during their stay. PEHCHAAN has been partnering with SAALT since 2010 and we look forward to many more years of serving our community.

Manjusha Naik





ASTU : THE MOVIE



PEHCHAAN hosted a film discussion on November 1, 2015 at USF School of Public Health. The film screened was 'Astu', a family drama about love, life and relationships. The story of an elderly scholar living with Alzheimer's disease is its central theme. The protagonist, Dr. Shastri (Appa), is played by Dr. Mohan Agashe with such tenderness and sensitivity, it is almost deafening in its impact. A brilliant cast of characters lights up the screen with each actor bringing authenticity to his/her performance.

How one major chronic illness can affect everyone it touches is the takeaway of this powerful film. Weaving past and present, it highlights how an evolved scholar of ancient Sanskrit scriptures slowly loses his cognitive skills, gets increasingly confused, anxious and lost, only to respond straight from the heart. Ironically, by disconnecting from the past and the future, he optimizes the present, the here and now, which is ultimately the only reality there is. The innocence of Alzheimer's is pitched against the complexity of humanity where the best in people is drawn forth in the harshest of times. This is masterpiece cinema that seduces the senses when one least expects it.

The screening was followed by a Q&A session with Dr. Mohan Agashe leading the discussion with his views through the lens of a psychiatrist. His accomplishments include a psychiatrist by profession, professor, founding director of Maharashtra Institute of Mental Health, actor, director of Film and Television institute of India, among others. He pointed out that in schools and colleges the term curricular refers to cognitive skills. Extra-curricular activities refer to all the other senses. We are notorious for promoting cognitive skills over all other skills. Emotions particularly get ignored. As Dr. Agashe put it elegantly, "We are cognitively swollen and our senses are shrunk." He claims, "These days I am into 'smuggling'. I am smuggling in education through the medium of cinema. Just as the language of cognitions is books, the language of emotions is image and sound."

He went on to address treatment options for illnesses of the brain. "Tender, loving care is the first response to psychiatric and psychological problems." He held a magnifying glass to the challenges of the caregivers as well as the emotional rollercoaster they endure.

It was yet another exceptional program, with over 100 attendees, engaging in thought-provoking discussions. It was a moving experience with tears mixed with spontaneous smiles and relieving laughter as the afternoon fare.

Sushama Kirtikar



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WALK



PEHCHAAN held its third annual mental health awareness walk on December 5, 2015 at the Lettuce Lake Park in Tampa. Nearly fifty people attended the walk to bring awareness of mental health issues to our community. This year, the need was more acutely felt, in light of the tragic death of a teenager in Tampa. PEHCHAAN hopes that events such as the Awareness Walk can shine a light on the hidden problems of mental and emotional illnesses and encourage the community to explore options for early diagnosis and treatment.

We hope to see you next year by our side.

Tharangini Raman





GRIEF SUPPORT SESSION

In October, a tragedy befell the South Asian community in Tampa Bay. A college Freshman from Tampa committed suicide and a community was left searching for answers. PEHCHAAN was instrumental in organizing two grief support sessions , one for the parents of teens and young adults and another for teens and young adults. The sessions were facilitated by Sushama Kirtikar, LMHC, Dr. Aarti Mathur and Dr Ben Ghozali, Psy D, PA. There were about 20 attendees in each session. The main aim of the sessions was to provide a framework for the participants to address the psychological effects on the community and to help in the grieving process.



A SUPERPOWER I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE

By Sai Manthena, 9th Grade

Having superpowers doesn't just mean saving a girl from a burning building or having enough strength to hold up an entire building. One doesn't need to be able to lift up buildings to be a superhero. Aside from saving people from life and death situations, one can heal them emotionally. Many people today experience many forms of emotional stress or severe depression. They need someone to motivate them and keep them going. Many times this goes unnoticed by their family and friends, or, they shut everyone out who wants to help. If I could have a superpower I want to be there for those who are going through hard times. I want to be able to hear their voices inside my head, and to talk to them through their subconscious mind, and help them resolve their problems.

Suicide rates have become increasingly high in the past 10 years. Many people have suicidal thoughts at one point or another in their life. I don't want their thoughts to become a reality. They would unknowingly tell me their problems, and I could help them to overcome their deepest sorrows. I want to be able to sit down every day and just listen, and motivate these people, whether they are homeless, or jobless, or just going through a rough time. I want to hear their thoughts and provide hope in their subconscious minds so that it will make them much more content with their lives. Life is a gift; people should not throw it away because of an obstacle in their path. No life is going to go on without both misery and happiness. People should understand that, and live life to the fullest. I want to help them with continuing that life. Before they are completely depressed I should be able to pull them out of falling into it.

People aren't always accepted into society. Many feel pushed away because of their race, sexuality, or even their personality. People do things they never would to try to fit in. I want people to stay original, and not have to change them just to fit in. They should be able to be themselves and still be accepted. Even if they aren't, someone should be able to tell them "So what?" I have gone through similar situations, and I have tried to change. As I got older, I realized that if people did not like me for who I was, I should stop caring. Teenagers are especially the ones to experience these kinds of situations while growing up. I want to guide these kids out of danger, and give them the support they need.

I want telepathic powers to motivate and keep depressed people out of harm's way. I may not be able to save a girl from a burning building, but I would be able to save that same girl from harming herself.



YOUTH CORNER

Talent vs Hard Work: Which One is More Important?

Sanika Phadnis, 11th Grade



While some say that a certain amount of talent is needed to achieve recognition in any field, others would argue that talent only gets one so far, and the constant practice and the work one puts in is the actual key to prosperity.

Upon witnessing a five year old piano prodigy effortlessly playing classical works of art which would take most adults years to master, it is hard to believe that any other five year old would be able to accomplish the same feat, no matter how much practice they put in. Talent like that, many say, is innate and cannot be learned.

However, that same five year old prodigy would get no better if he were to rely solely on his inherent talent as he grew up, rather than practicing and putting in the hours needed to improve and challenge himself. In fact, he might not choose to play the piano at all. Talent means little to nothing without the work done to foster and nurture it.

Meanwhile, the average five year old, who may struggle to play “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” could make the effort to put in hours of practice every day of her life and become a world-famous concert pianist when she grows up.

In our culture, we are constantly looking for shortcuts and easy ways out. While it is true that having a natural flair for something gives one a certain advantage over other people, I tend to agree with the statement that talent only gets one so far. It is better to be average but hard working than it is to be exceptionally bright but lazy. Talent gives you a head start, but hard work makes you finish the race.



Do You Think It's important to learn the language your parents and grandparents speak?

Anika Nayak, 8th grade

It is very important for people to learn the language their parents and grandparents speak. Not only is one able to communicate to a wider audience, but you have a lesser chance of getting brain diseases like Alzheimer and dementia compared to those who are monolingual.

Most people born and brought up in the United States speak English as their first language and use it for their daily communication. However, one's family members may have been brought up speaking a different language. Hence, if one learns their parents and grandparents' mother tongue, they can communicate to others in that language. This will enable them to have a more open and diverse perspective in life. People who speak their native language, tend to respect all cultures and encourage diversity.

Experts support the view that people, especially kids should learn new languages, mostly ones that others around you speak, because it can positively affect brain development. Specifically, the article "The Brain Benefits of Learning a Second Language" by Deane Alban states that, "Knowing a second language can postpone the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's by 4.5 years. This is significantly better than the best Alzheimer's drugs which can only delay symptoms by 6-12 months." This proves that one can prevent Alzheimer's and dementia by learning a new language. One way you can be bilingual is by learning a language that your parents and grandparents speak.

Hence, learn that specific native language from your parents and/or grandparents so you can talk to other people in that language, and have a diverse perspective in life. It can also prevent you from getting brain diseases, specifically Alzheimer's disease and dementia.



YOUTH CORNER

Do you think teenagers are distracted by technology?

Aneesha Nayak, 7th grade

Teenagers are distracted with Technology, because the excessive use of their cell phones takes time away from their academic work. These days teens between the ages of 13-17 carry cell phones. However, one shouldn't be distracted by a cell phone if they use it for the right purpose. Many parents buy their kids cell phones for communication. But, teens mainly use their cell phones for playing online games and social media. Statistics say 47% of teens use online games and social media and approximately 16% use it for academic purposes. They get hooked on to it, they want to keep checking their messages and playing games. Those teens are the ones who get bad grades because they were on their cell phones instead of studying.

Another reason teenagers are distracted by technology is because they keep checking their social media. Once teens get hooked on to social media, they use a lot of time to check messages and posts. What they don't realize is that they can be using that time to do other things like studying or volunteering. 90% of teens use social media for more than 3 hours a day. The reason teens use their devices so often is because this is the newest way to socialize, unlike 20 years ago when you had to call or meet friends face to face if you wanted to talk. Many teens care about what others are saying about them. From getting likes and comments to finding out if their friends are doing things about them.

Social media is one of reasons why teens are always on their devices. Teens don't use their technology for the right purpose.

"I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots"

-Albert Einstein



Treasurer's Report

The year 2015 started with a carryover balance of \$ 25,277.88.

We conducted a number of events to highlight the 3 main drivers of PEHCHAAN - Education, Awareness and Support.

Expenses for Community Events were:

- ✦ PEHCHAAN Booth at the FIA Republic Day and Independence Day celebrations to inform community of our services and role.
- ✦ 4th Biennial PEHCHAAN Fundraiser which was comprised of the play 'Jagadamba', Acapella performance by Tufaan and a silent Auction.
- ✦ Educational and informative session to the community through Alzheimer's workshop.
- ✦ Grief Counseling
- ✦ Screening of the movie 'Astu' followed by a question and answer session with Dr. Mohan Agashe.
- ✦ Annual PEHCHAAN Walk to raise Mental Health Awareness.

Organizational expenses for PEHCHAAN in 2015 were:

Annual State Filing fees, fundraiser, educational and community outreach programs. The total expenses for 2015 were \$5763.66

The projected expenses for 2016 are \$ 8000.00

We plan to use the funds next year for the following community events:-

FIA Booth, Annual Mental Health Awareness Walk, Youth oriented Programs, Agency Outreach, movie screening, book discussion and Annual Newsletter.

Manjiri Jakhadi, Treasurer





EDITOR'S NOTE

PEHCHAAN is proud to present the 7th edition of annual newsletter “Footprints”.

2015 was an eventful year for PEHCHAAN. We held our Biennial fundraiser in April. The main goal was to raise money for our organization, along with raising awareness of psychosocial health in the Tampa Bay South Asian Community.

The community has started accepting the fact that mental health is an important aspect of daily life. A tragedy in the South Asian Community brought the issue of psychosocial health to the forefront and has forced a conversation about previous taboo words like depression and suicide. A community is looking for answers and we hope that PEHCHAAN can be part of the solution and guide the community towards the resources available to address these issues.

I would like to thank Nandini Bandyopadhyay for helping me compile this newsletter.

Tharangini Raman
Editor, Footprints.

