

Lending a hand towards better opportunities



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UNLIKE the usual 'new year' celebrations, a bunch of volunteers from Lend-A-Hand India, a non-profit organization, decided to do something special to usher in 2007. The volunteers celebrated the new year's eve in New York's Central Park. Seven of them participated in the New York Road Runner organized midnight walk that started at midnight in the backdrop of beautiful fireworks taking place at Times Square.

With thousands of people joining each year, the midnight walk in the Central Park has been one of the unique ways to wel-

come the new year. The youngest in the Lend-A-Hand team was Krishna Gupta. The 2.5-year-old finished his first five mile marathon in a stroller. Other participants included: Anshu Agarwal, Nipa Dutta, Raj Gilda, Pooja Gupta, Prashant Gupta and Sunanda Mane.

"The run was to kick-off the volunteer group activity for the year 2007," says Sunanda Mane, co-founder of the organization. There was no money raised during the run as it was a networking opportunity for the volunteers.

"Voluntary help constitutes a big part of Lend-A-Hand's success. We have about 10 volunteers contributing an av-

erage of 10 hours per week. They all are professionals in their own pursuits," said Mane.

Youth unemployment and migration to cities are two important challenges in India. Lend-A-Hand addresses both the problems by popularizing and promoting importance of vocational training programs. It offers multi-skill vocational training based on basic technologies useful for rural sector, equipping the youth to either obtain job opportunities in surrounding area and even to start their own small enterprises. Since its inception in December 2004, the organization has reached to more than 3000 young girls and boys offering them viable options for their future careers and growth.