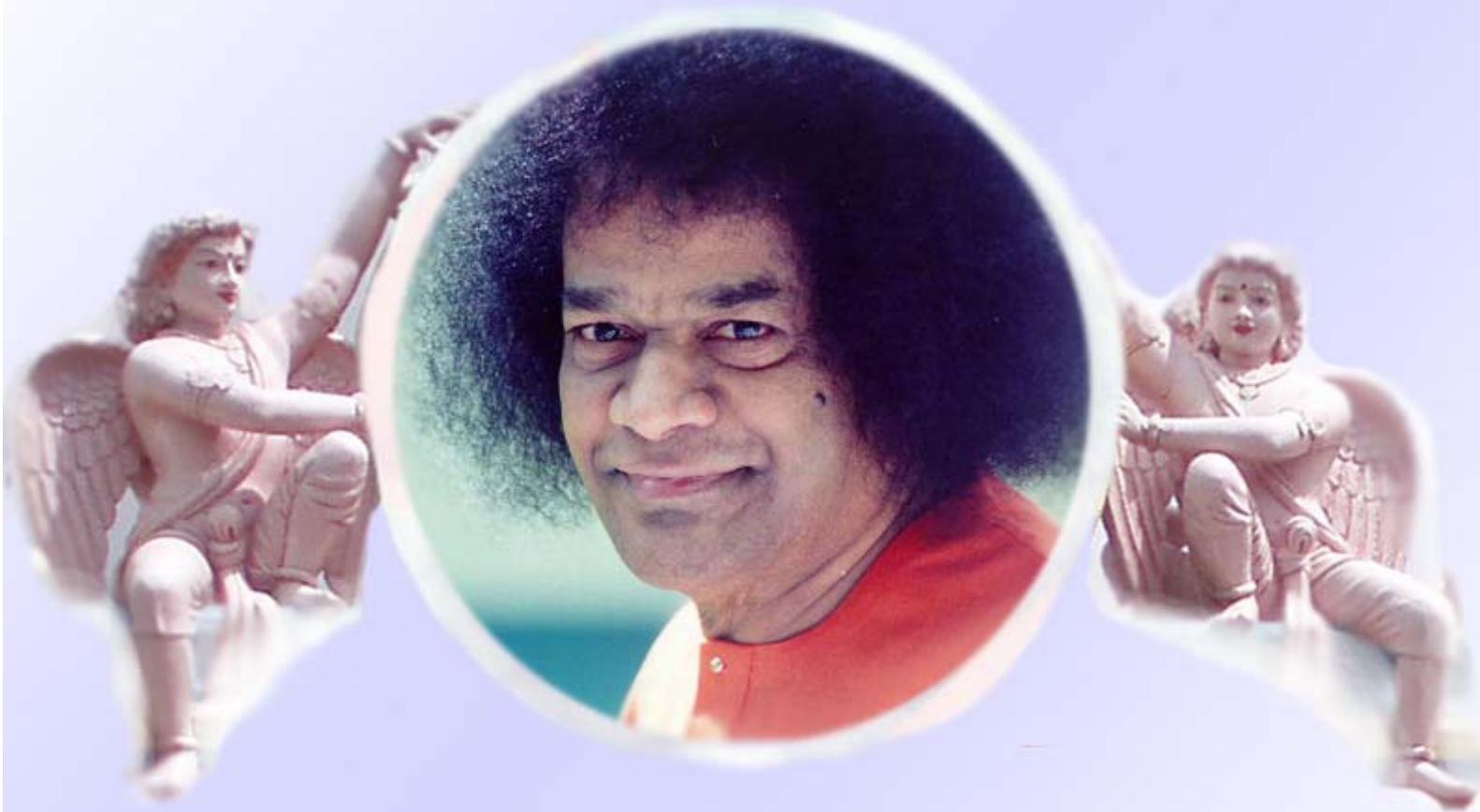




# Love in Action



**Newsletter for the Sathya Sai Organization of USA**

**Region 3**

**Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, US Virgin Islands**

**Birthday Special Edition**

**Volume 01, Issue 2**

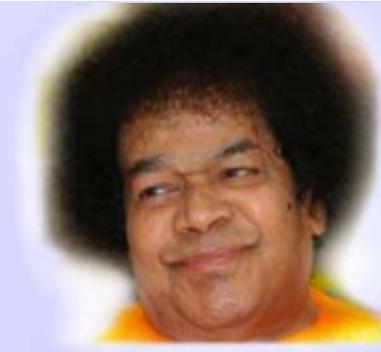


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# Love in Action



## Editorial

### Uniting Our Region

Sairam,

Swami's 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday will shortly be upon us. Our infinite Lord had taken birth in this finite form for a finite period of time. How have we been using this rare, sacred opportunity, an opportunity for which we have waited countless lifetimes? This golden chance to first hand experience, understand and put into practice our beloved Lord's directives is drawing to a close. How repentant, regretful, and remorseful will we be to look back at this time period as a wasted moment? Let us seize this moment. Let us no longer delay or procrastinate. Let us be instruments rather than obstacles as our Lord brings in this Golden Age. In this second issue of the Region 3 Newsletter, we have included a cogent passage from B.N. Narsimha Murthy describing the Golden Age.

With practically all of Puttaparthi, as well as many devotees throughout the world, practicing the Rudram as per Swami's directive, we have our own Dr. Gnana Bhaskar Tenali, a Swami student and former professor in Puttaparthi, giving us a gem of an article entitled Swami and the Vedas.

An important area most centers are working on is increasing participation in study circle. Our regional devotional coordinator, Raja Rao, summarizes an excellent presentation he gave at last years' officers retreat regarding the importance of study circle. We have also started an online study circle with this issue.

Also in this issue is a summary of the Sai Laksha-Archana/Namasmara performed at the Charlotte Center, as well as the Sathya Sai Medical Camp for the Homeless. Our SSE section continues to expand with new features including enclosing a favorite lesson plan as well as puzzles and art submissions. Our new YA representatives, Priya and Sujana summarize the busy slate of activities engaged by the YA's.

Our Center Spotlight this issue features the largest center in our region, Atlanta.



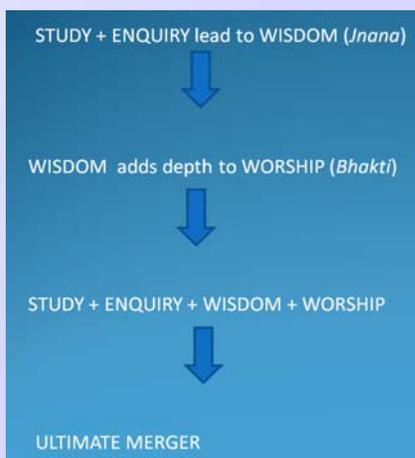
## Importance of Study Circle

The focus of this article is on the importance of activities which fall under the devotional wing of the Sathya Sai Organization. Typically, these activities are coordinated by the Center devotional coordinator and encompass bhajan selections / practice, devotional singing and the study circle sessions. However, a ubiquitous trend at Sai Centers is the relatively poor attendance for study circle sessions when compared to the devotional singing session. Swami Himself has mentioned in His discourses that ninety out of hundred amongst us have not understood the purpose for which He has allowed us to form Sai Organizations. Swami says “*The main objective of the Sathya Sai Organization is to help man recognize the Divinity that is inherent within him. It is established to translate the principles of love and nonviolence into daily practice. The structured program at the Sai Centers is aimed at expanding the human heart and purifying it.*” Therefore, a foremost requirement for any aspirant is the discipline to attend all Sai Center activities on a regular basis. This practice will serve as a wonderful aid in our spiritual journey.

The problem of poor attendance at the study circle session is further exacerbated by two common myths prevalent at many Sai Centers. Either the Center member feels that:

- ❖ He/she is a sufficiently religious and devoted person, and it would suffice if he/she reads Sai literature at home in lieu of study circle session.
- ❖ At the opposite extreme is when the Center member feels that he/she has not read sufficient Sai literature to be able to actively contribute during a study circle session, and therefore will not attend them on regular basis.

Again, our beloved Lord has provided guidance by stating that “*The qualifications for membership are to be an eager aspirant for spiritual progress, to have full faith in the name that the organization bears. That is all the qualification needed; nothing else counts.*” He further adds that “*Reading is not enough, you may master all the commentaries and you may be able to argue and discuss with great scholars about these texts; but without attempting to practice what they teach, it is a waste of time. I never approve of book learning; practice is what I evaluate...*”.



Divine flow chart for ultimate merger

The purpose of the study circle session is not to make a scholar of its members. To the contrary, the study circle aims at developing discrimination power through enquiry since translating the textual information into daily practice is not automatic. In this regard, Swami gives the example of food: “*Having food on the plate is not enough. First, it must be eaten, next digested, then the assimilated nutrients provide you the energy to do your work.*” The same is true in spirituality..... teachings must first be absorbed and Divine flow chart for ultimate merger internalized, only then can one draw upon them in times of need. The study circle is the mechanism recommended by the Lord Himself, to assist us in the important process of internalization. Therefore, Swami emphasizes that “*Study circles are very important; and mere bhajan singing is not enough*”.

He teaches us how study circles make the spiritual diet “balanced” through His divine flow chart which states that study and enquiry together lead to wisdom, which automatically adds depth to our



worship. Ultimately, all four combined will lead us to the desired goal. Swami also emphasizes that One must ruminate and digest the discussions held at earlier sessions. In other words, *“Attendance at study circle should not become a routine chore. You must listen and think. It must lead to experience and understanding”*

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the impact of study circle sessions is far-reaching. It serves

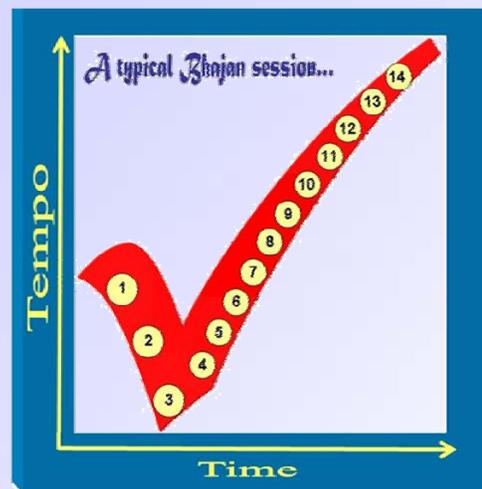
EDUCATION	EDUCARE
Mind is shaped by external forces	Mind is shaped by Divine Source within
Action is influenced and determined solely by the external world	Action is influenced by Sathya, Dharma and Prema
Survival philosophy (destroy opposition, beat the competition)	Divine philosophy (love all, serve all)
Education is for the head	Educare is for the heart

as a launch-pad for us to become cognizant of other practices which Swami advocates for the spiritual aspirant. For example, through study circle sessions, members can learn the importance of selfless service (seva) and the importance of the balvikas (SSE) program. As an example, the table below compares the value of Sai spiritual education to worldly education. In summary, the study circle sessions are like the roots of a tree

Comparison of worldly education with the Sai spiritual education

giving a base for the rest of the tree.

In regards to devotional singing, simple short bhajans should be chanted so that others can follow easily and with devotion. Swami says *“Bhajans (devotional singing) charge the atmosphere with divine adoration; that is why I insist on group singing of the names of the Lord.”* It is recommended that one sings bhajans which contain familiar words like Rama, Krishna, Allah, Sai, etc., and new bhajans are encouraged to be first be sung in a smaller gathering (or taught) so that the followers are familiar. To ensure that all members derive maximum bliss from devotional singing, the recommended order of bhajan tempo should resemble the check mark depicted below. Devotional singing should start with slow-to-medium tempo bhajans and end with high tempo bhajans.



Divine Lessons learnt at His Lotus Feet

Dr. Raja Rao  
Devotional Coordinator, Region 3

## News Letter Study Circle

"Giving trouble to one aspect of Brahman and worshipping another aspect of Brahman is not the right path." - Summer Showers, 1974 (2004 Edition) p. 108.

Please explain and elaborate upon the above quote. Feel free to use examples and experiences to help in the practical understanding and application of the message. Responses will be shared in the next issue.



## The Golden Age

It is said that Bhagawan Baba has come to usher in the “Golden Age” in the history of mankind. What does the “Golden Age” mean? The “Golden Age” is an ideal world dreamt by great thinkers of the world. Here are the essential components of such an ideal world in modern times:

- ❖ The basic material needs of all mankind - food, clothing, shelter, opportunities for education and facilities for medical care - are fulfilled.
- ❖ Every man and woman is aware of the spiritual origin and spiritual destiny of all beings and everyone leads a life replete with love and peace in pursuit of the spiritual goal.
- ❖ The rise of good leadership in all spheres of life and in all parts of the world that encourages and rewards goodness, and at the same time, discourages and punishes evil.
- ❖ Synthesis of science and spirituality resulting in spiritual orientation to scientific pursuit; physics hand in hand with metaphysics; psychology culminating in the discovery of the Self.
- ❖ Religious harmony brought about by the acceptance of unity of all religions and the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and universal acceptance of spiritual and moral values leading to discarding all types of violence in relationships between man and man, and nation and nation.
- ❖ United mankind bound by love leading to the harmonious coexistence of all nations and a united struggle against poverty, ignorance, disease and natural calamities, and for restoration of ecological balance, and for achievement of freedom from fear and war.

The “Golden Age” when it dawns gives birth to a “New World”. Mankind today has to choose between such a New World and “No World”. The “New World” is not a world without suffering, but it is a world in which man believes that he can conquer darkness. It is not a world without death, but it is a world where man knows that there is life beyond death. The “New World” is not a world that looks up to God in heaven for its redemption, but it is a world where men join hands with God to bring heaven down to earth. In this heaven on earth no one will be allowed to starve or go without raiment and shelter; none will suffer without medicines and care when needed. No child born into this “New World” is denied opportunity to right education. This is the vision that should inspire us today.



Some may think that such an idea is utopian, and not practical. But, let me remind you, the greatness of man lies in aspiring and working for goals that are seemingly unreachable. You should have implicit faith that with Swami by our side, anything can be achieved. The Sai Avatar has come with a mission and it is bound to be fulfilled. Let us find fulfillment in our lives by being a part of this glorious divine mission.

From the book, “Helpline On The Sathya Sai Path”,  
by B.N. Narasimha Murthy, Compiled by Dr. Kaushik Narayan,  
Sri Sathya Sai Publications Society, Kerala 2006  
Passage submitted by Esther Howarth, Sai Center of Tampa Bay



## SSE Corner

### Sai Spiritual Education Announcements

The Sathya Sai Newsletter/USA has recently begun including excellent lesson plans for all three SSE groups. You may order the Newsletter online at [www.sathyasaibooksUSA.org](http://www.sathyasaibooksUSA.org).

For our Regional Newsletter, we would like to humbly request that our Sai Centers' Educational Coordinators and SSE teachers submit their own lesson plans, SSE children's drawings, SSE activities for children, stories and poetry written by the children, or any other related and appropriate material about SSE. We have many talented Bal Vikas teachers in this region. It would be wonderful if some of our teachers could share some of their Bal Vikas materials. You may email Robin Gellner at [surya@bellsouth.net](mailto:surya@bellsouth.net) for further details.

During the recent World Education Conference at Prashanthi Nilayam in July, 2008, Swami gave some very inspiring discourses and answered some questions about SSE that the delegates to the Conference had posed. We would also like to direct your attention to the following links for these three discourses.

- ❖ July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008 : [http://sssbpt.org/Pages/Prashanthi\\_Nilayam/EduconfDiscourse20jul2008.html](http://sssbpt.org/Pages/Prashanthi_Nilayam/EduconfDiscourse20jul2008.html)
- ❖ July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008 : [http://sssbpt.org/Pages/Prashanthi\\_Nilayam/EduconfDiscourse21jul2008.html](http://sssbpt.org/Pages/Prashanthi_Nilayam/EduconfDiscourse21jul2008.html)
- ❖ July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 : [http://sssbpt.org/Pages/Prashanthi\\_Nilayam/EduconfDiscourse22jul2008.html](http://sssbpt.org/Pages/Prashanthi_Nilayam/EduconfDiscourse22jul2008.html)

#### Lesson Plan: Group 1

Value: Love

Sub-value: Unity of Faiths; all religions lead to God.

Quote: "There is only one religion, the religion of Love" Sathya Sai Baba

Silent Sitting: 1 minute of silence while listening to a recording of Om or the teacher can chant Om softly. Explain that all religions have different symbols; Christianity has the cross, etc. For Hinduism the symbol is OM. OM is the oldest sound. Anyone anywhere in any country can hear Om if they just listen and practice. Have the children practice drawing the symbol for Om.

Story: "The Other Way to Listen" by Baylor, Byrd, New York: Simon & Schuster, c1978. If you are focusing on Hinduism and Om as the symbol for Hinduism, this is a very good story to teach the universality of Om. This book can be found in many public libraries.

Discussion of the story: Have the children explain what happened in the story. The little girl learned how to hear the hills singing. It was the most natural thing in the world Swami teaches that all religions lead to God.





Song suggestion: "We are One in the Spirit"

*We are One in the Spirit, we are One in the Lord.  
And we pray that our unity will one day be restored,*

*And we'll know we're God's children by our Love, by our Love.  
Yes, we'll know that we're God's children by our Love.*

*We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,  
And together we'll spread the word that God is in our land.*

*We will work with each other, we will work side by side,  
And we'll pray to God in our hearts Who is our loving Guide.*

Prayer: The Golden Rule, discuss with children how all religions teach the Golden Rule. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Have the children discuss what the Golden Rule means to them.

Activity: Have the children draw a picture of people all over the world smiling and holding hands. The attached drawing is from a past Life application; Have the children continue to practice drawing the symbol for OM during the week. Practice listening. Have the children report what they heard to the class the following week.



Submitted by Madhav Sambhu group 1 student at the Sathya Sai Center of Atlanta

Robin Gellner  
Regional Education Coordinator



## Swami and Vedas

Swami has declared that the purpose of his avatar is two fold: fostering of Vedas and protection of the devotees. The purpose of Vedas is to provide the knowledge that human beings require to lead sacred and auspicious lives in this world and attain liberation. They reveal the essence of divine glory. They are the source of spiritual knowledge over the millennia for all mankind. There is no human author for Vedas. They are said to be the very life breath of the supreme Lord. They are supposed to have been revealed to Brahma, the creator, in his penance for the purpose of creation. Vedas are infinite. During the famous Guru Purnima discourse when Swami declared his identity as Siva- Sakthi swarupa, Swami narrated the story of Sage Bharadwaja, who studied Vedas for three hundred years and discovered that he could only study about three handfuls out of three huge mountain ranges!



The Vedas have been chronicled and classified by Sri Veda Vyasa, for the benefit of human beings in the Kaliyuga, into four Vedas, namely the Rik, Yajus, Sama and Atharva. Swami has mentioned time and again that much of this also is lost to humanity and that it is the responsibility of each and every human being to preserve this spiritual knowledge by upholding it in practice. Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavatam and all the spiritual literature are based on the Vedas. The message of the Vedas is thus made accessible to humanity through this literature. The study of these sacred texts gives us guidance to base and lead our lives on Vedic principles. Thus, cultivating the habit of reading the Puranic literature also amounts to upholding the Vedas.

Mantras form the contents of Vedas. The cosmic principle is amenable to the mystic formulae and sound patterns that the mantras represent. The syllables that form the mantras are strung together to create certain vibrations within the person chanting and in the surrounding atmosphere. When we utter a word the life breath is allowed to pass through the gaps in the throat, tongue, lips, upper and lower mouth etc. Vibrations are caused in the nerve centers situated in the areas through which the breath passes to produce the sound of the word. Veda mantras when properly recited with the proper discipline produce the necessary emotions in mind which ensures well being to the person who is reciting as well as to the world. The sound vibrations created in this chanting process itself are beneficial without any need for the meaning. It is said that in order to comprehend the Vedas, a mere familiarity with Sanskrit is insufficient. In order to truly understand the content of the Vedas one needs to be proficient in the





following six sastras: Siksha (phonetics), Vyakarana (grammar), Jyotisha (astrology), Chandas (meter), Nirukta (etymology) and Kalpa (method of ritual). While knowing the meaning may inspire one to pursue the chanting with sincerity, one should bear in mind that the translations give us only a partial understanding of the content of Vedas.



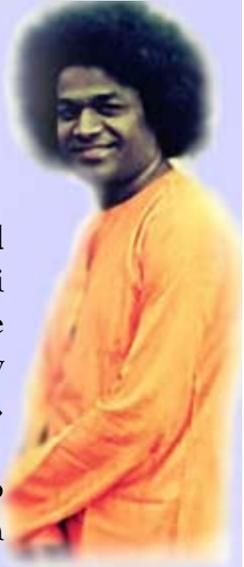
In His numerous discourses during the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna, Swami has expounded on the message of the Vedas and emphasized that it is only by sadhana that the full benefits of Vedas can be realized. Swami has been declaring that Vedas belong to all humanity. Swami said: “I have come to instruct all in the essence of the *Vedas*, to shower on all this precious gift, to protect the ancient wisdom (*sanathana dharma*) and preserve it. My main task is the reestablishment of the *Vedas* and Sastras (spiritual scriptures), and revealing the knowledge about them to all people.” Let us pray for Swami’s grace to make us sanctify our lives and reach him through service, namasmarana and Veda chanting.



Dr. Gnana Bhaskar Tenali  
Melbourne Sai Center



## Young Adult Section



With Swami's immense blessings, our Region has been so thoroughly inspired by the relentless efforts of the most wonderful role models in brother Sai Krishna, sister Arati Lal. With sincere prayers that they continue to be an inspiration, in their 'newer' roles, we seek the Grace and Guidance of our beloved Mother Sai to help us be the humble hollow instruments as our region marches on through S.A.I (Service Adoration Illumination) to Sai.

Moving from a center/group contact person role, it has been a great fortune to even become aware of the numerous activities fellow YAs have taken up across the region (and all over) with Swami's inspiration. With so much energy among all the groups of the region, the call seems to be to "buckle up for the ride ahead" - with Swami as the buckle and the ride!

Several activities are on the roll, some in their initial stages, some on full swing. Some of the noteworthy ones which we as a region can immediately participate in:

- ❖ Conference call - Study Circles. "Sandeha Nivarini - Dialogues with Swami" was started earlier in February this year, and has now been resumed in October. This book has provided some fantastic food for thought helping in the questioning attitude of our intellects, thus directly helping YAs on the path of Self-Inquiry.
- ❖ Several Sai families (centers, groups, YAs) across the U.S have taken up Chanting Rudram for the Sahasra Poorna Chandra Darshana Yagnam an offering of Vedic hymns with oblations, for world peace - gracing the occasion of completing 1000 full moon days since the Advent of the Poorna Avatar of our beloved Bhagawan, especially since Bhagawan Himself has recently announced that Vedic chanting should not be restricted to any one country.
- ❖ Monthly YA conference calls - inviting guest speakers/fellow YAs - to share their thoughts/experiences on very relevant topics. - For November, we are having brother Avani Kanubaddi, who was the very first YA rep for North Central region, share his experiences of how Swami has been a part of every aspect of his life.
- ❖ Bone Marrow Drive - Around the time of the recent medical camp held in Tampa, FL, there was a need to find a match for bone marrow to help couple of South Asian brothers suffering from Leukemia. During the search it was discovered that the National Bone Marrow registry has a very low number of registered South Asian Donors. One of the main reasons for this was noted to be the lack of awareness of the process of a marrow transplant. Inspired by this immediate need, several folks from the medical camp returned to their local centers/groups and have conducted numerous Bone Marrow Drives within the past few weeks. This is an on going effort. If interested in conducting some in your area, please reach out to any one of us, or your center representatives for more information.

With prayerful salutations at the lotus feet of our beloved Bhagawan, we look forward to working with our loving Sai brothers and sisters of Region 3.

Priya Raghunanan  
Sujan Pakala



## 2nd Sai Laksha-Archana/Namasmarana in Charlotte, NC

With loving grace of Swami, Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center of Charlotte, North Carolina gallantly performed 2nd Sai Laksha-Archana/Namasmarana on Saturday, October 11, 2008. (Chanting one Mantra for 100,000 times) Approximately 75 devotees from Sai Centers of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia participated.

After the Three Omkars, the afternoon program opened with the beautiful narration of significance of Nama Smarana by Swami's own student Shri Sathya Shankar, who now resides in Charlotte. This was followed by a Bhajan Medley led by Charlotte Center's Office bearers. Then in unison, we started the mantra "*Om Sri Sai Ramaya Namaha*", very thoughtfully picked by Mr. Sathya Shankar for World Peace. It progressed beautifully, in unison with swara and bhava in mind for approximately 3 hrs. After a half an hour break, the session continued with one and a half an hour of Thunderous Bhajans performed by Devotees of all the different centers, with great Gusto. The evening ended with delicious Prasadam, prepared by local Devotees. Everyone then headed back to their homes, carrying with them timeless vibrations of the day.



Laksha-Archana/Namasmarana on Saturday, October 11, 2008.

This spiritual exercise is to alleviate sufferings of humanity and for world peace. The 1st Sai Laksha-archana/Namasmarana was started by Greensboro Sai Center during October 2007. Carolina Centers have planned to host this event every year during the month of October.

Subburaj Narayanasamy,  
President  
Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center of Charlotte, NC



## Sathya Sai Medical Camp for the Homeless

Although hard to believe, even a wealthy country like the United States, with one of the largest economies in the world, still has its own share of those who have had misfortunes and mishaps allowing them to become downtrodden. These unfortunate people, many with families, have found themselves due to economic, physical or mental hardship to be without a home. After a hard day's work, most of us can at least look forward to coming home for rest, recuperation, relaxation, re-energizing and reflection. A home is not only a place of mere shelter where we have the ability to rest, have meals, and feel safe, but is also intimately associated with our sense of dignity. Adding to the burden, the homeless are also often without health insurance and thus without access to adequate healthcare.

In efforts to place into practice Sathya Sai Baba's teachings of providing service to those who are most in need in our communities, the Southeast Region of the Sathya Sai Baba Organization of the United States came together to provide a medical camp for the homeless on Saturday, September 27, 2008 at the Harborview Center in Clearwater, Florida.

In keeping with the principle of Unity, the Sai organization joined with a collaborative model, called Project Homeless Connect, which has been implemented in over 100 cities around the country to conduct a one day, one stop event to help support the homeless. This event brings together government, private and non-profit charitable agencies to provide much needed services designed to help these homeless individuals and families get back on their feet to transition from the street into their own housing and a life of self-sufficiency. Various public, private and charitable agencies provide many services including social services, job placement, haircuts, food, clothing, bus passes, housing information, and legal services. The Sai organization's role as a part of Project Homeless Connect, was to take sole responsibility for the medical component (medical camp) of this one day event.



Health Care is a serious problem in this great country, the USA, where one sees extremes of the best technology and medical facilities in the world alongside those who have no access or very limited access to that healthcare system. Many people, particularly the downtrodden such as the homeless, feel anxious and unsure in the medical environment. They are often given the "run around" and are directed from one area to the other without proper explanation, guidance or concern. Recently, there has been a trend for the commercialization of medicine and with it the development of a phenomenon called "Concierge Medicine" for the well to do. In this model, the patient pays a premium subscription above and beyond the normal fees and insurance for "special care" and "personal attention".

The model for this free Sathya Sai Medical Camp for the homeless was to put into practice Swami's directive to give the best of the best to the poorest of the poor. Our goal was to give personal, special



care above and beyond what is given in the best hospitals in the country. Each visitor was assigned their own personal attendant to cater to their needs and personally guide them through the various stations in the camp. These Sai Guides were viewing and treating their visitor not merely as a VIP, but as God himself encased in human form. Their goal was to



shower love and positive healing energy and vibrations. The model of assigning a personal guide was mutually beneficial to both volunteer and visitor. Both sides experienced an intimacy of personal interaction. The guides showered love and that love in turn opened the hearts of the often downtrodden, dejected visitor who then returned love back to the volunteer in the form of gratitude. The chemistry and vibrations were simply divine. The primary material or worldly purpose of the medical camp is to educate, screen, and facilitate the entry of these homeless individuals and families into needed medical care. More importantly, the primary spiritual purpose of the medical camp is to

show and share love, a process which spiritually elevates both the volunteer and visitor.

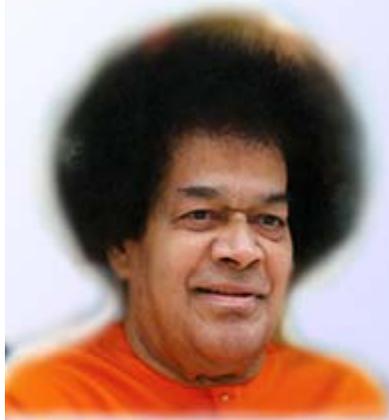
For this Sathya Sai Medical Camp, over 180 non-medical volunteers journeyed from 11 centers and 5 different states, many traveling over 400 miles for the singular purpose of putting into practice the message of our beloved Swami during this one day event. In addition, 43 physicians and 17 healthcare professionals were present to provide medical care and counseling. An additional 385 volunteers were present for the rest of the Project Homeless Connect event.



A total of 881 homeless men, women and children visited the medical camp. The visitor to the medical camp was greeted, registered and initially assessed for height, weight, BMI (Body Mass Index),



and blood pressure. Next, blood was drawn for glucose and cholesterol evaluation. They were then given their breakfast while waiting for the processing of the lab results. After their breakfast, they were greeted by their personal guide to escort them, VIP style, to their initial primary care physician visit, where they were interviewed, educated and counseled as to which specialty and educational portions of the camp would be beneficial for them. A customized plan was then created, based upon their particular needs. Each visitor was then escorted by their personal guide to the various specialist and educational booths recommended for them. The following specialists were available for personal consultation: Cardiology, Dental, ENT, Gastroenterology, Gynecology, Hematology/Oncology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Pulmonary, and Podiatry. The following specialty tests and services were also available: PFT (Pulmonary Function Testing), Hearing screen, Vision test, Glaucoma test, Breast Cancer screen, HIV test, Syphilis test, Hepatitis C test, Flu vaccination, Nutrition counseling, Diabetes counseling and Smoking cessation counseling. A critical part of the camp was the social services booth, where the visitors were given instruction and placement into various government, private or charitable programs available in the community for follow-up depending upon their needs. All documents were copied and data tabulated.



Emphasis was placed on Swami's directive to strictly follow both the letter and intent of the law, and therefore detailed attention was made to be both HIPAA (Health Information Portability and Accountability Act) and OSHA (Occupational and Safety Health Administration) compliant as well as to photocopy and maintain all records with privacy, thus conforming to regulatory governmental requirements.

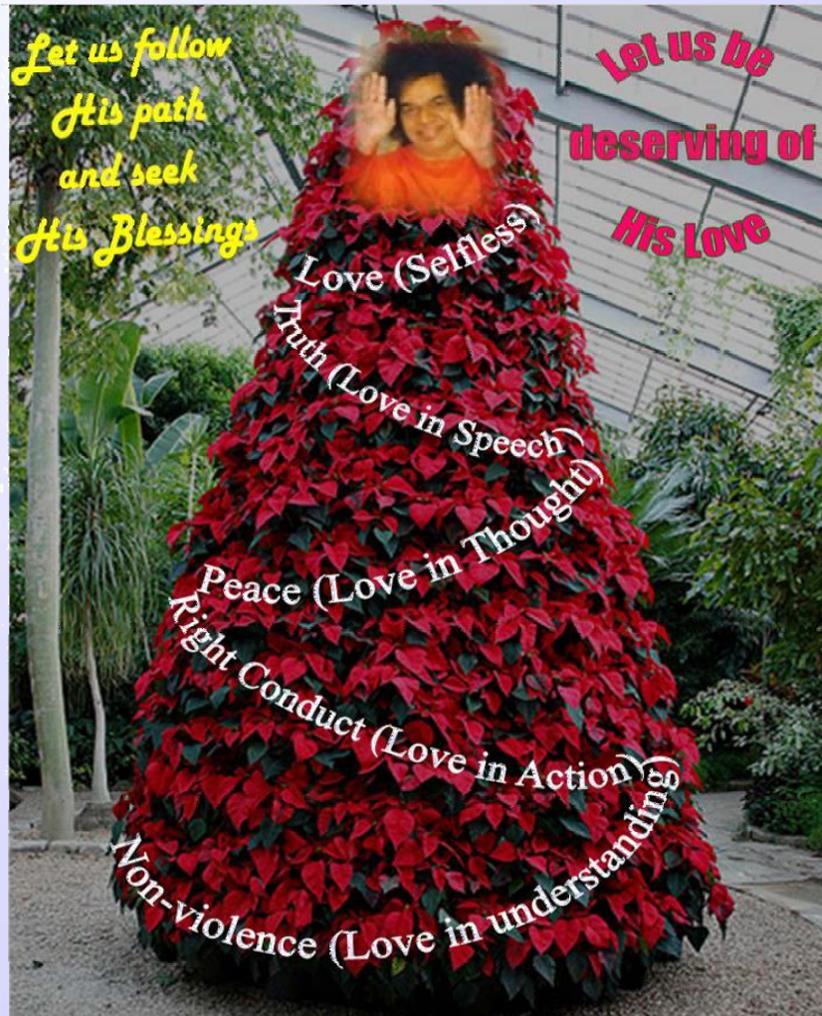
An opportunity to find out about Swami and his teachings was made available at a booth for those who were curious to see who was responsible for this program and for the motivation and ultimate loving behavior of the volunteers. A parting useful gift was given as they left, consisting of a backpack containing a blanket, a towel, a toiletry set, several bottles of sunscreen lotion, and socks, all of which would be helpful for their day to day existence

At the conclusion of their medical camp journey, visitors were given an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience at the medical camp via an exit interview. The responses were overwhelmingly positive. Two quotes were particularly revealing regarding the selfless, loving service performed by the Sathya Sai Organization. "I've never seen so many happy and loving people before" and "These people (volunteers) are so different than any other group that offers help. Let me know the next time they come so I can make sure to be there."

Dr. Axay Kalathia,  
Sai Center of Tampa Bay



## Poinsettia



### Why Poinsettia?

- ❖ A Mexican legend explains how poinsettias came to be associated with Christmas. Apparently, a child who could not afford a gift to offer to Christ on Christmas Eve picked some weeds from the side of a road. The child was told that a humble gift, if given in love, would be acceptable in God's eyes. When brought into the church, the weeds bloomed into red and green flowers and the congregation felt they had witnessed a Christmas miracle.
- ❖ The ancient Aztecs prized the poinsettia (cuetlaxochitl in Nahuatl) as a symbol of purity.
- ❖ The poinsettia is a symbol of the holiday season

Submitted by Swami Rajendran  
Greensboro Center



## Sai Word Search Puzzle

G	O	I	A	T	S	A	M	Z	A	C	T	I	O	N	B	Z	D
P	Z	T	Z	U	Y	C	L	F	H	T	Z	N	D	L	E	Z	E
U	K	H	M	D	L	A	X	E	K	D	R	O	L	R	V	X	G
M	O	H	G	I	B	L	A	D	F	P	F	I	D	G	O	H	N
W	O	R	D	N	U	R	T	S	I	A	W	T	E	U	L	P	D
N	N	M	S	O	T	P	R	B	D	S	Y	A	X	Z	O	W	D
O	X	L	T	N	Y	N	U	U	N	R	C	N	R	W	G	Y	I
I	I	R	S	V	H	Z	T	J	H	L	X	I	M	B	U	K	I
T	U	E	R	I	S	Y	H	V	Y	V	G	M	P	W	T	O	B
O	N	T	I	O	B	E	F	M	N	H	L	I	T	L	W	R	F
V	J	C	O	L	T	Q	L	N	T	C	K	R	G	S	I	O	P
E	V	A	P	E	Z	D	E	C	T	E	H	C	T	T	D	N	A
D	W	R	C	N	K	P	O	W	W	N	Y	S	A	F	X	R	E
K	T	A	B	C	F	N	M	A	L	P	X	I	C	B	P	G	L
U	Q	H	P	E	D	H	B	G	C	H	T	D	K	C	E	I	X
A	G	C	D	U	X	W	F	I	Y	B	V	N	I	U	A	E	D
A	Q	I	C	D	E	D	I	C	A	T	I	O	N	V	C	L	N
V	D	T	I	H	S	T	H	G	U	O	H	T	T	B	E	N	H

Search the hidden words in the above puzzle and fill into blanks:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ alone has to be revered by everyone.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ have tremendous power.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the key to the spiritual path.
4. It is \_\_\_\_\_ that marks the life of a good individual.
5. One should see that no harm occurs to anyone on account of one's \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Sacred, pure and helpful activities constitute \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The chief source of Aanandha is \_\_\_\_\_ to God.
8. The first words uttered by Krishna were that there should be \_\_\_\_\_ between the Kauravas and Pandavas.
9. The flower of \_\_\_\_\_ is the first of the eight flowers that one should offer to God.
10. The Message can be grasped only by those who yearn to know the \_\_\_\_\_, to which they have to be loyal.
11. The principle of oneness has to be experienced through \_\_\_\_\_.
12. The real \_\_\_\_\_ is the destruction of desire.
13. To acquire \_\_\_\_\_ knowledge one requires general knowledge, which consists of ordinary cleverness and intelligence.
14. What we encounter depends on our \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Without \_\_\_\_\_, all spiritual exercises are valueless.

( clue: You can find answers from Sathya Sai Speaks, Vahinis and Summer Showers )

Please email your answers to [swami\\_rajendran@yahoo.com](mailto:swami_rajendran@yahoo.com) with subject line 'Answers to Sai word search puzzle'. Name of 'all correct' winners and the correct answers to the above puzzle will be published in our next issue.



## Center Spotlight – Sai Center of Atlanta

❖ Can you tell us about the history of the center?



The center was started approximately in 1980 at a devotee's home with Swami's blessing. There were approximately 10-15 devotees when the center started. The meetings over the years moved through several homes. The center progressively has grown over the years. In the year 2000, the center moved to its current location at the Unitarian Church, 1025 Mt. Vernon Hwy Atlanta, GA, located approximately 10 miles north of downtown Atlanta. At that time the center had approximately 70 devotees. The location is accessible to many of the major highways in the area, making it convenient for devotees from a wide area. Now on average 125 -150 devotees come per meeting.

For special events well over 200 people will attend. Since the beginning of the year the meetings are being held in a larger room at the church, to accommodate larger numbers. For many years we met on Saturday evenings, and now our meetings have moved to Sunday evenings.

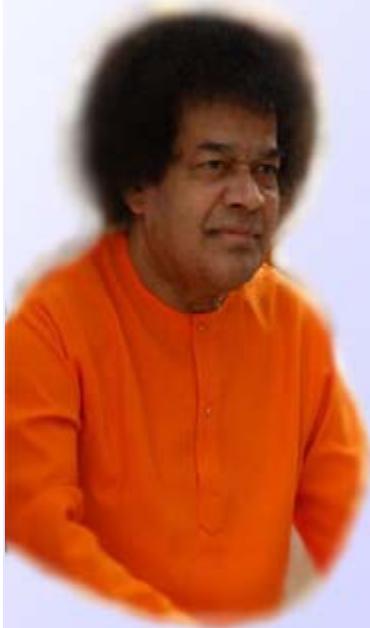
❖ What is the format for your center meetings?

We meet every Sunday afternoon. Preparation for the meetings begins starting 2:00PM. We have teams of volunteer to help in the preparation. We have an altar team, book stall team, and room preparation team to help arrange chairs and furniture. Study circle is conducted the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month from 2:45PM to 3:35PM. Every week, the SSE program and Bhajan practice are from 3:00PM to 4:00PM, so that parents can attend either the bhajan practice or study circle while the children are in their classes. From 3:45PM to 4:00PM, soft meditation music is played while devotees are arriving. From 4:00PM to 4:15PM, a video clip is played (sometimes Swami's discourse, darshan, bhajans or interviews). During this time the children and bhajan leaders and musicians file into the room. At 4:15 we chant Om Sri Sai Ramaya Namaha 11 times. The president welcomes the group, gives the announcements and quote of the day. Then Om Tat Sri Narayana is sang in unison, followed by 11 Om's and then devotional singing. Of the 11-13 songs, an effort is made to have a minimal of two English songs and at least 4-5 group bhajans (e.g. women lead, men follow). Two meetings a month we will end with unison songs. After the last song, one minute of silence, followed by 3 Gayatri mantras, Asathoma, Samasta Loka (with translation) and then Aarati. Ladies exit the hall first, followed by the men. Vibhuti packets are given on the way out. A 15 minute guided meditation is conducted in the hall for those wishing to remain. The entire program is usually completed by 6:00PM. The cleanup team stays behind to take down the altar and rearrange the room at the church. They usually leave by 6:30PM. Since April we have introduced a monthly "Sadhana Theme". The theme for this month is "ceiling on desires, sathwic living". All center activities touch upon this theme for the month. The SSE lesson plans and the study circle topics reinforce the topic. Children and parents, including YA's, work on implementing the program at home and in the workplace.



## ❖ What are your service activities?

Two long-standing seva projects we have running for over 15 years include visiting a nursing home and a women's shelter. We visit the Wesley Woods nursing home every 2nd Saturday of the month. The residents are invited to a common gathering room where we distribute light snacks (sugar free), sing old English folk songs as well as some English devotional songs, and spend time with the residents. We meet from 10:00AM to 12:00PM. The number of residents attending averages around 9 and the number of Sai Volunteers participating any given day number from 8 - 12. Also every 2nd Saturday, a separate group of volunteers visits a women's shelter to provide breakfast. The participants average around 40 in number with 6-8 Sai volunteers taking part each week. A few months back we started computer training classes for the women's shelter every Saturday. Every third Saturday we gather to pack medicines for distribution to third world countries. Individual volunteers take time to drive senior citizens to run errands and visit doctor's appointments during the week. Several help with Meals on Wheels. Another project in which the center has taken part is assisting with home construction for needy families through the government of Georgia. Every week we have a food drive collected at the center for distribution to Fulton County for the needy. Currently we are working on a new project to assist 500 refugee Bhutanese families in Atlanta. Once a year we participate in a whole day of service at the CVI Center for Visually Impaired, where we read letters, help them with shopping etc. Members also volunteer at Hospice Atlanta and the Fulton Library.



The YA's, in addition to taking part in all of the service projects mentioned above, have done some special ones on their own. They have helped conduct Value based workshops with children under 17, as well as the 17 - 21 age group. Many of these have been socially abused. The workshops teach how to practically apply the human values, to avoid reacting purely on emotion, and to apply anger management techniques. These workshops have been featured on Radio Sai. For Swami's 83rd birthday, 83 hygiene kits will be distributed to these children.

## ❖ Tell us about your other center programs?

Our SSE program includes 32 children in Groups 1-3. We have about 10 teachers who rotate through the classes. As mentioned, the lesson plans try to coordinate with the Sadhana theme for the month. In the near future we plan to introduce time for every 4th week of the month for kids to sing as a group during the bhajans. 3-4 times a year we have a members meeting. At this meeting the kids and teachers do a presentation to the center regarding updates on what they are learning and working on.

The Young Adults (YA'S) form the core of energy for the whole center. They take part in all of the aspects of the center, including as SSE teachers. We currently have approximately 25 active YA's.

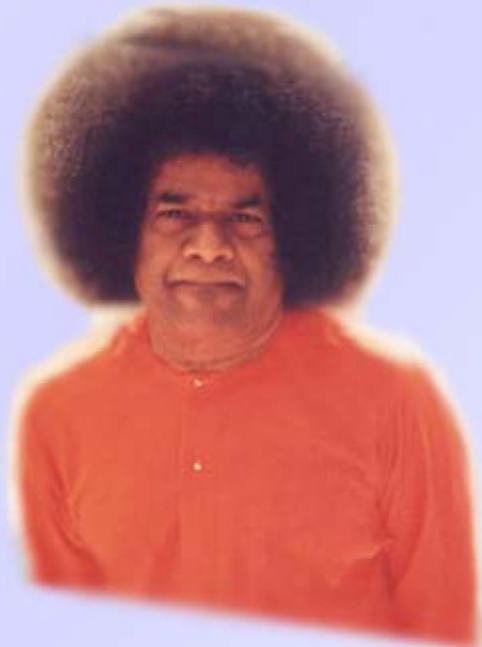
We have had 2 retreats this year. In March, we had Sai Students give a program with the theme "Lessons Learned at the Lotus Feet" and in August we had Mayur Pandya and Jeff and Diane Justice from Atlanta speak regarding the theme "In the Sunshine of Sai Love". For Swami's birthday we have



another retreat planned with our guest speakers Johnima and Kalassu Wintergate (Lightstorm). Every month, for the past 6 months, we have been having guest speakers come to center meetings to share experiences and give inspiration.

❖ What are the challenges facing your center?

I think challenges are in every area. Most important is how to come together as a group as one unit. Once we do this, the challenges will disperse. We want to be more inclusive and include as many people as we can in all programs. One challenge we always have is to motivate people to do seva. There are 30 to 50 dedicated people who always participate. We need to try and encourage the other 100 to become more involved. We tried many ideas over the years with some success. These include a buddy calling tree method to give reminders as well as sending out email reminder the Thursday before each seva project to the entire center distribution list. Motivation for study circle participation has also been a challenge. Another challenge is to have people adapt to proposed changes. We all feel that we can do more than what we are doing today.



❖ What are you most proud about regarding your center?



Everything! Atlanta folks (kids, adults, teachers, parents) are very dedicated to the center. They will come no matter what because they know Swami is present at the meetings. On Easwamma day the children put on a skit on Meerabai, preceded by Vedic chanting. The program was so moving and powerful that everyone was in tears and felt Swami's presence. A DVD recording of the program, held inside an envelope, was later brought to darshan in Parthi by a Sai Student on the center's behalf. Swami approached the student and asked for the DVD (the envelope had no marking that it contained a DVD).

Swami placed the DVD to his heart and said that the Atlanta folks are "very loving, very loving, very loving." He mentioned that even 4 year olds were chanting the Medha Suktam. He told his students to watch the DVD because of the devotion of the Atlanta participants. He said that He was present in Atlanta for the program.



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### Next Issue Highlights

- ❖ Center Guidelines
- ❖ Word puzzle answers
- ❖ Newsletter Study circle responses

We hope you will contribute and take part in our newsletter.  
Please submit articles, photos and updates for the next issue along with comments and suggestions.

**Om Sai Ram!**