



Community Organizations Step up to Help Community During COVID-19 Pandemic

Volunteers from several Indian American organizations from the tri-state area, including the FIA, are working tirelessly by delivering food to healthcare workers on the frontlines. Healthcare workers find it difficult to get food items while working since public cafeterias in hospitals are closed. Several local restaurants in the area are also distributing food to their nearest hospitals.



Doctors, nurses, paramedics, public safety officers and others risk their lives on a daily basis to ensure the well-being of the public at large.

According to Indiaspora, a nonprofit organization established to transform the success of the Indian diaspora into meaningful impact worldwide, there has been an outpouring of support from the Indian diaspora during this pandemic. "Several community-based organizations are providing much-needed relief, with CEOs, entrepreneurs, professionals from different industries, and the entire community rallying to make contributions to various nonprofits."

Similarly, several organizations have initiated online and social media campaigns to find plasma donors to help in the treatment of those in serious condition.

The American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, or AAPI, billed as the largest ethnic medical Association in the U.S., has launched a plasma drive from patients cured of the novel coronavirus and are now with no corona-virus related symptoms for at least the past two weeks. Another major initiative of AAPI has been the "Donate a Mask" program. The AAPI Task Force on Masks has been busy securing resources and identifying the hospitals and sending the supply of Masks/PPE directly to those in needed.

Sewa International in Houston launched a national registry for COVID-19 blood plasma. The Sewa Plasma Registry (www.sewacovidplasma.org) is a 24/7 service that offers a national registry for



both donors and recipients under the Convalescent Plasma Therapy program with live phone and social media support. Users of the registry can call (302) 659 - SEWA / (302) 659 - 7392 or contact via email: plasmasupport@sewausa.org.

Some organizations are focusing on the marginalized members of the community. Many says that hunger is one of the most pressing and urgent challenges facing both the U.S. and India right now. To that effect, Indiaspora has launched a ChaloGive for COVID-19, an online giving campaign to fight hunger and provide relief directly to vulnerable populations affected most by the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S. and India. The giving campaign has so far raised \$500,000 in contributions from Indiaspora's leadership network.

AIM for Seva is collaborating with Sewa International to provide non-medical help to the communities affected by the pandemic in the U.S. Volunteers are delivering gloves, masks, sanitizers to those in need, delivering groceries to the elderly, delivering information on travel and visa status, helping foreign students from India who are stranded here, providing human resources to counties (translators, Food Bank helpers, volunteer drivers, etc.), and finding rides for persons with symptoms to get tested.

Religious institutions are also doing their part by streaming live mantras and yagnas to spread and positivity. The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) has been honoring those on the frontlines who are risking their health, more than ever before to stem the impact of COVID-19. Beginning on March 29, 2020, BAPS has been lighting their temples across the U.S. blue as a gesture of gratitude to those men and women working tirelessly in healthcare and public safety.

Trump Announces 3-Phase Road Map to Reopen the Country; Leaves Timetable to State Governors' Discretion

President Donald Trump has announced a three-phase road map to reopening the country's economy for the states to begin lifting restrictions on businesses and social gatherings. According to the guidelines provided in the document, some regions could begin returning to normal after a month-long evaluation period, at the earliest. However, in areas or cities with more infections or where rates begin to rise, it could take longer.

While unveiling the plan on April 16, Trump said he will leave the time table for opening up their states to the governors. "Governors will be empowered to tailor an approach that meets the diverse circumstances they have in their own states," he said. "If they need to remain closed we will allow them to do that. And if they believe it is time to reopen, we will provide them the freedom and guidance to accomplish that task and very, very quickly."

According to Dr. Deborah Brix, the Coronavirus Response Coordinator for the House Coronavirus Task Force, as states work through the three phases, they could allow for more and more employees to return to work in increments.

However, experts have cautioned that any move towards loosening social distancing guidelines would only be possible with widespread testing capabilities, and that the United States continues to lag in meeting those requirements.

Before the phases can be initiated, states must meet a series of "gating criteria" including a downward trajectory of confirmed cases and cases of patients with Covid-19 symptoms over a 14-day period.

The administration's 18-page guidance document, available on <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>, details three phases to reopen state economies, with each phase lasting, at minimum, 14 days.

Phase one includes much of the current lockdown measures such as avoiding non-essential travel and not gathering in groups. But it says large venues such as restaurants, places of worship and sports venues "can operate under strict physical



distancing protocols."

Phase two can be implemented when there is no evidence of a resurgence of the coronavirus. This phase allows non-essential travel to resume. Schools could reopen and bars could operate "with diminished standing-room occupancy."

Phase three will let states which are still seeing a downward trend of symptoms and cases allow "public interactions" with physical distancing and the unrestricted staffing of worksites. Visits to care homes and hospitals can resume and bars can increase their standing room capacity.

Meanwhile, a few hours before Trump's announcement, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that the state would remain under stay-at-home orders until 15 May. Although officials in the state, which is the epicenter of the outbreak in the U.S., say the situation is showing signs of stabilizing, there are still hundreds of deaths daily.

The governor, along with New York Attorney General Letitia James also announced that the state has renewed a previous order from March 17, 2020 that halted the collection of medical and student debt owed to the State of New York and that was specifically referred to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) for collection for an additional 30-day period, in response to growing financial impairments resulting from the spread of coronavirus disease. The new order took effect on April 17, 2020, and will run for an additional 30-day period, until May 17, 2020. After this 30-day period, the OAG will reassess the needs of state residents for another possible extension.

Additionally, the OAG will accept applications for suspension of all other types of debt owed to the State of New York and referred to the OAG for collection.

Similarly, Gov. Cuomo, along with N.J. Gov. Phil Murphy, Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, Delaware Governor John Carney and Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo, announced the creation of a multi-state council to restore the economy and get people back to work. This announcement builds on the states' ongoing regional approach to combatting the COVID-19 pandemic.

The coordinating group – comprising one health expert, one economic development expert and the respective chief of staff from each state – will work together to develop a fully integrated regional framework to gradually lift the states' stay at home orders while minimizing the risk of increased spread

of the virus.

The council will create this framework using every tool available to accomplish the goal of easing social isolation without triggering renewed spread – including testing, contact tracing, treatment and social distancing – and will rely on the best available scientific, statistical, social and economic information to manage and evaluate those tools.

In New Jersey, during his April 17 press briefing, Gov. Murphy released new numbers in the coronavirus outbreak – 3,250 new cases and 323 more deaths. A day earlier he had announced that schools in the state would remain closed until at least May 15.

There are now 70 sites across the state at which you can receive a #COVID19 test if you are exhibiting symptoms of respiratory illness. Two dozen of them are publicly accessible.

For a complete list, visit covid19.nj.gov/testing

Veteran Journalist Brahm Kanchibotla Dies of Coronavirus

Veteran journalist Brahm Kanchibhotla is among several Indian Americans who have succumbed to the novel coronavirus. Kanchibhotla, a resident of Long Island, died in a New York hospital due to complications from COVID-19 on April 6. He was 66 and is survived by his wife Anjana and children Sudama and Srujani.

Kanchibhotla began to show symptoms of Covid-19 on March 23, and was admitted to a hospital in Long Island on March 28 after his condition began to worsen. He was put on a ventilator on March 31. He died of a cardiac arrest.

Kanchibhotla moved to the U.S. in 1992 after having worked for several publications in India.

Kanchibhotla, a content editor at the New York City-based Mergermarket Group, had worked with news agency United News of India as a senior correspondent. He has also worked as a contributing writer with the Urban Indian, managing editor of India Weekly USA and associate editor of News India Times. In recent years, he was writing for two ethnic Indian American publications: The Indian Panorama and South Asia Times.

Kanchibotla worked with News India Times for nearly a decade, where he was in charge of handling front-page articles while also reporting on financial news. He later moved to India Weekly USA, a publication based in New York City in a role that comprised setting coverage priorities and editorial policies. A short year-long stint followed at The Urban Indian, a New York-based publication for South Asians where he was a contributing writer focusing on a wide range of issues.

Kanchibotla joined Mergermarket in 2007, having originally applied for a reporting role, but joining as a content editor.

A gofundme page created by fellow journalists and Kanchibotla's colleagues has raised over \$15,000 in five days. The funds were to go to the family to cover medical and funeral expenses.

During his long career in the U.S., Kanchibotla has attended several FIA events and press conferences. The FIA leadership reached out to the family to provide assistance during these challenging times.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's Ambassador to the U.S. Taranjit Singh Sandhu and chef, Vikas Khanna, along with several of Kanchibotla's colleagues took to social media to remember him.

"Deeply anguished by the passing away of Indian-American journalist Mr. Brahm Kanchibotla," Modi tweeted. "He will be remembered for his fine work and efforts to bring India and USA closer," he wrote. "Condolences to his family and friends. Om Shanti."

"Very sad to learn about the passing away of veteran Indian-American journalist Brahm Kanchibotla due to COVID-19," Sandhu tweeted. "Our heartfelt condolences to his family. He will be deeply missed by his friends and admirers in the U.S. and India."



N.Y.-based Nonprofit Releases List of COVID-19 Related Resources for South Asian American Community



SouthAsianAmericansLeadingTogether (SAALT) is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that fights for racial justice and advocates for the civil rights of all South Asians in the U.S., has released an extensive list of COVID-19 related resources for the South Asian community. The list aims to help the vulnerable in the community including the elderly and the immuno-compromised, as well as those who are economically, racially, and geographically marginalized.

Following are some of the resources listed by SAALT. A full list is available at <https://saalt.org/covid-19resources/>.

1. Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) provide information on how COVID-19 is affecting working class and immigrant communities and families in New York City, including methods and media to redistribute funds, power, and supplies. <https://www.drumnyc.org/powerandsafety/>

2. A tool kit put together by Equality Labs features tools and resources (like mutual aid projects) from disabled, queer, elderly, Asian, and indigenous people. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rcan4C_e6OBFBI5bUn7MtYK74Ab-WarxyJmDvZUI_YA/preview

3. The Sikh Coalition has compiled detailed information and resources for dealing with Covid-19 for Sikh communities. <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/our-work/empowering-the-community/covid-19-response-resources/>

4. The India Center has established the South

Asian Arts Resiliency Fund for South Asian creatives who may have had professional events cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19 and offers a minimum of \$1,000 as aid. <https://theindiacenter.us/artsfund/>

5. The National Lawyers Guild has information on how to ensure law developments are equitable and just in how they respond to Covid-19, especially for people of color and other marginalized people. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tTWDHkBoTYPNalsN3IEi5yUjZi9qMdhL2IAM_S8bVqE/edit

6. Informed Immigrant has a list of national and state-wide resources that also highlights specific information for students, such as local relief funds and reduced-cost wifi. <https://www.informedimmigrant.com/guides/coronavirus/#>

7. The U.S. Small Business Administration has compiled information on how small businesses and their communities can keep each other safe, secure, and healthy. <https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources>

8. Applying for a Paycheck Protection Loan is a simple nonprofit guide to those loans you've been hearing about to cover payroll and that don't need to be paid back. <https://www.seyfarth.com/news-insights/nonprofit-guide-to-the-cares-act-including-those-loans-youve-been-hearing-about-to-cover-payroll-and-that-dont-need-to-be-paid-back.html>