

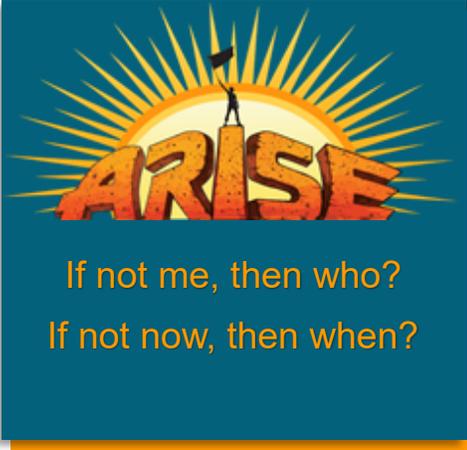


ARRYA 2019

Annual Regional Retreat for Young Adults

SSIO USA – Region 3





This year, Region 3 held the Annual Regional Retreat for Young Adults on February 16th and 17th, 2019, in Atlanta, Georgia.

The theme for ARRYA 2019 was "ARISE! If not me, then who? If not now, then when?" The theme was selected to inspire YAs to "ARISE" and take on the golden opportunity to imbibe Sathya Sai Baba's message in their daily lives, at their Sai Centers and communities. More so, to do it now and not let the sacred opportunity pass.



ARRYA kicked off with high energy devotional singing, an intro to the weekend by the Regional Reps and a fun icebreaker. This was followed by three service projects that attendees participated in. These projects included the Foster Care Project, the Cohen Nursing Home Sing Along and the Arts Project for Cancer Patients.

ARRYA Service Projects



Art Project - Decorated cards were sent to the House Charities Organization, a non-profit which will gift the cards to teenage and young adult cancer patients



Foster Care Support Project - Volunteers help set up for a Prom-A-Palooza event, for teen girls who are in foster care, group homes, or relative care placements. The girls come by appointment to select a free dress and accessories so that they can prepare for their own high school prom without the worry of cost.



Cohen Nursing Home - Volunteers spent time with the residents singing songs and interacting with them.

ARRYA Guest Speakers

The program continued with a talk by the key guest speaker, Brother Ajay Yekkirala. Brother Ajay, a Sai Alumni, based in Boston, explained why YAs today should consider themselves fortunate to live Swami's message. He encouraged the YAs to rise to the occasion and be the change they want to see in the world today. He narrated stories from his personal experiences with Swami and connected that with practical scenarios YAs face today.



The theme of ARRYA was separated into two dynamic workshops. Workshop one titled "If not me, then who?" and workshop two titled "If not now, then when?"

Shri S. Ganapathi conducted the workshop "If not me, then who?" Sri Ganapathi hails from a Sai family and serves Bhagawan as the State Coordinator for Sai Spiritual Awareness Program, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations, Tamil Nadu, India. Sri Ganapathi emphasized on self-confidence and reminded YAs they are verily God too. He did this by explaining the difference between the ego and the true self or Swami. He reaffirmed that YAs could achieve anything if they have true self-confidence.



Sister Anu Venkateswaran led the workshop on "If not now, then when?" Sister Anu, a Sai Alumni and a strong advocate of the Sai Young Adult Program beckoned YAs that now it the time to take action. The workshop began and ended with Swami's Chinna Katha (short story) and was interspersed with audio/video clips, white board activities, Q&A and engaging discussions. Sister Anu drew the attention to the fact that Swami spent the vast majority of His time with the youth. She reminded everyone of Swami's own words, "The future of this country depends on the skill and the sincerity of the youth. All my hopes are based on the youth. They are very dear to me." The world needs Swami's values and teachings now, more than ever.

ARRYA Panel Discussion

The ARRYA agenda included a panel discussion with diverse panelists. The panelists included Brother Ajay Yekkirala, Brother Nikhil Kaushik, Sister Anu Venkateswaran and Brother Andrew DeMil.

The panelists were asked to field questions on practical issues facing YAs today. The topics included:

- Greetings in the SSIO
- Dress Code in the SSIO and Sai Centers
- Conduct of YAs in specific situations
- Relationships in the Sai Center
- Social Media
- Gender Equality
- Communication with Elders



ARRYA Activities

Along with the guest speakers, workshops and service projects, ARRYA included activities that engaged the YAs. These activities included a unique ice breaker, team building exercise, experience sharing session, study circles and a conveyor belt activity.



Team Building Activity: Recreating a Smiley Face

For this activity, participants were divided into groups of 4. Three of the four people in the group could only use one sense organ: one person their eyes, one the mouth, one the hand. The fourth person was God, the eternal witness. The goal for the team was for the group to recreate a smiley face in which the eyes had 30 seconds to observe.

Study Circle: Cultural Inclusion and Expansion

Participants were divided into groups to discuss the Cultural Inclusion and Expansion initiative of the US SSIO. At the end, groups shared their discussion in a summary to all attendees.

Topic #1 - The purpose of a Sathya Sai Center

- What do you feel is the purpose of a Sai Center? What does Sai say is the purpose of a Sai Center?
- Do our Center activities reflect, project and inspire the message of oneness and our inner divinity to all? How and how not?

Topic #2 - Unity in Diversity

- Do our current practices and routines provide a perception of inclusion?
- How and how not? In addition to routine service activities, how can we foster love towards our fellow beings of all cultures in practical ways?

Topic #3 - Unity of Thought, Word and Deed

- With regards to Cultural Inclusion and Expansion, can you give examples of how we as individuals sometimes say one thing yet practice something else?
- What can the YA group do to change this?

Topic #4 - YAs and Cultural Inclusion and Expansion

- What are the reasons YAs become disinterested or disengaged from the Sai Center in terms of Cultural Inclusion and Expansion?
- What can the YAs do to change this?



Conveyor Belt Activity

Participants formed two lines facing each other. Each person was paired up with the person from the opposite line. The pair had a 30 second interaction with each other, where each person had to share one thing they learned from the retreat and one thing they were going to implement immediately in their daily lives. After the 30 second interaction, the participants moved down the 'conveyor belt' to the next person where they repeated the same conversation, but with a new person. One of the goals of this activity was to learn what each others item that they would like to implement and hopefully spark out new projects within the region, led by the YAs. Telling as many participants about your idea was so you would remember and hold yourself accountable once returning home, because if it's not you, then who? And if it's not now, then when?