

# News from Shishu Mandir



Vol. IX, Jan to Mar 2015

**Welcome** to Shishu Mandir! We are pleased to introduce you to our latest developments and programmes in the quarter from Jan to March 2015.

## Gratitude Day

One day of the year is dedicated to celebrate the person who gave life to our Shishu Mandir more than thirty years ago. This takes place every year on Jan 11<sup>th</sup>. The entire Shishu Family comes together to spend the day with the person, who came from Germany to India to give her heart and soul to suffering people.

As with each year, the children took care to prepare for this special day. From the main building to the office building wonderful Rangoli patterns were drawn and the children gave up a night's sleep to get this done by early morning. At 9 am the School and Community College students and staff greeted Mama with a traditional Aarthi, a procession was taken to the beats of Dollu drums, at which some of our students are experts. It was indeed a heart-rendering reception. When the children and staff sang the song **Mama, My Mother, Love You Forever**, many of them had tears in their eyes, overwhelmed as they were by emotion; for someone like Geetha, whose day-to-

day existence is a testimony of the selfless service of **Hella Mundhra**, she also found it hard to hold her tears back. It is indeed a moment vibrant with emotions, when the whole wonderful Shishu Family showers its love on Hella, the Founder.



Always the colourful cultural programme of this day takes everyone by surprise. Every year, the programmes surpass the previous years and when our teachers are asked where they draw their ideas from, they reply with great humility that the ideas are born more from their heart than from their head. An auditorium which is meant for 700 people held more than double the number squeezed in to witness the magnificent show and also to express everyone's gratitude. Whether it was

the Tiny Tots' dance or the Community College students' Mix Masala, everything was an expression to show what Mama meant to them. It is indeed a day for everyone to their commitment for this noble cause, which enables us to reach out to more than 1000 children and youths every year.

## In the World of Robotics

Several students participated in the first level Inter-State Lego Competition held at Chennai. They were tested for their creativity in design, accuracy in the performance and communication, and their knowledge of Robotics. Our Shishu School won the **second position**



out of 16 schools and consequently qualified to participate in Delhi, where of a total of 36 teams our children came 4th. All thanks to **Mr. John**, who volunteered to be their mentor, and **Caterpillar Company**, which was our sponsor.

### Dead Man Talking – A Documentary by Shishu Children



Some of our children were participating in photography and videography training for two years. As part of the course, a documentary film was produced under the name *Dead Man Talking*. Every year our children are expected to produce four short films to be sent for a competition in the USA. This film was based on the life of a mother, who burnt herself to death because of her alcoholic husband. The story is so touching that a journalist interviewed our girl and published an article on her life with her alcoholic father. In addition to this, this movie has been selected for a competition in the USA.

### Musicians from New Orleans, USA



Plato says “Music is the moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and everything”. That is exactly what the musicians from New Orleans brought with them by their music presentation for

about 90 minutes. The children sang jubilantly with ecstasy and full soul, one song after the other with a feeling of never to stop.

### International School Award Project of the British Council of India

One project – and the place puts on a fully new mask! That is what happened to our school, when the British Council appealed to schools to make nature and the outside world come alive in the classroom. Subsequently many classes were held in the open air. The children were taught to make organic manure from food wastes, sow seeds, remove weeds and harvest the products of their work like beans, tomatoes, greens, etc. Because of this project the children converted every nook and corner of the



school compound into green areas. The smaller children were making various types of houses found in different continents and explained their models to the other children. As part of this project, some teachers connected themselves to a school in Germany and worked on traffic rules and currencies of various countries. Children from a neighbouring school came to see the work done by our children in our newly created vegetable garden.

### IBM Kid Smart Early Learning

Every visitor comments that our children are smart. We want them to be smarter. Thanks to **IBM and Promise**, which offered the Smart Early Learning Programme, this plan has now been put in motion. The programme is aimed at children of 4 to 8 years and is meant to teach them computer, art and reading.



One room was converted into a colourful hall with attractively designed computers that offer special programmes for learning reading, spelling, and basic mathematics all by themselves. The surrounding keeps the children spell-bound, while they get engrossed in the topic going on.

### Employment secured for 100 Youths

45 young boys and girls completed their 3-month course in Tally and Office Administration. Another 55 rural youths, temporarily employed by TE Connectivity Company, were provided with a training to enhance their skills for employability. Our thanks go to **Tech Mahindra** for supporting us in this field. In keeping with our working conditions with Tech Mahindra we found suitable jobs for more than 90% of the youths. The youngsters, whose lives experienced a dramatic change from aimlessly loitering around to a paid job, produced a breath-taking valedictory function in gratitude for the courses provided by Shishu Mandir.



### Impacts of Volunteering

**Claudia**, a 25-year-old lady from Germany and an air hostess with Lufthansa by profession, collected her



complete annual leave to do a service to underprivileged children. She happened to find us. Her idea was to kindle awareness about sports in the children, as she had experienced the blessing of sports to overcome tension, problems, or hardships. From the first minute, she gave herself to this service and obviously never reached a limitation. For hours together, she would train the different classes in long distance running. On returning to the Home she would immediately start the next task, be it the homework super-vision of the children, be it the care of the babies, or be it the theory and practical classes for cycle training – Claudia would not stop until all tasks of the day had come to an end. We can only say ‘Hats up to Claudia!’ Fortunately, her job permits her to take a flight to Bangalore every now and then so that we will keep in close contact with her.

### Soukya Holistic Health Centre

A service of a different kind was given by Dr. Ramya from **Soukya Holistic Health Centre**. As a homeopathic doctor, she distributed medicines to the children and staff of our four centres, the Home, the School, the Vocational Training Centre, the Child Care Centre and to the villages. This service is a big blessing for many villagers who cannot afford treatment from private hospitals.

### KPMG-sponsored Programmes

KPMG selected 6 of our girls in the last two classes to be trained in their prestigious **Aspire Programme**. These six lucky girls were trained in public speaking and were given career guidance. Further, they were taken to Agastya International Foundation for several days to enhance their knowledge in Science.

Another KPMG-sponsored programme is the **Story Walla Show** where stories are told with full body involvement of the ‘story walla’. It is an apt programme for the little ones of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> standard, who enjoy these shows to their hearts’ content.

### Reading for Real

We attach big importance to reading. To instil intense reading habits in the children we got trained by **Hippo-campus**, the leading Library Training Centre in Bangalore, which developed a programme called *Reading for Real*. Encouraged by the way our children got interested in reading, we kept adding new books. Once again, it was **KPMG**



and **Mrs. Karin Clark** from Germany who added 750 viz. 300 books to our library. **Mrs. Annie** and her friends have held weekly reading sessions since 2008, which is highly appreciated, as they have contributed considerably in deepening our children’s reading interests.

From reading, we have moved to listening to stories read out by people living in UK and USA and various parts of India via Skype. This interactive story telling session initiated by **Mr. Manoj of CAN Trust** in collaboration with Divya, our PR and HR, has brought modernity in the field of reading and listening.

### Community Services

For the first time we have ventured into the construction of **four houses at a time**, and I am sure this will be the last time that we do such a work in one go. We were happy to inaugurate one of those houses built for a widow, who had to struggle for her daily food. The

other three houses are still unfinished for want of sand and due to the excess of work in regular supervision of the different construction places.

### Child Care Centre



The construction of the **Child Care Centre** has reached its final phase and will soon welcome 70 Tiny Tots for the next academic year. The formerly one-room asbestos sheet covered building has become one of the best equipped child care centres in India. Thanks to numerous donors who have contributed their might to give these children a child-friendly environment and a basis for their school career.

### A special Event

The rare event of an air show was the highlight for our middle school children, thanks to Mr. Ashok Tandon, the Company Secretary of HAL. Our children, who had never seen an aeroplane from up close, were breathlessly following the astonishing turns and circles and interactions of those sky-birds from 44 countries.



Reported by

Hella

Anand C.

Aravinda



**Docu film by teen who saw her mother burnt alive by alcoholic father**  
By **Apurva Venkat**, Bangalore Mirror Bureau Feb 15, 2015, 04.00 AM IST

*With the help of her friends, who are children of addicted fathers, the 13-year-old makes a film on the ill effects of alcohol.*

**Unable to forget the scene of her drunken father burning her mother in front of her eyes and wanting to do something about such incidents, a 13-year-old girl has come up with a short film advising people not to drink.**

Shweta (children's names changed) was used to seeing fights between her father and mother every evening. Most of the times, it was violent. In a drunken stupor, her 40-year-old father would often beat up and even kick her mother. It was common for Shweta to wake up in the morning to see her mum's bruised face. But what the eighth-standard student of Shishu Mandir, Hella Nagar saw one evening five months ago left her shattered. The consequence was that she strongly took up the cause of de-addiction. Speaking about the incident, Shweta said, "It was the usual scene at home that my dad came home drunk. There was an argument between him and my mother. Suddenly, my father got so angry that he poured kerosene on Mum and burnt her. I can never forget that scene: Mum burning and screaming in front of my eyes, all because my dad was too drunk to realise what he was doing. What followed was worse. Even after the gruesome act, there was no sense of regret in him. Instead, he sat down and ate his food, while my mother was burning. Alcohol was the evil behind this and I want to stop it," Shweta added.

For more than two months after her mother's death, Shweta lived in a shattered state of mind.

Around three months ago, a team of Adobe Youth Voices trained students of her school in the art of film making. That was when Shweta and five of her school friends decided to make a short film with de-addiction as its theme. They decided to call it '**Dead Man Talking**'. The students used the knowledge they had learnt to fight the thing they all suffered most.

Rashmi, a ninth-standard student, said, "I lost my mother because of alcoholism, and my father is still addicted to alcohol. I have tried every way possible to stop him. I tried explaining to him, I tried scolding him, I even tried emotionally making him sensitive by telling him what would happen to me, when he is no more. But it all fell on deaf ears. This is my last resort. Maybe this film will make him stop. I want to explain to him after the film show, what will happen after he is dead."

To make sure that their first film has the desired effect, the students decided not to use actors in the film. The film has special effects that make it appear like a sketch in motion.

"It is not just one person. I want everyone to stop drinking and smoking. So we collectively decided not to have any face. We made the movie to show it to our parents, and are now thinking of an appropriate time. We want them to take the film as a shake-up and a learning experience and don't want to provoke their anger," added Rashmi.

**Ericks**, a teacher and co-ordinator of the film, said, "Our school has decided to arrange a parents' meeting where we show the film. The whole idea and concept of the film was the students' initiative. The only help they got from me was some inputs and corrections. The duration of the film is 2 minutes 14 seconds, but it means a lot for these children. It is an important step in their larger fight."

Mangala, script writer of the film and a student of the ninth standard, said, "I lost my uncle to alcoholism and my father too is an addict. We have seen so much abuse in our homes because of the single evil, alcohol. We therefore thought that we have to stand up against it. Our parents are uneducated labourers, but we should try all ways to educate them with the knowledge we have."

"The script has a graveyard and skeleton added to it. We want people to **relate alcohol to death**. We wanted a dead man to tell the living ones that what they were doing was wrong. Our short film is our way to fight against what happened to our friend and what we all suffer," added Mangala.

**Anand**, director of Shishu Mandir, said, "I am proud that my students have decided to fight against what they suffer. More than 50 per cent of the students studying in our school have lost one parent to alcoholism. The same goes for the makers of the film. We hope that these students do not grow up to ask help from the society, but instead change their society."

"We have de-addiction talks and counsel parents regularly, but there is hardly any change. Children putting so much effort into this and employing innovative methods to put across their message might help. I personally feel this will not stop with one short film, it will go on - simply because these children experience the ill-effects of alcohol on a daily basis," he added.