

Sikh Welfare Council, Singapore

<https://www.facebook.com/SikhWelfareCouncil>

Five-Forty for Charity



540 Km | 4 days | 12-15 March 2016 | 65 Riders | 25 Event Marshals | Fund Raising Target of \$200,000
2 Beneficiaries; SIWEC (80%) & Sunlove Home (20%)



SIWEC would like to wish all riders the very best in their journey for charity. If you would like to make a contribution as a donor, or wish to volunteer as an event marshal, it's still not too late!

Please email your interest to manjitsr@hotmail.com or contact 9855 0192.

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A Journey of Empathy

Before Ride for Charity (RFC) embarks on its second journey, riders and volunteers paid a visit to one of the beneficiaries of this ride- Sunlove Abode for the Intellectually Infirm.

Sunlove Home played host to a group of about 30 volunteers from RFC and SIWEC on 19 September 2015. The abode is home to approximately 200 intellectually-disabled persons and provides, among other things, rehabilitation and psychotherapy for its residents. The home is also one of the beneficiaries for this year's RFC. It was in an effort to understand firsthand the organization and persons who will be helped with the money raised that volunteers paid a visit to the home.

Mr Wee Lim, founder of the Sunlove, led the group on a highly informative tour of the home's premises, explaining the various amenities and services provided for residents. This included a food hall where volunteers perform weekly and where RFC volunteers sang for and danced with the residents! Another beautiful part of the home was the 'Harmony Activity Area'; a room for prayer and reflection. In this room, all major world religions are represented- sharing the same wall in the same space. It is in this room that the values of harmony, love and



unity come to life. It is with those values that SIWEC serves the community, for service to humanity transcends barriers of race and religion.

Volunteers also spent time interacting with the residents and served them delicious food generously donated by Riverwalk Tandoor. The day ended with dancing- Punjabi style of course!

For volunteers, the experience at Sunlove Home was an educational one and a reminder that donating time, money and love goes a long way in helping individuals in need. SIWEC, as the other beneficiary of RFC 2016, greatly appreciates the hard work and tireless effort put in by every single volunteer to raise money for SIWEC and our services. The donations raised will indeed go a long way in helping us help the less fortunate. On behalf of SIWEC, thank you volunteers!



A Purple Collaboration by SG Sikhs



SG Sikhs@ Purple Parade 2015 Contingent

P for Purple, P for Pagh- 31 October was more than just Halloween last year, it was the day thousands of Singaporeans donned purple in an effort to speak up for persons with special needs. That's right; it was Singapore's Purple Parade 2015- a 'movement that supports the inclusion, and celebrates the abilities, of people with special needs'!

Amongst the crowd last October though was something previous

Purple Parades had not seen before- a sea of beautiful purple *paghs* (or turbans) of men from the first ever SG Sikhs@ Purple Parade contingent! A collaborative initiative between SIWEC, Singapore Punjabi Bikers, Young Sikh Association and Singapore Sikh Sewaks, the SG Sikhs@ Purple Parade contingent aimed to exemplify the Sikh community's support towards persons with special needs within the Sikh community and in Singapore as a whole. The contingent even designed t-shirts specifically for the event!



About 30 Sikh ladies, gents (and baby) came together to form the Purple Parade's first ever Sikh contingent. This cause struck a chord with SIWEC as we are an organization that works with clients from all walks of life, including persons with special needs. Our fast paced society tends to leave behind persons who are different and, as an organization that strives to serve the community, SIWEC aims to ensure no one falls within the cracks or gets left behind.

While forming a contingent alone does not solve this problem, it is the first step the Sikh community, and SIWEC, has taken to show our support for the more vulnerable in our society. We look forward to seeing you as part of the SG Sikhs@ Purple Parade 2016 contingent! Stand with us in purple pride!



Lighting Hearts and Homes 2015

In an attempt to spread the festive cheer of Deepavali, a group of like-minded individuals have joined hands for the past three years consecutively for project *LIGHTING HEARTS AND HOMES*. Spearheaded entirely by individuals from different backgrounds, to include businessmen, students, professionals and entire families, and with no support from any organisation, each year the team of volunteers raises funds which are then used to deliver festive packs to needy families across Singapore. Each festive pack includes homemade festive goodies and basic essentials. For the project in November 2015, the combined value of all items in each festive pack exceeded \$100. In total, more than 580 households received the festive packs. Through this project, the team hopes to engage as many individuals to reach out to those less privileged among us and remind them that they are not forgotten.

SIWEC supported the project by sending some of our volunteers to assist with the operations of project team such as logistics and delivering the festive packs. More importantly, some of SIWEC's clients which include the elderly, disabled persons living alone, single parents and other

"We can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone..."

- The ethos of project *LIGHTING HEARTS AND HOMES*



deserving households were also beneficiaries of the project. This is an excellent example of an initiative that brings together people from all walks to contribute to the community by making a small difference in the life of a total stranger, and provides an opportunity to reflect and light many hearts.

SIWEC is grateful to all volunteers that made *LIGHTING HEARTS AND HOMES 2015* an overwhelming success! If you would like to find out more information on the project and get involved later this year, you may visit the following website: <http://lightingheartslightinghomes.weebly.com/>.



The Family that Serves Together Stays Together

*I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy.
I woke and I saw that life is all service.
I served and I saw that service is joy.*

- Khalid Gibran



SIWEC Insight spoke to brothers Avnash Singh and Harmeet Singh who recently embarked on, and successfully completed Project Khwaish XIV, an overseas service learning project by the Young Sikh Association Singapore (YSA). They were part of a team consisting of Singaporean youth who helped refurbish the school grounds and provide a library for the Government Senior Secondary School at Ghudani Kalan, Ludhiana Punjab, India. We found out more on their motivations and reasons for volunteering at a young age...

Q1: What inspires you to volunteer?

Avnash: I like helping others. It comes to me as second nature, probably because I enjoy it so much that this drives me to volunteer for various programmes and events.

Harmeet: I feel like we should always give and not expect anything in return. I always volunteer on the basis of this principle. The feeling you get after helping someone in need is priceless. No amount of money or gifts can make you feel as happy

after seeing others happy. In many ways, one also gains a lot from the experience of volunteering and being of service to others.

Avnash: Adding to that, our parents also show us the way when it comes to volunteering. Dad is especially involved in volunteering and he has a particular interest in helping youth. As far as possible, he always makes it a point to take the entire family along with him when he volunteers and so we've learnt a lot and made many friends along the way. Needless to say it's also a way for us to spend time as a family and its fun!

Q2: How do you manage to juggle all your other commitments and volunteering?

Harmeet: School, friends and family are all important and as far as possible, I try to dedicate an equal amount of time for these. I think having clear goals also helps. For me, my goal is quite simple- to do well in school, spend time with my family members and give back to society. These goals allow me to prioritize

what I must and want to do.

Avnash: It's useful to not think of all our commitments as separate from one another. For example, and as I mentioned before, our family volunteers together and this way we get to spend quality time through new experiences, making fantastic memories along the way. So similarly, with friends we can also find a way to spend time together doing activities that are meaningful. In my case, I will be enlisting for National Service (NS) soon and I reckon this will take up a lot of my time for the next few years, but I look forward to seeing how I can still make it work when it comes to all the things I want to do.

Q3: Most recently you went on Project Khwaish XIV together. What was the experience like, going together as brothers?

Harmeet: The experience was great! It was my first time going overseas without my parents and having my brother with me was comforting. I was not anxious as I always look up to him and knew I could count on



him to help and guide me along the way. Going together, we got to learn a lot more about each other such as each other's strengths and weaknesses. Overall, this trip was a good opportunity for us to bond as brothers.

Avnash: Yes I agree it was an amazing opportunity and a new experience for both of us going together overseas to bond. It was also a good way for us to learn how we can better be of service to others by building on our volunteer experiences here in Singapore. Most importantly, I think all the youth in the team came back feeling a lot more appreciative of what we have back here at home. We're really grateful for the things we enjoy here but don't give much thought about until they are taken away from us.

Q4: What did you learn about Punjab, the community and school you completed Project Khwaish XIV?

Avnash: The community was very warm and welcoming. When we walked around the village, the people would wait for us and wave

at us. This was very different and overwhelming because you would rarely experience this in Singapore - where it takes more time for complete strangers to approach each other and get comfortable with one another. The students and teachers were especially friendly as well. Within the two weeks, we had forged unique bonds with them. The students would help us with painting and through our conversations with them, we learnt more about each other. They felt like our brothers and sisters and leaving them once we had completed the project was heart-breaking.

Harmeet: What really struck me about the community during our time there was how people were so friendly and forthcoming with offering their help. They were always willing to go great lengths to help us and ensured that we had a comfortable living space and that we could complete work at the school. So while we had set out to help the community there, in many ways it was a two-way process and we would not have accomplished much of what we had set out to do without their help.

Avnash: Indeed, it truly was a collaborative project where we worked with the community to complete the project at the school. So while we did have our initial ideas, informed by our experiences and perceptions of what a school should be like 'Singapore-style', we learnt that things work very differently in other parts of the world. It is therefore always useful to spend some time consulting the community on their needs instead of prescribing what should be done as it is much more meaningful to work together.

Q5: Any advice for young individuals/youth like you who want to volunteer but may not know where to start?

Harmeet: My advice would be to start small like donating money to charity and building up from there. There are many organisations who are looking for youth to volunteer, and joining one of these organisations would help to build up your experience and passion.

Avnash: Yes, I agree with Harmeet on the point of passion. Usually it's when you are passionate about an issue that you are able to find ways to commit to a cause. There is a saying when it comes to working and jobs that if you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life. I think this applies to service and volunteering as well. It becomes a part of you rather than something you do additionally. So to fellow youth, I would advise them to take the time to find out and see what interests them, keep an open mind when it comes to service and volunteering, and do it out interest and passion.

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji Birthday Celebration at the Prisons Nov 2015

One of the three pillars of the Sikh faith is *vand ke chakna*; the act of sharing one's fruit of labour with others. In sharing, a Sikh understands that everything he possesses has been provided by *Waheguru*, the almighty God, and it is his duty as a Sikh of the guru to share what he has with others in community.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji, from an early age, was deeply sympathetic to the plights of the needy. His father had once given him money and instructed him to enter into a good bargain, or *khara sauda*. The Guru left home in search for such a trade when he came across a group of saints who had not eaten for several days. Guru Ji chose to use the money on feasting the saints as to him, there was no bargain better than the act of giving to those who are in need. Later, the Guru institutionalised the *langar*- a common kitchen in all Gurudwaras that provides free vegetarian food to all, regardless of race, creed or caste.

At SIWEC, we once again had the blessed opportunity to further this



very spirit of *vand ke chakna* last November 2015.

For two days on the 12th and 17th of November 2015, volunteer counsellors active in SIWEC's prisons counselling services for inmates along with members of SIWEC's management committee spent the morning of each day doing *Naam Simran*, *Kirtan* and *Gurbani* explanation followed by *Ardaas* for inmates. This was in order to commemorate Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Birthday Celebrations

at the prisons as a congregation with inmates from our community and in line with SIWEC's counselling, rehabilitation and befriending efforts for inmates which aim to successfully reintegrate them back into society. SIWEC was also able to secure approval for *Langgar* of *Karah Parsad* with *Channa* to be taken into the prisons that was prepared by the *Yishun Gurdwara*. SIWEC is especially thankful to the Prisons for allowing us to continue to effectively reach out to inmates who are members of our community. We are also grateful for our committed team of volunteers who make themselves readily available to cater to the needs of these inmates, and most importantly are there to remind them that they are not forgotten.

To further their counselling objectives which is primarily to provide counselling, rehabilitation and befriending inmates and to assist them to reintegrate back into society, SIWEC and its committed team of volunteers visits inmates to celebrate *Vesakhi* and *Guru Nanak Dev Ji's* birthday celebrations every year.

PRISONS/COUNSELLING AND AFTERCARE PROGRAM

SIWEC focuses on the following :-

WHILE IN PRISON

- Provide spiritual and rehabilitative counselling to inmates.
- Address the needs of the inmates.

POST RELEASE

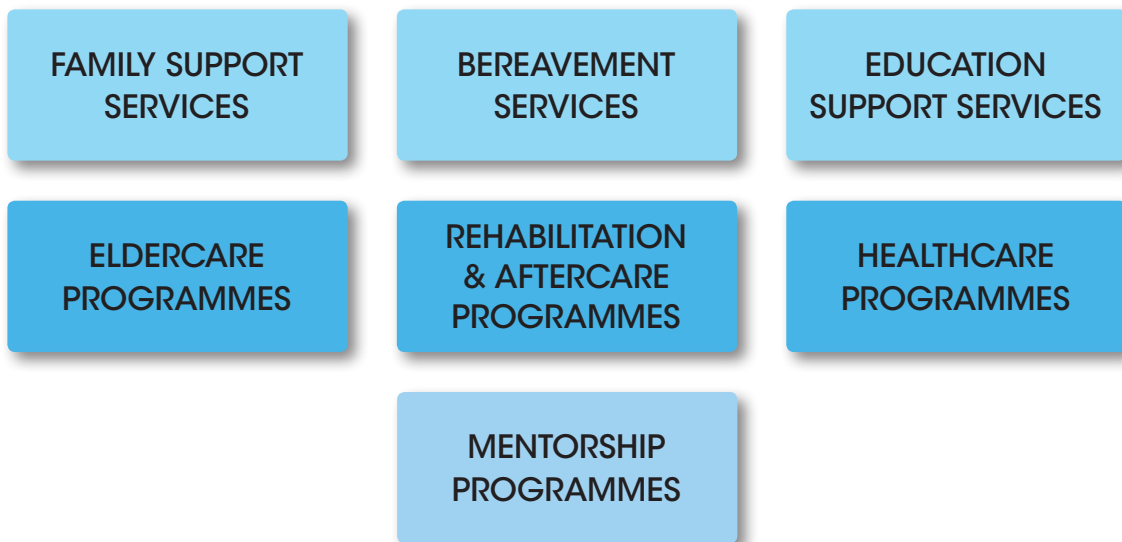
- Assist in finding meaningful employment through organisations like SCORE/SACA.
- Follow up counselling;
- Collaboration with aftercare associations like THE ASHRAM

Should you or anyone you know wish to be a volunteer, please do not hesitate to contact SIWEC.

@ SIWEC

**"The best way to find yourself
Is to lose yourself in the service of others."**

- Mahatma Gandhi



JAN'16

FEB'16

MAR'16

26 JANUARY:
Commencement
of 2016's
Sunehri
Saheliyan

14 FEBRUARY:
Ride for Charity
briefing
1.30 – 4.30 pm,
Central Sikh Temple
Level4

12-15 MARCH:
Ride for
Charity 2016

SIWEC bids farewell to our staff...

AMRIT KAUR, Education project Officer & KARAMJIT KAUR, Social Work Executive

and welcomes on board...

JASPREET KAUR, Social Work Executive | NELVINDER KAUR, Administrative Executive

SIWEC is here to help. If you or someone you know requires assistance or is interested in our services, please come down to meet us at:

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL

2 Towner Road, #06-02, Singapore 327804

Opening Hours: Monday- Friday, 9am-6pm

Email: info@siwec.org or contact out 24-hour helpline @ 6299 9234