

# VOLUNTEER SPEAK

## PROJECT WHY

A New Delhi based non-profit organization, Project WHY engages in education support and life skill enhancement of slum children and their families. The intern here worked with children who have mental and physical disabilities, teaching them subjects like English.



"The internship has been an eye-opener for me. The whole experience has made me down-to-earth in my approach. The programme has helped me experience my inherent desire to work closely with the needy. These children with disability taught me many lessons, the most powerful being 'we can do'. This experience has made me more optimistic about life."

- Bharat Kapil, Final Yr, MBA, IILM, New Delhi

## SATARK NAGRIK SANGATHAN

Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS) is a citizens' group with a mandate to promote transparency and accountability in government functioning and to encourage active participation of citizens in governance. The intern assisted the organisation in spreading awareness in slum areas about the RTI act.

"Working with SNS was an enthralling experience for me. I was able to utilize my free time productively. Due to college studies, I don't get enough time to work there, but I'm still associated with SNS and will be excited to be a part of their future endeavours."

- Nitin Arora, 3rd Yr, Netaji Subhash Chandra Institute of Technology, New Delhi



## SOCIETY FOR PROMOTION OF WOMEN AND CHILD WELFARE

Society for Promotion of Women and Child Welfare (SPOWAC) works towards the cause of women and children belonging to the weaker section of society. They have several projects underway that empower women and provide educational opportunities for children. The intern worked on the issue of women's empowerment through the Self-Help group model.

"Before joining SPOWAC, I felt I was self-centered. My world revolved around myself, my family and few friends. But after joining the volunteering program, my horizon has definitely widened. The experience has made me more patient and I have become a good listener. This opportunity has also honed my interpersonal and communication skills. I was a reserved sort of person earlier. This experience has made me a more social and friendlier person now."

-Vaishali Joshi, 2nd Yr, B.Com Honours, Shri Ram College of Commerce, New Delhi



# YOUNGINFLUENCERS

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## Volunteering in Delhi



### IN THIS ISSUE ...

Pravah has been running the SMILE (Students Mobilisation Initiative for Learning through Exposure) Program in Delhi for more than 13 years now. SMILE promotes youth volunteerism in order to develop a sense of social responsibility among young people of today, take them on a journey from self to society and engage them in social action. The program is rooted in our belief that volunteerism is a learning opportunity.

To expose young people (we call them SMILERS) to various social realities, build their understanding of these, allow them to contribute to society in their own ways, and to inculcate the value of volunteerism amongst the youth as well as organizations that engage youth volunteers, we place SMILERS in various NGOs both in Delhi and across India.

This newsletter captures the essence of the experiences 12 volunteers had through their volunteering placements. Read on to get a glimpse of the variety of social issues that they worked on, ranging from HIV/AIDS to Climate Change, Microfinance, Gender and Sexuality, Environment, Waste Management, Education and Disability, and the impact the placements had on them.

Overall, dear Reader, in this issue we are happy to celebrate the journeys of young SMILERS, and hope to inspire many more to explore the world of social action, and realize the potential within.

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## AAROHAN

Aarohan's focus is on helping children who live below the poverty line to gain admission into government schools and to subsequently support their academic pursuits so that they do not drop-out. Aarohan firmly believes that the existing government schools should be put to optimum use. Their model of development therefore focuses on working with resources that the government already provides. The SMILEs at Aarohan had to teach students of Class 10 and 11 subjects such as Geography.



"This program has lit in me a spark to make a difference to the society in my own simple ways. The interaction with the kids at Aarohan and their overwhelming response infused a sense of pride in me being a part of such a great mission. Teaching and dealing with students has helped increase my confidence, communication skills and patience levels. This was my first volunteering experience and it has motivated me to take up many more such opportunities in my life."

- Pallavi Joshi, 2nd Yr, BA Geography, Kirori Mal College, New Delhi

It's been an incredible experience. I walk out with a new surge of confidence, a much higher degree of patience, some unexpected friendships and a whole bunch of memories. And somewhere I feel like I am in touch with the 16-year old in me again, looking for more from life than I could imagine possible before.

- Sonal Baid, Final Yr, MBA, MDI, Gurgaon



## AMAN BIRADRI

Aman Biradari is a people's campaign for a secular, peaceful, just and humane world. It aspires to build local level institutions mainly of youth and women, of diverse faith, caste and gender, at village and district levels to strengthen mutual bonds of tolerance, fraternity, respect and peace between people of different religious, caste and language groups. It aims at promoting equal citizenship, justice, communal harmony, peace, and the celebration of our social and cultural diversity. The SMILEs worked with children at various shelters around Delhi using mediums like music, arts and craft to interact and gain a better understanding of their lives.

"After working with Aman Biradari, I can say that I am at peace with myself. The joy, pleasure, and smiles on the faces of the people at Khushi (Aman Biradari's rainbow home) have made me appreciate things more. I also realised that our lives are a precious gift from god, and we should value it as much as possible. I have started to appreciate what all I have and make all possible efforts on my part to get the best in everything. I would like to continue working at the grassroots level in the future as well."

Rupa Banerjee, 1st Yr, M.Sc Life Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi



"This volunteering experience has transformed me. I am more aware of what is happening around me. It took a little getting used to but slowly, I started getting involved with the children and started playing with them, teaching them and now I love them from the bottom of my heart. They have become an indispensable part of my life. Now I make it a point to visit them at least once in 15 days howsoever busy I am."

- Trisha Jolly, 2nd Yr, BA Economics, Lady Shriram College, New Delhi

"The 4 months that I spent volunteering there have been the most memorable and satisfying months of my college life. Being an outstation student, it turned out to be my escape from loneliness and a channel for my art skills. I am greatly thankful to all those who mentored me for this experience that I would cherish for the rest of my life."

- Vidhi Banka, 2nd Yr, B.Com, Shri Ram College of Commerce, New Delhi

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## KRITI

The team at Kriti works with a gender perspective on a wide-range of development issues, such as health, education, environment, human rights, micro-credit, violence against women etc. The SMILE intern worked here on issues relating to the environment and also helped in organising events.

I have learnt many new skills in my time at Kriti. I worked with different people and also learnt how events are organised. I intend to continue volunteering with Kriti while in school and also wish to do similar volunteering in college. I enjoyed participating in the events and want to do more of the same work in college."

- Siddharth Venkatesh, Class XII, Mothers International School, New Delhi



## KAMALNAYAN SOCIETY

Kamalnayan society is engaged in providing basic education and life skills to slum children. The intern here volunteered to teach children of class 1 and 2, 5 days a week.



"I had loads of fun with the kids, and have come to love them. Some of their talks disturb me and make me wonder about the unending greed of the well to do people. There is so much need here, that any little contribution, any time, is of great value. I am extremely happy with my decision and am trying to talk more people into community service."

- Aditi Gupta, Final Yr, Biotechnology, IIT, New Delhi

## KUTUMB

Kutumb is trying to provide a platform to young people from the non-privileged sections of society to engage in conversations and express themselves through creative forms as diverse as football, painting and theatre.

"Before the program started I wasn't really unaware of the problem that people face, yet I was careless about a lot things. After the program I almost feel like I have grown up. I consider myself to be an informed and aware individual. I have learned to cherish and respect whatever I have in my life. I am glad that I took up the SMILE program and helped in bringing a smile on the face of little children that I worked with."

- Sohini Mukherjee, 2nd Yr, BA English, Gargi College, New Delhi



## PRAVAH

Pravah is a registered non-profit organisation based in New Delhi working with adolescents, youth organisations and institutions working with young people to impact issues of social justice through youth citizenship action. The intern here was part of the Youth Intervention team and worked in the SMILE program.



"It has been an immensely enriching experience to have worked with Pravah. Every day was a learning experience for me and I would always be grateful to the wonderful people I met and worked with. I know I can always look back to this brief period with a deep sense of pride and satisfaction and for having done my bit as an intern in Pravah."

- Nianmuanghoih, Final Yr, Masters in Social Work, Delhi School of Social Work