



# Fall Newsletter 2019

## Assam Foundation of North America



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## AFNA is moving to a new volunteer DL

We are switching from [afna-vols@freelists.org](mailto:afna-vols@freelists.org) to [afna-vols@googlegroups.com](mailto:afna-vols@googlegroups.com) as our volunteer DL. We have already invited all our existing Freelists members to join the Google Group. In case you are new or missed the invite, please visit here to join: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/afna-vols/join>

Going forward you can start sending your emails to the [afna-vols@googlegroups.com](mailto:afna-vols@googlegroups.com)



Event Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/501200570460299/>



### You shop. Amazon gives.

- Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Assam Foundation of North America Inc whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.
- AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.

Support AFNA by starting your shopping at <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/61-0994468>

## Help AFNA earn during tax season

- ★ Mention AFNA to your H&R Block Tax Consultant
- ★ AFNA earns \$20 for your referral
- ★ There is no cost to you
- ★ In the first year, AFNA earned \$180 via this non-profit referral program



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.

# AFNA @ the Vancouver Assam Convention 2019

By Sarfaraz Taher

AFNA had a very successful convention with great support from the convention organizers. We got a great location for our booth, logistics for our meeting were very well arranged and the AFNA initiatives were regularly publicized by the masters of the ceremonies during the cultural programs. All this with generous support from the well-wishers, donors, patrons and volunteers made this convention a very successful fund-raiser and a good communication event of AFNA activities. The information shared at the GBM can be found here – 2019 AFNA GBM Slide deck; 2019 AFNA GBM Minutes. Here are some moments captured in pictures from the GBM – 2019 AFNA GBM pictures.

We also announced the winners of AFNA’s 4th Annual Essay Competition. Nimisha Bora of Minneapolis, MN (1st Prize), Eva Rahman of Novi, MI (2nd prize) and Riddhi Bora (3rd Prize) of Dallas, TX, were the winners. The first prize is donated by the family of Late Himadri Das of Detroit, MI, who was a very dedicated AFNA patron. Such initiatives are the humble beginnings to engage the younger generations and we will continue to find ways to keep them connected to our very beloved Assam.

AFNA was showered with some excellent acts of generosity at the convention that deserve some special mention. With a substantial donation from Mr. Dutta Baruah of Houston from the proceeds of this recently published memoir – “One Long Journey”, we opened a new fund called the Lohit Dutta Baruah Orphan Welfare Fund. Mr. Hiren Sarma, also from Houston, contributed a handsome amount from the proceeds of his recently released book of short stories, “La Centera”. We cannot thank Mr. Dutta Baruah and Mr. Sarma enough for their laudable acts. These funds will soon be put to good use and we will publish the details through our newsletters. In support of AFNA’s relief efforts for the recent floods, the patrons and volunteers once again opened up their hearts and contributed generously. The communities of Seattle and Calgary donated their prize money from the AC2019 Chorus and Bihu competitions for this cause. Thank you! More details on the flood relief initiatives are also published in this newsletter. Another memorable act of kindness that I experienced at this convention, one that I will never forget, is that from 7 year old Riya Namai Kalita, daughter of Sangha Mitra Kalita who walked up to our AFNA booth with a number of coins that she could barely hold in her sweet little hands and said, “This is from me”. It just melted our hearts and underlined the thoughtfulness of the children of our community as well as the greatness of the parents who have raised them. AFNA promises to continue to nurture this greatness and serve the community as effectively as possible.

We are off to a great start for the year 2019-2020 which the excellent support from your patrons and the dedicated work of our volunteers. Thanks a lot, and please continue the support.



## Dilip Dutta, A Remembrance and His Contributions

By Debabrata Sarma



On September 26, 2019, Dr. Dilip Dutta, noted mathematician, litterateur, and linguist, passed away at a hospital in Rhode Island, USA. He was 82 years old, survived by son Darik from first marriage and daughter Manashi from his second marriage with Mrs. Ranima Dutta. Dr. Datta was the eldest son of Late Phanidhar Datta of Jorhat, founder registrar of the Gauhati University, and Late Ratneswari Datta. He moved to Canada in 1960 first as a faculty member of University of Calgary, Canada, and then moved to USA. He was very active in the Assamese community of North America, was President of Assam Association of North America (AANA) in the years 1983 to 1985.

Dr. Dilip Datta was Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, University of Rhode Island, USA. He has made an immense contribution towards mathematics and Assamese literature. Prof. Dilip Datta was a noted author, published several books in mathematics and had authored several books, novels in Assamese literature including, *Bhupen Hazarika Geet Aru Jibon Rath*, *Phali Lua Biranji*, *Mur Sikkha aru Mur Sikkhak*, *Miss Gauhati (Novel)*, *Mone Mur Koina Bisare*, which was converted into a movie.

He was close to Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, and compiled all the songs of Dr. hazarika in his book, “*Bhupen Hazarika Geet Aru Jibon Rath*”. He also published a book on lyrics by Dr. Nirmalprava Bordoloi, and wrote a book on Kola Guru Bishnuprasad Rava. A notable contribution from him was the preparation of seven reels of microfilm of the manuscript of writings of the famous Christian missionary, Miles Bronson, a pioneer in the development of modern Assamese language and literature and handed over the microfilms, containing 14,000 pages, written by Miles Bronson himself, to the editors of “*Asomiya Jatiya Abhidhan*” editorial board. He also searched out the first English Assamese Naga Singpho dictionary published by Miles Bronson in 1839.

Dr. Datta traveled to Assam frequently and donated money to several projects including the establishment of the Phanidhar Datta auditorium at Gauhati University in memory of his father and establishing a school in Jorhat, the Phanidhar Datta Bidyalay, which he renamed, Phanidhar Datta Peeth Jorhat Jatiya Bidyalay, and handed the campus over to Jorhat Jatiya Bidyalay. He was conferred the Sabyasashi Samman by the Jorhat Jatiya Bidyalay on January 1, 2019, for his contribution to mathematics and Assamese literature.

# ANFA's Flood Relief Project Update

By Someswar Barkataki



Assam is synonymous to the land of floods during the monsoon season. Recurring floods have devastated the state economy, human and wild life populace. This year too it was not different, floods ravaged a huge area of the state including Kaziranga National Park, bringing widespread loss of wildlife as well. Considering the perennial nature of the floods and associated destruction and devastation that comes with it, AFNA's focus has always been on the long-term projects rather than immediate flood relief efforts. However, this year's case was different as the damage was very widespread and the need was urgent. The terrible impact on both human and wild life warranted immediate relief measures and AFNA decided to mobilize volunteer efforts to tend to the need of the hour. In this effort, AFNA reached out to one of its old NGO allies from Assam, RVC to get some details from the ground and carry out the rescue and rehabilitation operations.

DDMA (Dhemaji Disaster Management) reported around 118,030 of the population, including children, from 373 Villages was severely affected, as on 18<sup>th</sup> July, the date on which maximum villages are reeling under the flood. The situation on the ground was grim and immediate help needed. Based on media and RVC's reports, AFNA immediately took up a relief and rehabilitation project, which was divided into three phases as stated below.

**Phase 1: Immediate Relief** (for about 10 villages/350 families): Provide funding for non-perishable relief items e.g. water filter kits (bucket, mug, water-purifying tablets etc.), mosquito nets, tarpaulins for temporary shelter etc.

**Phase 2: Recovery post the Flood:** This focuses on the same villages to provide items that will help the villagers in regaining their livelihood e.g. seed for crops, tat-xal (handlooms) etc.

**Phase 3: Long-term infrastructure work** in at least one village (Adopt-A-Village): pick one of the 10 villages to build bathrooms, etc. by working with Village Panchayat.

AFNA launched the first phase of the project right away. The team put a plan in place for distribution of relief kits involving 419 families from the worst affected village. After detailed discussions, the contents of the kit were finalized to help the villagers immediately. A mosquito net, water filtering kit and soap were few of the important items included in the kit. During the first phase of project execution, AFNA volunteers had regular meetings with RVC's field team to make sure the distribution was done in timely manner. In the first phase attempt, AFNA disbursed a total amount Rs.4,60,368 through RVC.

AFNA reached out to its donors online (website, social media) as well as through emails. As always, this time too, a lot of donors came forward to donate for this great cause. So far, AFNA has collected around \$9,980 through this fund-raising effort for this project. We sincerely thank all our benevolent donors for their generous and timely contributions to help the needy back home. AFNA volunteers are working on phase-2 and phase-3 initiatives and will inform all the donors in the days to come.

# 2019- 2020 AKADAMICS Winners Announced

By Sarfaraz Taher and Team AKADAMICS

The class of 2019-2020 AKADAMICS scholars were announced on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. A group of 30 very bright and deserving students were selected by the selection board. 16 students pursuing STEM careers were among the 30 winners this year. 7 awardees were girls with extraordinary talent. Here is the quick breakdown of the courses being pursued by this year winners – B.A.: 11, B.Sc.: 1, B.Com: 2; B.Tech/B.E: 6, MBBS: 9, and BHMS: 1. The quality of the scholars is evident from their 12<sup>th</sup> grade score which range from 77.80% to 93.0%. Considering the adversity that these students face, their ability to score such marks with very little guidance is commendable.

With the addition of 30 scholarships this year, a total of 130 scholars have been awarded in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the program since inception. By the end of 2019, 68 scholars would have completed their graduation with the support from this program. Here is quick breakdown of the graduates - B.A.(43), B.Sc.(10), B. Comm(3), B.E./B. Tech(2), B. Pharm(2) & MBBS(8). Graduation rate is 100%.



## Walk-A-Thon in New Jersey

By Manoranjan Bordoloi and Team

Join the 5k Walk-A-Thon to support an innovative school system (Akshar Foundation) that accepts the tuition as used plastic. This is the first example in the world for such unique school that combines environmental awareness as basic foundation of education. Assam Foundation of North America (AFNA) is proud to start a process to collaborate with Akshar Foundation, Guwahati, Assam, India. As a first step on November 3, 2019 our dedicated volunteers from New Jersey area are organizing a 5k Walk-A-Thon at Morris Davison Park, Plainsboro, NJ, USA to raise awareness about Akshar Foundation’s work and start a fundraising to support the great initiatives taken by the foundation. Please join the Walk-A-Thon if you are in NJ by registering at <https://www.facebook.com/events/501200570460299/> or by just showing up that day at the Morris Davison Park. There will be refreshments available after the walk for all. You can read more about Akshar Foundation at <https://www.aksharfoundation.org/> as well.



**JOIN THE 5KM WALK-A-THON**

to support an Innovative School Systems (AKSHAR FOUNDATION, ASSAM, INDIA) that accepts the Tuition Fee as used plastic.

This is the first example in the world for such unique school that combines environmental awareness as basic foundation of education.

Please help to promote this school to make our globe a truly environmental friendly starting from the start of basic education.

Anyone above 10 years of age can join this historic walk-a-thon as part of your regular walking schedule with a minimum registration fee.

REGISTRATION FEE : \$10 Per Person  
TIMING : 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM.  
LOCATION: Morris Davison Park, 681 Plainsboro Rd, Plainsboro Township, NJ 08536  
CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION : Jahnabi 609-779-1812

Volunteers will be provided certificate for their support on the day.

## Bay Area Walk & Run 2019

By Pallav Saikia and Nandini Deka

The AFNA volunteers of San Francisco Bay Area held the AFNA Walk & Run event for the second year on August 25th, 2019. It took place on a nice Sunday morning in the local Quarry Lakes Regional Park where 120+ members of the local Assamese community participated with full enthusiasm. It is not easy to give up sleep and get up early on a Sunday morning. But the community was up for a challenge to lead a healthy lifestyle and join the event for a noble cause.

The walk and run were around the beautiful Quarry lakes with trails covering 5k & 10k races. The event attracted runners and walkers of all levels, ages. The community here boasts of dozens of regular runners who participate in the half marathons, full marathons and even on Iron Man Triathlon challenges. At the same time there is a quite a bit of interest for the rest of the community to pursue an active lifestyle that involves walking, running, biking, etc. This made it even more interesting to see the range of participants from hitting their personal best timing for a 10k run or just finishing a 5k walk with their kids in strollers.

No event in the Assamese community is complete without some good food, as was this event. The volunteers cooked and contributed to lay out a lavish breakfast spread that consisted of homemade "pitha", "ghugni", "doi-sira jolpan", "payox", "suji", deserts, homegrown plums and more items like bananas and boiled eggs. We all sure had some guilt at the end for over-indulging on the food after the run.



The race this year saw a total 126 registered runners. Each runner received a T shirt, bib & a medal customized for the occasion. After taking care of all expenses we had a net surplus of \$3000 that goes 100% into AFNA's projects. We are proud of the community to make time to join the event and provide full support to make it a success! Already looking forward to the event next year!



Checkout more pictures of the event at [AFNA Walk & Run Album](#) on Facebook.



## My Thoughts on the AFNA Run

By Prerana P. Sarma

A few weeks ago, I took a break from my busy schedule in San Diego to fly home to the Bay for the weekend, so I could support my mom. Most parents have something they choose to dedicate their spare time to; some nod off in front of the television, some pretend they're more athletic than they are, others bake cookies while calling all of their siblings to tell them the exact same story, and still others take endless pictures every time they go out so they can convince their plethora of Facebook "friends" that they are fun, hip, cool parents. My mother has always been someone whose hobbies have been difficult for me to tie down—she has very little spare time, and while I was growing up, she spent most of it doing things for her family, so it was rare I got to really watch her do something else she's invested in, like painting or sewing or reading. Since I left for college, however, I began noticing she spent more and more time talking to me on the phone about one particular topic: AFNA, or Assam Foundation of North America.

For this reason, when she asked me last year if I would be the DJ and MC for AFNA's first annual run, I said yes without hesitation. I was curious to see for myself what she had become so rapidly involved in over the past few years. The morning of the run, bleary-eyed and armed with a playlist I had finished hours before, I set up my table with my laptop, speakers, and mic, and prepared myself for what I expected to be a very boring several hours. I wasn't completely wrong; the first couple hours were foggy and grey, and I sat huddled by myself in my chair while the hundred or so attendees were off on their walk/run. It was after the runners came back that things began to heat up, both literally and metaphorically. I got to watch a bunch of endorphin-filled Assamese people gathered in a small space, happily chatting with each other, mouths full of loosi and other delicious breakfast foods. While observing people from the safety of my chair, I realized that as organized as the run was, it was the disarray of the Assamese community—some sitting, some standing, some migrating from table to table, but all engaged in some way—that was the beauty of this event. Everyone was gathered here to help support AFNA's cause, but not everyone was as invested in AFNA as my mother and the other organizers. Yet holding this event, a bonding experience for the Bay Area Assamese community members, brought even those with no initial understanding of AFNA's purpose together to support an organization that does so much good for those in Assam with far less privilege than we in the Bay Area enjoy.

So, of course, when I found out that the run was again happening this year, I immediately called my mom and asked her if it would be silly of me to fly back home on one of my only free weekends of the summer, so that I could once again force a perspiring Assamese community to listen to my choice of tunes. That's how I ended up back behind my grease-stained table for the second time, DJing for an event I previously had had no interest in. This time, I brought my non-Assamese best friend; it was she who had asked if she could come with me. She, like me, was not interested in actually running, but she was curious to see what the event would be like, and through her eyes, I got to experience the event almost like it was the first time all over again. Of course, this time around, the run seemed to, well, run much smoother than last year, thanks to a handful of hardworking volunteers made wiser from the few mishaps of the year before. Again, from my vantage point behind the DJ table, I could see how people's early morning exhaustion transformed into a glowing, shared triumph after returning from their run. For those, like the children, who could not fully understand the main goal of the run (to raise money), the dual purpose was still achieved: a community of people brought closer together over finishing their run, and getting to celebrate it with breakfast provided by the volunteers. Even the children who were undoubtedly dragged there by their parents had forgotten they hadn't come by choice: in other words, it was worth it.

Attending both of these runs and being able to observe everything from my little corner table, I have gotten a sense that this event is quickly becoming one of those events people don't want to miss out on, one of those events people talk about at parties for months after and look forward to for the coming year, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of something that has brought the community together for such a wonderful cause.

**Donate to AFNA for a Great Cause - Together we can make it happen!**