



SEWA-AIFW Setu | सेवा सेतु: Issue #: 007 | Date: March, 2026

March is Women's History Month!

At this pivotal moment, our world faces interconnected challenges—from climate change and economic instability to healthcare gaps and threats to democracy. These issues often impact women, especially those from marginalized communities, most deeply. Yet, women continue to lead powerful, lasting solutions.

This year's theme for Women's History Month is “Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future” which also reminds us that sustainability goes beyond the environment. It includes economic justice, community resilience, education, and equity across generations. Women are at the forefront—driving innovation, building stronger communities, and shaping systems that support both people and the planet. This month, we honor their contributions, learn from their leadership, and commit to building a more just and sustainable future together.



UPCOMING EVENTS



SEWA-AIFW Annual Health & Resource Fair !

Please save the date for our upcoming **Annual Health & Resource Fair**, taking place on **May 16, 2026**, from **10:00 AM to 3:00 PM** at **SEWA-AIFW (6645 James Ave N, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430)**. Attendees will have the opportunity to access free health consultations, valuable community resources, and more.

Stay tuned for more information.

ROSHNI

A welcoming space for Afghan women to connect, build confidence, and explore their skills and opportunities—including food entrepreneurship as one pathway to financial independence:

- **Minnesota Cottage Food License - Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)**
- **Minnesota Catering License - Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)**

Takes place every Thursday from 12PM to 2PM beginning April 9th through June 11th 2026. For questions or interest, please reach out to Noelle@sewa-aifw.org or Shakila@sewa-aifw.org.



ROSHNI

FROM WITHIN WE RISE

Join us in a welcoming space for Afghan women to connect, build confidence, explore skills and discover food entrepreneurship pathways to financial independence; such as:

- Minnesota Cottage Food License - Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)
- Minnesota Catering License - Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

Children's play area and transportation provided.

Thursdays, 12PM to 2PM (April 9 - June 11)

6645 James Ave N, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430

Interested in joining us? Please contact
Noelle/Nelofar - 612-578-4311/
Shakila - 612-998-4176

24/7 Crisis Line: 952-912-9100
www.sewa-aifw.org



SAIL:

Stay Active & Independent for Life



Information Sessions
SAIL, **Stay Active and Independent for Life**, this program for older adults to increase strength, balance, & flexibility fitness with the primary focus on **Fall Prevention**. It works, it's safe & fun. You will meet others and make new friends.

SAIL Spring Class from:
March 30th - June 18th
Monday in person 1pm - 2pm
Thursday on Zoom 2pm - 3pm

Location: SEWA-AIFW office
6645 James Ave. N
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430

Leaders Names & Registration
Bharati Mehta : bharati@sewa-aifw.org
Rohini Ramanuj: rohini@sewa-aifw.org
Phone Number: 763-205-9873

Juniper is a statewide network that helps people manage chronic health conditions, prevent falls, and foster well-being.
yourjuniper.org
Toll Free 1.855.215.2174

SEWA-AIFW

JUNIPER
Your Health. Your Community.
A Program of TRELLIS™

This program is sponsored, in part, under the Federal Older Americans Act through a contract from a Minnesota regional Area Agency on Aging under an Area Plan approved by the MN Board on Aging.

Fall Prevention Classes

Falls are a leading cause of injury for older adults, and Minnesota ranks second in the nation for fall-related deaths among those 65+, with numbers rising quickly.

SEWA-AIFW offers community fall prevention classes to help you stay steady and safe.

Please email Rohini@sewa-aifw.org or Bharati@sewa-aifw.org to learn more.

OUR MONTH IN REVIEW



South Asian Women's Small Business Bazaar

We had an amazing time celebrating International Women's Day on March 8 at SEWA-AIFW during our South Asian Women's Small Business Bazaar! A huge thank you to all the incredible vendors and attendees who helped make the event such a success.

Bazaar Photos

Nourish & Connect

Our recent Nourish & Connect family wellbeing event was a great success, bringing together community members despite cold weather and competing events. Attendees enjoyed a welcoming space to connect, participate in activities, and access services, with many individuals served through our health clinics. This event also introduced many first-time visitors to our programs and strengthened community connections.



HUM Meet-Up

It was wonderful to gather in person for our HUM Meet after a three-month break and two winter Zoom meetings, and to celebrate Holi together in such a joyful spirit. The gathering began with a delicious lunch sponsored by SEWA, and we are especially grateful for the many thoughtful contributions that made the meal memorable. We also want to extend our sincere appreciation to our planning committee and volunteers for their continued support.

If you wish to know more about the Hum Group and wish to become a member to attend their monthly meetings, please contact Ruby@sewa-aifw.org or Bharati@sewa-aifw.org.

South Asian Men's Circle

We recently hosted a wonderful South Asian Men's Circle gathering, bringing community members together for a meaningful and engaging experience. The session featured an insightful presentation by Dr. Mishra Ji on microplastics, sparking thoughtful discussion among attendees. Participants also enjoyed a rejuvenating yoga and meditation session, followed by a men's showcase that highlighted the diverse talents within our community. The event concluded with warm conversations and connection over masala chai, creating a welcoming space for reflection.



Interested in joining our South Asian Men's Circle?
Reach out to Dasharath@sewa-aifw.org for more information.



Chai & Chat

March 28th Sewa Women's Group Chai & Chat session titled: *From Chai to Folk Dancing* was warmly received, offering participants practical, culturally rooted ways to reset the nervous system in everyday life—through deep sighing, humming, chanting, gentle folk dancing, and shared presence. Thank you, Dr. Niloufer Merchant for sharing her expertise, insights and energy. Enjoying chai and snacks together added to the sense of ease and connection.

Interested in joining our Chai & Chat? Reach out to Sayali@sewa-aifw.org for more information.



Our Journey With Sanjith: The Early Years

by Suresh Rangamani



Sanjith's early life—especially those first two years—was an emotional roller coaster for our whole family. For my wife and me, it was a period filled with uncertainty, and even our daughter, who was only four or five at the time, felt the impact in her own way.

Having already raised our daughter, who has developed typically, we thought we had a good sense of what to expect during a child's first months and years. At first, Sanjith seemed to be growing just like any other baby. But as time went on, we noticed he wasn't hitting many of the milestones we were familiar with—

cooing, smiling, making sounds, responding to his name, playing with toys, or making eye contact. By 9–12 months, he still wasn’t forming early words, and several other expected behaviors just weren’t emerging.

At the time, I didn’t see these delays as alarming. When we spoke with family back home, they reassured us that every child develops differently. We heard stories about cousins who didn’t talk until 18 months or relatives whose children didn’t walk until age two. Their words gave me comfort, and for a while, I held onto the belief that Sanjith simply needed more time.

During Sanjith’s regular checkups at 3, 6, 9, and 12 months, we shared our concerns with his doctors. Initially, they echoed similar reassurances. But around the 9–12-month mark, they began encouraging us to take a closer look—starting with hearing and vision tests to rule out any sensory issues. Those results came back normal.

The doctors then suggested we connect with the special-needs community and consider meeting with a psychiatrist to better understand his developmental progress. This was the point where my wife and I found ourselves in different emotional places. I was still holding onto the hope that everything would fall into place naturally. My wife, however, had a strong intuition that something more was going on and that early evaluation would be important for him.

Coming to terms with this possibility wasn’t easy. It took us several months of reflection, learning, and honest conversations. But just before Sanjith’s second birthday, we scheduled a full developmental assessment with a psychiatrist. Using tools such as the DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and the CARS (Child Autism Rating Scale), they evaluated him thoroughly.

That’s when we received the diagnosis: **PDD-NOS — Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Not Otherwise Specified.**

It was a moment that changed our lives, but also one that marked the beginning of understanding, support, and hope.

-----To Be Continued-----

SEWA-AIFW IN THE COMMUNITY

Supporting MN's South Asian Community with SEWA-AIFW



The Trump Administration's Operation Metro Surge has made the last few months unbelievably traumatizing and challenging for Minnesotans, especially for our immigrant communities. I was so grateful for the opportunity to meet with representatives from SEWA-AIFW to discuss how Minnesota's South Asian community was impacted by Operation Metro Surge, and to share my work in Congress to demand accountability and transparency from the Trump Administration.

Champion of Community Wellness Award

We are proud to celebrate our very own Dasharath Yata on receiving the "Champion of Community Wellness Award" at the Telugu Association of Minnesota's Ugadi Festival on March 21, held at Jefferson School. This well-deserved recognition reflects not only his leadership, but also the impactful work of SEWA-AIFW in serving and uplifting the South Asian community.

This honor highlights a shared commitment to service, beautifully captured in the message, "Service to humanity is service to God." We extend our sincere congratulations to Dasharath and gratitude to the SEWA team and community partners whose continued support makes this work possible.



COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Arts India US, National Junior Board Opportunity for High Schoolers

Dear Administrators of Indian organizations and classical arts schools in America --
We are writing to share a new national leadership opportunity that may be of interest to students in your community who are deeply engaged in Indian classical music or dance.
Arts India US has launched the National Junior Board, a selective, year-long leadership experience designed for **current 8th–11th graders** who want to contribute to Indian classical arts beyond their individual practice.

This program mirrors the structure of serving on a real nonprofit board. **Students gain exposure to governance, strategy, fundraising, and institutional decision-making while advising a national arts organization.**

This is not a class or extracurricular club. It is structured, professional, and intentionally limited to 30 students nationwide to preserve quality and rigor.

Junior Board members will:

- Participate in 90 minute quarterly board meetings (via Zoom)
- Serve on a focused committee
- Learn how arts institutions operate and sustain themselves
- Contribute insight on programs, outreach, and future directions
- Commit to a modest fundraising goal, gaining early experience in arts philanthropy

For many young artists, thousands of hours are spent mastering technique. Far fewer opportunities exist to think about audiences, access, sustainability, and the ecosystem that supports these art forms, a layer of leadership that is looked highly upon especially in the college admissions process. This program was created to fill that gap.

Applications close April 15, 2026.

We would be grateful if you would consider sharing this opportunity with your student and parent community.

More information and application details can be found here: www.artsindiaus.org/juniorboard

With appreciation for all that you do to support Indian classical arts,

Best,

Samyuktha Rajesh Kumar

Resource & Partnership Strategist

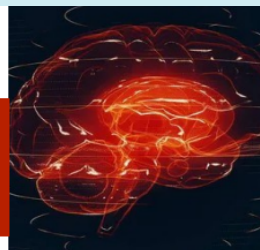
Arts India US

Are You A South Asian Stroke Survivor or a Caregiver?

Dr. Yanamala and Dr. Varsha Singh at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School are conducting a study to better understand the emotional journeys of South Asian stroke survivors and caregivers and contribute to improving support services tailored to their unique needs.

- Eligibility: South Asian stroke survivors and caregivers aged 18 and older.
- Participation: Involves an online pre-survey, group interview sessions (60 – 90 mins), and two brief post-surveys.
- Purpose: To explore emotional experiences and identify ways to improve the support provided to this community.
- Compensation for your participation is explained in the flyer.

Participants Needed: South Asian Stroke Survivors + Caregivers



RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Exploring emotional recovery and support systems for South Asian stroke survivors and caregivers

PARTICIPATION DETAILS

As a study participant, you would be asked to complete:

Stroke Survivor:

- One (1) online Zoom focus group session in a group setting (~ 90-120 minutes).
- Two (2) post-focus group surveys, each taking approximately 10 minutes to fill out

Caregiver: *can only participate if the stroke survivor they are caring for is eligible and agrees to participate in the study.

- One (1) online Zoom focus group session in a group setting (~ 90-120 minutes).

ELIGIBILITY

- Adults (age>=18) of South Asian origin
- At least one (1) year post-stroke

COMPENSATION

- \$50 to each of the participants (Stroke Survivor or Caregiver) for completing one (1) online focus group in their respective focus groups.
- +\$25 (stroke survivor) for completing (2) post focus group surveys.

***Compensation will be provided individually as an Amazon gift card via email or text, with \$50 after the focus group and additional \$25 after completing both post-surveys, each sent within 7 business days.*

For further questions, please contact:



NAVEENA YANAMALA, MS, PhD, FASE
Associate Professor of Medicine
Section Chief of Clinical Research and AI Innovation
Director of Data Science and Machine Learning Rutgers
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School



VARSHA SINGH, DNP, SCRNP, FAHA
Neuroscience and Stroke Program Manager
St. Joseph's University Medical Center
Email: Yanamala.naveena@rutgers.edu
Phone: 732-258-3649

GETTING STARTED

To see if you are eligible, complete a short 5-minute survey by scanning this QR code!



URL- <https://tinyurl.com/SAHA-DIPS>

The study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University.

Protocol #: Pro2024002111
Protocol Title: Exploring Emotional Well-being and Support Systems for South Asian Stroke Survivors and Caregivers
Version 2 Date: 02.11.25

If you have any questions, would like additional materials, or need further clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to Dr. Yanamala at yanamala.naveena@rutgers.edu or 732-258-3649.

Click the link below to access the pre-survey and determine eligibility

Eligibility Questionnaire

If you have questions regarding the items in this Setu issue or future issues, please contact Addo@SEWA-AIFW.org or Sayali@SEWA-AIFW.org.



SEWA-AIFW | 6645 James Ave N | Minneapolis, MN, MN 55430 US

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