

Ekam Indianapolis Chapter: 2020-2021 Annual Report

A lot has changed in our world since the 2019 annual report, mainly driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and an increased awareness of the need for equity. However, the mission of Ekam, and the need for volunteering and community service has not changed, rather it has been amplified over the last 20 months. We have continued to leverage the Ekam Youth Ambassador (EYA) program established by Ekam USA to promote the values of community service and compassion through volunteerism and fund raising, and to focus on these goals: (1) Identify and engage in youth-friendly volunteer activities in the local community, (2) Identify and support the needs of our adopted district, Madurai, in Tamil Nadu, India. Raise funds to support healthcare, sanitation, and education needs, and support Sustainable Well-Being Initiative (SWBI) programs, and (3) Promote awareness of Ekam and EYA program to grow the local chapter. Here, we provide a summary of the group's activities and accomplishments from Jan 2020 through Dec 2021.

1. Indy EYAs, Local activities and PVSA (President's Volunteer Service Award) recognition:

Indianapolis chapter continued to focus on volunteering through partnership with agencies that are addressing hunger and food insecurity locally. While the pandemic related restrictions prevented indoor activities, particularly from April 2020 to May 2021, the team found creative ways to help the best they could.

We are immensely proud of our young EYAs who received the PVSA awards two years in a row. We also commend our Chapter Recognition Award winners. All these EYAs continued to find ways to serve the local community and helped raise funds for needs either in India or here during the pandemic with active support and engagement of their parents.

2020 PVSA winners: Anjali, Maya, Adhik and Krithik with their PVSA certificates after a Second Helpings van wash shift.



2021 PVSA winners
wearing their medals:
Anjali- Silver;
Krithik, Maya, Adhik – Bronze.

**Ekam Indianapolis Chapter
Recognition awardees:**
Aashiv (2020);
Anjani & Mihir (2021).



Development of Leadership Skills among EYAs: Virtual meetings every month have not only allowed the Indy chapter to stay connected but also provided a leadership opportunity to the EYAs who host these meetings. They presented project updates and researched current events that remind us of the importance of the work we do, e.g., World Humanitarian Day and National Homeless Persons' Remembrance Day, and educated us on new subjects like vernalization for starting native, pollinator-friendly plants. The EYAs have also participated in the monthly National Ekam meetings and shared our chapter updates at regular intervals and cohosted some of the meetings. **It has been a pleasure to see our EYAs grow in their confidence, communication skills and collaboration through these events.** We will continue to use these meetings as a forum for EYAs to host, present and share learning.

The primary volunteer activities have focused on **hunger-relief programs** through our established partnerships with Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana and Second Helpings.

Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana: Families have volunteered monthly at Gleaners warehouse, helping sort food, pack weekend “snack bags” for food insecure children, or pack food boxes for families during the pandemic. As an example, during a Saturday shift, 7 Ekam volunteers joined 46 other volunteers to inspect and sort 6320 lbs of food, which is the equivalent of 5252 meals.



Second Helpings: This agency welcomes kids of all ages to participate, so it has been a favorite of our younger EYAs, even 5-6 yr olds. However, kids have not been allowed to volunteer indoors since April 2020. This did not deter our EYAs, who found other ways to help. Aashiv leveraged the Caring Crowd fundraising platform to raise \$2000 that Second Helpings could use towards 1600 extra meals that helped meet the surge in demand at the height of the pandemic. Several of the EYAs and their parents volunteered to clean and wash the vans used for food delivery. This assistance was greatly appreciated by all the drivers who were working extra hard to deliver meals across the city. During 2021 summer, some families helped grow tomatoes for use by Second Helpings. Recently, our EYAs have been making lovely cards to accompany the meals being delivered to the elderly, adding some cheer through their beautiful artwork and heartfelt messages. The staff is very appreciative of this gesture, and we have many opportunities to expand this safe and fun activity for all ages in 2022.



Volunteering to protect the environment: Since outdoors is the safest place to be during the pandemic, we continued to partner with the Helping Ninjas, another local youth volunteer group, to 1) continue our work on the pollinator garden at Founders Park, Carmel.



2) Grew tomatoes in the Carmel Community Garden for donation to Second Helpings.



Earth Day 2021
As part of "Keep Fishers Beautiful", planted trees at Fishers Agripark.

Our talented EYAs also partnered virtually to create a wonderful **music video** heralding arrival of spring to share with their peers in Madurai and Bada schools - to welcome spring and return to school.

<https://youtu.be/jHQ3PWiuGf8>



Some of the EYAs and their parents set up a **lemonade stand during India Day 2021** and raised \$400 for COVID relief activities in India. This event also provided a wonderful opportunity for the EYAs to prepare and present a poster highlighting the chapter's accomplishments and recruit new members.



2.Projects in India: Ekam Indianapolis Chapter continues to support the needs related to **healthcare, basic amenities, and education** in Madurai. The project needs were identified either by Ekam Foundation staff, or during the 2019 visits by a few Indy families to Madurai. We also had an impactful opportunity to support a school in Karnataka. We supported these needs in 2020 through **fundraisers** leveraging the 50% match by Caring Crowd® platform and, after its discontinuation, through other personal fundraisers in 2021. In addition, we have supported Ekam Foundation's **COVID-relief efforts in India** through donations to Ekam USA COVID-relief campaigns. These efforts included distribution of masks, PPE and equipment to frontline workers and hospitals, groceries to antenatal and postnatal mothers, and the elderly, and on-going health awareness programs. **Total funds raised- \$ 11,746 in 2020 and \$10,860 in 2021.**

We have successfully funded the following projects over the last two years in India:

- Improve sanitation and infrastructure in Kallanthri and Kalimangalam schools, Madurai.
- Provide physical therapy equipment for developmentally challenged kids and chairs for mothers in waiting rooms - Madurai Rajaji Hospital.
- Help start a library and fund a television to enable teaching through web-based content in a rural school in Bada, Karnataka.
- Provide life-saving medical equipment for newborns and mothers in primary health centers across Madurai.
- Provide clean drinking water, classroom televisions to enable teaching through web-based content, and furniture to schools in Karseri and Gangamuthur villages in Madurai.

Due to pandemic-driven school closing and focus on immediate COVID relief, and the recent floods in Tamil Nadu, some of these projects are taking a little longer than usual to be completed, but we are excited to share that the majority have been completed and rest are in progress.



Physical/ sensory therapy equipment and microscope (Rajaji Hospital); **Phototherapy** unit (Kallandhri Govt PHC) will treat jaundice in premature babies and infants, benefiting about 72 babies annually at this center.

Chairs for mothers in waiting area - Madurai Rajaji Hospital.



Library in Bada school, with books, bookshelves, chairs and tables, and TV, for accessing web-based educational content.



Madurai Schools:
Equipment delivered !
Construction in
progress !!



COVID-relief Efforts:



Distribution of equipment, PPE and groceries.

Health Awareness training for
Adolescents and Antenatal &
Postnatal care mothers.

What Ekam Indianapolis members are saying ...

“As an EYA my eyes have been opened to the needs of those in my community both globally and locally. Through volunteering and fundraising I have been able to positively impact the lives of strangers.” - Maya, EYA.

“Second Helpings Cards for the Elderly - creating handmade cards for seniors makes me feel proud for everything that I’ve accomplished and closer to the needs of my community.” - Anjali, EYA.

“We are committed to EKAM to help support the cause of serving those in need and the underprivileged. It is amazing how EKAM lends itself to volunteering locally and having an impact far and wide.” - Dr. Ajay Jain, EYA parent.

“Ekam provides necessary healthcare to women and children through a sustainable approach and helps connect me to my roots.” - Anjani, EYA.

“My favorite part of Ekam is the Ekam Youth Ambassador (EYA) program, which provides a great platform for children to serve the community and help those in need via several events organized throughout the year ...” - Dr. Suresh Raman, EYA Parent and Adult member.

Acknowledgements: We are very grateful to those who have played a critical role in keeping the Indianapolis Chapter alive, helped organize various events, spread the word, and supported each other through this challenging period. We are excited to have several new members join us in the past few months and actively engage in various activities. None of this is ever possible without the enthusiastic support and engagement of all the EYAs, their parents, and the generosity of our donors.