

Sarbat da Bhalla

WELL BEING OF ALL MANKIND

Voice of the Sikh Welfare Council - Singapore

March 2008



BHAI KHANIYAH JI serving water to an injured enemy soldier.

A Portrait of Selfless Sharing and Love

The idiom 'Actions speak louder than words' is something that SIWEC has lived up to. At its inception, the Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC) drew inspiration from the Sikh Gurus' teachings, in particular from the selfless act of Bhai Khaniyah Ji.

IN 1704 BHAI KHANIYA (1648-1718), was on a visit to Anandpur Sahib when a combination of hill troops and the imperial Mughal army invaded the city. During the numerous battles between the Sikhs and the enemy, Bhai Kanhaiya was often seen carrying a mashak (a sort of pouch made of goat's skin that was used to carry water from one place to another), to serve water to anyone regardless whether they were Sikh soldiers or enemies. Some people complained to Guru Gobind Singh about this. When Guru Ji enquired from Bhai Sahib about that, Bhai Ji replied, "I see God alone, my master in every person, I cannot distinguish between the Turks and the Sikhs, I see God in all." The Tenth Master not only appreciated his benevolent act but took out a bottle of ointment and gave it to

him, to apply it to their wounds of all injured soldiers as well.

SIWEC HAS not turned down anyone who has approached it for assistance of any kind. For example, the 24 hour Hotline received a call at 3am. The spouse was being battered by her alcoholic husband and was driven out of the house. SIWEC provided her a temporary shelter at that hour. There are many heart wrenching cases like these, where SIWEC comes to the aid of the needy irrespective of time, place and the most difficult of circumstances.

SIWEC HAS also lived up to the principles of helping all human beings regardless of race and religion.

continued on page 3

RACIAL HARMONY AND COMMUNITY BONDING

Running home the message of Racial Harmony

8th Singapore Racial & Religious Harmony Marathon Relay 2007

Organised by the Sikh Welfare Council & OnePeople.sg

THE OVERNIGHT Marathon run has been going on for 8 years. The positive outcome being that when other races came to know of it, more and more Singaporeans started participating over the years. We now have the CDCs, IRCCs, Community Centers, Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist organizations also participating in the event. *more... Page 15*



Running in Harmony.

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- | | |
|----------|---|
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SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

This number is well used at all times of the day and night. A young mother thrown out of the house with the children by a drunken husband in the middle of the night was given assistance and temporary shelter for the night.

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Chairman's Message



Dr Sorinder Singh
Chairman
Sikh Welfare Council

It has been a rich and rewarding experience heading the Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC). It is the community's first ever national level effort to address the welfare concerns and needs of the entire community. It has been a challenging experience as there was no similar model in the rest of the Sikh world which we could learn from and emulate. We moved through relatively uncharted waters in the conceptualization, planning, working out of programmes and activities of the SIWEC.

Charity, welfare and selfless service are central to the Sikh way of life. It is not surprising therefore that welfare work was an integral part of the functioning of Gurdwaras-the core Sikh community institutions in Singapore. Thus the welfare concerns of the community prior to the setting up of SIWEC in 1995 were addressed by individual Gurdwaras based on their institutional resources.

However concerns had began to surface from the early 1990s, especially after the setting up of the Singapore Sikh Education Foundation to look after the Punjabi language education needs. The entire community, felt that there should be a mechanism similarly to look after the welfare needs of the community. The concerns were based on the following factors:

- There was a lack of an overall welfare policy for the community as a whole;
- There was increasing evidence of needy Sikh families and dislocated individuals who required social, emotional, moral, financial and spiritual support, turning to other faiths;
- Sikh Gurdwaras were busy fulfilling their spiritual and ceremonial roles and did not have the staff to take on the welfare role on a systematic basis; and
- There was a need to professionalize welfare services in the context of the government policies and changing Sikh community needs.

The Sikh Welfare Council was launched in October 1995 in the context of the above socio-economic milieu. The constitution provided that representatives from all Sikh Institutions sit on the Council to mobilize community support together with a group of professionals with expertise from various fields.

The far sighted decision by the Community to set up SIWEC has paid dividends. For more than a decade now, the organisation has through its volunteers and two fulltime staff catered for the welfare of the entire community by:

- Providing regular financial and material support for more than 50 Sikh families at any one time;
- Providing counseling, emotional and spiritual support to nearly 200 families every year;
- Carrying out hospital visits to critically ill patients to provide support to both the families concerned and the patients in question;
- Assisting Sikh families in optimizing on the resources and services provided by CDCc, MCYS, FSCs and SINDA;
- Arranging for weekly visits to prisons and DRCs to provide moral support and

- spiritual counseling to Sikh inmates; and
- Providing bereaved families with emotional, spiritual and administrative support at various stages.

In the context of the above, SIWEC provides a 24 Hour Hotline (Tel: 62999234) to attend to welfare needs of the members of the Community around the clock.

Not many small communities like ours have such comprehensive welfare services. However the confidential nature of welfare work may result in much of the good work done by SIWEC going unpublicized except for services like bereavement services where the general Sikh public is present. This perhaps is the universal characteristic of all welfare organization in the world.

While SIWEC has fulfilled the role for which it was set up it continues to face challenges in the following areas:

- The need for stabilized funding;
- The requirement for more volunteers to come forward and serve in various areas; and
- Carrying out needs assessment to cater for the changing welfare needs of the Community.

The community too needs to keep this in mind and support SIWEC.

I wish to place on record my appreciation for all the volunteers who have contributed countless man-hours to serve the needs of individuals and families in the community.

I wish to commend the volunteers comprising the editorial for bringing out this issue of Sarbat Da Bhalla, a publication which on a regular basis will be publicize, within the constraints of confidentiality, the contribution of the Council to the community and keep everyone abreast of the needs of the institution.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Do you know we started our fund raising with a bang. Two donors gave \$2500 a month for several Years. There were others giving \$500 a month and quiet a few who gave \$100 a month.. There are yet a few giving \$50 and \$25 a month since SIWEC came up with Giro in 2003.

BE GENEROUS DONOR AND HELP THE NEEDY IN THE SIKH COMMUNITY

Sikh Welfare Council Members

OUR HONOURABLE PATRON



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S. Jagjit Singh Sekhon



Dr. Choor Singh Sidhu

continued from page 1

IT IS in our culture and heritage to genuinely care for people around us. It comes to us naturally to care for people regardless of who they are!

MOST OF us would shy away from drug offenders, and other criminals or even from troubled children for that matter. The reasons are many – social constraints, fear of what others might say, or even our own feelings towards them. Also, as individuals with our own social and private burdens to bear it makes it difficult for us to help people in dire need. However, as an organization, SIWEC has gone out of its way through its wide range of programmes to help individuals affected by

different misfortunes. An example of these is counselling.

COUNSELING OF Sikh inmates in prisons or drug rehabilitation centers are provided them emotional and moral support. Follow-up by SIWEC volunteers and support is continued after they leave these centers.

SOME OF the simplest yet most overlooked forms of care are regularly provided by SIWEC. Such forms of care include acting as a neutral party or at other times being there for others in need. For instance, visiting patients in the hospital on the request of a family. These are not easy tasks. Yet these are

important services that bring relief to others who need it.

SIWEC HAS a 24-hour hotline (62999234). Has anyone ever wondered who takes care of this line? This line is managed by SIWEC with Welfare Officers personally take care of every case. The Hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with scope covering every problem one can fathom, from death right down to domestic issues. Not a single cry of help has been ever turned down.

The spirit of Bhai Khaniyah resonates in the deeds and actions of SIWEC.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - *Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs*

SIWEC provides Financial Assistance and support to needy Sikh families. It has served the needs of over 58 families in 2007. Each year a few of these families are still receive help but there are many who are independent today with children holding good jobs.

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234



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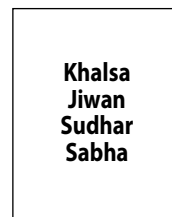
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Jiwan
Sudhar
Sabha**

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

Arranging tuition for the educational upliftment of children of needy families.
Young Sikh tutors are deployed, who also act as mentors.

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Community News

The Singapore Sikh Community

Sarbat Da Bhalla, (the voice of the Sikh Welfare Council) will bring to you all regularly some interesting and important happenings in the community which affects the community's overall welfare and well-being.

This time it brings you news of ONE finding of the Project Fateh, albeit, its' most important finding.

Project Fateh was initiated to look into why some Sikhs are converting to other faiths and what can be done to eliminate/reduce this trend.

This trend was reportedly even noted by our Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong from an article he had received from India. He then voiced it to MP Inderjit Singh.

This was discussed at a meeting of the Community leaders by MP Inderjit Singh. The community leaders considered this a grave and growing threat and decided that a committee be set up under the Sikh Advisory Board to look into it and to propose measures to address the issue.

This led to the setting up of "PROJECT FATEH".

Main Finding - Our ignorance of Sikhism!

The major finding was that these conversions were because of the lack of knowledge of Sikhism among Sikh masses within the community. Ad- hoc teachings through the many avenues reach only a small group

and often the same group. This left the vast majority of the Sikhs for the past few generations without concrete understanding and conviction in their own faith. Self learning inspite of the internet is very minimal in today's fast paced life which is full of conflicting priorities.

The Answer

THE TEACHING OF RELIGION MUST BECOME A PART OF PUNJABI TEACHING.

This was always the plea by our elders who have repeatedly wanted Punjabi to be taught as they felt that Punjabi would allow our children to read and understand the Guru Granth Sahib. Thus when fund raising for the present SKA was carried out it was with the promise that it would include a Punjabi School. The fund raisers readily admit that the money donated was more because of the Punjabi school rather than for the club.

It did include a Punjabi School but did not take off as well as hoped. So much so that Gurmat was never introduced. That aspect was left to the Gurdwaras.

And when Punjabi was taken over by the Singapore Sikh Education Foundation (SSEF), the priority was to ensure that the children did well in Punjabi with the result that the grades of most of our students are even better than their average grades for the other subjects!

Again Gurmat teaching was put in the background.

SSEF now accepts that it requires only very



little extra teaching to ensure that our students become proficient in the reading and understanding of the Guru Granth Sahib. The students are already taught Punjabi Grammar. They need only to learn and understand Gurmukhi grammar. The grammar of the Guru Granth Sahib is a little extra and a little different but easily manageable.

Besides grammar they have to learn a lot of new words. But this will only improve their vocabulary and will help their Punjabi grades as they will become more prolific in their writings. We need to realize all this little extra is spread over 13 years - Pre primary to Pre U 2 and hence not taxing at all for the students. The normal Saturday classes will go on as usual with a couple hours for Gurmat teaching. The two hours taken by this can be compensated by sending in Punjabi teachers to our children's English schools to teach during their Mother tongue teaching periods. As for logistic problems we think two hours could be managed comfortably.

Why the need to teach Gurmat?

Look at ourselves – the parents of our generation - successful in life in every other way but we feel inadequate when it comes to a discussion on Sikh religion. I am sure you will feel embarrassed when you cannot answer some searching questions from your children.

You could study it on your own time but somehow we all just cannot find the time and the will to make the effort. And let me tell you it gets extremely difficult as you get older. And at 63 when most of us will retire you will have to look at the meaning of the same word 10 times and still it does not stick in the mind.

And those of us who have lost our children to other faiths, lost them because we couldn't convincingly answer their questions or teach them anything for we did not know enough.

Our children needed this grounding all these years as they are subject to questioning by their school friends. This is getting even more intense now with the Racial Harmony advocated very sensibly by the Government. Our children are subjected to even more detailed questioning as their friends come armed with a set of questions. And as in the case of earlier years our children feel inadequate I am sure deep sense of shame could lead to development of an inferiority complex.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

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SIWEC carries out regular visits and counseling of Sikh inmates in Prisons and Drug Rehabilitation Centers.
While the inmates are in prison SIWEC also looks after the family needs in whichever way needed.

Community News

Does attending the Gurdwara every Sunday morning teach them anything much? A lot of us have been attending the Gurdwara programmes all our life. However, when it comes to teaching the children and motivating the kids we failed as we were not sufficiently knowledgeable or convincing enough.

Gurdwara is not the place to do a structured teaching. It is a place to loose yourself in the Shabads and be inspired to higher planes. And this can happen only if you understand the meaning of the shabads.

The young if they grow up the same way as us, are going to feel terribly shortchanged in life and are going to blame us for not providing them the grounding in Religion. And we must provide it at that stage in their life when the mind is receptive like a sponge and they can understand and remember things.

And thus when they go to the temple and start understanding the Shabads being sung they will want to go more and more often.

What is needed for SSEF to make Gurmat a part of the School curriculum.

What is required is a school building of our own where the SSEF can start increasing the teaching of Sikh values and Gurmat in addition to Punjabi language. While we have the children in our fold for Punjabi we could at our own premises expose our children to meaningful age specific activities which will:

- Expose our children to the basic tenets of Sikh history;
- Introduce them to the fundamentals of Sikh philosophy;
- Provide them insight into the lives of great Sikh men and women who dedicated their lives according to the Principles of selfless service to humanity, Sarbat Da Bhala (well being of mankind) and Chardi Kala (psychological fortitude);
- Enable them to listen to inspiring and

successful Sikhs whose success is based on the practice of Sikh values;

- Enable them to comprehend the profound and universal message of the Guru Granth Sahib; and

- Inculcate pride in them in being Sikhs;

With the above we could actually mould the model Sikh child who will be honest, righteous, controls his anger, greed and ego, stands up for the underdog, does his best in anything he does, shares, cares, with chardikala, says his prayers and has confidence that God will always be there for him.

This is the commitment from SSEF. They have delivered in the past and will do so again.

Economics

We think that at this time the economics are right and that this might be a feasible idea where we could generate income and at the same time have a home for our children. We are well aware that it's going to cost a great deal of money. But we feel this is the best thing we can do for our future generations.

Economics are still right. Of course if we had built a school a few years ago it would have been half the price. But that is spilt milk. So forget the past and go forward. Keep one thing in mind this money is not coming from one person. It's a little, "til-ful", as in Sikh philosophy, from each one of us. Nearly all of us are better of than our parents. Each might have to give a little more than he wants too. By appealing for a noble community cause, we can get the people to contribute more. Perhaps **it is useful to remind them that within the last 15 years our struggling parents have managed to invest 18 million dollars to repair and build Gurdwaras. Could our generation not build a school?**

What is going for us is that we can make money out of this. The community only needs the school for the weekend. We can rent it

out to one of the international schools for the weekdays or better still run an international school on franchise basis. So here is a School which can earn rental and maybe even pay a dividend. The returns can only get higher in latter years with increased rentals.

Another thing that might convince the skeptics is that the Government is taking measures to cool down the property sector. Thus there might be a dip in land prices and that should make it easier.

It would be an ideal investment for the Sikhs. For the long term the property prices will only go up and up.

And we need to realize that if we say land is expensive now, it's not going to get cheaper with time. The next generation will find it impossible to build a school for the same reason as we have been putting it of.

A Panel is presently doing a realistic feasibility study. History will be grateful to this generation if we can build a school.

So let our Chardikala spirit come forth. Don't hesitate to voice your opinion that you are for it and that you will whole heartedly donate for this school.

by
A concerned Sikh



In our next issue, we will publish a report of the feasibility study for a school and introduce you to the professionals and businessmen in the panel.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

We are grateful to all the Doctors and nurses who have helped and are still helping at the Dr Amar's Medical Screening and Counseling Clinic.

It is now located at Silat Road Sikh Temple Annex Building.

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Teens: Opportunities And Challenges

by a Singaporean Sikh Youth

Sometimes we all think exactly like this

We all face challenges throughout our life. Challenges we face as teenagers will be unique and quite different from facing challenges from another period of our life. As teenagers our bodies undergo rapid change. Our teenage years can be a period of great confusion as well as satisfaction and fun. Some people face more challenges than others.

Sometimes we teens find ourselves thinking:

"Oh, what shall I do? Everyone thinks it's so easy? Well, they are so wrong, it's a little tough you know, when no one listens except for my pet."

"It's so easy to just go along with the crowd – even if I know it's not the right thing to do. I need my own identity – but more importantly, I need the courage to forge my own identity!"

A percentage of teenagers do face variations of such problems as well as other dilemmas, which may include issues that pertain to peer pressure, family problems, stress, drug abuse, abuse and violence, eating disorders and issues regarding our sexuality and identity.

Some of the problems we face can be quite major. For example some teens practise self-mutilation. Self-mutilation is the practice of self-abuse. Some teens who are unable to express their pain find an outlet by inflicting pain on their physical self.

Sometimes our problems are also linked to our cultural background. I remember the times when I was teased for having long, uncut hair, or how many young men I know faced challenges linked with their turbans. From time to time we view our strict parents as a limitation on our freedom, especially when we see many others around us get away with so much more.

In our quest for personal freedom as well as forging our own "unique" identity (or simply fall prey to negative peer pressure), some of us fall by the wayside and become addicted to harmful substances that impact us very negatively. These include smoking, alcoholism and even substance abuse.

SIWEC helps teens in two ways – both directly and indirectly. Direct help is available through the mentoring programme and through counseling.

Hypothetical example:

Family Background

Mrs Singh has approached SIWEC for help with financial and emotional problems. She has revealed that she has 3 children aged 10, 12 and 15. She feels depressed due to the problems she is facing, especially those concerning unemployment, and her upcoming divorce. She feels that it has negatively affected her children. Her teenage daughter has not been doing well in school and has been behaving out of character lately, as opposed to the cheerful, bubbly girl she was previously. Her other

two younger children are not taking the separation from their father well either.

Mentoring

From the looks of the case, it seems that the children need help in coping with school. SIWEC's possible solutions are to pair the teenage daughter up with a suitable youth mentor who is able to help her with not just her grades, but also to be there simply as a friend. Wouldn't you feel that someone our age communicates better with us most of the time as opposed to an adult especially if we are in a period of great turmoil?

Counseling

In the event that the negative behaviour displayed by the teenage girl seems to cause harm to her physical well-being as well as her development in other areas, such as school and her future prospects, she might then require more care from SIWEC. SIWEC will step in to communicate with her school teachers and counselors to find out more and communicate directly with the teen to get to the root of the problem and work towards a better solution through means such as counseling.



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Assisting the breadwinners to get jobs and to be self reliant.

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Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC) Annual Report for 2007

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC) has successfully completed another successful year of service to the Community. As can be seen from the Draft Annual Report below, SIWEC provides a comprehensive range of programmes and services to address the diverse concerns facing the Sikh Community. This ranges from financial assistance to needy families on one to provide comprehensive support to bereaved families.

are a source of inspiration and have succeeded in rehabilitating many inmates over the years. They have successfully provided aftercare support to many of the former inmates, helping them to fit into society as responsible citizens who are leading meaningful lives.

SIWEC also work regularly with SANA Sikh Counseling Services so that community expertise is optimized and the needs of the inmates are met.

2. FINANCIAL AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

The Financial and Material Assistance Programme includes the delivery of Food Rations and Financial Assistance to needy Sikh families. The details of the two components for 2007 are as shown below.

a) Food Rations Delivery

SIWEC continued to provide monthly food rations to needy Sikh and non Sikh families.

In 2007, a total number of 58 families received rations monthly. There were 50 old cases and 8 new cases. Of these, 4 were non-Sikh cases (1 was a Muslim, 1 was a Christian -Presbyterian and 2 were Hindus).

b) Financial Assistance Programme

SIWEC also continued to serve the financial needs of the poor Sikh families. In 2007, a total of 14 cases received financial assistance of which 13 were old cases.

3. THE PRISONS/DRC VISITS AND COUNSELING PROGRAMME

In 2007, 5 Sikh Volunteer Counselors and the 2 Sikh Welfare Officers carried out weekly visits to provide social and religious counseling.

Prison/ DRC	Name of Counselor
Khalsa Crescent Prison	Welfare Officer
Changi Prison Cluster A1	S. Gurpreet Singh
Changi Prison Cluster A3	S. Dalijeet Singh
Changi Prison Cluster A4	S. Nirmal Singh & S. Swaran Singh
Changi Prison Cluster A5	S. Kashmir Singh
Changi Women's Prison	Welfare Officer

As a matter of policy, SIWEC does disclose the number of Sikh inmates in each Prison or DRC. However, the 5 Sikh Volunteers

4. AFTERCARE /REHABILITATION (PRISONS/DRCS)

A total of 27 cases who had been released from Prisons/ DRC came to SIWEC in 2007 for Aftercare Counseling and Assistance.

16 of these cases were follow-ups from 2006 and 10 were new cases.

Assistance provided by SIWEC was as follows:

- Transport (EZ link) and food so that they can go for job interviews.
- Matching them up with job agencies or individual employers for job.
- Providing networking with other agencies to help them go for courses to improve their chances of employment.
- Providing counseling to them and their families to help them with social issues and re-integration in society.

5. THE HOSPITAL VISITS PROGRAMME

The Welfare Officers carried out regular hospital visits upon request, referral from public and calls from the hospital staff. The type of cases normally visited varied from terminally ill patients, to those under long term hospitalization. Cases of patients affected by amputations were also visited. On the average, 6 to 8 visits were carried out every month. A total of 85 visits were carried out for 2007. SIWEC continues to get support from numerous volunteers for the Hospital Visits Programme.

6. FAMILY BEREAVEMENT PROGRAMME

SIWEC provides families of the bereaved with social, emotional and spiritual support during their time of grief. SIWEC looks into various needs of the family by providing guidance on procedural and ceremonial matters for the funeral. The following are some of the services provided:

- Booking of the crematorium,

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24 HOUR HOTLINE
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When a loved one has passed away and you need any assistance. The Welfare Officers are there even in the middle of the night to attend to various needs and to the comfort of the families. Providing emotional, spiritual and other forms of support to families is what SIWEC does. This service of SIWEC is very much appreciated. Do read a couple of spontaneous appreciation letters published in this magazine.

Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC) Annual Report for 2007

- Arranging for the hearse (and driving if necessary),
- Assisting with obituaries,
- Making transport arrangements,
- Buying of items for funerals such as coffin, flowers, shroud,
- Assisting in bathing the body,
- Booking the Gurdwara for prayers,
- Assistance in ash collection,
- Providing assistance during the Anthim Ardas (final prayers), and
- Visiting families of the bereaved before and after funerals

In 2007, there were 62 cases where the above services were provided as listed below:

Mth	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No	7	7	6	5	8	3	8	4	6	3	4	1

SIWEC with the help of volunteers endeavors to provide comprehensive support to cater for the needs of bereaved family in order to help them to come to terms with the loss of the dear one.

7. HOUSE VISITS AND SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

In carrying out all of the above programmes, home visits are crucial as this helps to build rapport with clients and also helps in the assessment of cases for the type of assistance required. About 20 visits per month were carried out for the year 2007. The nature of this visits included:-

- Follow up visits to clients on F/A and Rations (1 visit per client done every 3 months for case review)
- Cases having marital disputes (10 families)
- Mediation for families having social disputes
- New cases who apply for SIWEC assistance.
- Juvenile cases (new and follow up cases*)
- Elderly cases (new and follow up)

A total of 240 home visits were carried out for 2007.

*SIWEC worked with families of 10 teenagers who got into trouble such as:

- dropping out from school,
- relationship problems,
- teenage pregnancies,
- smoking,
- drinking, and
- theft.

8. PRECESSING AND FINALIZING CASES FOR FREE PUNJABI EDUCATION

SIWEC also assisted in the processing and finalizing of 142 cases seeking assistance for Free Punjabi Education, (Exemption from School Fee, free books and uniforms). SIWEC carried out interviews, assessment and put up the cases for EXCO's approval.

9. TRANSLATION SERVICES

SIWEC provided assistance in translation for 16 non-English speaking individuals. These included 12 work permit holders, 3 ROM cases, and 1 case of counseling translation (Moral Family Service Centre).

10. SUPPORT PROVIDED BY SIWEC TO OTHER AGENCIES

The Council also works with the various government Ministries and bodies on Sikh Community matters pertaining to welfare. This includes:

- a) Siwec working with Ministry of Health, on important issues like human organ transplant and handling remains of HIV cases;
- b) Working in partnership with the Family Court (Project Shine) to assist families going through domestic disputes and needing assistance; and
- c) Working with MCYS, SINDA, FSCs and other government agencies of matter of mutual and national interest in the context of Sikh Community welfare

11. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION FROM SIKH INSTITUTIONS

SIWEC is grateful for the financial assistance received from the various Sikh institutions and individuals in 2007.

12. CONCLUSION

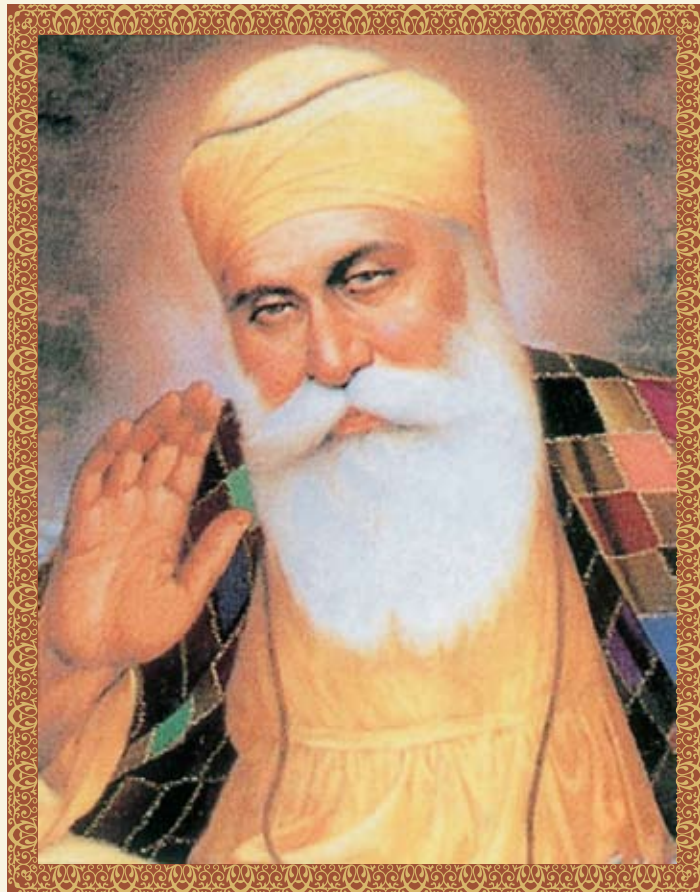
In addition to providing all of the above services, SIWEC also continued to operate the 24 HOURS HOTLINE (62999234) for the benefit of the Community.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

Carrying out visits and providing emotional support for battered wives and children.

**24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234**

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Bereavement, Spiritual and Emotional Support

Losing a love one

When a loved one passes away, we are overcome by grief and overwhelmed by what is to be done thereafter.

Mr Jasbir Singh Suropada of SIWEC has put together some important aspects to guide the family and ease the bereaved during this trying time.

All the details as to what to do and how to perform the last rites are explained fully in SIWEC website: www.siwec.org

The initial period after losing a family member or a dear friend is a painful one for the family or an individual. SIWEC has a Hotline number where a Sikh Welfare Officer is on 24 hour call at 62999234.

The officers have been extremely helpful and a great source of support for these families and individuals over the years. The Welfare Officers are there even in the middle of the night to attend to the various needs of the families and bring some comfort to them.



SIWEC provides the bereaved family with social, emotional, spiritual and financial support. During this time of bereavement, the SIWEC Council representative will assist the family with arranging the cremation of the deceased, providing guidance on the ceremonial matters and conducting the final rites for the deceased.

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SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

Providing aid for former inmates to get jobs, to help to merge with society
and to become good Gursikhs.

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Bereavement, Spiritual and Emotional Support

Grief counseling

Definition

Grief counseling refers to a specific form of therapy, or a focus in general counseling with the goal of helping the individual grieve and address personal loss in a healthy manner. Grief counseling is offered individually by Welfare Officers as well as informal support groups offered by community groups, or organizations devoted to helping individuals grieve specific losses.

Specific tasks of grief counseling include emotional expression about the loss (which can include a wide range of feelings), accepting the loss, adjusting to life after the loss, and coping with the changes within oneself and the world after the loss.

Typical feelings experienced by individuals, and addressed in grief counseling, include sadness, anxiety, anger, loneliness, guilt, relief, isolation, confusion, or numbness. Behavioral changes may also be noticed, such as being disorganized, feeling tired, having trouble concentrating, sleep problems, appetite changes, vivid dreams, or daydreaming about the deceased.

Purpose

The purpose of grief counseling is to help individuals work through the feelings, thoughts, and memories associated with the loss of a loved one. Although grieving can occur for other types of loss as well (such as loss of goals, ideals, and relationships), grief counseling is generally directed toward positive adjustment following loss after the

death of a loved one.

Grief counseling helps the individual recognize normal aspects of the grieving or mourning process, cope with the pain associated with the loss, feel supported through the anxiety surrounding life changes that may follow the loss, and develop strategies for seeking support and self-care.

Description

Grief counseling helps the individual work through the feelings associated with the loss of another, accept that loss, determine how life can go on without that person, and consolidate memories in order to be able to move forward. Grief counseling also provides information about the normal grieving process, to help individuals understand that many of the symptoms and changes they are experiencing are a normal, temporary reaction to loss.

For some individuals, the primary focus of grief counseling is to help identify ways to express feelings about the loss that the person has been unable to express his or her own. Individuals who seek grief counseling may be experiencing an emotional numbness, or a residual shock in reaction to the loss, and need assistance to return to a normal life. In those cases, grief counseling will focus on helping the individual get in touch with those feelings and become more active in the daily routine. This often requires accepting the loss as a reality.

As part of SIWEC services, there is organised after-care follow up. SIWEC Welfare Officers visit homes of the bereaved families to provide comfort and at the same time encourage the family to sit together in the form of Sangat and listen to Gurbani verses relating to death. The family does Naam Simran for the departed soul, this way the family not only comforts one another but also prays for the departed soul for eternal peace and union with the Almighty Lord (Waheguru). The Simran gives the family peace, solace and the mental strength to accept the loss.

With Best Compliments From



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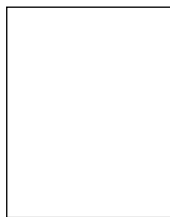
Our Volunteers



Manjit Singh



Charanjit Singh



Hardial Singh

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

**24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234**

We would like to stress that the Sikh Welfare council was formed to institutionalize the giving of aid and help while insuring confidentiality and dignity of individuals. We sometimes even don't mention in general terms about some cases as even that little might lead to the client becoming known to someone and maybe a gossip topic for some.

Sarbat da Bhalla Events

OVERNIGHT MARATHON AND CYCLING EVENTS

An often asked question is what have events such as Around the Island Overnight Runs and a Cycling exhibition from Ipoh to Singapore have to do with the Sikh Welfare Council. Aren't there other Sikh Institutions that should and can run these events better for greater impact on the Community?

The Sikh Welfare Council has over the years taken up these events for very simple and fundamental reasons. Firstly, they are aimed at raising funds to finance the ongoing activities and programmes of the Council. Secondly, the objective is to promote, among the participants in particular and Sikh public in general the value of Sarbat da Bhalla which is the core principle of the organization. Thirdly such events help to reinforce the psychological fortitude (Chardi Kala) and the ultimate message of self reliance.

Finally high profile events of this nature are targeted to enhance the publicity for the Welfare Council not only within the community but also the general public. Of course the organizing of these events has many other uses as well.

The Around the Island Overnight Marathon was introduced way back in 1999. The 300th year Anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh Ji.



One of the objectives was to get our Punjabi School students involved. With a considerable degree of success they participated both in the Marathon Run and the Walkathon at the end of the Run for the younger Children and their parents. The Run took the form of a relay around the Island with different Sikh Institutions including the SSEF, the Armed Forces, the Police and SAAA.

In total the whole Island was divided into 15 sectors, with different institutions providing runners for the different stretches. Each sectors representative's run about 10 km and passes the baton to the next sector representative.

Our Punjabi School Students were required to collect donations through sponsorship from family and friends. The kids were first briefed on the giving (sharing) and caring aspects of Sikhism through the real life event in Bhai Kanhiyah's life and his encounter with Guru Gobind Singh ji.

The response was fantastic. Every Sikh Institution participated and every Gurdwara was visited at different times through the course of the Marathon. The crowds at the start and the first three sectors i.e. the start, Wadda Gurdwara and Katong Gurdwara sector at the East Coast of the run were fantastic. Young and old Cyclists and roller bladders and just casual pedestrians joined the runners in an evening of fun and camaraderie. Except for motorists zooming past the next few sectors were rather lonely. However at Changi Village and than on though Sikhs were not many Singaporean onlookers' and motorists were taken aback by the sudden appearance of the runners and joined in the cheering.

The arrival of the runners at Yishun Gurdwara at Amrit Vela turned out to be the most memorable. A lot of Sikhs had gathered and new participants joined in the run. Cheers from Sikh families lining the route must have struck a good cord with the other communities though it was 2 am in the morning. A break for supper is taken here.

What is heartening and interesting each year without fail the Minister flagging of and some MPs' have made it a point to be there and joined the Sangat for langar here. MPs' and Ministers invariably ask of the functions of the SIWEC and are very intrigued by our 24 our hotline and our self help spirit.

And when the run continues Yishun masses and some motorists followed the runners for about two Kilometers and break of with Jakaras and well wishes. Than on the runners are more or less on their own with the lead car. A food lorry with drinks and a bus with participants and youngster who also accompany the run. Come daylight more and more people join in from Pardesi Khalsa to Katong and on to East Coast Parkway where we have ended the Marathon on a number of occasions.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

Visting the aged who do not have family support including arranging food for them.

**24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234**

Sarbat da Bhalla Events

OVERNIGHT MARATHON IS NOW KNOWN AS THE SINGAPORE RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS MARATHON RELAY

The Overnight Marathon run has been going on for 8 years. The positive outcome being that other races came to know of it and more and more of other Singaporeans, over the years started joining it. So much so now we have the CDCs, IRCCs, Community Centers, Muslim, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist organizations also participating in the event.

This has been possible with the support of national leaders like Mr Chan Soo Sen, the former Minister of State for Community Development and Sports. This year the Sikh Welfare Council organized the 8th Racial and Religious Harmony Marathon together with national organization "One People Singapore".

The objectives of this event have been broadened to include:

- The promotion of religious and racial harmony at the national level; AND
- The nurturing of fortitude among Singaporeans.

And whereas our runners were previously only stopping at our Gurdwaras' now they also stop and pay respects in a Mosque, a Church, a Hindu Temple and a Buddhist Temple. And the run has been now named as Singapore Racial and Religious Harmony Marathon Relay. It is there to stay and consolidate the goodwill between the various races. It will likely go on the "Singapore's Events Calendar for the year".

THE CYCLE RIDE FROM IPOH TO SINGAPORE

A few Sikhs cycling enthusiasts who love the thrill and spill of cycling and have gone on many rides with a charitable organization of cyclists which has raised funds for various welfare organizations in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand etc. The Sikhs together with some of their friends from other races felt that they should organize a ride to raise funds for the Sikh Welfare Council. Significantly the timing was such when Ipoh Sikhs had just launched the teaching of Punjabi. And they wanted the other states throughout Malaysia to also teach their Children.

We taught it will be a good occasion not only to raise some money but also to help boost Punjabi Language teaching in Malaysia. So we took a bus load of our Punjabi students and teachers and the Punjabi School quire along with us to showcase the benefits of the programme. Our student enthusiasm, impressed and delighted the Sangats at the various Gurdwaras in Ipoh and on the way from Ipoh to Singapore. All along, accompanied and guided by Dya Singh from Australia they spread the message of the Sikh Way of Life and Punjabi Language.



The ride we were aware can be dangerous but we were assured that only experienced safety conscious riders will be allowed and for any new riders weeks of training and rides to Desaru and other nearby Malaysian towns were organized to make them aware of the dangers. But the thrill of riding at high speeds, the danger and excitement of downhill ride after the backbreaking never ending climb and the satisfaction of completing the route brought together more than 30 riders who enjoyed themselves and completed the route safe and sound.

A number of interesting incidents have taken place in the riders various rides to Malaysia. On the way one such interesting incident took place to the South of Muar. At about 11 in the morning, it started raining very heavily with possibility of thunder and lightening. Without asking permission 5 of us stopped in a porch of one of the small Kampong houses and were drying ourselves. The occupants must have seen us through a window and a Malay man in his early 60's came out and started chatting with us like old friends. And with no indication or warning out came other members of the family with 5 glasses of steaming hot sweet TEH-O with biscuits. Did not look like a very rich family but with hearts of gold and the spirit of sharing and caring.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

SIWEC - Networks with national agencies to ensure that clients get maximum assistance from these sources. Even liaising with Social Workers in the hospitals to get waivers and or reduction in hospital fees.

Sarbat da Bhalla Events



Another small incident next day in the afternoon when it was extremely hot. There was a sudden shower for a very short time. The road started steaming as we went ahead and we noticed patches of blood and some flesh – cars had run over small snakes about a foot or so long. Some were still crawling around and we safely cycled past by lifting both feet off the pedals well above their reach. But you know something before that incident, we in the afternoons after lunch from about 1 pm onwards we used to ride very hard for 45 minutes, exhausted we used to lie down and without a second thought rest on grass patches under trees for 15

minutes before starting again on the dot at the start of the hour. We had to be extra careful after the snake incident and when it had rained – conditions which brought the snakes out of their holes.

On the whole, it was not a difficult ride but its great fun. Besides the thrills and the self satisfaction of having participated it was great to feel welcomed by enthusiastic Sikh Sangats at every stop. The crowds were not only at the Gurdwaras' in Ipoh but also in KL, Malacca, Batu Pahat and JB.



MALACCA - SINGAPORE CHARITY RIDE

We are now organizing another ride from Malacca to Singapore from 12th to 13th April 2008. Do join in early as there are limited places.

This is a fairly easier ride. 90 kilometers from Malacca you will have an overnight stop in Batu Pahat. On the eve of Vesakhi, we will be back in Singapore right in the middle of the Vesakhi Mela at Sri Guru Singh Sabha. So do join in. There is plenty of time to prepare. Training will be provided by experienced cyclists who have done many such rides.

For more information or to participate in the ride
Call 1) Ranjeet Singh 92216115.

2) Daljit Singh 98339109.

3) Jasbir Singh Suropada 62999234.
(Sikh Welfare Council)



SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

We had a very old lady looking after her retarded grand daughter. She only took from SIWEC minimum financial help. Only asked that the grand daughter be looked after when she passed away. A suitable home was arranged for the grand daughter and the old lady went peacefully. Help us to Help More Such Cases

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Testimonials

Youth thanks the Council

As cliché as it sounds, there came a time in my life when I thought I'd never finish school. Funds were low, my mother was the sole provider for the family, and I had a younger sister who was getting through secondary school.

At some point I used to think of dropping out. But today I am armed with a university degree, ready to take the world on. And it is at this point that I offer my gratitude to the Sikh Welfare Council.

The organization has assisted my family for the past 8 years in various ways from financial assistance, monthly groceries to moral and emotional support, from tuition during my A Levels, and finally to pay fees for a semester or two during university. The Council was ready to help us whenever the need arose, to the best of its ability. And although it felt awkward to approach someone else for help outside the domestic sphere, it has proven to be a wiser choice instead of wallowing in almost self-destructive pride.

After all, life is about ups and downs. With every setting sun comes darkness no doubt, but the sun comes up again. Mine is rising, thanks to the Sikh Welfare Council.

article by recent Sikh graduate



"I thought to myself -- if only there was such support from an organization for me when my beloved father passed on in 1970. Then, at 10 years old, I was completely lost as to why it happened. There was no direction and till today, I still feel that I was robbed of some potential to grow into a better person. Thankfully, my children had an organization like SIWEC to help them rationalize their grandmother's passing and return to normal life as soon as possible."

What People Say...

Tribute to the Sikh Welfare Council

One of the saddest moments in our lives was the passing of our beloved mother/grandmother, Bebeji Gian Kaur, on the 25th of January this year.

We knew she was blessed with an additional 3-plus years after she was diagnosed with liver cancer in 2004. The extra three years, where she returned to normal life, had more than prepared all of us for her eventual passing on.

But, when the moment actually came, we were still lost. In the end it was no different from just like any other family's moment of grief and loss.

Most of us were just as lost as to what to do next. There was the expected support from members of the family and our close relatives, who helped bring some calm and understanding to the situation.

But thanks to the Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC), especially to Jasbir Singh, our mother's transition from this world to the next was, hopefully, a smooth one and good one. His help came from within five minutes of her passing.

I called Jasbir to help arrange the funeral. The words on the other side were some of the most consoling in my moment of need.

"I am really sorry about your loss. Losing a parent is certainly a difficult time, for anyone. You need to be strong for your family and to be with them now," he said.

"You do not worry about anything. I will arrange everything. All I need from you is your mother's death certificate and the time you want to book the crematorium."

That was, indeed, all I had to do.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Carrying out hospital visits for severe cases or where requested by family members to provide moral, religious and spiritual support.

Testimonials

From arranging the embalming of my mum, to her coffin, to the booking of the buses for the funeral and the paraphernalia for the funeral rites, I left it to the office of SIWEC. Right down to the administrative details of collecting the ashes the next day.

Indeed, it was all taken care of and everything went without a hitch.

But the involvement of SIWEC was not to end there. The day after the funeral, I was pleasantly surprised to receive a call from Jasbir.

He asked if everything was alright, and at first, I thought it was a routine check. But his next words truly made the difference to my family in one of its greatest moments of loss.

"If it is okay with you," he asked, "can I come over to your home and we do simran as a family. I believe that it will help your family get over the grief and understand, as well as accept, the passing of your mum." It was, he said, part of the services provided for by SIWEC as follow up.

At first I was hesitant for I did not want a preachy session at our home but, in hindsight, saying "Yes" was one of the best things I had done in those two weeks.

The family, together, every evening, coming to terms with its loss was indeed therapeutic. More importantly, Jasbir, representing the softer side of SIWEC, and explaining verses from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in relation to the passing of Bebeji, made it all the more meaningful and acceptable for my kids, and even grown-up siblings who had come all the way from Canada.

I thought to myself -- if only there was such support from an organization for me when my beloved father passed on in 1970. Then, at 10 years old, I was completely lost as to why it happened. There was no direction and till today, I still feel that I was robbed of some potential to grow into a better person.

Thankfully, my children had an organization like SIWEC to help them rationalize their grandmother's passing and return to normal life as soon as possible.

Thus, it is from the bottom of our hearts that we thank Jasbir, his wife, daughter and the SIWEC for their support throughout our mother's passing from this world to The Other World.

The family, as a whole, has accepted that our mother's passing would not be in vain, if we remain steadfastly imbued in Sikhism, take comfort from the shabads so lovingly gifted to us by Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and live our lives the way in which Bebeji

had prayed for us to do so everyday, as Sikhs.

These were messages that were heard and hopefully absorbed, from relatives and friends in their condolences and reinforced every evening by Welfare Officer in the sharing of Gurbani verses meaning in English and enriching Simran during the course of the bereavement.

This form of follow up grief counseling using Gurbani would definitely help families in accepting the loss, adjusting to life after the loss, and coping with the changes within oneself and the world after the loss.

Thank You all.

by
Santokh Singh Grewal
s/o of the late Dara Singh
(departed Aug 23rd, 1970)
and the late Gian Kaur
(departed Jan 25th 2008)

*"I feel that the prayers helped
us a lot to get over and cope with the
death of our grandmother"*
- Parveen (aged 9)

*"I think what he (Mr. Jasbir Singh)
said was very meaningful."*
- Jaskiran (aged 11)

"It helped me gain internal peace."
- Jaspal (aged 13)

*"It helped to bring us to terms with
our dearly beloved grandmother's death and
at the same time taught us a lot about our
way of life through our religion."*
- Ishwarpal (aged 14)

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

ਸਚੁ ਤਾ ਪਰੁ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਜਾ ਸਿਖ ਸਚੀ ਲੇਇ ॥ ਦਇਆ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਅ ਕੀ ਕਿਛੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਕਰੇਇ ॥

The Guru says: "Then alone is the mortal true when he receives the true instruction. He shows mercy to living beings and gives something in charity."

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Testimonials

Another tribute to the Sikh Welfare Council

I would like to put on record my deepest appreciation to Jasbir Singh for being with my family during my mother's demise on 26 March 2006. He arrived at SGH within half an hour of being called, helped my family and I on the rituals and what we need to do at the time of need. He kept reminding us that she is in a better place and we should try to console ourselves and cherish the moments we had with her.

No doubt I am familiar with what needs to be done, I was lost at that point of time and I broke down so much that he consoled me privately and kept talking to me about being positive. Even when we had the cremation ceremony three days later as we waited for my brothers and sisters to arrive from overseas, he was there again to assist and told us what to do and buy. He even accompanied me to the places to buy all the necessary stuff for the cremation.

One moment that our family felt truly touched and appreciative

was when he asked us to do Sukhmani Sahib when we had about 3 hours before departing for the crematorium. Everyone in the house appreciated his initiative and the Sukhmani Sahib put all of us at ease. An example of the power of Gurbani.

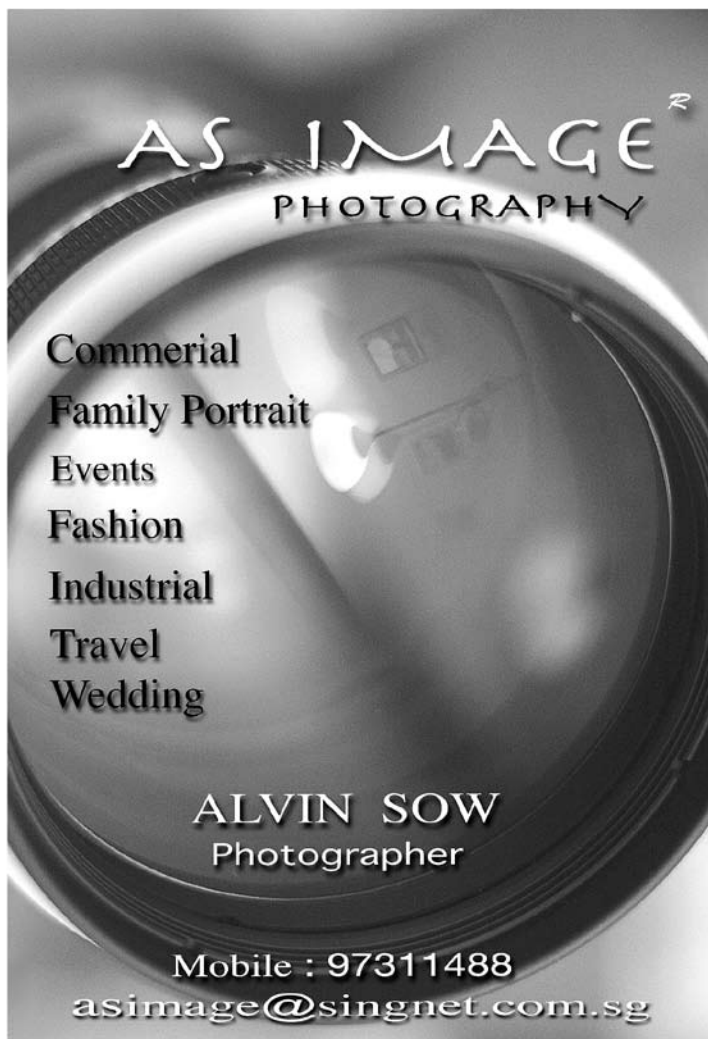
My family and I are truly grateful that the initiative of the Sikh Welfare Council in setting up such a structure of sending Jasbir in times of need. He deals with the "job" extremely professionally and puts everyone at ease and brings all of us to GOD and makes us understand the basic fundamentals of the Sikh culture and Gurbani.

I also understand that he is on standby 24 hours a day. My family and I salute him for his dedication. If only there were more Jasbirs.

Contributed by

Satwant Singh (Lawyer)

Vice President - Young Sikh Association, Singapore



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SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

We have sourced jobs for our female and some men clients from DRC's and prisons. If anyone amongst our readers can offer jobs please leave word with Welfare Officer at the above number.

Community Partnership

SIWEC & the Singapore Prison Service

Inmates Counselling

SIWEC's Prison Counseling and Rehabilitation Sub-Committee's primary objective is to improve the spiritual well being of Sikh inmates under custody so as to enhance their chances of adopting law-abiding lifestyles on their return to the community and to create a safer environment within prisons, with the aid of teachings from Sikhism.

SIWEC monitors the welfare of inmates' families during custody and acts as an external link between inmates and their families should the need arise.

Upon release, SIWEC provides assistances that include follow up counseling, searching for meaningful employment, provision of financial aid and engagement of past offenders to community service.

To reach out to the Sikh inmates, volunteers from SIWEC conduct weekly counseling and rehabilitation sessions at their assigned prisons and on special occasions such as Vesakhi and Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Janam Dihara, invite local Raagi Jathas to sing kirtan and celebrate together.

The weekly counseling and rehabilitation session starts by volunteers and inmates directing their minds and meditating on God's Name. Through this constant meditation, the inmates practice controlling their minds and reflect on God's virtues such as truth, love, benevolence and kindness. The sessions hope that with time, the inmates will begin to develop a feeling of affection and love for humanity, to observe the presence of God in every human being and upon release, utilize their life meaningfully in being responsible citizens and in serving society.

After meditation, volunteers and inmates engage themselves in interactive discussion topics such as coping with emotional and mental stress, living a happy and high-spirited life, and maintaining a positive outlook in life. Gurbani Shabads, Sikh sakhis and history and past related experiences of both volunteers and inmates are used to supplement these discussions and to provide encouragement and motivational support to the inmates.

To conclude the counseling session, Ardas is performed as an appeal to God to bless the session with continuous mediation of His Name, with a truthful, contented and high-spirited life and a plea for the welfare and prosperity of all.

by Gurpreet Singh



OUR PRISON VOLUNTEERS



S. Dalijeet Singh



S. Gurpreet Singh



S. Kashmir Singh



S. Nirmal Singh



S. Swaran Singh

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

ਨਾਨਕ ਅਗੈ ਸੋ ਮਿਲੈ ਜਿ ਖਟੇ ਘਾਲੇ ਦੇਇ ॥੧॥

Nanak says: "In the next world that alone is received which one gives to the needy from his earnings and toil."

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Community Partnership

Outcry in the Community

In the early 1990s there was an outcry in the Sikh community that their relatives were converting to other religions or ending up in prisons or drug centers due to incoherent behaviour. This noise of desperation was brought up to the Sikh Advisory Board which then sought the help of Sikh volunteers and I was among one of them. Our first visit was to Changi Prison which was one of the main prisons in Singapore. To our surprise the numbers of Sikh inmates were alarming in comparison to the Sikh population in Singapore.

After the initial visit to Changi Prison, our first task was to ascertain the number of inmates in the smaller drug centers and prisons all over Singapore. Shockingly the initial number was over a hundred. This situation did not discourage us. It was not a bed of roses as some people would think; it was a bleeding task which requires patience and tolerance. We allocated Sikh volunteers to different prisons and drug centers and started counselling service mainly in religious and social issues. The counsellors encountered lots of frustrations and discouragements in their task. I am grateful to those who have persevered and sacrificed their time and effort for a good cause.

Successes

Although we faced brickbats at the initial stage, our perseverance has reaped results. Some inmates after being released from rehabilitation centres have embarked on a career and then went on to lead a successful life. We were indeed delighted to know that an inmate has set-up his own business, another owns a stall at a food market and a third has become a chef at a four star hotel. On the other hand there have been some unusual cases where the inmates after being released turned back to their old behaviour. This news has been heartbreaking but we persevered to

find a solution and through coaxing and counselling tried to help them.

One achievement that deserves mention is that the number of inmates has reduced over time. On release from prison or drug centres, the inmates had either turned over a new leaf or alternatively hooked on to a job that has given them the impetus to stride for a career and not forgetting their immersion into society. Nowadays, the grass is no greener in counselling new inmates. Their demands are such that it is sometimes indeed difficult for us to fulfill as we need to abide by the prison rules. But we handle the situation on a case by case basis and try our best to touch base with the Prison personnels to ease their problems regardless of the severity of the case. One word of caution is that inmates must realise that they are in a prison and not a hotel for actions which are unacceptable to society.

The Sikh counsellors have dedicated

their time for a good cause. In particular, when inmates were on death row, the counsellors were there when the inmates needed them, helping them to believe in Waheguru as the Almighty decides what is to happen! In fact, one young Sikh was able to recite Boleh Sonihal Sat Sri Akal before he went to the gallows.

Finally I would like to salute the Sikh Welfare Service for initiating a Sikh Counselling Service and Sikh counsellors who have spent their valuable time counselling Sikh inmates in prisons and holding special prayer sessions for Vesakhi, Guru Nanak's Birthday and helping inmates to uplift themselves to lead a successful life.

by S. Kashmir Singh

The writer is a Sikh professional who received the long service award for 10 years service in 2007.



Director of Prisons, Mr Chua Chin Kiat giving the ten year service award to Kashmir Singh.

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

We would like to form a data base of Sikh tutors who can work with the children of our clients. Both in tutoring and mentoring. We would like to make a list for both volunteers and those who would like to be paid. Alongside with education, we need you to impart Sikh Values

You can play a part

Volunteering

"Thank you" or "God bless you" are heartfelt words often said to a volunteer.

In the biography of Bhagat Puran Singh Ji, it says that a being a sewak is being a friend of the forlorn, helper of the helpless. This noble cause does not need the volunteer to be academically educated, but be a passionate lover of mankind.

When I first started doing volunteer "job", I was not sure what was expected of me. However when I saw the smile and look of appreciation on the face of the individual I was helping, it gave me the most joyous and unique feeling as I did so little and received so much. Thus I began my journey of social welfare work.

Sometimes in the cause of my work all I need to do is sit and listen to the individual or even reach out the disabled who is trying to put on his shoe. At the end of the day I feel good that I have spent my time and energy in helping others and bestowing hope.

This "job" might not pay monetarily but it gives great satisfaction.

The writer is a professional nursing officer in Singapore and an active volunteer with the Sikh Welfare Council.



With Best Compliments From



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SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

ਜਿਥੇ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ਤਿਥੇ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸ਼ੀਸ਼ ॥੪॥੩॥

"Where the poor are looked after on them O Lord shower thy grace."

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You can play a part

Joys of Volunteering

They say that you can make the world a better place simply by bringing a smile to someone's face. For the past six months, Pavandeep Singh Dhaliwal, has been bringing smiles to the faces of the residents of St. Joseph's Home, a haven for the aged and destitute. He is part of an independent group of volunteers who have dedicated themselves to making Saturday mornings for the residents of a number of such homes special. Their plan is simple. Every Saturday morning they visit the residents of these homes and serve them the choicest of local breakfast snacks.

The volunteers, who are themselves from different religions and racial backgrounds, truly capture the essence of sewa, selfless service regardless of race or religion. Pavandeep's Saturdays start with an early morning visit to Teka Market where the volunteers meet to purchase various goodies such as roti prata, puttu mayam, vaadai and yu cha queh. What they

purchase is dependent on the requests of the residents. It is straight to St. Joseph's Home then where the residents eagerly look forward to their Saturday morning treat. It is not only the meal that the residents look forward to, they enjoy having a listening ear and someone to dote over them. And of course, they have someone to share their weekly gossip with. For many, Saturday mornings are the highlight of the week.

The power of a kind word and a small act of love is very often underestimated.

The smiling faces of the residents belie how much the act of kindness by Pavandeep and his fellow volunteers means to them. Yet, if you ask Pavandeep about

his experience he is quick to point out that he has gained immensely from his weekly visits to the Home. Seeing the happiness in the eyes of the residents brings immeasurable joy to him. The experience has also enabled him to develop his ability to communicate and interact with people of all ages and from all walks of life.

Next Saturday morning when settling down to your breakfast, ask yourself how many smiles are you going to give to the world today?



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VOLUNTEERS ARE WELCOME.

Please leave your name and telephone at the above Hotline and we can include you as soon as we have enough volunteers and we can arrange a training session. Join us and discover the joy of lighting up someone's life.

You can play a part

How SIWEC counselling saved me - *An interview*

Over the years, SIWEC has helped many people financially, socially and emotionally.

Welfare is only one aspect of SIWEC. Some volunteers have helped counsel and guide drug addicts at the DRC.

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with someone who was counselled by such a volunteer.

Q: What led you to take drugs?

A: I was a teenager then. I was curious and bored and wanted to try new things. My friends were smoking and drinking and I wanted to have a sense of belonging in this group.

Q: What drugs did you take?

A: I started with a soft drug like marijuana and later took harder ones like heroin.

Q: How did you buy these drugs?

A: I am not proud of this but I cheated, lied and even stole to get my hands on the drugs.

Q: What made you decide to change?

A: I had been in and out of prison and DRC several times and I asked myself if this is what I wanted. I realised that there must be more to life than this. That year I also lost a very close family member. I did not like the life I was leading.

Q: How did SIWEC help?

A: I was arrested for drug taking and had to be in DRC for the next two years. There at the DRC, SIWEC counsellors gave religious and emotional guidance and support. Although I had attended the sessions before, this time they were more meaningful to me as I had made up my mind to change for the better.

Q: What part did the Sikh Volunteers play in your recovery?

A: The regular counselling sessions helped to build self confidence in me. I recall how one volunteer would give us a big hug and would listen to us attentively. This boosted our morale.

Q: Tell us about your present state.

A: Now I have a stable job with a stable income. I have made some friends. I still have my old friends but am stronger to resist temptation. I know what is important to me - strong family bond is necessary and family can help to overcome any hardship.

Q: It is very brave of you to come forward with your story; what do you hope to achieve by doing this?

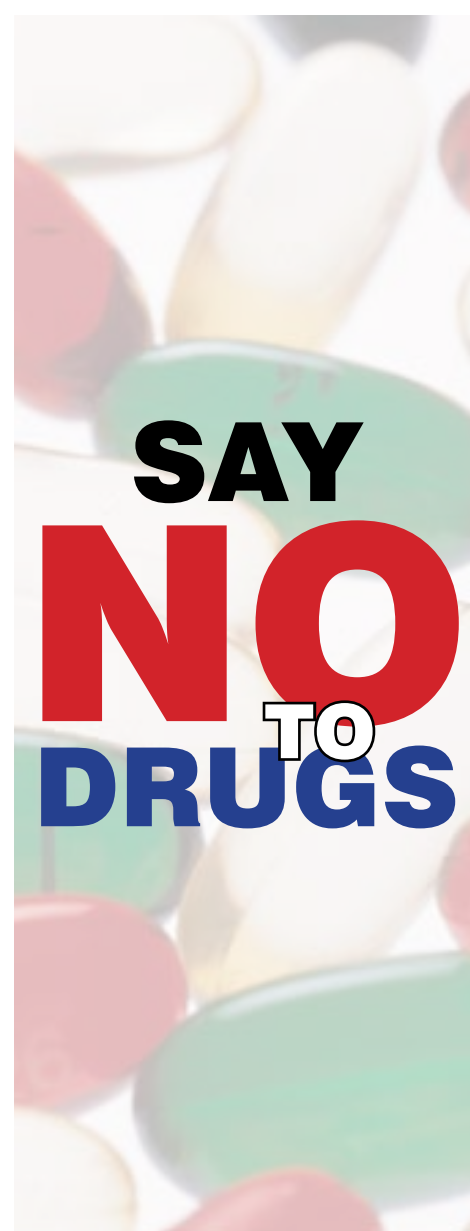
A: My journey out of drugs was a long and painful one. I feel that parents play a major role in our lives and children should have an open relationship with them. I lacked that and the volunteers from SIWEC helped me see that. Parents and children should communicate openly so that they will be able to come to them if they need any help.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

A: I have kept off drugs for some years now and am a happier person. I still keep in contact with SIWEC counselors but we are more like friends now. I do

wish to be a volunteer one day to help other drug offenders. I think I can better understand the addicts and hope to use my knowledge and experience to reach them.

With that our interview came to a close. He seemed very contented with his present life and had positive plans for the future. We all wish him the best in all his undertakings.



SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL - Over a decade of serving the community's welfare needs

We would welcome suggestions for improving SIWEC's work
and articles for our future magazines.

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

Know your SIWEC Welfare Officers



JASBIR SINGH SUROPADA

Senior Welfare Officer

BA. Psychology (Counselling)

Certified Traumatologist
(Academy of Traumatology USA)

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H/P: 9618 9301



INDREJITH KAUR

Welfare Officer

BA. Psychology (Counselling)

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PRISONS AND DRC VISIT PROGRAMME

- ~ Providing spiritual and rehabilitative counseling to Sikh inmates.
- ~ Studying the needs of Sikh inmates in jail.
- ~ Providing a link between the inmates and their families if the need arises.
- ~ Assisting the Sikh inmates in finding meaningful employment upon release.
- ~ Following up counseling for inmates after being released.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

- ~ Investigate and assess welfare cases and put them up for approval of the council;
- ~ Carry out hospital visits for the more serve cases, and where requested by families, provide moral, religious and spiritual support;
- ~ Carry out visits to deliver food rations, financial assistance and food vouchers to clients who are sickly and unable to come to the office.
- ~ Helping to find shelter for family members thrown out of their houses in the middle of the night;
- ~ Mediating to settle family quarrels and disputes
- ~ Counseling families and individuals on a regular basis;
- ~ Visiting the aged who do not have family support, including arranging for their food;
- ~ Arranging legal assistance for needy families;

HOSPITAL VISITS PROGRAMME

- ~ Obtaining information from Sikh nurses/doctors regarding the location of the seriously ill Sikh patients.
- ~ Organizing visits by volunteers or other individuals to hospitals.
- ~ Helping with the needs of Sikh patients in hospitals, including religious counseling.
- ~ Providing families of seriously ill Sikh patients with guidance in obtaining assistance from various health agencies and medical specialist, etc.
- ~ Providing free medical screening and counseling by volunteer doctors and nurses.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

- ~ Accessing needs of under privileged families.
- ~ Assisting families to become self-reliant in terms of their long term needs.
- ~ Processing and approving all cases of financial assistance to Sikh individuals and families.
- ~ Referring cases for educational assistance to individuals and families.
- ~ Directing the full time staff to further investigate requests for financial

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT FOR INMATES

- ~ Visiting inmates in prisons and DRC to provide emotional support and spiritual counseling ;
- ~ Provide support to former inmates to fit into society and become Gursikhs ;
- ~ Deploying volunteers to various cases in different intuitions.

INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY COUNSELLING PROGRAMME

- ~ Providing of counseling for family members or individuals upon request.
- ~ Liaising with Family Service Centre of SINDA and Ministry of Community Development, CDCs and other
- ~ Publicizing in the community of various available national programme pertaining to the development and cohesion of the family as a basic social unit.
- ~ Studying of family needs for the follow up action by other committees under the council.
- ~ Promoting family values as proposed the Sikh way of life.

BEREAVEMENT RELATED SERVICES

- ~ Providing emotional and spiritual support to the family of the bereaved ;
- ~ Ensuring the hearse is available ;
- ~ Making arrangements to keep the body of the deceased with the dignity if there is a delay in the cremation ;
- ~ Making the various arrangements for the funeral in consultation with the family.
- ~ Helping the family in the actual conduct of the funeral ;
- ~ Providing assistance to the family in arranging for and all through the prayers for the deceased ;
- ~ Attending to other needs of the family following bereavement.

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Bring a smile to the needy and to your own heart.
Become a donor.

Read our "Appeal for Funds" article and please send in the Giro form on the last page.

An appeal for funds

Lessons from our heritage

You must all have been touched by Bhai Kaniyah's unstinting love for fellow human beings, even while Sikhs were at war, during Guru Gobind Singh Ji's time. He saw God in all. Thus whether they were friends or foes he served water and provided first aid to all.

You must have also heard of Bhagat Puran Singh Ji of Pingalwara in the city of Amritsar. His name will live for ever for his devotion in looking after the handicapped and the needy. The handicap centre and numerous other similar institutions are still there though he has departed from this world. His selfless service and devotion to humanity will never be forgotten.

You might have read that Guru Teg Bahadur ji at the tender age of age of 4½, on his way to a marriage in mid winter gave away his fine clothes and jewelry to a very poor and needy boy whom everyone else had ignored. On his mother's questioning, when he returned home, he said that he gave everything to the boy knowing that there was no one to help the boy. But as for himself he knew his mother will give him a new set of clothes with a smile!

We all know that Guru Nanak and the Sakhi of Sacha Sauda. And I am sure everyone is well aware that Guru Nanak is the one who laid out the concept of sharing and caring for the needy.

Not a very well known fact is that the famous Professor Sahib Singh was during his early years, a very poor person who was helped by more than 100 people. And do you know he remembered them all in his daily Ardas? What a way to receive blessings.

Gurdwaras were set up to help the poor with food.

In India and elsewhere where there is famine or there is some sort of natural disaster it's very pleasing to know that we Sikhs are out there providing Langar for months and years. A lot of our Gurdwaras in Punjab are helping a lot of extremely poor with meals through their daily Langar.

There is a Gurdwara in KL sending food to the poor in a hospital weekly and also on Sundays keeps packets of pre-packed langar ready for some poor regulars to collect and take home to share with their families. I'm sure there are a lot other such beautiful stories we all know of.

Let's just do our bit and really and truly receive God's blessings.

Singapore Sikhs are living up to their Guru's examples through the Singapore Sikh Welfare Council. It has now been around for 12 years. As you would have gathered from some articles in this magazine it is really providing really much appreciated services (not just financial help) to 58 Sikh families who would otherwise have to turn to non Sikhs for help.

It is a way of life since the Gurus' Times to help each other no matter who in the society.

You must have read the letter from the Sikh boy whose family was helped in his younger days. He mentions getting help for his university for just a semester or two. That is true for few reasons,

- Our funds are limited;
- We also try and make families self reliant. We know there are loans available for tertiary education which can be repaid with some pride by the graduate; and
- Our limited funds can be used for others more in need.

Individuals and Gurdwaras' have been supporting with the finances of SIWEC. SIWEC itself has gone into fund raising in innovative ways but it's always good to have a steady flow of funds to meet all needs and maybe be more liberal with our clients. So we are appealing to all to contribute **a small part of your daswandh regularly through Giro to Siwec.**

With regular funds coming in the people running the show can look into new services. Personally I would be terrible ashamed if at all this institute stops providing any of its services that it's providing now. If anything its services should be increased.

Teenager's problems should be tackled more aggressively. Their educational improvement should be supported by funds even more generously from SIWEC and that SIWEC be made accountable for the success of our young clients.

Their ties to Sikhism and Sikh way of life should be made stronger and that they should be sponsored to go with the Punjabi Students heritage tours to Punjab. Expenses of this nature should not be frowned upon as wastage. We have from our inception been a caring society with really big hearts. And we have always been a self help group.

Our Gurus' basic concept of caring and sharing has kept us going both in generosity and spirit. And will prevail for ever. But albeit if we can become a bit more regular it will reduce the burden of our volunteers who often have to spend more time in raising funds rather than excellence and development of new programmes. We have a very experienced and able group. Make it possible for them to do their job better and increase the services.

BECOME A REGULAR DONOR THROUGH GIRO and remove their fund raising anxieties.

A Giro Form has been attached to this magazine. Please cut it out or photostat and fill up sections 1, 2 and 3 and we will get your bank to process it.

We intend bringing out this magazine bi-yearly. Some of you can help by taking out an advertisement regularly. A few advertisements could throw up some surplus for SIWEC.

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Bring a smile to the needy and to your own heart.
Guru Gobind Singh Ji said "My treasury (Golak) is a poor man's mouth."
Become a donor.

24 HOUR HOTLINE
62999 234

My Personal Particulars

Name:

Address:

NRIC No:

Date of Birth:

Email:

Handphone:

Telephone No:

Occupation (Optional):

Completed forms to be sent to:

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL

**TOWNER P. O. BOX 1468
SINGAPORE 913237**

Support the Sikh Welfare Council

Monthly Contribution to Welfare

YES, I want to give LOVE and CARE to the needy with my monthly contribution of:

☐ \$51 ☐ \$21 ☐ \$11 ☐ \$_____ (please specify)

☐ Please debit my bank account; I have completed the Giro application form below.

One-Time Contribution

YES, I would like to contribute:

☐ \$1001 ☐ \$501 ☐ \$201 ☐ \$101 ☐ \$_____ (please specify)

☐ I enclose a cheque / money order no.* _____ made payable to "Sikh Welfare Council"

APPLICATION FORM FOR INTERBANK GIRO

Part I: For Donor's Completion

Date:

To: Name of Bank

Branch:

Billing Organisation:

Donor's Name:

Donor's NRIC/Passport No.*

- a) I/We hereby instruct you to process the Sikh Welfare Council's instructions to debit my / our account.
b) You are entitled to reject the Sikh Welfare Council's debit instructions if my / our account does not have sufficient funds and charge me / us a fee for this. You may also at your discretion allow the debit even if this results in overdraft on the account and impose charges accordingly.
c) This authorisation will remain in force until terminated by your written notice sent to my / our address last known to you or upon receipt of my / our written revocation through the Sikh Welfare Council

Name(s) as in Bank Record:

Bank Account Number:

Contact Number(s)

Tel:

Fax:

Thumbprint(s) / Signature(s)*:

Part 2: For SIWEC's Official Use Only

Bank

Branch

SikhWelfare Council Account No.

7	1	7	1	0	3	3	0	3	3	0	2	0	4	7	4	4
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Bank

Branch

Account No. To Be Debited

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Sikh Welfare Council Reference No.

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Limit Of Each Payment (Exclude Cents)

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*Please delete as appropriate

Part 3: For Bank's Official Use Only

To: Sikh Welfare Council

This application is hereby rejected (please tick) for the following reason(s):

- ☐ Signature / Thumbprint* differs from Bank records
☐ Signature / Thumbprint* incomplete / unclear*
☐ Account operated by signature / thumbprint*
☐ Wrong account number
☐ Amendment not countersigned by customer
☐ Others:

Name of Approving Officer:

Date:

Authorised Signature:

