

# VOLUNTEERING HELPS YOU TOO

Among thousands of students who apply with top marks you will stand apart with your record in volunteer work.

PHOTOS: PARVEEN NEGI



One of the best things that education can do is to teach children about the obvious significance of volunteering early in life.



(From left) Joe Phelan of International Business Leaders Forum, UK, Anshu Gupta of Goonj and Rahul Nainwal of iVolunteer introduced the Apeejay India Volunteer Awards in Delhi last week

**12 387** Number of volunteer opportunities in the world last reported

**175** Number of volunteer opportunities in the country reported on *Ideallist.org*. These range from English teachers to

**to teach children about the obvious significance of volunteering early in life.**

RENU KAKKAR, Vice-President, Corporate Communications, Apeejay Surrendra Group

By Shreya Mukherjee

**I**F YOUR GOAL is to get into an Ivy League school, it's not enough to figure in the top percentile of your last big exam. The problem is that there are so many young people who are bright and equally capable of cracking tough exams, so you need to do something more to stand apart. Not only that, universities don't look for nerds. They seek out well-rounded young people and one indication of this fact is a student's record in community activities.

This was the take-home message of a round table organised by the Apeejay Surrendra Group to mark the completion of the first decade since the UN declared 2001 as the International Year of Volunteering.

Speaking at the discussion, Rahul Nainwal, director and co-founder of iVolunteer, a company that finds suitable volunteers for various grassroots activities around the country, said the recent drive for volunteerism is powered by Gen Next. "When my friends and I started iVolunteer in 2001, we met so many people who assumed we were from the US, had studied in the US or UK, or were somehow influenced by the West in some major way," Nainwal said. "But in the last few years there has grown a real understanding of, and a passion for, the work we do."

Much of this interest in volunteerism stems from the career boost that an exposure to it promises to students. Nainwal made this point on the sidelines of the discussion, which was attended by representatives of the NGOs, Save the Children India and Goonj, the International Association of Volunteer Effort (IAVE), and others to introduce the Apeejay India Volunteer Awards (AIVA) in August.

**US colleges and universities view a student's experience in volunteering as a sign of her being a candidate with the potential of bringing something different to the table**

Organised in collaboration with iVolunteer and International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), UK, the awards will celebrate the volunteer efforts of individuals, corporate organisations and NGOs, with a special award going out to volunteers under the age of 25.

"A lot more youngsters are saying they want to take a break from what they're doing or take a year off after school," Nainwal said. "And nowadays, a break often means taking time off to volunteer for a cause that young people believe in."

For students applying to the US to study, voluntary experience gives a clear edge, Nainwal said, adding: "From Ivy League institutions to liberal

arts schools in the US, volunteer experience shows that the candidate comes with the potential of bringing something different to the table."

The positive side of this development, according to Indira Dasgupta, executive director, People's Institute for Development and Training, New Delhi, is that "a lot more young people are travelling for education and coming back after having been exposed to different problems. This exposure then breeds the desire to do volunteer work here."

"Out of the seven college essays I wrote, four were on community service," says Uma Narang, who has got admission into an undergraduate programme at Emory University, Atlanta. "I volunteered to be a part of outreach activities in school and it taught me something about myself. Being a sports person, I'd love to volunteer at sports NGOs like the Right to Play."

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**THREE VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES**



**United Nations Volunteers (UNV)**

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) is a UN organisation that contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. The UNV programme mobilises close to 8,000 volunteers to work in development assistance projects and in humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. For more information, you have to go to <http://www.unv.org/>



**Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) India**

VSO needs volunteers with a range of professional skills. The organisation is now recruiting volunteers with skills and experience in business management, NGO management, advocacy, fund-raising, marketing and communications, health, and language therapy. For more information, go to <http://www.vsointernational.org/where-we-work/India.asp>



**NGOs such as Naz India also need volunteers**

Almost any NGO in the country welcomes volunteers, and will give you the opportunity to join their team depending on what you want to do, or how you feel you can help most. Naz India, for instance, is always open to volunteers for its Care Home for people living with HIV/AIDS. More information is available on their website <http://www.nazindia.org/>