

# Stories of Humanity & Empowerment

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

SUPPORT TO WOMEN, MEN, YOUTH, CHILDREN & SENIORS



NURTURING STRENGTH & BUILDING RESILIENCE



PATH-BREAKING CROSS-CULTURAL CONNECTIVITY



## Mission

Empowering South Asians to lead peaceful lives with dignity, hope, and self-sufficiency by providing comprehensive and culturally-sensitive services.

## Vision

To create culturally-sensitive pathways to empower individuals and families in the South Asian community.

## Values

Enshrined in the word HOME - Hope, Open-mindedness, eMpowerment, Equality.

Photo by Mike Benna | Unsplash

Ashiyanaa, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, provides culturally-competent services to South Asians in the DC metro area. Founded in 1989 as Asian Women’s Self-Help Association (ASHA) to help women and children impacted by interpersonal violence (also known as domestic violence), our services and programs have expanded over the years.

Today, we serve South Asians inclusive of all ages and gender, with origins in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Our culturally-sensitive support is provided in multiple South Asian languages.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Dear Ashiyanaa Supporters, Partners, and Well-Wishers,

As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, we are filled with gratitude for your unwavering support that has allowed us to make a meaningful impact on the lives of South Asians in the Washington, DC metro area. Your commitment to our cause has been instrumental in advancing our mission to address critical issues within our community.

In the fight against interpersonal violence, we provide a safe haven for survivors, offering a range of support services and resources, and ensuring survivors receive the care they need to rebuild their lives.

Our dedication to serving the elderly members of our community has deepened significantly over the past year. Through innovative programs and community engagement initiatives, we help address the unique challenges faced by our seniors.

We are proud to maintain a **high standard of financial transparency**, ensuring that every donation contributes directly to our programs and services.

As we move forward into the coming year, we remain committed to our core values, working with compassion, and engaging with community at each step. With your continued support, we aspire to expand our reach, strengthen our existing programs, and explore new avenues to address emerging needs within the South Asian community.

On behalf of the entire Ashiyanaa Board, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to each one of you who has played a role in making our mission a reality. Together, we are creating a brighter and more inclusive future for South Asians in the heart of Washington, DC.

Thank you for being a part of this journey,

Warm regards from all of us at Ashiyanaa.



Priya Kulkarni

President

# IMPACT 2023

**212** HELPLINE CALLS

100% increase in one year!

**81** CLIENTS SERVED

59 WOMEN  
15 SENIORS  
3 CHILDREN

Culturally-sensitive case management | Access to healthcare, counseling, legal, immigration support and other services | Funds for emergency, daily needs | Support for housing, education, skills, career

## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

**9580**

Volunteer hours

**50**

Active Volunteers  
(30% increase in one year)

**\$258,660**

Value of volunteer hours

## OUTREACH CONNECTIONS

With over 110 nonprofits, government entities, service providers, educational institutes, community members

CULTURAL TRAINING | SUMMITS  
AWARENESS SESSIONS | EVENTS

## COLLABORATIONS

**23**

PARTNERSHIPS

**17**

MEMBERSHIPS

**21**

MOUs

## REGULAR GROUP MEETINGS

**82** hours

WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

**98** hours

SENIORS CHAI & CHAT SESSIONS

## NEW LAUNCH

**19**

students of Nepali origin empowered  
ENGLISH 101 PROGRAM

**170+**

seniors socialize over two events  
SENIORS MEET N GREET

# Measuring Ashiyanaa's impact: numbers only tell part of the story.

Ashiyanaa's impact in the last year is most palpable in stories heard from the people we serve and our own experiences with the community.

## First-person narratives

The stories of many of our clients, survivors of interpersonal violence, have been moving from trauma to triumph - what could be more heartening? The seniors of our community are responding with an enthusiasm that completely ratifies our initiatives for this group, as they increasingly shed isolation and begin to trust our support.

## Community pledges

Community endorsement came out stronger than ever in 2023. Our first in-person fundraiser since the COVID-19 pandemic, the Golf tournament, was sold out. Four months later, our fundraising Gala got an incredible response: with a large number of guests turning up, we were oversubscribed. Spontaneous humanitarian pledges of support made the event very special and uplifting.

## Cultural competency training

We have also gained traction through our outreach as a trusted mentor for local institutions and services, who steadily invite us to set up cultural sensitivity training and share cultural perspectives.

## Grassroots momentum

This year we celebrate 35 years of community service. Established as Asian Women's Self-Help Association (ASHA) in 1989, our growth has been symbiotic with the rapid rise of the South Asian population in the Washington, DC metro area. We continue to be 'of the community, for the community, by the community'.

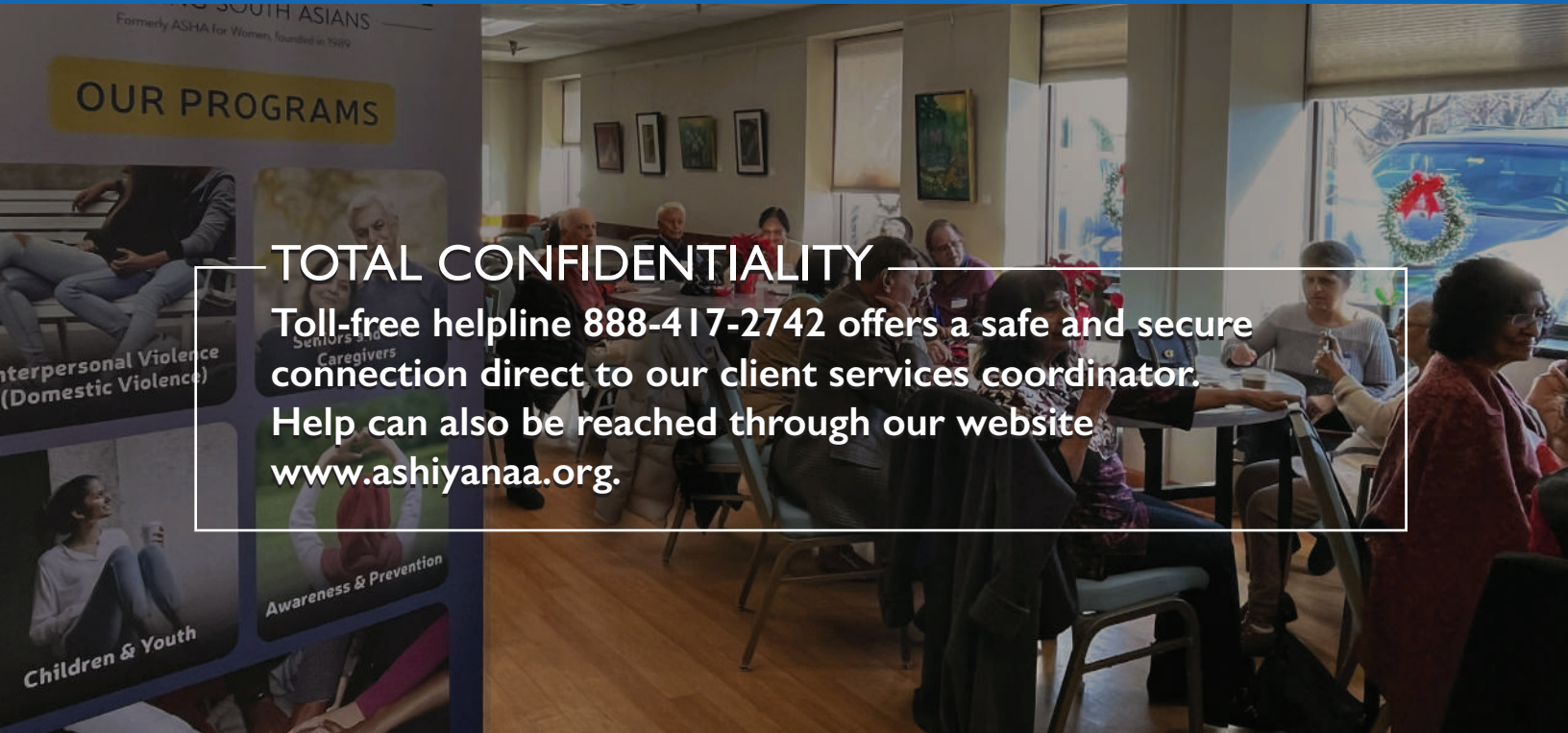
## Staying responsive and relevant

Society stays in constant flux and the situations surrounding men, women and children keep changing in nuance and complexity. Each case that comes to us for support is unique, requiring a unique response. We have to augment our knowledge and resources to manage increasingly difficult cases of interpersonal violence. Engaging effectively with seniors, young adults and children call for different sets of rules and requirements.

Our clients encounter a myriad of day-to-day obstacles. Ashiyanaa remains steadfastly committed to addressing these challenges proactively and effectively to maintain a position of sustained excellence.

Photo by Remi Walle | Unsplash

# SERVICES & PROGRAMS



## TOTAL CONFIDENTIALITY

Toll-free helpline 888-417-2742 offers a safe and secure connection direct to our client services coordinator.

Help can also be reached through our website [www.ashiyanaa.org](http://www.ashiyanaa.org).

### ■ Interpersonal Violence

Case management and coordination, assistance in crisis situations, safety evaluation and plan of action, help to access legal and health services, empowerment to achieve self-sufficiency through career planning, therapeutic counseling and more.

### ■ For Seniors and their Caregivers

Information guidance, help in accessing senior resources, benefits and services, community socialization, interaction to reduce isolation, support to caregivers in meeting caregiving challenges.

### ■ For Children and Youth

Providing case management services to help with the stress of living between two cultures. Issues addressed: discrimination and bias, acculturation, model-minority stereotype/label, estrangement with family or community, alienation.

### ■ Awareness & Prevention

Outreach across communities to stimulate healthy relationships, cultural competency training to first responders and social agencies, awareness and prevention education at South Asian community forums, promoting better understanding of South Asian culture through social media and via interaction and collaboration with not only peer groups within the social sector, but also the community at large.

### ■ Partnerships & Collaborations

Building partnerships and collaborations with State and County Government Organizations, Community based and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and social services organizations to better serve all our clients.

# SNAPSHOTS & STORIES



## From darkness to resilience, a survivor's journey

*"My husband had abandoned me and I had no family and friends in the US. Ashiyanaa helped me with finding affordable and stable housing. They even assisted with emergency food needs and connecting with social services, including applying for Medicaid so I could have health insurance.*

*At the same time I was working in the travel industry and was abruptly laid off. Ashiyanaa helped with filing for unemployment benefits and career counseling including help with job search, resume building, and interview prep. With Ashiyanaa's support I was able to find employment in the tech sector.*

*When I reached out to Ashiyanaa, I was on a conditional green card. Ashiyanaa connected me with an immigration lawyer, provided financial assistance with paying the retainer and attorney fees, and supported me during my citizenship interview process."*

Photo by Conner Baker | Unsplash



Women survivors meet in a safe space, share experiences, receive mentorship, and draw strength from each other

Photo by Jametlene Reskp | Unsplash

## WOMEN'S SUPPORT GROUP

*“A great support system...I don't feel lonely...it feels like a family to me”*

Healing from the trauma of interpersonal (domestic) violence is slow and full of ups and downs. Each person's story has unique complexities and requires a unique approach. While Ashiyanaa's designated case worker stays by the survivor throughout her entire journey, the Women's Support Group managed by us contributes a profoundly healing influence. Women connect using their shared cultural identity and experiences. They lean on each other for emotional support, advice, encouragement. Highly experienced mentors give guidance.

The meetings are sometimes online, sometimes in person. They are totally confidential, held in safe environments.

The Women's Support Group initiative was launched several years ago. Survivors who had the courage and opportunity to connect have benefited immensely in terms of problem-solving and coping strategies. Most participants report a feel-good and empowering experience.



We help immigrants to learn, unlearn,  
and overcome barriers

*"I am now confident of taking a job interview. I will be understood as my language and speech accent are now much better, also I will be able to understand the interviewer and reply correctly. At last I am feeling relaxed and sure of making a success here!"*

- Student, English 101 Class

## EMPOWERMENT AND ACCULTURATION

New immigrants are alike: they come with a burning desire to succeed. But often they encounter roadblocks, caused by unfamiliarity with local idiom, local employment processes, and cultural awkwardness.

To ease the way for a group of young men and women of Nepali origin, Ashiyanaa in partnership with SAATHI Baltimore, tailored a special 6-month conversation and vocabulary improvement class, called English 101. The students began with unlearning incorrect language usage. Over the weeks they progressively expanded their vocabulary, became conversant with everyday language, and imbibed terminology appropriate to a professional environment.

Experienced teachers conducted the classes and special support for translation and technical requirements was available at the sessions. Held each week, the classes got 90% attendance! To round up, guidance was also given on how to shape up a resume, prepare for an interview, and observe cultural norms of the workplace.

Career guidance and counselling has been an integral part of Ashiyanaa's empowerment plan for clients of interpersonal (domestic) violence for many years. We look forward to extending our experience and resources to help other groups of South Asians in need of language skills and acculturation.

# Seniors of diverse South Asian ethnicity mix together over fun, nostalgia and food

*“My wife and I long for the easy companionships we had in our home country. We were so happy to find that same friendly and homely atmosphere in Ashiyanaa’s get together! It was fun to play Bingo after so long, to chit chat and also the food was really enjoyable. Ashiyanaa is doing a great service for people like us who feel isolated.”*

- Guest, Maryland event

## SENIORS MEET N GREET



Meet N Greet was introduced during COVID times as a no-contact program with isolated seniors, gradually evolving into the online Chai & Chat. Though a few get-togethers took place under the banner later on, the program really came into its prime in May 2023. More than 70 senior women and men of diverse ethnicity signed in to attend the event at Reston Community Center, Virginia on a sunny afternoon.

The event was a huge success, featuring Bollywood Golden Oldies Singalong, Raffle Draw, South Asian Lunch. There was much laughter and community bonding.

Not surprisingly, when we announced another Meet N Greet event in December at the Maryland Benjamin Gaither Center, we were oversubscribed! More than a 100 community seniors joined in the fun this time, connecting over a superb South Asian lunch, Bingo and Raffle Draw.

We hope to expand our program further, socializing and integrating more seniors within the South Asian community through culturally familiar experiences. Our vision is to live in a society free of isolation, strengthened self-confidence and an instilled sense of belonging through acculturation. Most importantly, Ashiyanaa aims to build trust within the South Asian community so that when they need help, they know Ashiyanaa is here to support them every step along the way.

# A lively program gets seniors to socialize and engage in activities from the comfort of their armchairs

*“In this last quarter of my life I have found and made new friends with like-minded interest in life and I would like to keep it up!*

*I’m very grateful to Ashiyanaa and its members for their dedication and services to older generation of our South Asian community.”*

- Participant

## CHAI & CHAT



*“I really enjoy the talks, they are so positive! Mostly they are good for building up the confidence of senior people. I never miss a program.”*


- Participant

Our online Chai & Chat program was tailored to draw seniors out of lonely spaces and inspire them to form friendships. Popularity peaked during Covid times. The Zoom based program now has a 2 year old history, and is held unflinchingly every other Tuesday of the month. It is a much awaited ‘date’ in many senior lives.

Curating the bi-monthly program keeps Ashiyanaa staff and volunteers on their toes! Some of the most popular interactive sessions have been:

- Chair Yoga Class
- Discussion on Aging Confidently
- Speaker on Nutrition for South Asian Seniors
- TED Talk on The Brain Changing
- Talk on Embracing Aging

Session themes are often requested by the participants.



“Volunteering with Ashiyanaa is being part of a family that builds a better, kinder world, one life at a time”

- Volunteer Advocate, Ashiyanaa

## VOLUNTEERING: A shared humanity

*“Volunteering with Ashiyanaa has touched my heart in ways I never imagined.*

*It was inspirational to experience the overwhelming generosity of our community at the Annual Gala and the tireless efforts of the Ashiyanaa team – a powerful reminder of the goodness in the world!*

*What truly resonated was hearing a remarkable woman share her story. Her journey, shaped and supported by Ashiyanaa, along with the stories of others, has profoundly deepened my commitment to this cause. Their stories are not just narratives of struggles; they are beacons of hope and resilience.*

*Being even a small part of this impactful mission fills my heart with joy and a sense of purpose. Each moment reinforces my belief in the power of compassion and community support. It's more than volunteering; it's being part of a family that builds a better, kinder world, one life at a time.”*

# Cross-cultural conversations for awareness and sensitization, encouraging greater empathy and shared perspectives

*“We all desire a society that encourages appreciation of other cultures and integrates to become healthier and profoundly supportive of all individual constituents. From Ashiyanaa’s viewpoint this calls for Outreach at multiple levels. Biases and barriers will not drop till there is conversation, interaction, bonding and EMPATHY.*

*Our own South Asian community needs greater awareness and acculturation. Similarly, in the larger sphere, perspectives need to change and become all-embracing.*

*There are enormous challenges... and we are determined to take them on.”*

- Outreach Director, Ashiyanaa



## OUTREACH - Awareness & Prevention

Ashiyanaa staff and volunteers achieved path-breaking cultural connectivity last year. Through a busy schedule of over 100 outreach engagements, we interacted with diverse groups over discussions, presentations and training, at public forums, conferences and events. Some of the niche audiences were social service providers, students, educators, counselors and medical professionals.

With a focus to promote cultural competency in our local communities and an empathetic response to situations, our training program for various groups also addressed South Asian values, parenting principles and successful ways to build trust and engage with families.

Similarly, encouraging our own South Asian community to integrate with society at large, we spoke about challenges of living within two cultures, the impact on children, and the need to shed cultural barriers.

FACEBOOK

WHATSAPP

LINKEDIN

NEWSLETTERS

BLOGS

INSTAGRAM

X

WEBSITE

# Optimizing our digital reach to build healthy, well-informed communities

Photo by Levi Meir Clancy | Unsplash

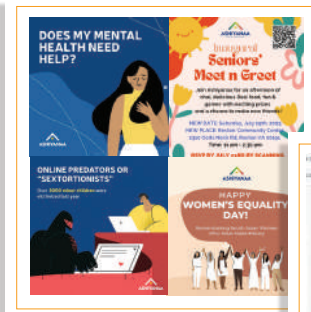
## MULTI-MEDIA CONNECTIVITY

DISCUSSIONS. REFLECTIONS. INFORMATION. FEEDBACK. The year 2023 generated a steady stream of communications from us through varied media channels, to catch and attract all denominations of people. Social media, newsletters and website blogs, primed communities on social issues and concerns, helpline and support services, community stories, health issues and support, events, festivities, and more.



Subscribers to our newsletter increased by 25%

Google reported high website connectivity	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Total clicks <b>2.37K</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Total impressions <b>28.7K</b>



Follower growth increased by 27% across social media platforms



# ACCREDITATIONS & HONORS

## Transparency & Accountability

The Candid Platinum Seal, earned by Ashiyanaa for the third consecutive year, has been awarded to only 0.7% of U.S charities and places Ashiyanaa in the topmost tier of nonprofits. It attests a total commitment to transparency and accountability based on the metrics of finances, goals, program information, strategies, capabilities, achievements, progress indicators, people involved and the difference the nonprofit is making.



## Honors

June 2023:

Ashiyanaa honored at the Indian American Impact Summit as Featured Nonprofit

October 2023:

Ashiyanaa honored as Domestic Violence Awareness Month Proclamation recipient

## Memberships & Donor Gateways

PROUD MEMBER OF



United Way of the National Capital Area

United Way # 9371

The international charity through which donors can reach us with ease.



CFC # 88808

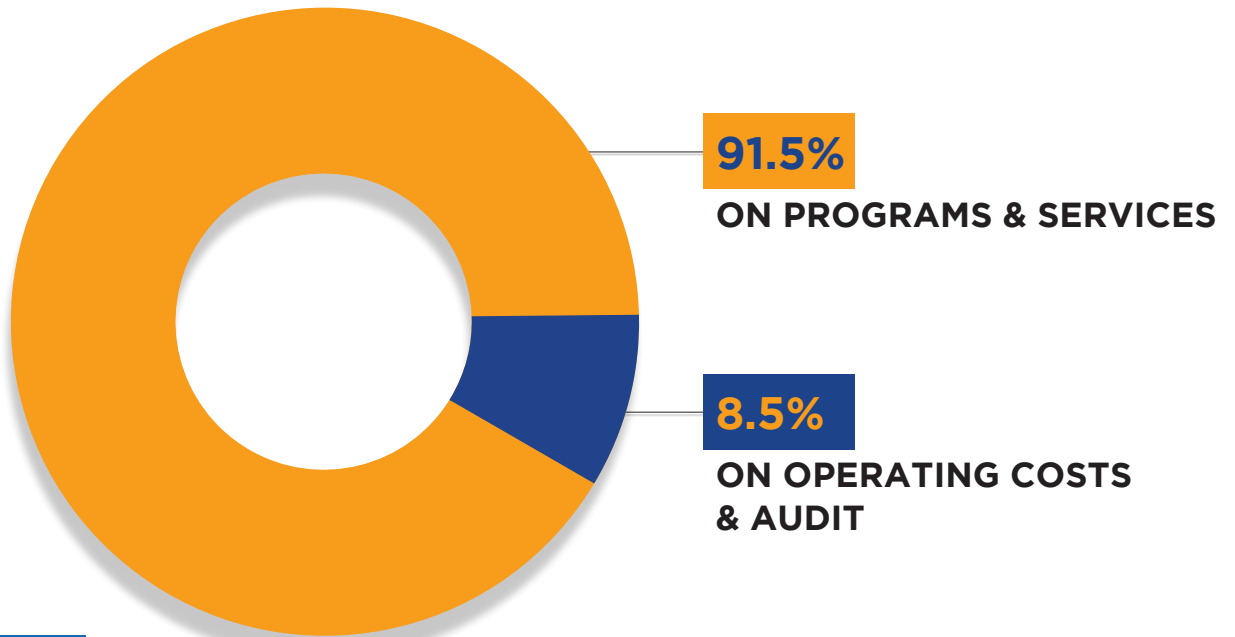
The workplace giving program of the federal government.

Ashiyanaa is a federally tax-exempt organization, as described in IRS code section 501(c)(3).

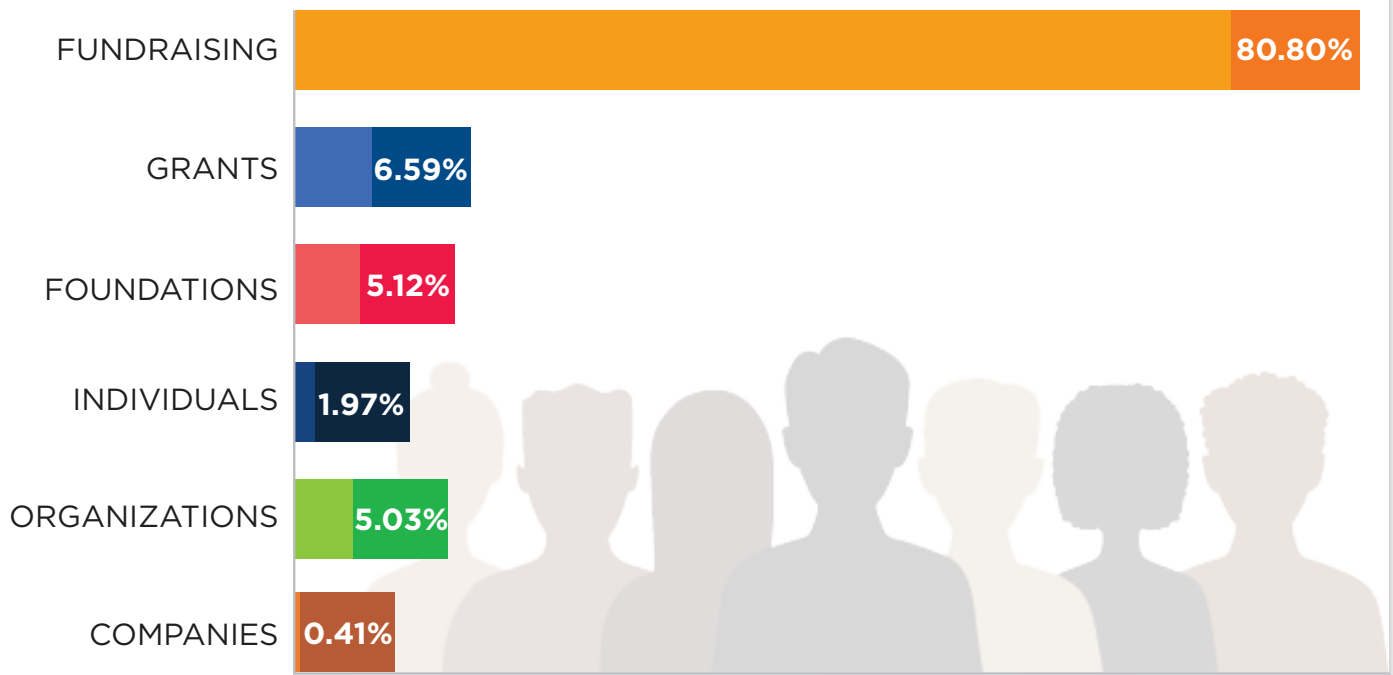
Our tax ID number is 52-2193753

# FINANCIALS

## THE SPEND ON EACH DOLLAR



## REVENUE





# FUNDRAISING STORIES

FUNDRAISERS are a perfect occasion to raise community awareness about social issues, build camaraderie within the community, applaud supporters and volunteers for their contributions... and share heart-warming stories of courage, resilience and triumph.

## 1ST ASHIYANAA CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT, MAY 2023



## SARI POP-UP SALE, MAY 2023



Immersed in the grand, celebratory mood of the Gala, the community comes together to reflect and rejoice. Inspired by stories of humanity and resilience, generosity goes viral and many pledges of support are raised.

## ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GALA 'LIGHTING THE WAY', SEPTEMBER 2023



# OUR DONORS

We are deeply grateful for the generous funding that has made it possible for us to continue providing critical, culturally-sensitive services. Thank you for your support.

## 30000+

- Capital One Bank
- Nalin & Shefali Garg

## 20000+

- Fairfax County
- Vaishali Deshpande & Samir M Deshpande

## 15000+

- Anirudh & Priya Kulkarni
- Anurag and Sanjna Lal
- Goswami Family Foundation
- Gupta Family Foundation
- Indu and Girish Jindia
- Manita & Debashish Hota
- Sahai Family Foundation
- Shehla and Waseem Haider

## 10000+

- 22nd Century Technologies Inc
- Rai Family Foundation
- Sudhakar & Aruna Kaveeshwar
- Sukumar R Iyer & Jyoti R Iyer
- Trehan Family Foundation
- Vandana & Amit Pamecha

## 7500+

- Madan Gupta & Monica Prasad

## 5000+

- Amit & Shalini Uttamsingh
- Ashish Khot
- Deepak & Hansa Hathiramani
- Electrosoft Services Inc
- Fabian Edward & Rena Bains, DDS
- GEICO Philanthropic Foundation
- Miles Foundation
- Peoples's Impact Network Inc
- Radiant Infotech
- Sanjay & Madhur Khanna
- Sanjay Shetty
- Srivastava Family
- Suneer & Priya Arora Foundation

## 2500+

- Alpha Omega Integration
- Ashok & Stuti Kaveeshwar
- Anita Raghavan
- Guidehouse
- Kay Kapoor
- Rakesh & Shalini Bhatia
- Rahul and Urvashi Prakash
- Vikesh & Nidhi Bansal Foundation
- Xerxes and Shilpa Mullan

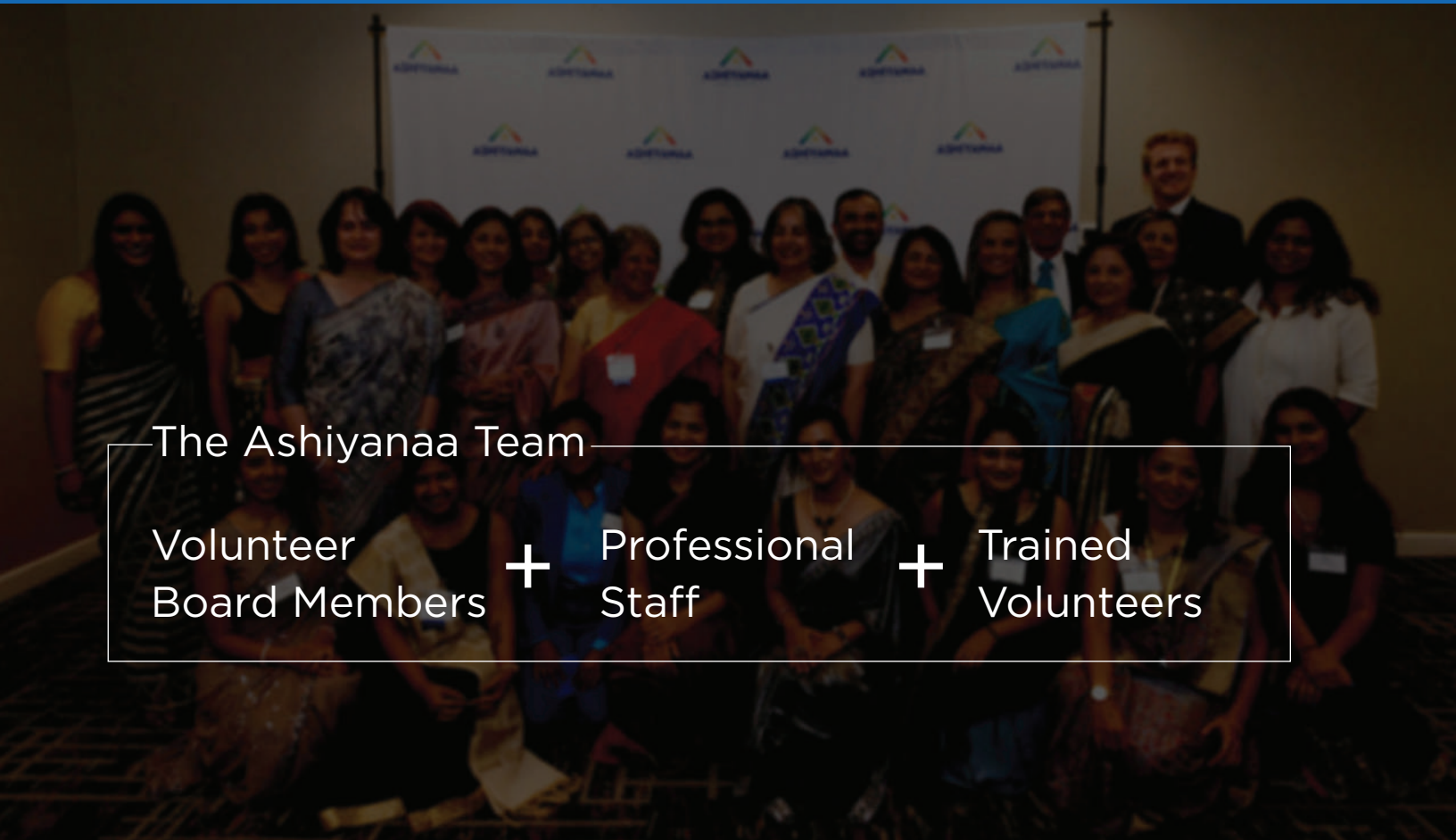
## 1500+

- ACER, LLC
- CyberPros Tech
- Dynamo Technologies
- Elias and Sultana Foundation
- Indian American Impact
- Dr. Meenakshi and Dr. Arvind Nandedkar
- Padma Kolla
- Potomac Law Group
- Preet & Manbir Takhar
- Sanjay & Vidya Govil
- Sharad and Mahindar Tak
- Sivananda Center
- Subha Narayanaswami
- TD Bank

## 1000+

- Alka Khanna
- Ambrish & Jyotsna Gupta
- Anand Seth
- Anila and Vijay Khetarpal Foundation
- Arun Muralidar
- Ayesha Anwar
- Brown Advisory
- Bryan Chapin
- Desha & Ranjit Teja
- Eric Junker
- Gary S Grover MD
- Greater Washington Association of Physicians
- Jasveen Johar
- Jay Sunny Bajaj Charitable Fund
- Kamal Jajodia
- M&T Charitable Foundation
- Mahendranath Rangareddy
- Manjot Jassal
- Mansoor Dar
- Mrudula Alla
- Mubarik & Faryal Khan
- Neeraj & Anu Gupta
- Nita Thacker
- OneDigital
- Paresh & Sonal Dharia
- Pratima & Sudeep Damani
- Punita & Harsh Sethi
- Rakesh Mehrotra
- Revathi & Bhadransain Vikram
- Rita Grover
- Sage Computing, Inc.
- Sanjiv Jain
- Shankar Pillai
- Shashi Sood
- Shuchi Marwaha
- Sonal Mazumdar
- Sonia and Robert Makheja
- Subhash Garg
- Subha Narayanaswami
- Sudha Reddy
- Sunil & Margaret Mukherjee
- Sunil & Monika Monga
- Varalakshmi & Ashok Aiyappa
- Vikram Nehru
- Vineeta & Rajesh Malkani
- Urvashi & Varun Malhotra

# ORGANIZATION



## The Ashiyanaa Team

Volunteer Board Members + Professional Staff + Trained Volunteers

Ashiyanaa's organizational network is a balance of skilled professional staff, highly experienced working board members (all volunteers) and motivated volunteers from different backgrounds with diverse skills.

Volunteers undergo two levels of training and are assigned different functions depending on their professional and other capabilities. Our Advocate Volunteer team completes extensive training and is thereafter inducted into case work support, under the close supervision of Ashiyanaa's staff.

For a long time, as ASHA for Women, the non-profit was fully volunteer driven. Now, with new programs and changing client profiles, Ashiyanaa is steadily increasing the ratio by inducting professional staff to better serve its clients.

### **Continued commitment despite stressful nature of work**

Ashiyanaa's functionaries stay committed, even in the face of emotional stress, crisis management, and potential threats to their personal safety by the person(s) connected with the clients they serve. We are therefore very protective of the identities of the people who have chosen to put their comfort aside for the sake of others.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS (VOLUNTEERS)

All members of the Board of Directors have served the organization for several years, from its earlier days as ASHA for Women to the new identity as ASHIYANAA.

### **Priya Kulkarni - President**

Priya Kulkarni currently serves as President and Secretary of the Board of Directors and serves as the Chair for the Executive Planning Committee. She has been with the organization for 14 years.

### **Lakshmi Aiyappa - Executive Director**

Lakshmi Aiyappa retired as a Social Worker after working in the field for 25+ years. Lakshmi has been associated with Ashiyanaa since 2005. She serves as a Board and Executive Planning Committee Member, and has been the pro bono Executive Director since 2011.

### **Maya Virani - Treasurer**

Maya Virani currently serves as Treasurer and the Chair of the Finance Committee. She joined in 2006 and has served in many capacities including being the Director of Senior Services.

### **Nalini Rajguru - Secretary**

Nalini Rajguru currently serves as a Board Member and Secretary. She started volunteering with ASHA in 2001 and joined the Board in 2004. She was a past President from 2007-2011. Nalini is on the Executive Planning Committee and has conducted strategic planning sessions in 2012, 2016, and 2020. She recently retired as a law librarian at a Washington, DC law firm.

### **Jaya Nelliot**

Jaya Nelliot is an Ayurvedic practitioner and holistic coach. She and her family have always volunteered with social service organizations. Jaya started volunteering with ASHA in 2009 as an advocate and now is a Board Member and the Outreach Director.

### **Meghana Chalasani**

Meghana Chalasani is a public health professional in the DC metro area. Meghana started volunteering with Ashiyanaa in 2014, and joined the Board in 2021. She currently serves as the Chair for the Digital Media Committee.

### **Amrita Jhanjee**

Amrita Jhanjee has over 40 years of professional experience spanning multiple industries and continents. She began volunteering with Ashiyanaa in 2008, and joined as a Board Member in 2009. She currently chairs the Volunteer Management Committee.

### **Abraham Mathew**

Abraham Mathew came to Ashiyanaa after spending 22+ years as a Banker. He has been a full-time volunteer and Board member since 2019, supporting Fundraising and Outreach activities. Previously, Abraham was Vice President at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, leading the Consumer Mortgage Department in the Mid-Atlantic region.

## AUDITORS & BOOKKEEPER

SB & Company, LLC  
Money Equations, Inc.

**OUR LIGHT  
IS ALWAYS  
ON**

We are always available on our helpline or through email to listen to, support and guide individuals of all ages from the South Asian community. Our support is non-judgmental and culturally-sensitive, and the person seeking help can request to communicate in a preferred South Asian language.

**Toll-free, confidential and safe helpline  
1-888-417-2742**



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9am-5pm, Monday-Friday

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