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Joy of Giving-Music for a Cause A fundraising concert for AFNA organized by AAMI

On the afternoon of Saturday, May 18th, 2019, the beautiful Village Theater in Canton, Michigan, buzzed with music enthusiasts from far and near who were there to enjoy the unique live performance of acclaimed violinist Sunita Bhuyan and her son Ronojit Bhuyan, an extremely talented young pianist. Sunita, a recipient of the prestigious Indira Gandhi Priyadarshini Award for Excellence in Music, is that rare performer who blends skill and a nuanced understanding of music with spunk on stage. Her musical range is breathtakingly wide, from pure classical music to a wide range of light melodies that fuse jazz, folk, and a host of other influences from different parts of the world. Her repertoire and her unique style were quite evident in her performance, where she was able to create a distinctive musical experience, enthralling each and every member of the large audience.

Spell-bound, electrifying, mesmerizing, once-in-a-lifetime experience, enthralling, best concert of my life – these were some of the words used to describe the concert by those who attended. It was an eclectic audience, drawing audiences from the US, Canada, all four corners of India, and from China, Japan, Scotland, and Romania among other countries. Everyone enjoyed the performance wholeheartedly. For almost 2 hours, Sunita swept the audience off their feet. Many of the ushers and the floor managers of the beautiful auditorium commented that they had never seen a performance like this before. Sunita really transported everyone to a different world.

Sunita and Ronojit were accompanied by Prafulla Athalye, an accomplished Tabla player from Phoenix, AZ, who is a disciple of Tabla, Maestro Padmashri Late Ustad Allarakha Khansaheb, and Padma Bhushan Ustad Zakir Hussain.



The ensemble also included local musicians from the Assamese community of Michigan, namely Vishal Sharma on the Cajon, Chiranjit Bordoloi on acoustic guitar, and Sameer Barua on the electric guitar. This concert was a part of Sunita and Ronojit's 4 city tour of the US, which included Chicago (May 1st, organized by Bengali Association of Greater Chicago - BAGC), New York (May 23rd, St. John's at Pierpont.), New York (May 25th, Sahakriya, organized by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in association with Consulate General of India), and Washington D.C (June 1st, Chairman's Ball, Young Professionals Organization).

The concert in Michigan, which was named "Joy of Giving-Music for a Cause", was organized by a few members of the local Assamese community as a fund-raiser for AFNA. It's noteworthy that Sunita has been recognized by His Holiness Pope Francis as a Joy of Giving Ambassador for her work with almost 20,000 less privileged children.

Prior to the concert, AFNA had decided to use the funds raised in this event to support an organization named Kalyani Niwas in Assam, which is a shelter for abandoned and destitute girls. This organization, is managed in Guwahati by Mrs. Sunanda Das, mother of Nabarun Das, a Process Safety Engineer living in Farmington Hills, Michigan. The organization has been facing financial challenges lately and approached AFNA for support. AFNA, after following due process for vetting new NGOs and projects, decided to support the immediate need to provide health care expenses for the current residents (about 36 girls) at Kalyani Niwas, which includes the cost of a part-time doctor, medicine, toiletries, laboratory tests and hygiene supplies. This project is named PROJECT KIND by AFNA.

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Thanks to all the generous donors from different parts of the US and Canada, this event raised enough money to fund the healthcare expenses for Kalyani Niwas for more than a year. All in all, this one-of-a kind event organized by a few Assamese residents of Michigan was a resounding success - providing a memorable afternoon of wonderful music while at the same raising enough funds to ensure a healthy environment for some unfortunate girls in Assam. All the objectives that the organizers set out to achieve – “Joy”, “Giving”, “Music” and “Cause” – were fully accomplished!

AFNA's continuing and new participation in events at New Jersey

Arbor Day on April 27th 2019 at Bridgewater Township: The Arbor Day Celebration marks Bridgewater's achievement as a Tree City USA community for the 23rd consecutive year! AFNA has been participating and collaborating with the Bridgewater Township on this event for several years, thanks to our dedicated volunteers like Niren Choudhury and others.



Eco Blast at Kid Street Park, May 5th 2019

AFNA is partnering on this annual event for several years now. AFNA distributed close to 400 seedlings for the planting in this event. This partnership reflects AFNA's commitment towards environmental initiatives.



5th International day of Yoga, June 23rd 2019

AFNA is proudly partnering with the Consulate General of India, New York and with Friends of Yoga to present the biggest yoga event of the season on June 23rd, 2019 at Fair Bridge Hotel & Conference Center, 195 Davidson Avenue, Somerset, NJ 08873. In December of 2014, the UN General Assembly declared June 21st as the International Day of Yoga. The date of June 21st was chosen since it is the summer solstice, which is the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere, and has special significance in many parts of the world. “Yoga for Peace and Non-Violence” is the theme chosen for this year's celebrations. Over 2,000 yoga enthusiasts are expected to join this grand celebration. Yoga sessions will be conducted by professionally trained Yoga teachers following the standard Common Yoga Protocol for the International Day of Yoga. This will be a day of celebration of not only yoga, but, also, Indian cuisine, arts & culture. In addition to yoga demonstrations, there will be number of performances by eminent artists. You can find more information about the event at <https://www.indiainnewyork.gov.in/yogaday/>.

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Project updates: AKADAMICS AFNA's college scholarship

AKADAMIC Scholarships has entered the 6th year of its successful operation. 100 scholarships have been awarded so far and another 30 scholarships are going to be added this year. To date, 67 AKADAMICS awardees have successfully completed their bachelor's degree from colleges across Assam with a graduation rate of 100%. 26 of the graduates are females. Here is quick breakdown of the degrees received:

1. B.A. – 43
2. B.Sc. – 10
3. B. Ayurvedic Medicine – 1
4. B. Comm. – 3
5. B.E. and B. Tech – 2
6. B. Pharm. – 1
7. MBBS - 7

We started with 10 scholarships during our first year in 2014, and by the end of this year, we would be paying 63 scholarships a year, which is ~\$22,000 in annual scholarship contribution. We set a goal to achieve 75 annual scholarships by 2020 two years ago, which is more than doubling the number of scholarships in 2017 i.e. from 32 to 75. While this was an aspirational goal, we are making steady progress. We have grown our scholarships from 32 to 63 in two years. Achieving 75 annual scholarships by 2020 still appears a tall order, as this means a consistent annual disbursement of ~\$26,250. In order to keep marching towards our goal, AKADAMICS is looking to raise \$7000 at this year's Assam Convention in Vancouver, CA. A contribution of \$350 enables awarding 1 college student for 1 year.

*Support a college scholarship
for one student with just
\$350 a year. Donate today
and make one student's dream
come true!*



Sabina Yasmin, SJN Homeopathic Medical College,
Bachelor of Homeopathic Medicine

"I have completed the 2nd year of BHMS education in the last six months. I have appeared in my final exam in November of 2018 and my academic result is good. I had many problems and challenges and in the last six months, all of my problems have been resolved by grace of God and with the help of AFNA. AFNA solve(sic) my financial problems. AFNA gave me a mentor named as Navanita. She is not only a mentor but also like my guardian, like my elder sister. She gives me solutions to all the problems I faced in the academic year. At the time of my final exam, she supported me mentally and emotionally and gave me consolation(sic) after the results. I will reach my goal in 2020 and become a doctor. I want to treat poor people free because I know the problem of poor people. This is not only my dream but also my mother's dream. All of my dreams will be fulfilled with the help of AFNA because my parents are not capable of giving me all the money needed for my education. This is why I want to thank AFNA from the core of my heart. AFNA helped me at the time of my need and hope that they will help me in the next days to complete my education. My graduation will be complete in the month of November 2020.

Thanks a lot, AFNA."

Together we can make a difference

Join AFNA to bring a positive change to someone's life

AFNA thanks the contributors for the articles for this special issue of our newsletter. The volunteers contributing on this newsletter are (in order of the articles) Krishanu Kaushik, Niren Choudhury, Sarfaraz Taher, Pallav Saikia, Debojit Bora, Lipika Deka and Nandini Deka.

Assam Foundation of North America, Inc. is registered under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code with Tax ID# 61-0994468. Donations to the foundation are tax-deductible in the U.S. to the extent permitted by law. Please consult your tax advisor for specific tax advice.

Project update - Tapoban A Residential School for Specially-abled Children

Elevator for Tapoban's new four-story residence and school building

- Total project cost estimated: Rs 14,70,000; Actual cost is Rs. 15,64,649
- Project executed as per schedule of 5 months; this included civil & electrical work and installation of elevator
- AFNA funded 70% of the cost at Rs. 11,00,000 paid in 3 installments
- AFNA raised ~\$15,000 specifically for this project and met rest of the obligation (\$600) from the General AFNA Fund

Project update - Support-A-Child (SAC)

AFNA is helping multiple schools in Assam to continue to provide education to the needy. 2019 grants were made for the following:

- \$3000 to SHED to cover for food expenses for their students (boarders & day scholars). This covers around 40% of the yearly cost. SHED currently has 23 residents and 65 nonresident students with special needs. It also runs an evening school for the students in the local area.
- \$625 were disbursed to Patacharkucchi High School to support the expenses for 25 students, most of who are girls
- \$3000 were disbursed to Tapoban to help meet their operational expenses. Tapoban hosts 30 specially-abled students and provides services to ~70 non-resident students with special needs

We are ever so thankful to our donors who enable us to support our projects. Special thanks to our AC 2018 attendees who kick started the campaign for Tapoban's Elevator construction.

Adopt a child with an annual contribution of \$150 and provide her/him the safe life she/he deserves

Project update - Seneh A home for homeless and destitute women

Seneh: Adopt-A-Grandma is a collaboration with Seneh, a home for elderly ladies who are often abandoned by their families due to illness at old age. AFNA is providing grants to help meet medical expenditures for its residents at Seneh. AFNA has been working with Seneh for a couple of years now, and due to overwhelming support from our volunteers, we are able to keep providing support for these grandmas. Seneh started off with one home in Guwahati and have recently expanded to another home in North Lakhimpur. AFNA is hoping to continue a successful fundraising this year at the Assam Convention in Vancouver and throughout the year so that we can keep our commitments to these grandmas.

AFNA is grateful to all the generous donations and support from all of our volunteers with a big heart, and we thank you for always being there.

AFNA provides \$6000 a year to Seneh, to help with:

- Payroll for 2 nurses, one each in its Guwahati and North Lakhimpur branch
- Monthly charges for the on-call doctor service
- Purchase of regular medicines
- Medical treatments including hospitalization, a regular need for the residents as they generally have physical or mental health issues.



Seneh Grandmas

Adopt a Grandma with an annual contribution of \$300 and provide her the life she deserves

Join AFNA GBM at 40th Assam Convention 2019 in Vancouver

AGENDA FOR THE 2019 GENERAL BODY MEETING on Saturday July 6th from 9:00AM to 10:30AM:

- ❖ Last year in review
- ❖ Projects Updates
- ❖ Operations Overview
- ❖ Finance Overview
- ❖ Nomination and Election of Board of Directors and officers
- ❖ 2019 Budget
- ❖ 2019-2020 Roadmap



Support AFNA and pick up a button at the AFNA Booth!

We Are All A Connected Human Family by Debojit Bora, California

After waiting for many years, I recently got my “life-saving gift”, a kidney, from a total stranger, far away in Texas. During my complicated recovery process, I also experienced love, care, dedication and compassion from the hospital staff, friends and family members who patiently and tirelessly worked hard for my recovery thereby bringing an incredible amount of grace, appreciation, and infinite gratitude into my life!

This life changing experience made me realize *how every person has the potential to rise to higher ground and make differences in another's, without considerations of race, location, economic status, religion and other man-made differences. Such is the mission and spirit of AFNA too.* With compassion and generosity of its volunteers, donors and sponsors, AFNA for many years, has been touching the lives of thousands of needy strangers, adults and children, abled and disabled, in Assam and in the US (disaster relief), thereby helping and empowering the underprivileged. So, come and join us in the journey of grace and gratitude.



Himadri Das Memorial Essay Competition - 2019

The 4th annual Essay competition by AFNA is open for 8th to 12th grade students. This year's topic/prompt for the competition is: **“Which aspect of Assamese Culture or Tradition would you like to teach your Non-Assamese friends and why?”**

The winners of the competition will be announced at the 40th Assam Convention in Vancouver, Canada (July 5th – 7th, 2019). The essay competition has cash prizes for winners and the first prize is sponsored by Late Himadri Das's family, in his honor, through a generous donation to AFNA. This is an annual event and we encourage the students to share their thoughts and creative abilities. The competition kick-offs right after Rongali Bihu. Please look for announcements for this event.

Rules for the competition:

- Only Assamese origin students residing in USA, Canada or Mexico can participate in the contest
- Essays must be no longer than 1500 words in length, submitted in English
- Only Word (.doc) or PDF files can be submitted
- Only one entry per student is allowed, and each entry must be the work of only one student
- Essay entries cannot have already been published
- Any essay found to be plagiarized will be automatically disqualified

For any questions please contact me at krishanuk@gmail.com or (734) 262 1697

Annual 2019 AFNA run is coming and expanding to more than one location



The bay area volunteers of AFNA organized the first annual Bay Area Run on 19th Aug, 2018. The event comprised of 5K and 10K runs for all age groups. This event was organized with the aim of encouraging healthy lifestyle among the local Assamese community. We saw an overwhelming response, with the participants exceeding the initial expectations, and AFNA had to suspend accepting new registrations well ahead of the event. The astounding success of this event enabled us to make significant contributions to the causes AFNA planned to raise fund for, through this event. The causes are listed on the box on the right. AFNA would like to thank all the enthusiastic participants and volunteers for associating with this event and making it a successful event.

To build on this astounding success, AFNA is planning to make the 2nd Annual Bay Area run for the Assamese Community this August. As always, we appreciate the support from the community and hope to make such successful events a regular feature in our calendar. This year the event will be taking place in three places: San Francisco Bay Area, Michigan and New Jersey.

The 2nd Annual **AFNA Bay Area Run** is scheduled for 25th August, 2019. You can find more information about this event at <https://www.facebook.com/events/604470850062011/>. This is again shaping up to be an event filled with fun and frolic with a lot of delicious Jolpan. The planning is underway and the goal is to raise money for great causes.

If you are interested in the 1st AFNA Michigan run, please contact our volunteer Krishanu Kaushik at krishanuk@gmail.com.

If you are interested in the 1st AFNA New Jersey run, please contact our volunteer Niren Choudhury at nirenc@gmail.com. Please keep an eye for more information about these events in the coming days, and please participate if you are near any of the places.

The run is organized to raise awareness and fund for the key AFNA projects in Assam:

Support a Child to go to school and get an education that he/she cannot afford to have.

Support a college student to go to college by providing a scholarship and mentoring through our AKADAMICS program.

Support a special need child to have a home at Tapoban, a residential school and help them get education, vocational training and medical treatments they need to live a respectful life.

Support a Grandma at Seneh who have been abandoned by their family and the society.