

Rice Kids Spreads Hope and Healthy Meals

By Kyle Schickner

It's incredible how a practice institutionalized in South Asia can influence the journey of kids born and raised in America 550 years later.

Anakh (14) and Prabir Sawhney (11) co-founded Rice Kids in 2018 with a mission to bring hot and nutritious meals to food-insecure individuals and families. Their vision was clear: one day, they wanted to be in a world where no one would sleep hungry because of a lack of resources.

"I was inspired by Sikhism's core principles of selfless service and sharing what you have with others. I remember going to the Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) when I was three, and one of my favorite activities was to serve freshly prepared meals at the community kitchen," recalls Anakh about her early childhood experiences.



While Prabir looked forward to serving, he also had a grudge. "They would never give me the important and heavy stuff to serve as I was too little. Until recently, I could only serve bread or water," he remembers with a chuckle.

Sikhism originated in the Punjab area of South Asia, which spread across the present-day states of India and Pakistan. The community kitchen (or langar), which is a practice of serving free meals to all, was started by the founder of the Sikh religion in the late 15th century. With it, he wanted to help the poor and uphold the principle of equality among all people of the world, regardless of religion, caste, ethnicity, color, age, gender, or social status. "It was a practice that, in many ways, brought about the birth of caring communities," explains Anakh, adding "while the two of us had a weekly serving schedule, we realized that none of our friends were experiencing the joy of helping others in the community like we were. So, we always tried to find ways to involve other kids."

While serving meals at the community kitchen became a regular practice, the kids soon realized they needed to do more. "As we visited major cities like New York and Philadelphia and traveled to places in Asia, we realized there is a much bigger hunger problem and a lot more needed to be done," says Prabir. "We saw homeless people on the streets and others rummaging through trash for food."

One day in 2018, on their way back from their weekly community kitchen routine, the kids started to talk about initiatives they could do outside of the community kitchen to help others in need. "While my son, who was six then, was more of a passive contributor to the conversation, my daughter was passionate about the cause. She wanted to help everyone and anyone she encountered, but I tried to explain it was not feasible," reminisces Niti Sawhney, the kids' mother.



That is when the idea of a nonprofit organization came about that would allow the Sawhney's to scale up and serve more people.

Since then, the nonprofit operations have helped thousands of food-insecure individuals and families with global projects. Many of these projects are in the US, serving homeless and low-income families, and in India, where malnutrition and poverty are more pronounced. Team Rice Kids, as they like to call themselves, also helped hundreds of families during the COVID pandemic when access to food became a major pain point for the poor.

They recently completed the Feed 5K program, which aimed to feed 5,000 food-insecure individuals in NY, NJ, and surrounding areas. As Anakh describes, "there are smiles all around that make our work so much fun!"

When Rice Kids was founded, one of their key objectives was to involve other kids in the community so they could experience the joy of giving. Hundreds of kids have volunteered for their programs to date. These smiles have encouraged the siblings to scale up their work further. They plan to expand partnerships within the US and Asia to reach more people and increase the impact of every dollar they raise. "We believe everyone working on the hunger cause is our ally. We are grateful to all the individuals and organizations because they are helping us get closer to our vision. We want to partner and celebrate all of them," notes Prabir.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
COHEN SEGLIAS
PALLAS GREENHALL & FURMAN PC

DIVORCE WITHOUT THE DRAMA

Carolyn N. Daly
cdaly@cohenseglia.com

cohenseglia.com

AAML
NEW JERSEY CHAPTER



DC DE KY NJ NY PA