

# Learn to Serve - India

## An Exploration of Service & Spirituality INFORMATION & APPLICATION PACKET

LEAPNOW: Transforming Education  
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Spend a season immersed in the life of Varanasi, one of India's holiest cities, while serving those whose lives would be poorer without your help.

The Lonely Planet travel website, describes Varanasi in this way:

*"Few places in India are as colourful, charismatic or spiritual as the bathing ghats lining the Ganges in Varanasi. The city of Shiva is one of the holiest places in India, where Hindu pilgrims come to wash away a lifetime of sins in the Ganges or to cremate their loved ones. Varanasi, previously named Benares and Kashi (City of Light)...has always been an auspicious place to die, since expiring here offers moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). The city is the beating heart of the Hindu universe, a crossing place between the physical and spiritual worlds, and the Ganges is viewed as a river of salvation, an everlasting symbol of hope to past, present and future generations. The magical but sometimes overwhelming city is where the most intimate rituals of life and death take place in public on the city's ghats. The accessibility to the practices of an ancient but still living religious tradition is what captivates many visitors, and a walk along the ghats or a boat ride on the river is one of India's most absorbing experiences."*



The primary purpose of this semester is to serve others, and learn about service, while experiencing the richness of life in India. Over the past decade, while running other programs in Varanasi, LEAPNOW has forged contacts with individuals, small organizations and grass-roots initiatives that are working to serve people who have few or no resources or low status or limited rights – people who won't be helped without the intervention of caring individuals. This includes people who are very poor, lepers, children of prostitutes or underage prostitutes, the sick and dying. Semester participants will assist these grassroots efforts in Varanasi, while learning Hindi and living with Indian families, immersing themselves in the life of a culturally rich city. We will challenge ourselves to find new ways to support those who wouldn't be helped if we don't reach out to them and touch their lives in a positive way.

After a 3-day orientation retreat in California, we spend 11 weeks based in Varanasi before returning to California for a 3-day retreat to debrief the semester and re-enter the U.S. in a gentle way.

We start the semester in India with an in-country orientation in Varanasi accompanied by intensive Hindi language instruction – to be able to more fully meet the people we'll work with on their own terms. In addition to significant instruction in the Hindi language, LEARN to Serve students will also attend courses on learning to teach English, how to work effectively with children, and other modes of helping. Students will live with Hindu and Muslim homestay families and meet on a regular basis at the LEARN to Serve house - which is our home base throughout the semester. We'll be based in a quieter part of the city for the sake of our sanity, but will have access to the entire city and surrounding towns for service, exploration and classes.

Service work is complemented by regular and enriching classes such as: hatha yoga, Bollywood dance, silverwork, meditation, traditional Indian dance, woodcarving, sitar or tabla lessons, drum-making, Ayurvedic medicine, energy healing, astrology, jewelry making, and much more. Our weeks in Varanasi are frequently enriched by weekends exploring sites of cultural interest in the region such as Bodh Gaya (site of the Buddha's enlightenment), the Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim, Sarnath (site of the Buddha's first public discourse), and the Taj Mahal. Students will also have frequent opportunities to take part in the spiritual life of this vibrantly holy city - yoga and meditation courses, ceremonies and pujas, cremations on the ghats, and visits to other sacred sites.

Learn to Serve – India group members will comb the city to find undersupported people, projects, local initiatives and opportunities for service. During the semester each student will distribute their own Angel Fund: a budget of \$300 that they will use to identify and reach out to someone during the semester that they can help, and who isn't currently being helped. As a group, throughout the semester, we will explore themes such as: Overcoming entitlement; The paradox of the fact that the world needs change, and it's simultaneously perfect the way it is; How to serve effectively; Opening the Heart & Avoiding Burnout; Selfless service and karma yoga; Helping others, Helping ourselves; etc.

We live in a time when many people feel disconnected, powerless, or alienated. What could be more important or rewarding than unlocking our hearts and learning to serve? Join us for an amazing semester!

Enthusiastically yours!



Sam Bull, Executive Director



James Quinlan  
International Programs Director

***The secret of happiness: Find something more important than yourself, then dedicate yourself to it.***

*Dan Dennett*

***We make a living by what we get,  
but we make a life by what we give. - Winston Churchill***

# LEARN TO SERVE 2010: PROGRAM OVERVIEW & CALENDAR

**PROGRAM DESIGN:** As in all LEAPNOW programs, we bracket periods of intensive exploration, learning and service abroad by two retreats in the U.S. The first gives you time to prepare for the experience, and the second gives you time to reflect on your experiences before you return to your prior world. Human beings seem to learn best when given time to reflect on an experience after having it.

## FALL 2010 Calendar

**September 27 - 30**      **Orientation retreat at LEAPNOW campus in northern California**

Three days in residence at our Northern California campus receiving basic orientation to India and the program, meeting your leaders and group, and creating a healthy foundation for a conscious travelling community. The conversation about what it means to be a sacred activist in the 21<sup>st</sup> century starts during this retreat and is a theme of the entire semester.

**September 30 – December 12**      **11 weeks living, serving & learning in Varanasi, north India**

**Dec. 13 – 16**      **Closing Retreat at LEAPNOW campus** Return to our northern California campus to gently re-enter the U.S. This retreat focuses on reflection, integration and completion.

**CREATE A FULL GAP YEAR:** Participants can take the opportunity to use the semester-long Learn to Serve program to start or end a full “Gap Year”. To that end, we offer various semester-long programs & solo internships that can be put together to create a cohesive and comprehensive year of exploration & growth. Solo internships can be found on our website, and short descriptions of our other group programs are provided here:

**Deeper Waters:** This three-and-a-half-month Spring or Fall semester program brings together 2 intensive inner-directed residential retreats at the LEAPNOW campus, with a major internship chosen from 6,000+ that are available throughout the world. The program is open to anyone over the age of 18 at the very reasonable cost of \$7,900. Deeper Waters semesters can be attended back-to-back or combined with one of our other programs to tailor an amazing year of learning. This is an example of “live education” where the individual’s life purpose is the context for living and learning. Academic credit is available to Deeper Waters students.

**One Revolution:** Each Spring and Fall, LEAPNOW offers One Revolution, an exciting 5-month program that takes participants on a full revolution around the Earth. One Revolution participants travel as a group with two leaders to Guatemala, India & Uganda. They do 5-6 week individual internships with homestays in each country, immerse themselves in Spanish in Guatemala, take part in 3 retreats for orientation, context and grounding, and are supported by 2 experienced leaders. The program costs \$12,900, and it can be followed by another program or internship to form an unforgettable and transformative gap year program. College credit is available.

## COLLEGE CREDIT:

Learn to Serve participants have the option to earn college credit through a simple and inexpensive process. We have an arrangement with Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) that allows you to earn up to 15-quarter hours of credit for the program. SCCC is accredited through the Northwestern Association of Schools and Colleges (NWASC). The College offers a number of courses designed to allow students to earn academic credit for international study or work experience. The courses don’t require you to go to Seattle, and there is no physical classroom. The course meets electronically by email, or by mail, phone or fax. Reading, journaling and writing papers are an integral part of the curriculum. There is a high degree of latitude for you in determining what you would like to study

within each course – you can focus on the aspects of the region or culture that are of most interest to you, and it integrates well with the Learn to Serve experiential curriculum.

## LOGISTICS

**APPLICATION & ADMISSIONS:** Applicants can download, print, complete and send in the attached Learn to Serve Application Form. Once received, a LEAPNOW staff member will contact you for a phone interview. There is no application deadline – we accept people until the program is full – then create a waiting list. We reserve the right to require any applicant to have an in-person interview – though this happens infrequently.

Once accepted into a program, participants receive a Learn to Serve Acceptance Packet. This packet, together with the regularly-updated web page, covers program details, transportation, gear & equipment, health & immunization info, communication during the program, climate & living conditions, college credit, a detailed trip itinerary with contact info, required documents & paperwork, financial details & tuition agreement.

**GROUP SIZE:** Learn to Serve has a maximum of 12 students with 2 adult leaders in India. Student:Staff ratio on retreats averages 1:1.

**AGE RANGE:** Minimum age is 17 by the start date of the program. No age maximum.

**REQUIREMENTS:** Participants must be able to attend the full program. Anyone in reasonable physical condition should be able to complete the program successfully. A vegetarian or restricted diet can be easily sustained throughout the program.

**HEALTH, SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION:** The safety and well-being of our students is a first priority. LEAPNOW has safely brought home over 1,500 students after travel all over the world since 1994. The current world situation raises questions for our students, their families and friends, and it is very important that you feel confident and secure as you embark on a program involving international study and travel. We constantly monitor the situation in India through the U.S. State Department, and through a network of individual and organizational contacts in Varanasi that function as our eyes and ears on the ground. We design and modify our group travel semesters to avoid hot spots, health risks & political trouble.

Our group leaders are experienced both as travelers and leaders, and each group of students travels with two leaders to insure that any individual emergencies can be given attention needed for resolution.

Learn to Serve starts with a retreat in the U.S. before any travel commences – allowing us to give very comprehensive orientation, get a good sense of each of the participants, and lay down a foundation for healthy group dynamics before leaving the country. Students will have excellent access to reliable communication and good medical facilities through the program. Throughout our travels, participants are provided with potable water, clear information about health risks, and a comprehensive in-country orientation upon arrival.

**COST:** The cost for Learn to Serve is \$7,900 and includes all scheduled program activities and excursions, food and accommodation during the program. Not included in the program fee is the cost of personal health insurance (required), personal spending money, as well as domestic and international airfare. The program fee is paid in full prior to the start of the program in a short series of installments.

# IS LEARN TO SERVE FOR ME?

## **Learn to Serve is FOR ME if ...**

- I'm at least 17 and feel a "call" to service, exploration and personal transformation
- I'm willing to deal with culture shock, new & challenging situations, and simple living conditions.
- I look forward to being challenged to grow in many new and different ways.
- I'm willing to abstain from using drugs & alcohol for the duration of the program.
- I REALLY want to do this program for MY OWN reasons.
- I'm willing to do hard work, and be uncomfortable in order to learn more about myself.
- I'm willing to be part of an intense and honest group.

## **Learn to Serve is NOT FOR ME if ...**

- I'm looking for a vacation, a party, or a chance to "hang out."
- I think that the program is just a good chance to travel & get college credit
- I only want to do this because **someone else** thinks it's a good idea for me.
- I'm only willing to stick with something until I become bored or uncomfortable or judge it as "a waste of time."
- I regularly use drugs or alcohol or am in the grip of an active addiction.
- I need therapy for a serious psychological condition.
- I'm not willing to be away from my boyfriend/girlfriend, friends and family for three months.
- I like parts of the program, but other parts don't really work for me.
- I don't want anybody telling me what to do with my time.

**GENERAL DISCLAIMER:** *LEAPNOW reserves the right to make changes to any program in order to provide the best possible experience, safeguard participants or respond to changing political or climatic conditions.*



## Learn to Serve – 2010/11 APPLICATION PACKET

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Please fill out this application thoroughly and thoughtfully. The application, a phone interview, and reference checks will be the way we determine your fitness for the program. We expect honest and detailed responses to these questions. We strive to keep the application process simple. We will call you for the interview after we have received

your complete application packet, and we will make an admissions decision within a week after the interview.

Please complete and mail or fax us everything that says “Application Packet” on it to:

**LEAPNOW: Learn to Serve Semester in India**  
**11640 Highway 128, Calistoga, CA 94515 USA**  
Phone: 707-431-7265 Fax: 707-431-8479

### PERSONAL & CONTACT INFORMATION:

Your Name (as it appears in your passport) \_\_\_\_\_

Name You Like To Be Called \_\_\_\_\_

I am applying for the Learn to Serve program in (circle one):    Fall 2010            Spring 2011

Passport # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Place of issue \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Address (current) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address (permanent, if different) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Let us know the best method, \_\_\_\_\_  
time of day, & number to contact you: \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach  
a recent photo of yourself  
here - any size will do.

Your application is not  
complete  
if the photo is missing.

For office use only:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Received    \_\_\_\_\_ Logged By    \_\_\_\_\_ App Fee Received

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Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: (If not your parents, whom should we contact in case of an Emergency?)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about Learn to Serve?: \_\_\_\_\_

**On a separate sheet of paper, please fully answer the following questions.** *(Please don't give one word or one-sentence answers if you would like us to take your application seriously.)*

1. What is your inspiration for doing this program? What do you hope to gain from taking part?
2. How is service to others important to you?
3. Please write a three-paragraph introduction of yourself that could be read to your new group. Feel free to introduce yourself in a way that is creative and that will give them a clear sense of your essence.
4. Drugs & alcohol are big problems for many people - describe your relationship with each one. Are you willing to completely abstain from these substances during the Learn to Serve program?

**APPLICATION FEE:** The application fee for the program is \$50, and is non-refundable. Please check your mode of payment:

\_\_\_\_\_ I have enclosed a check for \$50 with my application, payable to "LEAPNOW, Inc."

\_\_\_\_\_ Please bill my VISA or MasterCard for \$50

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Cardholder: \_\_\_\_\_

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### LEARN TO SERVE PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS & RULES:

For any group of human beings to thrive while living together, basic guidelines of behavior and expectation are needed. The following are the basic non-negotiable rules that govern our community, and that you will have to embrace if you want to be part of it.

1. LEAPNOW programs are for those who are willing to challenge themselves physically, culturally and socially. If you are willing to work hard, take on challenges, and make a difference, this is a program for you. If you are looking for a vacation, trip or party, please look elsewhere!
2. We expect all group members to treat one another with basic respect and consideration. LEAPNOW staff will help group members work through any issues or conflicts that arise during the program.
3. In general, the following behaviors are out-of-bounds, and if you engage in these behaviors and are unable to make positive changes after receiving feedback, you will be asked to leave your LEAPNOW program: If you engage in behavior that puts **the program** at risk; If you engage in behavior that puts **another group member or leader's** health, safety, or well-being at risk; If you put **your own** health, safety or well-being at risk; or, If your behavior is negatively impacting someone else's experience.
4. The program is a DRUG AND ALCOHOL FREE ZONE. Any drug or alcohol use, purchase or possession will result in immediate termination from the program. This includes abuse of prescription medication.
5. If you create a "mess" during the program, it will be your responsibility to make amends within 48 hours. This must be done without the prompting of the group leaders. A "mess" can be a physical mess, a problem for another group member, host family, leader or program sponsor, or other problem that an adult would clear and clean up – to restore harmony and make amends.
6. The following are not tolerated during the program: unwanted sexual advances, verbal abuse, physical violence, property damage, or theft. If not rectified immediately, each of these may result in the termination of participation in your LEAPNOW program.
7. As a general rule, participants are expected to act responsibly. The program leaders are not babysitters or parental surrogates. Their first priorities are your safety, and the viability of the program. You may be asked to leave the program if you put your, or the group's, safety and well-being in danger.
8. You will need to use more discretion about behavior and dress while traveling abroad than you do in the United States. It is vital to your health and safety that you stay within guidelines given during orientations.

**PARENTS** (if applicant is under 18): I have reviewed my son or daughter's Learn to Serve application, have read and understood the Learn to Serve Program Expectations and Rules set forth above, and have reviewed my son's Medical & Health Disclosure. I am unaware of any further medical, psychological and physical problems that might inhibit their ability to successfully complete the program.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT REFERENCES:** Please give us the names and phone numbers of two adults who know you well who are not related to you. One of them must be a former teacher or employer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

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**MEDICAL & HEALTH DISCLOSURE:** Please answer the following questions by circling YES or NO. *If you answer yes to any of them, please add another page to describe the situation or condition at greater length.* We reserve the right to request further information and to speak with doctors, counselors, etc. All medical information and personal disclosure will be kept strictly confidential.

1. Have you ever been asked to leave school or a previous program? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
2. Do you have any physical, psychological or chronic condition that limits your participation in any physical activities? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
3. Have you been treated for a psychological condition in the past 3 years? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
4. Do you take prescription medications for any health or psychological conditions? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
5. Have you been or are you currently being treated for substance abuse? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
6. Do you now or have you ever smoked or used chewing tobacco? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
7. Do you have any special dietary needs or restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
8. Have you used alcohol during the past 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
9. Have you used drugs during the past 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
10. Have you committed a crime within the past 3 years? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
11. Have you been hospitalized in the past 5 years? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
12. Are you UNable to swim? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
13. Do you have or have you ever had any of the following?
  - Allergies? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Learning Disability? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - ADHD or ADD? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Epilepsy? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Diabetes? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Asthma? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Heart or Lung Disease? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Hepatitis or Jaundice? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Intestinal Problems? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Foot, Leg, Back Problems? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Motion Sickness? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Eating Disorder? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO
  - Clinical Depression? \_\_\_\_\_ YES NO

14. Please tell us how many non-work hours a week you spend on a computer or gaming:  
please include gaming, Facebook, Twitter, web-surfing, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*REMINDER: If you answer yes to any of the questions, please add another page to describe the situation.**

I take full responsibility for my medical, psychological and physical condition for the duration of my LEAPNOW program. I am unaware of any further medical, psychological and physical problems that might inhibit my ability to successfully complete the program. Should any problems arise during the course of the program, I will promptly notify a LEAPNOW staff member. I have read and understand the Program Expectations and Rules set forth above. I understand that if I withhold or misrepresent vital information from my past, I may be asked to leave the program.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_