



Shishur Sevay

To Not Feel Alone in the Universe

LIFE AT SHISHUR SEVAY

A view on how we are dealing during a Global Pandemic

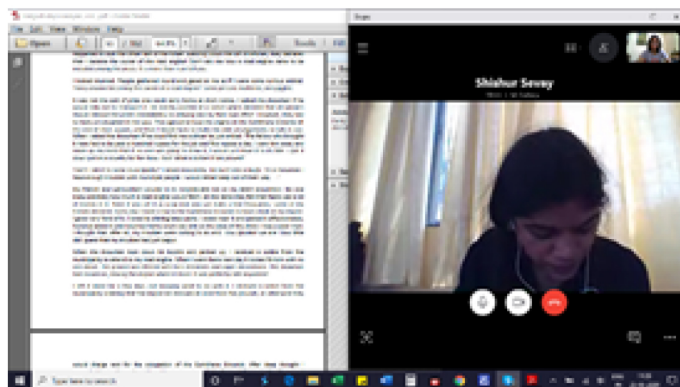
A note from our founder, Dr. Michelle Harrison

We Are All Connected

When talking about the meaning of family, a little girl once said to me, "Family means the people you share germs with." Never has that been more true because we all share germs. At this moment we are trying not to share a certain set of germs, but we understand we are all vulnerable. We are all family; none of us is immune. So, Shishur Sevay wants to share with our friends, family, supporters how we are weathering this pandemic. India is on lockdown, total lockdown until 15 April. If you go on the street you will be confronted by police demanding to know why you are out of your home. But we are fine. Teachers are giving classes online; everyone is doing what they can from home. The massis/caretakers are staying here. I am taking up the slack and spending time with the children. Thank you for caring.



Karate class through online video instructions.



One of the girls reading Malgudi Days through Skype

The girls have managed the technology for the classes including and also do some basic troubleshooting. When problems have occurred they worked via teacher instructions and screen sharing. For the past three years they have all been in a weekly computer class.



Sharing a Subitizing image through skype



An ongoing online session

STAYING CONNECTED



On a whatsapp video call with one of the teachers

FEEDING THE POOR

Our girls' origins are among the extremely underprivileged. We taught them that these were the foundations on which to gain strength and grow. Today they asked how we can help the poor and hungry during the #lockdown. We all decided to cut our food budget while still staying healthy. The money saved goes to a program feeding the hungry.

[CLICK HERE to read e-paper article - Bengali newspaper Ei Samay: To Fight Against Coronavirus Michelle Harrison And Her Shishur Sevay Decided To Cut Their Food Budget And Money Saved Would Go To A Program Feeding The Poor](#)



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Quarterly Activity Report January – March 2020

JANUARY

- A Sweet Sixteen for Ganga and Bornali's 16th birthday. we made it a little more special for them. There is a lot that they miss out that the other girls are able to do, so we wanted them to have a special day.



- The girls attending Mamata Shankar's Udayan Kala Kendra participated in their annual program Prayaas, at Science City Auditorium.



One of our girls taking centre stage in the performance

- The girls participated in the KKI cup National Level Full Contact Karate Championship. Two of them were adjudged third in their respective groups.



- Bidipta Khasnobis, a college student, started her internship at Shishur Sevay. She has been very helpful, working with our youngest one, helping her with her schoolwork, and making material for our upcoming playschool.

FEBRUARY

- Four of the girls took their karate belt test and went on to the next levels. One got upper yellow, two got yellow and our youngest got the upper blue belt.
- Judi Klover has been a regular volunteer at Shishur Sevay. This time she took the girls on various trips, to the planetarium, the movies and did various activities them. She also did a workshop on various aspects of a play school, based on her years of experience. This was very helpful given that we would be starting the playschool shortly. The movie vouchers were donated by Payal Maji.



At the theater after watching the Hindi film, Panga.

- Laura Cuda a.k.a. Laura TheGypsy volunteered her time conducting yoga and dance sessions for the girls. The floor routines allowed the girls with disabilities to participate too. They all loved it.



Yoga session with the girls

- Purba Rudra went for a two-day RX Math workshop on building basic number sense, conducted by Jacquie Johnston from National Institute for Learning Development (NILD), South Africa. Some of the girls at Shishur Sevay have poor number sense and hence often struggle with application in daily life as well. This would also be helpful in the playschool.
- We got closer to starting the Children's Smart Centre, the inclusive play school for the poor in our community. The rental agreement was signed for

for the place that would house the centre. Dr Harrison and Board Vice President, Seema Gupta represented Shishur Sevay in the contract and one of the girls signed as witness.



- Board member Jayita Dey along with three of her friends, Tamalika Das, Sujata Chatterjee and Sutapa Dutta organized a trip to Nehru Children's Museum, where the girls saw dioramas depicting Indian epics and dolls from all over the world.

- One of Puja's paintings was chosen as the cover for a collection of poetry by Manoj Dey, a friend of Shishur Sevay.



The book cover with her art

- Our older car was close to 15 years old and was having frequent breakdown, by Indian law it had to go off the road within the year. Friends of Shishur Sevay donated funds to buy a new car. Some of girls who are more abled, now go out on their own using public transport but for our girls with severe disabilities that is not an option and having a car that is dependable is necessary.



Ganga and Bono with Dr. Harrison, staff and the new car

A special thank you to FOSS president Meera Rao and Treasurer Dean Gould for raising the funds and making the arrangement in time.

We had a wonderful visit from Meera, timed just around when the new car was delivered.

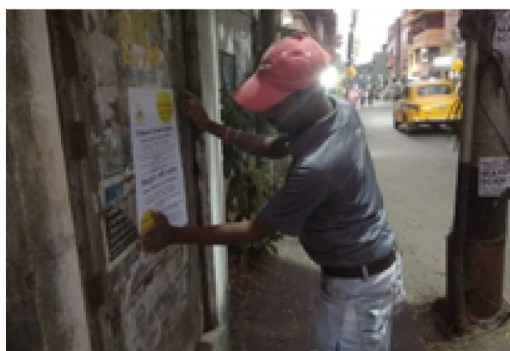
- One of our students who is in the advanced group in Udayan Kala Kendra performed at Basant utsav Spring Festival, on the occasion of Dol Purnima, a very popular festival in West Bengal, dedicated to Lord Krishna. The day is usually marked with colours and is on the day before Holi, the more popular festival of colours, celebrated around the country. She was part of a performance which included seniors and teachers of Udayan Kala Kendra. Later Dr. Harrison and the girls smeared abir (dry colours) on each other.



- Ever since signing the rental contract, work has begun to set up the playschool, the Children's Smart Centre. The walls are painted, some school supplies have been bought already, some ordered and some



in the process of being shortlisted. Shishur Seva staff including Dr. Harrison have made home visits to prospective parents in the basti areas nearby. Flyers have been posted in the community.



School flyers go up in the neighbourhood

- Sagorica Rudra, Board Member of Children's Hope India visited us and spent time interacting with the girls, listening to their incredible life stories. CHI is one of our longest time supporters and a visit from them is always special.

MARCH



Ganga checks out the centre before the painting begins

The opening was planned for first week of April with classes starting mid-April but that has been postponed for now, because of the Covid-19 pandemic. More on the lockdown later.

- Three of the girls attended a two day Tanjore Painting workshop, each finishing a small piece by the end of it.
- A group of volunteers from the NGO Bandhur Sparsha visited Shishur Seva. They have requested our help in improving their school for children with cognitive and developmental disabilities.
- National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) exams stand postponed till further notice. Two of our students are scheduled to appear for one paper each.
- Many of our plans have been brought to a grinding halt because of the Covid 19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown. As per government instructions all staff except the essential ones, the childcare

workers and a guard have been given off/ are working from home. One of the childcare workers who came from far, travelling in buses, has also been given off. Dr. Harrison is there with the girls overseeing everything.



Our guard wearing a mask