

STARS SUPPORT DAY OF SERVICE

Celebrities back Sewa Day event

by IMRAN CHOUDHURY

SEVERAL top celebrities are backing a campaign by doing their bit for an international day of volunteering.

Famous faces, including politicians Tony Blair and Boris Johnson and Indian cricketer Yuvraj Singh, will be joining communities from across the country and around the world for Sewa Day next Sunday (25).

Performers Meera Syal, Raj Ghatak and Kulvinder Ghir, plus TV presenters Arti Halai and Lizzy Cundy, will also join the thousands taking part in local projects to relieve hardship, deprivation or to improve the environment. This year, they will be joined by people from 15 other countries.

In Croydon, Surrey, some volunteers will help with the ongoing clean-up operation following the riots. Syal said: "It's a chance to spread a little bit of joy in your local community. Me and thousands of others will be doing just that.

"It can be something as small as planting a tree, entertaining the elderly or sending gift parcels to soldier stations abroad. It's about giving back to your local community and it's a great cause."

Sewa which means 'be of service' was started by the UK charity Sewa UK and encourages people from all around the world to take responsibility for overcoming the challenges of deprivation.

Arup Ganguly, chairman of Sewa Day, said: "We believe in the concept of helping others in need and that this should be encouraged whether we are in the midst of a recession or not.

"Last year, Sewa Day saw volunteers from over 50 organisations undertake over 130 projects. Following on from last year's phenomenal success, we want to treble the number of those taking part.

"There is no better sense of fulfilment than putting a smile on somebody's face - especially the vulnerable, the poor, the sick and the needy. This is the real power of sewa. Volunteering is a wonderful



GOOD CAUSE: The City Hindu Network clean up Victoria Park during last year's Sewa Day



Khan to fight for African aid

BOXING champion Amir Khan will be the guest at a charity dinner to help raise funds for the African famine.

Khan will be helping to raise money tomorrow (17) for the famine in Africa for the Islamic Help charity. The region is experiencing its worst drought in 60 years which has affected over 12 million people.

At the dinner, an auction with memorabilia from his recent win over Zab Judah will be up for grabs. Up to 1,000 people are expected to attend the event at the Hilton London Metropole on Edgware Road.

Khan has been active in supporting humanitarian causes and raised over £1 million for survivors of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. He also helped with the south Asian earthquake in 2005 and went out to Pakistan to deliver aid.

■ For tickets or more details, call 0121 446 5682 or go to www.islamichelp.org.uk.

opportunity open to all." The networking group City Hindu Network (CHN) will be holding a series of events in London to encourage people to give time as volunteers.

This year CHN are volunteering to clean Victoria Park in London's Tower Hamlets, which requires 50 people to help. They will also be distributing food and toiletries at the homeless refuge of St Mungos in London's Camden area and require 20 volunteers to assist them.

The third event will be at children's Tropical Lagoon Ward, Queens Hospital in Romford, Essex. The volunteers will try to bring joy to the children by providing them with some entertainment and activities from 2pm-4pm.

■ For more information on CHN events on behalf of Sewa Day and volunteering opportunities, go to www.cityhindusnetwork.org.uk

To get involved in Sewa Day, please visit www.sewaday.org for more information.

COMMUNITY CHEER FOR GUJARATI ROLE MODELS

A GUJARATI community in London celebrated the role models of a new generation in an awards night last weekend.

The Federation of Patidar Associations (FPA), a Gujarati Hindu Patel community organisation, held the event on Saturday (10) at FPA's community centre, the Patidar House in Wembley, London.

Each year, awards are given to members of the Gujarati community that have excelled in their own particular field, and become role models to inspire the next generation.

Lord Dolar Popat received an award for his ennoblement to the House of Lords, while Dr Chai Patel, Mayank Patel and Sonal Patel (above inset) all received awards for recognition of their success in business.

Subir Patel received an award in recognition of his efforts in the construction of the temple, the Sanatan Mandir; Ramesh Patel received a prize for his services to the FPA and community; Sandip Patel received an award for leadership and his service to the British armed

forces, and a special award was given to Bhiku M. Patel for his dedicated service to the FPA as a founding member of the organisation.

There was entertainment as the Eencee Dance Academy performed and elder organisation ambassador Purshotam D Patel spoke about the need to engage young people, and compare Kamal Patel (below inset) kept proceedings lively and informative.

Former soldier and captain Sandip Patel told *EE*: "It was an honour to receive an award. Joining the army as a Gujarati boy was not the norm but my five years serving was my best ever.

"I hope I can be a role model to the younger generation in our community." Kamal Patel, one of the evening's emperes, said it was good to join and young and old together.

"The FPA understands how important it is to keep the young members of our community involved and that is why we tried to make the night as entertaining as possible and not just another boring award show."



Dance group get Royal call

AN INDIAN dance group in London has been selected to perform in a national dance festival at the Royal Albert Hall.

Srishti-Nina Rajarani Dance School in Harrow, London, has been selected from hundreds of UK dance acts to perform at the world famous venue.

The dancers will join 24 other acts to appear at the first ever Dance Proms, a national dance festival, at the Royal Albert Hall on November 13.

The winning piece, a Bharatanatyam dance, a classical dance form from the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, was choreographed by Nina Rajarani MBE with music composed by Y Yadavan.

■ For more, visit www.dance-proms.co.uk or info@dance-proms.co.uk

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