



# सेवा पत्री (Seva Patri)

**Seva Newsletter of Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America (VHPA)**

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We are delighted to publish quarterly **Seva Newsletter** online only to share the various “Seva” activities done by the VHPA to provide the visibility so that it can be replicated and/or reapplied by others as needed. We are looking forward for your constant support and welcome your comments and suggestions.

Focus of this quarter’s newsletter is on the Seva activities performed in USA. If you are doing any seva activity in your area please contact me at [neelam.jswl@gmail.com](mailto:neelam.jswl@gmail.com) so that we can publish it in future newsletters.

## **Seva for California Camp Fire victims**

Northern California's Camp Fire in Butte County is the worst fire disaster in the history of the state. Dry conditions and heavy wind contributed to the widespread damage with more than 12,000 homes totally destroyed and 86 people died. This is one of the most beautiful areas of the state where many retirees live on fixed income and many hard working citizens make the rural economy work. The victims had been temporarily placed in the nearby town of Chico. FEMA, state service agencies and many NGO have been helping the affected citizens through some great work. VHPA also joined the relief & rehabilitation work along with other service organizations like Seva International, Bharati Tamil Sangam and Annapoorna.

On Nov 24th, 2018, VHPA along with Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and Bharati Tamil Sangam volunteers collected supplies from San Francisco Bay Area and delivered them to the central distribution center for the victims in Oroville, CA. The supplies included new clothes, blankets, toiletries, non-perishable foods etc., which were immediately needed for the impacted people of the Butte county and the town of Paradise.

One group of volunteers stayed at the distribution center to sort all the donated supplies and repack them to be sent to specific communities. This was a very efficient operation as the incoming and outgoing supplies have to be maintained at the steady pace to make sure the center is not overwhelmed with unsorted supplies occupying the limited warehouse space. Another group of volunteers went to FEMA emergency camp to volunteer and donate readily usable gift cards to the victims. There were approximately 5000 victims visited on that day to get help from FEMA and other supporting state organizations and NGOs. The gift cards were highly appreciated by the impacted families as they would help with truly and immediately needed items. Though the victims lost everything, the quiet dignity they showed were humbling for our volunteers.

VHPA also donated \$1000 to the Cal Fire Foundation. This foundation helps the fire fighters’ families and any families in need. They were doing amazing service by donating significant amount of gift cards to the victims of the disaster once they register with FEMA. Their service at the FEMA center was really touching. The volunteers met the President and Secretary of the Cal Fire Foundation and donated \$1000 and a set of Starbucks gift cards to the fire fighters as a token of respect. They were very appreciative of this gesture and conveyed their wish to partner with Hindu Seva organizations in the future.



## Grace under pressure

On Dec 23rd, 2018, VHPA, Seva International and local volunteers at Loomis, CA, participated in a Holiday Party for the victims of the California fire who lost their homes. It was a humbling experience for all the VHPA members. Those who lost so much in terms of property and material things but have not lost any hope at all. We met retirees, mothers with toddlers and mother who gave birth few days after the fire and many more families whose circumstances put them under tremendous pressure for day to day living. But the grace they showed and optimism expressed inspired all of us to continue our Hindu Seva whenever and wherever possible.

We distributed many essential supplies and gift cards to 100 people. The holiday lunch was arranged by the local volunteers per the local tradition. There was also a classical music concert in tune with the holiday mood.



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