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College students hit the ground running against ailments

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A group of 36 students from an Andheri college took the Jogeshwari (E) slum residents by surprise on Friday, when they visited the Idgah Maidan and started raising health-related slogans.

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The Shrimati Kamala Mehta VWA College of Commerce students are a part of a group of 1,000 students from 40 colleges who have hit the ground to spread awareness about seasonal ailments, such as malaria, dengue and H1N1. They are volunteering for the Mumbai Aarogya Abhiyan, organised by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), in collaboration with the National Service Scheme (NSS) of University of Mumbai, and NGOs. The citywide awareness drive is concentrated on high-risk zones, and volunteers will directly reach around 2–3 lakh people through street-plays, rallies and small talks.

The campaign endeavours to leverage the power of youth volunteers in the city, who get trained as health educators, and reach out to the communities near to their respective colleges.

The Shrimati Kamala Mehta VWA College of Commerce students have already made several trips in the last week and have visited Idgah Maidan, Pascol Colony, Squatters Colony, Janata Colony and other neighbouring areas. “At Idgah Maidan alone, we aim to reach 7,000 households out of the estimated 35,000,” said Pranav Panchal, NSS project in-charge of the college. He added that the students were very satisfied with the response that their effort has generated, and with the encouragement of their principal Santosh Tiwari.


Shailesh Wagle, coordinator for NGO United Way–Mumbai, said the students were the additional limbs of the system. “People want to know about these disease as there are a lot of myths surrounding them. When students started raising the slogans, a man rushed out with a microphone and speakers, so that the voice could reach many more,” he said. Archana Nair, representative of NGO S D Corporation, said, “We will conduct nearly 150 drives in September and October and will focus on areas suggested by the civic health department.”

Dr Vinayak Laxman, at the Health Post of Jadhav Squatters Colony, said, “The people listen to the students and ask questions. Our staffers posted there then identify the patients and counsel them to take immediate treatment. Such drives are very successful when students get involved, as people find them more convincing.”

BMC's Mumbai Aarogya Abhiyan

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