



Assam Foundation of North America

Celebrating thirty years of volunteer-driven service.
Proudly supporting education and income-generation projects for underprivileged people in Assam and charitable work in the US
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AFNA PROGRESS REPORT

May 2014

Dear supporters,

Hope all of you had a wonderful Rongali Bihu season. I celebrated it well with friends and family in the Pacific Northwest, as did everyone in Bihu-toli's across North America. It was great to see that the first **AFNA Work-An-Hour** appeal was received warmly at Bihu across the continent, including in Seattle. AFNA received generous donations for our projects during this period. An hour of your income has a huge beneficial impact on underprivileged people's lives back home. Thank you for your support! Based on the encouraging response, we will make the AFNA Work-An-Hour *an annual event* during Bihu from now on.

I have enclosed a progress report for six of our projects below. They are written by some of us as AFNA volunteers, based on close engagement with those projects. The reports give you a glimpse of the progress being made by AFNA in a wide range of projects in Assam. All this work is fueled by your generous financial contributions and the hard work of all the volunteers. Thank you for your continued support!

There is still a lot that remains to be done. To meet the full needs of the projects we have outlined here and the nine other active projects that we support (details in our website), ***we still have to raise \$10,000 in the remainder of 2014*** and do a lot of volunteer work to benefit the projects. Please help us achieve these critical goals. If you are not already a *volunteer*, please join us. To start, you can contact me or any of the volunteers named in the reports, or email us at assamfoundation@yahoo.com. If you would like to *donate*, please send in your **100% tax-deductible donation** in a check with the reply-slip provided at the end of this article. Together we can make a difference!

Thanks and best regards,
Satyajit Nath
President

1. SAC (Support A Child) (Report by Pallav Saikia, San Francisco)

Our flagship Support a Child project has entered the 5th year this time. We have been supporting students of multiple educational institutes in Assam every year to make sure they can continue getting their education. Every year we have been supporting around 50 to 90 students with a lump sum scholarships of \$100 for an academic year. We have successfully raised \$3200 in 2014 for the SAC project. We have also started disbursing our scholarships. We have sent the



1st half installment of the scholarship amount to 20 kids each in Pragyalaya and Parijat Academy, and the full installment for 21 kids in Tapoban till now.

2. AKADAMICS (AFNA sponsored Kaushik Das Memorial College Scholarship)

(Report by Sarfaraz Taher, Minneapolis)



AKADAMICS is a scholarship program for economically distressed but academically brilliant students from Assam. It is awarded to students who are seeking to or are already admitted in bachelor's degree courses. 2014-2015 is its inaugural year and 4 scholarships are planned to be awarded in its inaugural year. The program is being rolled out with the help of principals from around 20 colleges in Assam. These principals were contacted by AKADAMICS volunteers and their partnership was solicited to spread the word about this scholarship and to identify deserving students. The response has been very encouraging and the program has received applications from very high quality students. College principals

have been very supportive of this program and have been integral to the progress of the program so far. The deadline for application is May 5th, 2014 and scholarships will be announced in the month of June. The program is being executed in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Gauhati South. The program is funded primarily by the donations of residents in North America. This program is planned to be rolled out to larger number of colleges in the coming years. For more information please visit the program website <http://www.new.assamfoundation.net/index.php/our-projects/campaigns/akadamics>.

3. SIPA (Summer InternshiP Assam)

(Report by Satyajit Nath, Seattle)

SIPA is a new AFNA initiative to provide *summer internships* to underprivileged school-age children in Assam. Internships will help the students connect their education to workplace experience so that they have information to make better career choices after they graduate. In this first year of the program, we are doing a limited pilot by providing internships to four students who have completed high school -- three students from Parijat Academy outside Guwahati, and a fourth student from Pragyalaya, near Titabor. The internships are underway currently and are being conducted in partnership with 2 organizations in Guwahati -- **NEHERBS**, an outsourcing company, and the **Factory for Rickshaws** run by the Centre for Rural Development (CRD). Parijat Academy is providing room and board to the student from Titabor locally during the internship.



We give thanks to NEHERBS, CRD, Pragyalaya, and Parijat Academy in Assam in this joint partnership with AFNA to start this unique initiative.

We hope to see the 4 students learn many new skills at the end of the internship that will make them more ready for the workplace. Based on learnings from this year's pilot, we plan to scale this project to include more students and organizations next year.

4. SHISHU SAROTHI (Centre for Rehabilitation and Training for Multiple Disabilities)

(Report by Bibhash Barua, Chicago)

Shishu Sarothi is a groundbreaking and pioneering institution of its kind in the North East providing a full range of services to people with disabilities, especially children, and also provides support to families facing multiple challenges.

Established in 1987, their mission is to uphold the rights of the disabled and to ensure equal opportunities and access for all. It advocates for their full participation and inclusion in society without fear of stigma and discrimination. The possibilities of a partnership between AFNA and Shishu Sarothi have been under consideration since 2013. Therefore, a few AFNA

volunteers visited Shishu Sarothi in early 2014. They were all overwhelmed upon seeing the dedicated work being carried out at the institute and decided to sponsor this organization through AFNA and also help develop a long-term relationship between the two organizations. The Board of Directors of AFNA has initiated a discussion accordingly with Shishu Sarothi to exchange information about comparison of progress on disability rights in the US and in India, as a starting step.



5. MATRICULATION GUIDE TO BPL STUDENTS

(Report by Hitesh Kalita, Washington DC)



AFNA recently initiated a project to donate a matriculation guide book to BPL (below-poverty-line) students who will appear for the 10th Final examination in 2015. The goal is to help these underprivileged students have parity in access to preparatory material to get a fair chance to do well in the exams. AFNA donated a guide book to each of 225 BPL students from 16 schools in Assam. The event was held on 10th March in Chaygaon Higher Secondary School, Kamrup. The Chairman of the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA), Mr Vinod Sheshan, was also present in the event and

there was an interaction session between the students and him. We look forward to continue this guide distribution effort annually.

6. SHED (Society for Health & Education Development)

(Report by Amit Rajkhowa, Seattle)

SHED is a project that aims to provide education, build self-worthiness and training to underprivileged children and children with physical and mental disabilities. SHED is based in Dimoria block, Sonapur, Assam. SHED runs a school and residential hostel facilities and currently has over 24 students enrolled in the school, 13 of whom are hostellers. AFNA has been working with SHED since 2012.

Over the last 6 months, after an urgent appeal from SHED when the government water supply was cut off to the entire Dimoria block, AFNA provided emergency funds to support the building of a ring well. The basic functioning of the school and hostel facilities was in jeopardy due to lack of water supply and with the ring well on-site, dependence on government water supply was reduced. In addition, AFNA and SHED have been exploring options for SHED to become self-sustaining financially in the next 3~5 years.

For the next 6 months, the main focus is to raise funds for construction of concrete/pucca building for the school classrooms. Currently the classrooms are in a thatched building which is exposed to the weather and not conducive to providing quality education. At the same time, AFNA and SHED will continue to work on a plan for self-sustainment of SHED in the coming years.

AFNA volunteers for SHED thank the community for their support and donations. These donations are critical for AFNA to support emergency situations like in the case for SHED school and hostel not having water supply.



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Assam Foundation of North America
www.assamfoundation.net

AFNA 2014 APPEAL

Request your kind response by: June 30, 2014

<p>Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of:</p> <p>() \$25 () \$50 () \$100</p> <p>() \$250 () Other \$ _____</p>	<p>Project(s) to support:</p> <p>_____</p> <p><i>(please leave blank for AFNA to decide based on project need)</i></p>
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Please make your check payable to **AFNA, write your email address on it**, and mail with this reply slip to the address below.

If you will apply for **employer matching**, please list your company here: _____

ADDRESS TO MAIL YOUR CHECK AND THIS REPLY-SLIP:

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