

LEGACY DONOR 1

THE ASHA CENTRE LEGACY

DONOR: MRS ZERBANOO GIFFORD
UK

The ASHA Centre - Creating the future

Author, human rights campaigner and champion of the young, Zerbanoo Gifford established the ASHA Centre in the enchanting Royal Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, England. Her vision was to create a beautiful and sacred place for young people to be inspired to transform themselves and the world they live in.

A stunning Georgian home and gardens, ASHA is a centre of excellence where pioneering ideas are put into action and where service is not just a motto but a reality. It is a magical place, where everyone feels at home and leaves feeling inwardly reconnected.

The ASHA Centre is recognised internationally as a hub of activity for people from all over the world to experience each other's cultures, faiths and shared humanity. Young people from war-torn countries and divided communities, those with disabilities, volunteers keen to contribute, and high achievers re-evaluating their priorities all find that being at ASHA gives them a new perspective on how to live a good life. They value the space they are given to explore their own identities and the chance to examine social justice and the importance of principled and inspirational leadership. They are encouraged to experience the joys of working on the land, community living and the use of the creative arts. The ethos at ASHA is that everyone has special gifts that need to be nurtured and that everyone can enrich their world. ASHA is a place where hope becomes action.

The three pillars of ASHA's work have been developed out of the Zoroastrian faith, the foundation of Zerbanoo's life and work. The first encompasses the whole spectrum of Sustainable living. ASHA's gardens are cultivated by the age-old biodynamic tradition. All vegetables, fruit, herbs, flowers and the Old English Rose Garden have been dug, planted, hoed, weeded and harvested according to the lunar calendar. The ancient Zoroastrians grew their crops in this way, to respect the earth and the elements. As a super-organic way to grow food, it saves on precious water and there is no need for chemical fertilisers, packaging or carbon footprint.

The second pillar of work comes under the heading of Interfaith action. It is based on the Zoroastrian tradition of respecting other people's faiths and cultures, and leads to healing communities torn apart by their unhappy histories.

The third area of ASHA's work is the Arts, especially theatre. Zoroastrians are known for cherishing life and for their excellence in the performing arts. Drama, voice training and presentation all underpin the work of teaching self-confidence and allowing young people a creative space to express their vitality, individuality and passion for life.



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Mrs Zerbanoo Gifford (middle) with youth at The ASHA Centre