

EDITORIAL

Dear Passages' Family,

“Sometimes surrender means giving up trying to understand and become comfortable with not knowing.” - Eckhart Tolle

Many long months of this year 2020 have passed since the COVID-19 pandemic brought the world down to its knees. It has changed almost everything - especially each individual's perspective of looking at life.

The coronavirus outbreak has had the entire world population in its grip of uncertainty and fear, leading to a red alert in each and every person's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual being.

People started exercising different degrees of caution and risk in how much they interact outside their home with people, spaces and environments. The definition of 'safety' and 'safe space' varied from person to person. The pandemic has led to an Infodemic; social media and news media were blaring, posting, tweeting about the virus related to everything and the opposite of everything and a lot of fake news around COVID-19 was circulating.

Seeing the increased reach of social media, we collaborated with the Corona Quilt Project to create a virtual quilt from designs and expressions of art done by you, our well-wishers and friends, during these times.

We had to stay home and away from the hectic pace of life of work meetings, social engagements, workouts; those were replaced with household chores, zoom meetings for work from home, home schooling, wellness and meditation classes.

As a result, many of us were drawn into reflecting and introspecting relationships and how blessed our lives are and how much we take for granted.

Mood swings and emotions from anxiety, nervousness (on handling sanitization procedures in addition to other tasks), anger and depression, feelings of victimization, rationalizing and acceptance with gratitude; all became ways of coping with this loss of freedom that the pandemic had snatched away from each and every person

We, at Passages, also got into some action to overcome our inner monkey thoughts. Also, the best way to feel better is to make somebody else feel better. News, stories and appeals from institutions and communities, migrant workers of the less privileged who were cut off from their daily supplies, were coming our way. Thanks to our generous donors we stepped in to extend a helping hand with some of the challenges.

We have documented our humble endeavors in this newsletter for your benefit.

Do reach out if we can assist you or anyone known to you in these challenging times.

To all of you, stay safe and cautious and, of course, masked!

Keep smiling; this too shall pass.

Kaya Shewakramani

CONDOLENCES

We, at Passages, extend our sincere and heartfelt condolences to our Office Administrator, Snehal Salve, on the very untimely and sad demise of her dear husband, Mr. Sailesh Salve on 28.07.20. May God grant Snehal's family the strength to tide over in this time of sorrow. Snehal has been a dedicated member of our Passages' team for over 12 years and many of our members and friends would have interacted with her during our many seminars, workshops and other functions.

EVENTS:

CELEBRATING WOMANHOOD

14th February, 2020

Gallery Art & Soul, Worli

An interactive Poetry Theatre presentation conducted by group of women from the group Poetrusic; they found each other while participating in a dramatizing-poetry workshop. The process inspired, and spurred them on to bring poetry to life and make it accessible for everyone, simply by keeping it real and honest. Their performance was a montage of poems from here there and everywhere, including some from our own late Co-Director, Dr. Coomi B. Singh's poetry book, 'In Celebration of Women.' The afternoon was dedicated to Coomi's memory and was a sensory experience using bodies, words, emotions and imagination to connect with poetry by connecting with us. High Tea followed this.

We had the good fortune of having Dr. Bharat Singh (Coomi's husband) grace this event and also enjoyed his meaningful words on living life!

The Performers and Facilitators:

Neeti Singhi; Rachna Toshniwal; Shivali Parkash; Shubha Shah; Smita Vyas Kumar.

Directed by:

Niketan Sharma; Roo Jhala McLaughlin.

The Poetrusic Team Performers



Dr. Bharat Singh interacts with the audience

DONATIONS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Acknowledging our Donors

We, at Passages, thank all our donors for their prompt response to our appeal for helping us extend some comfort to the following communities who required assistance during this serious, global pandemic. This was an on-going effort, which spanned the lockdown months. Our sincere gratitude also to all who helped disburse the items to the various venues in the city.

All contributions helped us in procuring food items, toiletries, medicines, facemasks, shields and PPE gear for the following groups (as per their individual requirements.)



15th April: Distribution of essential food items to the residents of Siddharth Nagar, Worli.



15th April: Distribution of hygiene products and food items at Sion Koliwada.



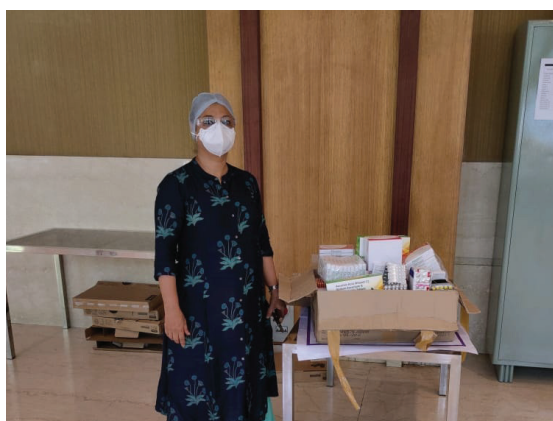
21st April: Distribution of food items and medicines to the children staying at the Bal-asha Trust, Mahalaxmi.



14th April: Distribution of food supplies to the families of the Taxidrivers' Colony, Foras Rd, off Grant Rd. Thank you Sheetal Bhatkar (WithArya) for reaching the items to the venue and Anahita (Rusi Mehta Foundation) for coordinating this distribution.



9th April: Families of Policemen. Thanks to Shital Bhatkar and her team from 'WithArya' for coordinating this distribution of food essentials.



9th June: Distribution of PPE gear and medicines to the Covid-19 facility, NESCO, Goregaon.

20th April: Distribution of food items and PPE gear, face shields and masks for the Medical personnel of the Cama & Albles Hospital, Fort.

CANCER HEALTH PROGRAMME

MEDICINE BANK

(A report by Rita Advani)

The Cama Hospital fortnightly distribution of chemotherapy medicines - Tamoxifen and Letrozole - came to a halt as soon as the lockdown was declared. Since the Mumbai local trains and other modes public transport were stopped, it was impossible for most patients to commute and even when the situation eased a little, the hospital protocol did not allow the OPD Clinic to open for quite some time. Most of our patients stay in the far suburbs of Mumbai and commuting to the city was impossible and moreover, not safe. Some patients managed to buy these medicines from their chemists but either they were finding it expensive or it was not available near their residence.

From mid-June, our volunteers, Snehal and Rehana, started the distribution of tablets to about 24 patients from the Passages' office at Cooperage. These were given to recurring patients who were in constant touch on the helpline. As public buses had started for essential services they were able to come. Some came via their private 2-wheelers.

I also stayed in constant touch (via our helpline) with patients who were regularly taking our medicines and were expressing concern about the non-availability of these chemotherapy tablets owing to the lockdown. We were constantly trying to find ways of reaching the same to them.

A word of appreciation for Ms. Savita Pavre, the Medical Social Worker at the Cama Hospital; her constant involvement with our volunteers and the hospital patients has definitely made a difference in smoothening out the distribution during this time of crisis.

ILLNESS TO WELLNESS

Over the past few months, we have financially assisted five individual patients (four adults and one child) to complete their treatment requirements as per their requests and after scrutiny of bills submitted for the same. These were one-time donations to help them further their treatment.