



Friends Society



Celebrating Golden Jubilee

December 2019

Friends Society (FS) is a youth organization providing various social services in Vadodara, Gujarat, India. Most of its members are from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and other colleges in the neighbouring areas. Nearly 70-75% of FS activities are conducted by student volunteers, the remaining services are provided by paid staff (teachers, physical therapists, music therapists, and helpers).

The idea behind Friends Society is quite simple. It is to provide college students a meaningful alternative by spending their free time in a constructive manner – that is, by providing social services to people in Vadodara.

WHEN and HOW FS started:

While doing her field work at a mental hospital, a student pursuing Master’s in Social Work (MSW) requested university students to volunteer time and carry out recreational activities for the patients. Following this experience, her fiancé, also MSW student, along with a student from the Faculty of Engineering, encouraged others to join them as they widened services to cater to various needy people in the community. The idea was well received by a few students, and FS was formally established on 15th August 1969. FS continues to touch, improve and enrich the lives of many individuals ever since.

First audited account (1969-70):

Audited Accounts		Expenses	
Receipts		Programmes & Activities	
Membership fees..	Rs. 176-00		Rs. 617-31
Donations	Rs. 611-90		
Additional contributions from members	Rs. 112-00		
Sale of Greeting Cards	Rs. 81-00		
Total	Rs. 980-90		Rs. 617-31
Balance	Rs. 363.59		

SLOGAN: “Self-development Through Service”

Student volunteers realize self-development by volunteering at FS. They plan and conduct activities, some become members of the Executive Committee and participate in the managing operations, they work closely with the Trustees and staff. Some of them assume leadership roles as group in charge for each ongoing activity or special events. At FS, members hone their social skills, make new friends, learn about teamwork, and develop communication, organizational and leadership skills. These skills prepare them for the workplace and beyond.

SYMBOL: “YSI” is embedded in the FS logo – it stands for “Youth Society Integration”

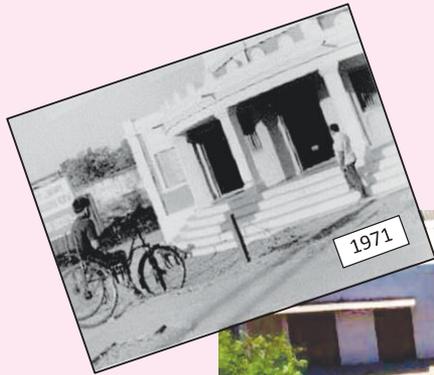
While helping improve lives through activities, volunteers learn about social responsibility and giving back to society from which they have benefitted. Thus, they become caring and responsible citizens.



Playing games with disadvantaged children (Youth Club)



Volunteers working with mentally challenged children



After conducting operations from the offices of various groups at the university, in 1971, FS entered in an agreement with Hindu Mahajan Mandal to continue to operate and improve their Petit Library and Reading Room in Fatehganj in return for allowing FS to use the premises for activities. Since then, both the library and reading room are greatly enhanced and have continuously served the local community. Also, the building and the grounds around it have been transformed into a vibrant and green campus. Several activities, such as Balwadi, Sunday School, Sunday Club, Sewing Classes, and celebration of festivals, are conducted from these premises.

MISSION:

Help people realize their potential and be happier; help increase their physical, mental, emotional well-being and increase their earning potential, and bring youth closer to disadvantaged sections of society.

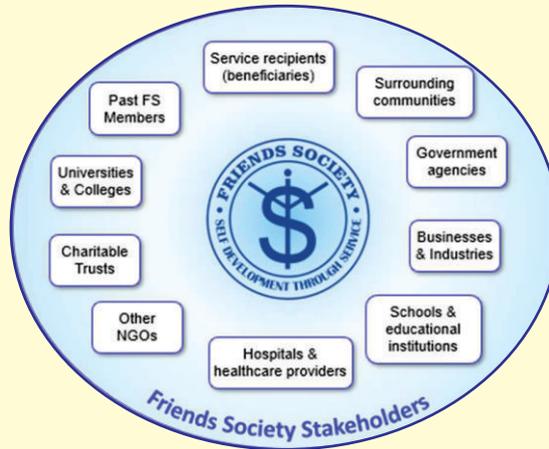
(In short: To enhance the lives of people in need as well as the volunteers)

PRINCIPLES: The following principles guide the activities at Friends Society

- Believe in each person's potential to achieve great things
- Members realize self-development through service they provide
- As custodians of other people's money, spend the money wisely and properly
- Treat each other with respect, we are all equals
- Safety and well-being of volunteers and the people we serve are very important
- Academics and family always take priority

UNWRITTEN CONVENTIONS

- Beneficiaries are our friends.
- We keep politics and religion out of FS.
- We do not duplicate services provided by others.
- Big is a blessing but small is beautiful. - Through many small donations, we reach out to more people and this increases our accountability to more people in the community.



STRATEGY for the coming years

The following six-part strategy provides a roadmap for moving forward in the coming years. It's a plan to ensure long-term viability of Friends Society while achieving its mission.

1. **Make FS stronger** - its structure, ways things are done, allocation of resources, long term funding, operational procedures and policies, ensuring compliance with regulations on a regular basis.
2. **Communication** - effective and reliable communication among the volunteers, staff, external partners, agencies, and public at large
3. **Coordination and accountability** - coordination of activities and establishing accountability for volunteers and staff responsible for them.
4. **Volunteer and staff-based activities** - FS started with volunteer-based activities. Over the years, a few staff-based activities have been introduced; need to ensure that there is effective coordination between them.
5. **Volunteer self-development** – opportunities for volunteers to realize personal and professional skills development is the central focus at FS from the beginning. This needs to be maintained as FS strives to become a more professional organization.
6. **Past member involvement** - need to systematically provide opportunities for past members to participate and make contributions to FS and accommodate their interests, unique strengths and experiences, time availability, and special needs of members living outside Vadodara.





Blood donation camp



Sahiyari Mela



Summer camp

Reading Room / Petit Library



Celebrating



Celebrating



Shaurya



Youth Club



Sewing class

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Activities for children and adults with disabilities

- Cheer Up Program
- Sunday School (children)
- Sunday Club (adults)

Activities for Fatehganj Community

- Public Reading Room and Library
- Balwadi
- Sewing and Embroidery Classes
- Youth Club

Activities for Patients

- Sheth Khushalchand Charitable Medical Center (store)
- Blood Donation Program
- Health Services

Activities for School Children and Youth

- Program for Future Leaders
- Program for University Youth

Special Events

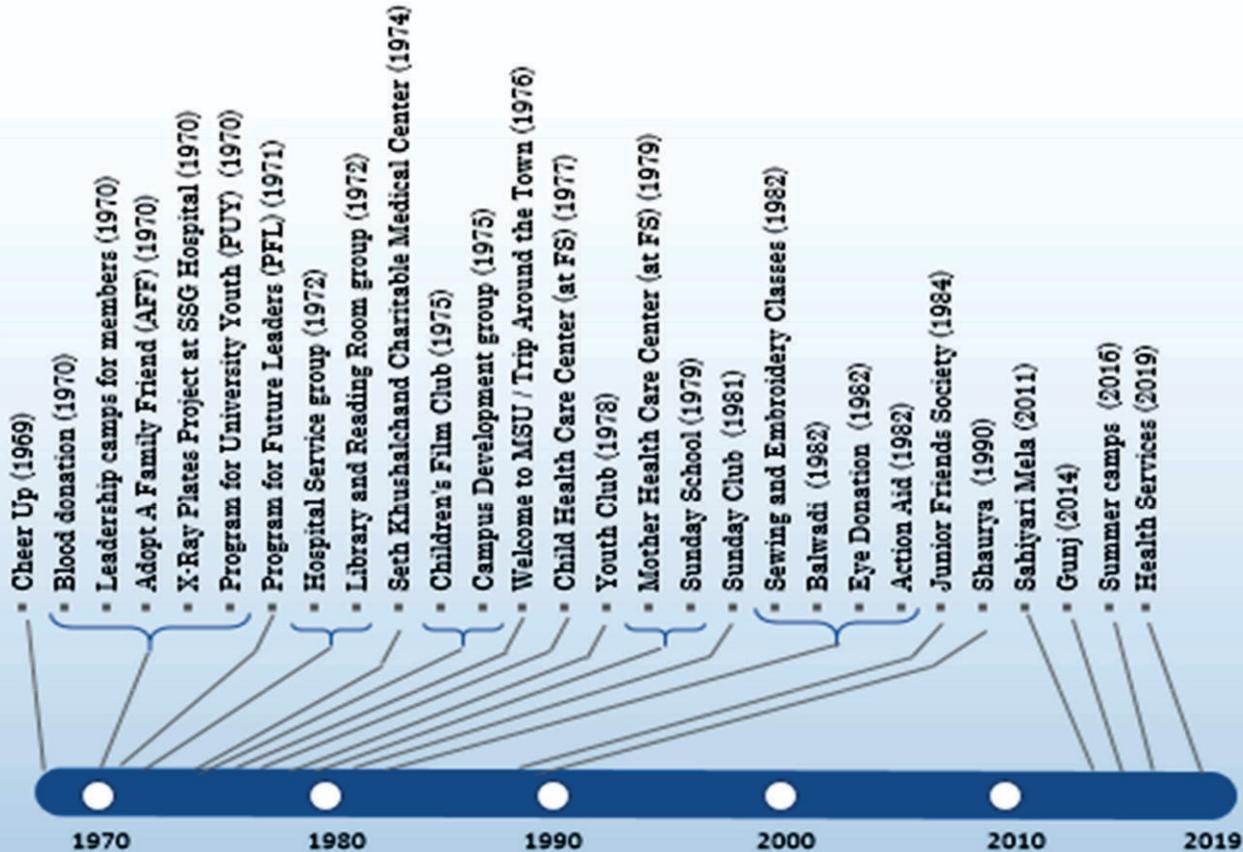
- Shaurya - All Vadodara Special Children Sports Meet (annual)
- Sahiyari Mela – Arts and crafts exhibition and sales (annual)
- Gunj – music program by visually impaired adults (biennial)
- Health Check-up camps (medical / dental)
- Summer Camps for Children
- Camps for Volunteers
- Celebrating various festivals

KEY ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST

(Activities discontinued for various reasons, for example: to avoid duplication, no longer needed)

- Adopt-A -Family Friend (AFF) Program
- X-Rays Plates project – SSG Hospital
- Mother Child Health Care Center
- Hospital Services Group (visits to various wards at SSG Hospital)
- Children’s Film Club (PFL)
- Outward Bound Camps (PFL)
- General Knowledge Quiz / Talent Contest (PFL)
- Junior Friends Society
- Typewriter Institute for physically challenged persons
- Thalassemia support group

START OF NEW ACTIVITIES



FOR THE FIRST TIME ...

- Visit Mental Hospital (24 Aug 1969)
- Ouring: Crippled children to see K. Lal's MAYA JAL program (12 Aug 1969)
- Visit School for the Blind (12 Oct 1969)
- Visit Children's Ward at SSG Hospital (4 Sept 1969)
- Visit Home for the Crippled Children (14 Sept 1969)
- Blood donation camp - MA Hall (Boys Hostel, MSU) (2 Aug 1970)
- Leadership camp was at Raipura (25 Dec 1970)
- Stall at the University Fun Fair (7 Feb 1970)
- Friends Day (8 Mar 1970)
- Functional Education classes for Mess Servants (1975)
- Cardex System with blood donor contact information – the first in Baroda (1975)
- Community blood donation camp - in Fatehgunj (1 Oct 1978)
- GUNJ (first program on the 205th birthday of Louis Braille) (4 Jan 2014)

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS AT FS

- Handicapped Students Association handed over their assets to FS as they closed (15 Aug 1970)
- Variety Entertainment Program (9 Feb 1970)
- Survey of land around Beggars Home by volunteers: relief camp to set up a vegetable garden (18 Jan 1970)
- Amina Tyabji became the first Chairperson of FS (1970)
- Household survey by 40 volunteers to identify people with disabilities (Nov 1971)
- During Navnirman movement of Gujarat, the blood bank was empty - FS collected 59 units of blood in 2 days (1974)
- Asha Parekh trophy for collecting highest number of blood units in Gujarat ; received the award 2 more times (24 Aug 1975)
- Award for FS from the Fed. of Gujarat Mills and Industries (29 Mar 1977)
- BCC award to FS for its work (13 Sept 1979)
- Health camp at FS campus: 174 children got medical check-ups (1979)
- Greenhouse built on the campus (1980)
- Gowri Rajendran became second Chairperson of FS (1989)
- 25th Anniversary Reunion for members (1994)
- Kutch earthquake - FS sent volunteers, doctors and supplies (2001)
- Gathering of members to discuss future of FS (2 Oct 2012)
- Reunion for members (13 Jan 2013)
- Issued Sexual Harassment policy, formed ICC (15 Dec 2018)
- Jaikishan Gianchandani became the third Chairperson (15 Jan 2019)

IMPACT of Friends Society

Friends Society has made significant difference in the lives of thousands of children and adults who participated in various FS activities conducted by thousands of student volunteers who themselves realized self-development to help enhance their careers.

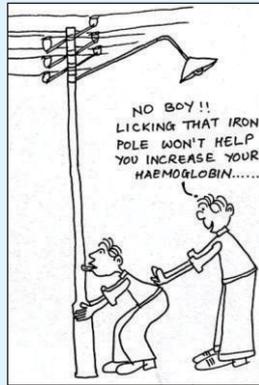
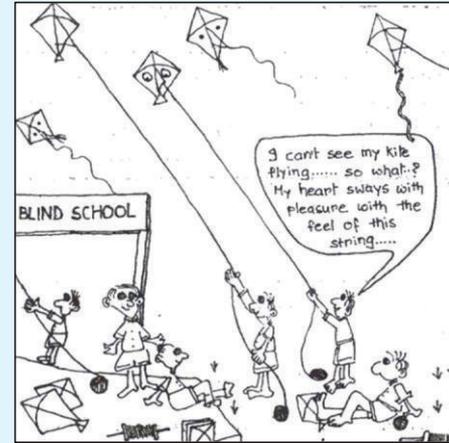
During the 50 years:

- ✓ FS has conducted **28 types of activities**, 16 of them are continuing today.
- ✓ A total of **48,800 individual activities / events** were conducted – almost 1,000 per year. These account for over **128,000 hours** of activities.
- ✓ Through these activities, **2,580 children and adults** with some physical or mental limitations, or women and children from low-income communities were helped.
- ✓ FS has conducted **377 blood donation camps**, collecting **19,130 units of blood**, to help around **23,000 patients** at the SSG Hospital.
- ✓ Fatehganj community residents were able to read newspapers and magazines in the **Reading Room** for **11,400 days** and borrow books (from a collection of over 6,000 books in various languages) from the **library** for **5,700 days**.
- ✓ **2,700 student volunteers** have participated in FS activities over the years, spending around **735,600 hours**.

Impact on beneficiaries: Bring happiness and joy in their lives; increase self-confidence, self-image and hope for the future; help increase physical skills (such as eye-hand coordination) and personal skills (such as patience, team work, being on time, and public speaking); enhance education through supplemental education activities; increase knowledge of personal health matters; develop friendships; and just have fun in general.



FS Members - 1972



FS Members – 2013 Reunion



Cartoons by Ravindra Amin (FS member since 1979)

TESTIMONIALS FROM A FEW FS VOLUNTEERS

(We had asked members to share their thoughts about FS two years ago for the website. Here are few excerpts)

“When I look back, I realize how lucky we were to have had such a wonderful foundation to do something useful for society. And the activities were so noble and uplifting not only for the beneficiaries but also the volunteers. [Shailesh Ventakesh]

I joined FS with an intention that we have one more place to go in the evening if we are bored ! But then FS turned out to be a lifetime memorable experience ! The FS experience enabled me to learn to care for opinions and views of others, empathize with the differently abled people, be more aware of social issues and what we can do to address them, becoming a risk taker, and so much more When I look back, I realize that FS moulded me the way I am today by providing experiences and exposures be it in the administrative matters of organization, running the activities, or appreciating softer and sensitive human issues. [Kamlesh Vaishnav]

I worked with KC and other boys in Youth Club to help build up confidence. After many years, when I met KC, he opened his wallet and took out a worn-out piece of paper, and said, "This is the letter you had written to me 12-13 years back and from that day, it is with me all the time. Whenever I am disappointed or do not know what to do, I will read it and see my path clearly." [Haider Ali Saiyed]

My experiences at Friends Society have always been warm, endearing and highly enriching. FS taught me the true meaning of the term value. Through my long association with FS, I learnt to value not only time and money but also the people around me. [Seema Nambiar]

I was extremely reserved before I joined FS and rarely took part in group activities in school. At FS, I got a lot of self-confidence to plan, organise, and in working with people and it improved my public speaking and communication skills. This experience helped me in my career and is helping me even today after so many years. [Rahul Sharma]

Working on many different activities, I learned to think in multi-dimensional ways. And, this allowed me to have a broader intellectual bandwidth. This has provided an advantage to me at work over my colleagues I had learned critical skills of being able to convince others [Nisheeth Desai]

.... In my work (as a Chairperson) at FS, I associated with the very rich for fund raising and the poor and needy through various activities, I became very comfortable with all of them. In my eyes, all are the same, some are just more fortunate than others. This realization has kept me well-grounded over the years we have all grown for the better because of FS proportionately, we have received more from FS than we have given. [Gowri Rajendran]

I learnt to speak fluent English in FS and overcame my shyness. I learnt the value of teamwork and skills to become an effective team member and conducting meetings and documenting. I learnt to get things done in spite of limited resources, to build from what you have. All these have helped me in my personal and professional life. [Sagun Desai]

FS has not only helped me discover and develop my competencies, but it has also given me friends for a lifetime, has played an important role in helping me develop an inclusive attitude towards the differently abled I have evolved into a different person because of FS. [Anushree Gokhale]



ORGANIZATIONS

Who Have Supported FS Over the Years

Hindu Mahajan Mandal - has allowed FS to use the Petit Library premises for its activities in return for developing, maintaining and operating the Petit Library and Reading Room for the local community.

The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (MSU) - The idea of Friends Society was born at the **Faculty of Social Work** fifty years ago; an estimated 1,500 students have become FS volunteers; hostels and faculties have allowed blood donation camps; initial sports meet were organized at the Union Pavilion; FS participated in the University funfairs by setting up stalls; and Welcome to MSU” program for incoming students at the University. The faculties and students from the **Faculty of Social Work** (FSW) and **Faculty of Family and Community Sciences** (Home Science) have played significant and long-term role in shaping FS activities; and the **Chetan Balwadi** has provided professional guidance for setting up a Balwadi at FS. Over the years, volunteers have also come from other faculties (such as Engineering and Technology).

SSG Hospital & Medical College of Baroda - played a major role in supporting various healthcare activities of Friends Society during the first 20 + years - collaboration with the hospital blood bank; space within the hospital for setting up a discounted medical store; participation by healthcare professionals in running the Child Healthcare Center and the Mother Healthcare Center; partnership for Eye Donation program for three years; and partnership for services by FS in several wards in the hospital.

Sumandeep Vidyapeeth - has been providing significant support for Friends Society beneficiaries, children with disabilities and those from nearby underprivileged communities, by providing free healthcare services, primarily through three colleges: **Dental College and Hospital, College of Physiotherapy** (post-graduate students visiting FS every Sunday to provide assessment and guidance on exercises they should do), and **Medical College** which provides free evaluations and treatment to children with disabilities through various departments such as Orthopedics, Neurology, Ophthalmology and Medicine.

FACES eV (Germany) - From the funds raised in Germany, it has made significant annual donations to Friends Society for over 20 years.

Khushalchand Charity Trust – trusted this student-run organization in 1972 by giving Rs. 75,000 grant to start a medical store at the SSG Hospital and annually Rs. 10,000 to maintain this activity.

Hospital for Mental Health (“Mental Hospital”) – has been helping FS in carrying out assessments and treatment of children with mental challenges, providing free medications, and helping them get Unique Disability ID (UDID) cards.

Fatehsinghrao Gaikwad Trust - The trust had donated funds to FS in the early years. Also, Ranjitsingh Gaikwad had helped FS in variety of ways, including printing publications.

Jyoti Ltd. (Late Nanubhai Amin) - Shri Nanubhai Amin provided strong support in the initial years - a big factor in FS getting on sound footing and flourish.

Convent of Jesus and Mary Girls High School - Provided school grounds, and had lent some of the sports items, for conducting Shaurya sports meets for more than 20 years.

Baroda Citizens Council (BCC) and **United Way of Baroda** - BCC provided, in conjunction with Municipal Corporation, vaccines and trained persons for the Child Healthcare Center run by FS. Both organizations had provided variety of support and financial assistance during the first decade.

Modern Food Products - has made significant annual contributions to FS for decades. The past FS Chairperson’s (Gowri Rajendran) family owns the company; the entire family has made significant contribution of time and commitment to FS for many decades.

Narayan PowerTech - For almost ten years, Narayan PowerTech has provided significant donations to Friends Society every year; have given jobs to eight blind individuals in their factory that makes transformers and plan to hire more; held blood donation camp every year at their factory; and has provided variety of other support over time.

Shree Jalaram Seva Ashram Trust - Provides lunch every day for Balwadi and Sunday School students; and had donated significant funds to set up night counter at the Medical store at the SSG Hospital.

Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) – has provided variety of assistance to Friends Society in the first two decades, including providing 200 to 300 truckloads of construction debris to fill up a hole surrounding the Petit Library and then truckloads of soil to provide top layer ; waived the corporate duty on

x-ray plates for Friends Society's X-Ray Plates project at the SSG Hospital, and in conjunction with BCC provided vaccines and trained persons (vaccinators) for the Child Healthcare Center.

V-One Society – has helped acquire appliances and aids for children and adults with disabilities to help increase their mobility and other functions.

Lions Club of Taramandal - Has provided for the last several years financial support to FS

K.G. Patel Children's Hospital - The Orthotics and Prosthetics department has been providing free or significantly discounted aid, appliances, and medical treatment to children with physical disabilities for the last five years.

Baroda Lions Club Education Trust - Lions Club had helped FS organize blood donation camps and talks at some of the schools they support.

Rosary High School - Rosary High School had provided, for more than 15 years, free buses for children with disabilities and the school ground was used for holding Shaurya Sports meets during some of the years.

Shroff Foundation Trust - This trust had made annual donations consistently for nearly 20 years, which was useful source for supporting FS activities.

Transpex - Silox Industry Pvt. Ltd. has provided donations to FS for several years

Nagrik Raktadan Samiti (NARDAS) - Friends Society has worked in close partnership with NARDAS for arranging blood donation camps from the beginning.

Medtronic India – channeled large sum of money through FS to help build a school in Kutch after major earthquake and had also donated money to FS

E-Tech - provided donations, arranged for blood donation camps at their facilities, and supported Sahiyari Mela

Alpha Foundation (Milin Mehta and A. Panchal) - donated significant amounts for 3 to 4 years for making major repairs of the Petit Library building and the compound.

Christian Spiritual Life Center - provided their facilities for holding two-day annual Executive Committee (EC) camps for almost 20 years at discounted rates.

Hill Memorial High School - Youth Club activities, such as playing football, were conducted in the school grounds for 5 to 6 years in the mid 80's.

Goodluck Travellers - provided, for many years, free transportation for Shaurya and other events

Mahisagar Faraskhana - provided faraskhanas at discounted rates for many years

Society of the Physically Handicapped (SPH) - provided variety of support for FS activities, including use of their premises for programs such as “Udan” and lending their chairs for functions held at FS.

Trinity Goodies Pvt. Ltd. – provided free snacks for Shaurya for over 10 years

Donations are exempted from income tax under Section 80G(5) of the Income Tax Act 1961. We welcome your support. Please send the cheque (“Friends Society”) to the address below

Registered Under Society Registration Act 1860

- Reg. No. Guj/351/Vadodara; & Bombay Public Trust Act 1950 - Reg. No. Vadodara F-109

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*50 Years of
Continuous Service*

Friends Society