

Bringing a slice of happiness with pizza parties for homeless

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

New York

PIZZA parties. They are common phenomena among young and not-so-young alike. But what sets EyeBLINK's pizza party apart are the cause that the parties are attached to.

Nonprofit organization EyeBLINK, run by a desi brother and sister duo of Qurrat Ann Kadwani and Obaid Kadwani, organized the event called 'Pizza for the Hungry: A Smile brings Hope' at 13 different shelters across eight cities in New York, New Jersey, Oklahoma and Boston in June.

The move was aimed at arranging for pizza for thousands of people living in homeless shelters across the country.

The guests present for lunch or dinner ate pizzas sponsored by Dominos and listened to music played by talented musicians. A total of 15,000 pizza slices were donated during the event, which was funded by private donations.

Qurrat, who is also an artistic director, said: "Even in today's economic situation, it is so heartwarming to see the donations flooding in, all to make people happy with some pizza and music. The overwhelming support



really confirmed for me that social change is possible; that people from all backgrounds will come together to spread hope, joy and awareness."

Many Indians contributed, becoming Pizza Project Pillars. This is the name given to people who contributed \$100 or more. One such 'Pillar,' Sara Militello said:

"I jumped at the chance to donate and participate in the Pizza for the Hungry project. The contribution can make a huge difference on a day in someone's life knowing that others care and want to help. I appreciate EyeBLINK for bringing it all together."

Nikhil and Dipti Bhalja were the project managers for New Jersey. This couple was also the Pizza Project Providers for a Newark Shelter. That title is conferred upon someone who sponsors all the pizzas for one shelter. "We really wanted to be involved with the project," said Dipti. "We're not doing anything," added Nikhil modestly, as the couple helped serve pizzas to the shelter guests.

Five-year-old EyeBLINK also produces multicultural theatre, dance, and other special events. Chairperson Arif Kadwani hopes that the Pizza for the Hungry project, which began last year in five New York City shelters, will be extended to 20 states by next year.