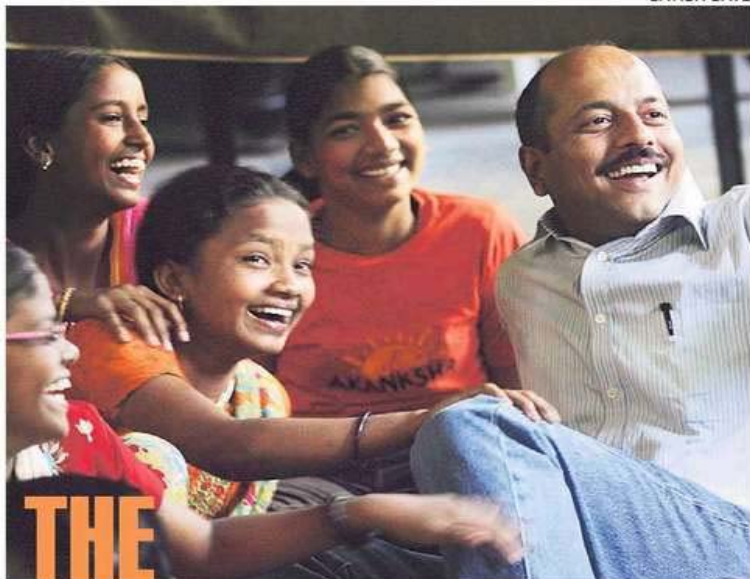


SATISH BATE



# THE DO-GOODERS

We'd all love to make a difference. Find out how

By Mignonne Dsouza

**T**ODAY, AS 35,000 runners participate in the Mumbai marathon, a fair amount of those participating in the seven-km Dream Run will be running to raise money for charity. Like them, lots of us have the urge to give back to society, but don't know how we can help. Four people who've made good on their impulse to do good tell us how.

## JUST DO IT

Businessman Sandeep Sukhija seized the moment eight years ago when he saw an ad asking for volunteers for Akanksha, an NGO that teaches underprivileged children. "Fundamentally, every person wants to make a difference," explains Sukhija. "When I saw the ad, I thought to myself that I would be able to teach kids. So I went for it."

Today, Sukhija remains committed to Akanksha (regularly winning 'best volunteer' awards) despite his growing business and personal commitments. He explains, "I am very clear - if anything conflicts with my teaching responsibilities, I simply tell clients and family that I am committed elsewhere."

Sukhija also acknowledges the support he receives from his family and employees. "I make it a point to explain to them what I do at Akanksha," he says, adding, "And they support me 100 per cent."

When asked if he has any words of advice, he says, "People are always waiting for the perfect set of circumstances, but what I've found is that there is no perfect time. Something always comes in the way - problems with your boss, conflicts at home or timing problems. The only way to do it is to just jump in there."

## STAY THE COURSE

Satish deSa, an associate creative director with a leading ad agency, did just that. He jumped into the volunteering game in college when he dropped by the Social Service League office at St Xavier's College.

"It was the only organisation that caught my eye," he explains. deSa remained a committed volunteer all through college and even after he passed out, but over the years, he explains, "Work kept on interfering and the scale of my involvement kept on dropping."

Then seven years ago, he and another college friend took up the gauntlet again when they were asked to put up a street play. They decided to perform the play at other locations and decided on doing it at a shelter for street kids and at a girl's orphanage. "Then we thought - why not serve snacks and hand out gifts - and before we knew it, we were organising a full-scale party,"

## HELPING HANDS

Sandeep Sukhija (left) has been an Akanksha volunteer for eight years, while Mahesh Adhav (right) funds cleft surgery operations for underprivileged kids. (Bottom right) Satish deSa at a Christmas party for street kids



recalls deSa.

Since then, aided by a group of friends, he has been regularly organising events at different NGOs. "Our criteria is that we work with kids and choose organisations that don't usually attract too much attention or funds," explains deSa.

## NO TIME? DONATE MONEY

Last year, Arindam Basu, a project manager with an IT and financial services company, commemorated his father's death anniversary by fulfilling the wishes of two terminally ill kids via the Make-a-Wish Foundation, an NGO that matches sick children who have needs with donors willing to make contributions. "I'd heard of Make-a-Wish when they visited our office. I'm part of my office's social committee and we had raised funds for them at Diwali," explains Basu.

Make-a-Wish sent Basu a list of 'pending wishes' via email and he and his family donated a cycle to a terminally ill boy, and a dollhouse to a sick girl. "It was a very good feeling; I definitely want to do more along the same lines," says Basu.

Software professional Mahesh Adhav is no stranger to this feelgood feeling. Adhav is a regular donor to the Shankara Eye Foundation and a US-based organisation that works with kids requiring cleft surgery. And a few weeks ago, he set a record at his office by bidding Rs 3,300 for a Christmas card made by his colleagues. "We were auctioning the cards to raise money for charity and realised that they were going for smaller sums, so a colleague and I raised the bar," explains Adhav. He and his colleagues ended up raising Rs 20,000 in one day.

## PICK A CAUSE

Having trouble picking a cause? Stick to your strengths, advises deSa. "I love being with kids, for instance, so I chose organisations that work with kids." Sukhija advocates picking organisations with a "high efficiency rating" and those that are transparent about their balance sheets and activities, while Adhav also advocates picking one that you can visit so that "you can keep an eye on it and actually see all the good that's being done."

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**A FEW WEEKS AGO, MAHESH ADHAV BID Rs 3,300 FOR A CHRISTMAS CARD MADE BY HIS COLLEAGUES. THE MONEY WENT TO CHARITY**



## DONATE OR VOLUNTEER

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<http://www.giveindia.org/>  
This website allows you to donate money to NGOs and promises feedback about your donation. You can also create your own iGive page to raise funds for a cause, or opt for the Payroll Giving option.