

News from Shishu Mandir



Vol VIII, October to December 2014

Welcome to Shishu Mandir! We are pleased to take you along to our latest developments and programmes during the quarter of October to December 2014.

Let us start with a general activity which was inaugurated by the **Prime Minister, Mr. Modi, 'Swachh Bharat'**. Our children wholeheartedly accepted the challenge and toiled hard, sweating it out, whatever it demanded. Not only the ever present waste around the compound wall disappeared, also the garden and the store rooms attained a fully new look. What a feeling of achievement they had after the toil!

The National Library Week



There was another all India event which we celebrated at our school. **Drop Everything and Read – D.E.A.R. –** was the call of the hour which children and staff followed enthusiastically. Of course the reading activity did not end with the children, even their parents were invited to read (out) a Kannada story. As usual, our mentor in library matters, Hippocampus, was extremely pleased with our efforts and success on the way of improving the reading habits of our children.

Heart Camp

A significant help was rendered to 177 children between 0 and 10 years of age by way of a heart camp. They had been diagnosed with a heart problem earlier in their lives and were now screened by specialists from Chennai for any type of heart disease. Much as their anxiety had been on their way coming, they could all return with a free mind, as the investigations had not detected any heart disease. It was a big relief for the worrying parents and their families! Thanks to



TE Connectivity and Aishwarya Trust, which bore all expenses for the sophisticated investigations.

Eye Camp



Another medical help was provided through Shishu Mandir, this time benefitting the villagers around the school. About 200 came to get their eye sight tested and, sure enough, 108 required spectacles. We made sure that the spectacles were issued so-to-say on the spot, thanks to UST Company and the Lions Club of Bangalore. For three patients a

cataract operation was advised which would also be done free of cost.

Science Training by Agastya International Foundation

Science is not a popular subject with most of the children. Althmore Shishu Mandir struggles to attract the students' interest to Science. KPMG, which shares our zeal to make students shine in Science subjects, offered a 3-day residential camp at Kuppam, AP, to improve the children's interest in Science. 6 girls were the lucky ones to be exposed to a high-level Science scenario with many experiments and models.

Employability Training

This training was very practical. Under the leadership of Mr. Jimmy from Volvo Company volunteers from companies like Northern Trust, Cap Gemini, SAP etc. engaged themselves in sensitizing the students for the best manner of going through an interview, how to compose their resumes, and last not at all least, how to show good communication skills and - very important - the best of their English. No doubt, our students get an all round training.

Children's Day

No day in the entire round of the year reveals so specifically the bond between our teachers and students. On this day the teachers display all their talents and creativity and above all their love and dedication to the children by making it a big event.



They perform a self written skit which itself puts the children into reels of laughter, but not sufficient with that they cook and bake and sing and dance and make the



children feel totally at home. Children's Day in fact is one proof of Shishu Mandir's claim to be a big Family.

International Giving Day

December is not only note-worthy for the big Christmas festival, but also for the International Giving Day, which Target India made into a special event for 30 of our children. They offered an inter-institutional competition in quizzes, dancing and Rangoli creations. It was an excellent opportunity for our children to compete with the employees of Target as well as with other NGOs, and inevitably they also won a few prizes. Our children have an extraordinary talent to dance and to create wonderful Rangoli compositions.

CCTV Cameras in the School and Home

The appalling happenings in a few reputed schools in Bangalore, where small girls were sexually assaulted by their own teachers, have led to stringent measures by the government which imposed on all schools and institutions to install CCTV cameras in all classrooms. We had no other choice than follow suit and fixed 16 such cameras so far. But it pains deeply to think that we cannot trust anybody anymore, be it a child, a teacher or an outsider. Big Brother is watching you! Where have we reached? The cameras are not the

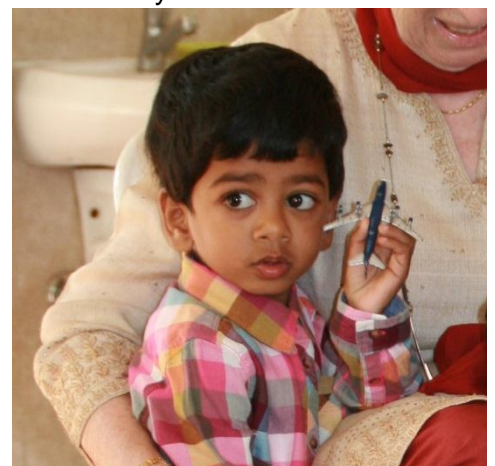
only imposition, there are dozens of rules and regulations, which are highly restrictive and even demanding big investments in respect of changes/ additions in the buildings. As usual the demands exceed all realistic options so that we are left with no other choice than envisaging penalties.

Support by international Companies

Though India's unprecedented economical growth led the lower sections of the society into even deeper poverty and despair, the improved economy resulted in a heightened readiness to support NGOs, from the side of the management as well as from the employees. We could count on increased support from companies though every time it meant an immense struggle and effort from our side. This quarter it was Brady Company which gave us a generous support by providing high quality sweaters for all students just in time before the start of the winter season. We are extremely happy and grateful.

Home

After 4 ½ years the search for a family for little **Monish** came to an end. Monish, you may remember, was born with the glass bone disease, an incurable disease which leads to frequent fractures even with a little impact. Although Monish was a handsome and smart little fellow, he could not find his family in India. But destiny rewarded him for all



what he may have missed in 4 ½ years: A couple from Britain living in Luxembourg offered to adopt him knowing very well about his disease and the consequences. We were overwhelmed by the magnanimity of this couple. And the unimaginable happened: Within two hours Monish, shy and sceptical as he always was, sat in his father's lap calling him 'Daddy'. Indeed this scene brought tears to our eyes.

From the State Juvenile Home

At the age of 1 year and 9 months **Sree Raksha** was transferred to us. She could not yet sit, but showed all symptoms of severe hospitalism like beating her head against the ground and pulling her hair. It was pathetic. But within six weeks she had overcome her habit and became active and jolly. Even her weight increased by 2.2 kg and since the beginning of February she is walking freely. It was a miraculous improvement. Hopefully she will find an adoptive family soon in spite of her delayed milestones!



Changes in the Adoption Scene

During the last few years the Indian government ordered strict rules concerning adoptions. Local agencies cannot suggest a couple anymore for adoption, the application has to be made online to the Centre. We did not appreciate this system, but we accepted it, different from other institutions which closed down.

Consequently the number of adoptable children increased considerably, burdening our working capacity beyond limits. 11 babies at a time, when our usual number is below 5, meant an enormous challenge. Meanwhile we have introduced a system of outside foster care by approved families, whenever the number of babies exceeds a certain limit. In this way we can hopefully provide more children the happiness of living in an adopted family and more parents the happiness of experiencing parenthood.

Our Vocational Training Centre...

...has completed seven years, a hard time. Without a reputed name as a training centre it was very difficult to get students, though the training was and is free. Now only we seem to have managed a breakthrough: Our staff members distribute pamphlets in many places of the church and villages around, but then also our former students are our trumpet. For the current course we had more students than we could possibly take.

To direct the students towards job reality, every course provides an internship training of two weeks at a workplace outside of Shishu Mandir. During this quarter it was the Fitters and Electrical students who had their internship. They had to apply whatever they had learnt in their course, which was of course very basic, but they got a feeling of their future job reality.

Service Camps

A similar experience waited for them in a 'service camp', where they did little repairs for the villagers at



Jyothipura, like setting door or win-

dow fittings, repairing electrical wiring, naturally free of charges and with a happy feeling. An elderly lady had been living without electricity for four years. Our boys set the connection right and literally brought light back to her life.

Reaching out to the Fathers

This time we took efforts in also reaching out to the fathers of our students. To give them a feeling of being important, we made them learn small bike repairs. With this we hope to have boosted their self-respect to some extent.



A Turning Point in their Lives

If not for the fathers, for the students we could definitely achieve a great increase in their self-confidence, as almost all found jobs through our contacts. These students all have passed years of loitering around aimlessly and now they will earn their own money. It is indeed a turning point in their lives, which has been achieved in a course of six months of giving them the basics of a skill, life skill sessions and above all respect.

