

Essence of yoga pervades health fair



Yoga teachers seated, Shekhar Agrawal, left, Meera Rama Rao, Stephanie Cole, P.Y.P. Acharya, M. B. Shintri, Daksha Shah and Vijay Kumar; Standing, Debbie Schwartzbard, left, Kalpana Peck, Jillian Thomason, Prakash Morolia, Roslyn Earl, Jennifer Bergmeister, Ma Maneesha, Menaka Ram Mohan and Sushma Pallod.



Suryanamaskaar or sun salutations being performed outdoors, under the guidance of Shekhar Agrawal, above, and indoors, with Roger Rippy, below.



A Bhutanese refugee gets free medical check up at the yogathon.



Mallikarjun Shintri performs Sirasasana; Right, Ma Maneesha conducts a yoga workshop; Left, Mary Cygan performs acupuncture at the yogathon.

The Houston yogathon and health fair organized by Sewa International was held on Jan. 24, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Eldridge Park, Sugar Land.

The extravagant, comprehensive health fair provided a platform to the area's yoga and meditation groups to participate in a marathon of yoga, as well as showcasing other events such as yoga workshops, naturopathy, breathing, meditation and other exercises that promote a healthy and happy life.

The event was part of global health campaign of Sewa International called 'Health for Humanity Campaign.'

The main attraction, yogathon along with sun salutation yoga, started at 9 a.m. on a cold morning and more than 500 enthusiastic Yoga practitioners participated in continuous Surya Namaskaar spanning over 5 hours, resulting in over 9000 salutations.

SVYASA, Yoga for Peace, Memorial Hermann Sports medicine, HSS-USA, Lazuli Om, Yoga One, Healthy Mother Healthy Child, Spectra Cell, Jennyyoga, Life bliss foundation, Yoga Teachers Association of America and others had their booths at the venue.

Vasudev Singh, coordinator, Houston chapter of Sewa International, said "I am very excited by the response in spite of the bad weather. This is the first event. Now we plan to do it every year as annual outdoor event of Sewa."

Patanjali Yoga Peeth and Jennyyoga held workshops during the marathon.

One of the participants in sun salutation, Cathal Keane of Houston, said "It is encouraging and empowering for every yoga practitioner and anyone who is thinking about practicing yoga to participate in such a unifying event. The day has truly captured the essence of yoga to unite, and it has inspired me to share my practice with friends."

"The yogathon was a wonderful way of reaching out to the people of Houston to contribute to the victims of the Hurricane Ike disaster. At the same time it was a platform to promote the concept of holistic health care and bring together the people and practises that contribute to this way of life, said Ma Nithya Maneeshananda, Mahacharya, Nithyananda Dhyanapectam, India.

"The whole program was vibrant and lively. It was heartening to see so many folks turn up on a cold Saturday morning and express their solidarity. As a travelling yogacharya of the Nithyananda Order I was particularly impressed with the response of the yoga community, the teachers, the studio owners and the ardent practitioners who did their bit for a noble cause," Maneeshananda said.

"I wish to express my gratitude to the organizers and the people of Houston for giving me the opportunity to share the great truths of Nithya Yoga as cognized by Paramahansa Nithyananda and for making this whole event a huge success," she said.

A free health check up for the families was conducted by a team of doctors under the guidance of Dr. Nik Nikam, president of the Indian Doctors' Association, Houston.

Other participants in the fair included the therapists from Paths in Healing, who demonstrated how their massage techniques help in the healing process of the body.

Healing Your Body Holistically did the demonstration of reflexology treatments with their reflexology chair.

'Bridge To Better Health' shared information about benefit of Thermography (a medical scan that is very beneficial, without the harmful radiation or compression).

Spectracell Laboratories educated people about nutritional diagnostic tests.

Other booths at the event included Sandy's Market, which is Houston's premier food and organic market.

Representatives from yoga for peace radio show were also present at the event.

Roslyn Earle of Yoga for Peace, a nonprofit educational organization, and a volunteer in the event said: "Yoga is a sound, true, ethical, and moral path to peace. To promote yoga is to promote peace. Peace begins within and expands outward just as love opens the heart to compassion for all living beings. Yoga For Peace(www.yoga4peace.org) is eager to promote Yogic principle, practice, and philosophy through selfless acts of service."

The yogathon was part of Sewa International's continuing efforts to help those affected by Hurricane Ike. Sewa International has been engaged at the grass root level to support the victims of Ike. In the past four months, it has helped many families settle into their regular life after Hurricane Ike. A quick call for financial support was made after the event. People generously donated for Ike rehabilitation and other projects of Sewa International.

Mallikarjun Shintri, a CPA and yoga teacher at HCC Stafford, did a 16-minute-long yoga posture, standing on his head, to help in the fundraising.

Sewa International has a proven track record of disaster relief and rehabilitation including the work done after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. Recently, Sewa international has also started refugee resettlement program in Houston under Bhutanese refugee empowerment project (BREP). Sewa USA is a Non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization with international presence. — Ashutosh Gupta

