



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Welcome to the 13th edition of BM Connect!

The quarter from July to September kept the children on their toes, and kept all of us breathless trying to catch up! Different festivals and functions made the quarter very interesting, and the photo essays in this newsletter show the excitement and enjoyment of the children in each of the functions and festivals – which are designed to provide a mix of learning and fun.

We also have a very special piece in this edition by a great friend of Bala Mandir, Ms. Miranda Corti, who visits Bala Mandir every year with her son Benedict. Every year she has raised funds for the institution through bake sales in her company, International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Foundation, and brings with her craft material for planned activities with the children. The children thoroughly enjoy her visits and the different activities she conducts with them every year. This year we have got her to pen her experience in her own words! Thank you Miranda!

We invite you all to share your experiences with Bala Mandir too! We would love to hear from you if you are interested.

Hope you enjoy this newsletter. Do write in with feedback as well, to the email ID below. Happy reading!

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MAGIC SHOW

On August 28th, a magic show was organised in the Dining Hall for the children by the Rotary Club of Madras, T.Nagar. It was an interactive session, and the children thoroughly enjoyed themselves!



NEWS BYTES: JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2017

Bhumi Nakshatra Competitions

Bhumi organised the Nakshatra Inter Orphanage Sports and Cultural Competition, in which the Bala Mandir children participated and won a number of individual prizes in singing, dancing, elocution etc. Bala Mandir also won the overall championship.



Dussehra Holiday Activities

As a continuation of the Saturday club activities, between September 25th and 28th, special activities were held for the children in the Home, including street theatre (by Mr. Uday), greeting card making, crown making, door mat making, and garland making. The children were encouraged to learn how to use recycled materials (newspaper) for craft.



School Field Trips

Educational trips were held for school students from Classes I to X, to various places in Chennai, such as the Birla Planetarium, Guindy Park, the Railway Museum, Anna Centenary Library, Santhome Church and Fort St. George. Interesting educational activities and games added to the fun of the trips.



Sessions with the Matrons

Matrons and helpers in the Infant and Toddler Block typically have a full 24 hour day schedule, which does not allow them much time for relaxation. To provide some fun for them, a activity was held by Ms. Lakshmi Gopal for them on September 19th.

New Admissions in the Vocational Training Centre

With the end of the semester examinations, the Bala Mandir Vocational Training Centre was ready for a new batch of trainees. Admissions in the Electrical and Fitter NCVT courses were carried out, and a new batch of AC Mechanic trainees also joined.



FESTIVALS IN THE BALA MANDIR HOME

In this quarter, many festivals were celebrated. One of the most special festivals is Dusshera, which is celebrated in honour of the Divine Mother for ten days. The yearly tradition of the 'Kolu' was continued this year as well, and the children enjoyed the festivities. For the second year, the boys had a 'Kolu' of their own in the Boys' Section. The children of Nagercoil also had a 'kolu'. As per tradition, visitors were given 'tambulam' at the end of their visit. As part of Dusshera, Ayudha Pooja was celebrated across all units of Bala Mandir, and as continuation of the 5S initiative, equipment was cleaned thoroughly. Books, tools, implements and vehicles were worshipped.



Other festivals celebrated in this quarter were Varalakshmi Viratham (conducted by the girls of Standard VIII to X), Janmashtami (conducted by the Standard VI girls and boys), and Vinayaka Chaturthi (conducted by the boys of Standard VI to X). Each festival had its own dance, drama, bhajan, ashtotram and temple visits, and immersion of the idol, in the case of Vinayaka Chaturthi. The children enjoyed the cultural activities and the time spent in preparation.



SCHOOL ANNUAL DAY

On August 17th, the 56th Annual Day of the Schools was celebrated in the Rajagopalan Hall on the theme 'Empathy'. Mrs. Padma Sundaresan, Headmistress, Government Girls High School, T.Nagar, presided over the function and distributed prizes. 91 students participated in the cultural programme.



FUNCTIONS IN BALA MANDIR

Annual Day of the Vocational Training Centre

The Annual Day celebrations were held on July 8th, at the Bharath Kalachar, T.Nagar. Mr. Dharmaraja, Vice President, L&T, was the chief guest, and Mr. Kanna, past District President of Rotary 3230 was a special invitee. Both of them addressed the gathering. The trainees put up an excellent cultural programme, including an excellent dance, drama and mime performance. Prizes were given away to the winners of indoor and outdoor games and competitions.



Kamaraj Day

Kamaraj Day celebrations were held on July 15th in Rajagopalan Hall. Mr. S. Krishnan, Advisor – MNC, was the Chief Guest. The children of Standard V performed a Villupaattu on the life of Sri Kamaraj. Mr. Krishnan highlighted the important values that Kamaraj symbolised as a role model for children. Helpers across Bala Mandir units were honoured. The children of the Creche were given new clothes and a scholarship for education was announced.



Medical Day

Medical Day was conducted on August 11th. Mr. Jeffery Vardon, choreographer of repute, was the Guest of Honour for the event. The theme for the event was “Health and Hygiene”, on which Dr. Suchitra conducted a quiz for the children of SMHS. The children enjoyed themselves and learned many new things. Mr. Jeffery gave a very interesting talk, and, much to the joy of the children, led them in a dance-exercise routine focusing on health and movement skills.



FOUNDER'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

Founder's Day was celebrated at the Bala Mandir Dining Hall on September 23rd. The function was based on the theme of "Empathy". Children from the Home, day scholars from Standard II to X, trainees of VTC, teachers and staff of various units, matrons and helpers of the Home, Members and well-wishers participated in the function.

The Primary children presented a Villupaattu on the life of Smt. Manjubhashini. Following this, three staff members, Ms. Chandra of SMHS, Mr. Chandrasekar of VTC, and Ms. Sushmitha of BMRF shared their perceptions of Manjumma, whom they have never met, but heard much about. Ms. Lakshmi of BMKT also shared her personal experiences with Manjumma. **The Chief Guest, Mr. Prahalathan, Co-Founder of Bhumi Organisation**, spoke in an interactive way with the children, telling them stories to illustrate empathy, and also emphasise on how hard work ensures success. He also shared his happiness that Bala Mandir was one of the first institutions Bhumi worked with. Following this, a special lunch was provided for everyone.

Post lunch, a programme was held for the staff and helpers of all Bala Mandir units. The children were also there to lend cheer to the proceedings. Multiple games were conducted. **A quiz programme** was held on interesting facts about Bala Mandir. There were seven teams in all – Children's Programme, BMPS, SMHS, DCC/Vidyalaya, Office Staff (BMKT / BMRF), Social Workers and VTC. After five rounds, the SMHS team won the quiz, followed by Social Workers, and the Office Staff. The second game was **a poster competition** on the theme "What BM Means to You", and the teams were asked to prepare posters using eco-friendly materials. Each team was asked to explain their poster in five minutes. The judges for this event were Ms. Vimala Kannan from Madhuram Narayanan Centre, Ms. Vaishnavi from Bhumi, and Ms. Gomathy Shankar from Nalanda Way. The team of Social Workers were placed first, followed by the team from DCC/Vidyalaya, and the Children's Programme team. The final event was a **'Passing the Parcel' game for the helpers** and prizes were given on the spot for right answers. Snacks were provided at the end of the programme. Everyone enjoyed the fun and bonhomie of this event.



REMEMBERING OUR MEMBER: MRS. LEELA RAMJI

Bala Mandir recently had the misfortune to lose Mrs. Leela Ramji, who was a significant contributor to the institution. She was a Member of the Executive Committee and a favourite with the children.

Mrs. Leela Ramji had been a Social Worker over sixty years back, attached to the Prison's Department in Delhi, associated with Correctional Systems. She shared her experience and provided advice on dealing with tough situations and tackling different people. Her solutions were always simple and practical.

But what Mrs. Leela will be most remembered for is the time she spent with the children. She loved being with them. As an ardent Sai devotee, she started teaching the children bhajans in the year 2000. She always ensured that they performed with the best possible quality. She interacted with the Bala Mandir girls and made them open up to their talents and built their self-esteem and confidence to the extent that the classes now continue, headed by a Bala Mandir girl, Swapna. She always kept abreast of what is happening at Bala Mandir and was also a live-wire during meetings, ready with her questions and requesting for clarifications.

Mrs. Leela was a very simple, straight forward, friendly, ethical, very approachable and empathetic person, who was appreciative of good work done. Her meticulousness and indefatigable energy were admirable, and the children loved attending her classes. The children, staff, and Members of Bala Mandir remember her with great fondness, and pray to God for her sadgathi.



INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS IN BALA MANDIR

Independence Day was celebrated on August 15th across different units of Bala Mandir.

In the Schools a flag-hoisting ceremony was held with Mr. Balaraman Jayaraman from Congruent Solutions as Chief Guest. Sanjana A from Standard V and Prakash D from Standard VII English Medium spoke about 'Independence'. The children performed a dance as well.

In the Nagercoil Home, the President of the Rotary Club, Mr. Raymond Singh, hoisted the National Flag. Members from the Rotary Club spoke to the children about the importance of independence. The children performed a Mime show which was well appreciated. A quiz was conducted and prizes were given as well.

In the Chennai Home, the National Flag is hoisted by an elder in Bala Mandir. This year it was Mr. Sadayandi, Watchman. The children sang patriotic songs and the national anthem.



School Celebrations



Nagercoil Home Celebrations



Chennai Home Celebrations



Mr. Jayaraman addresses the children



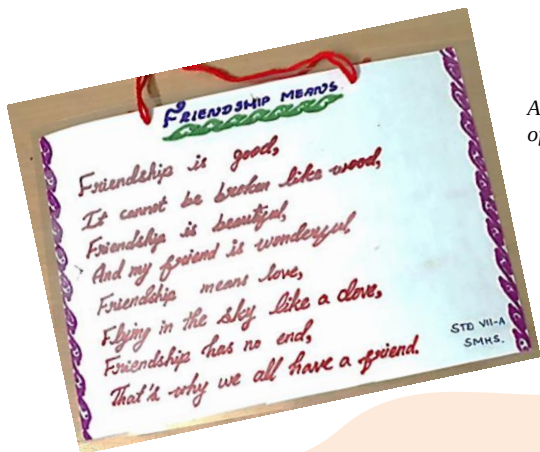
Mime Programme in Nagercoil



Children watching the flag hoisting

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Different vignettes from the lives of our children!



A poem by students of Standard VII A

The Under-14 girls of Sathyamurthi High School won an inter-school throwball competition by beating Vidyodaya girls, while the Under-17 girls were runners-up in the throwball finals against Kalyanam Girls Higher Secondary School.



The Bala Mandir children enjoyed special programmes over this quarter – entertainment by visiting Singapore MSW students, Bhajan programmes at Sarada Math, and a visit to the Bengal Association for Durga Pooja!



Craft work by SMHS students



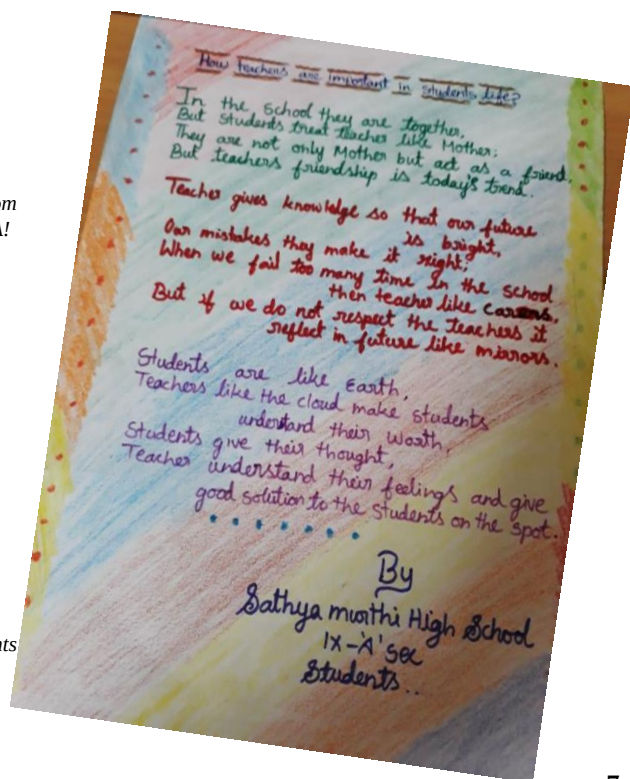
An awareness programme was conducted in the Bala Mandir Nagercoil Home on the problems faced by teenagers, by Mr. Samson, Inspector of Police. He recommended leadership training, motivation for the future, and choosing friends well.



The children enjoy learning a new song from social worker Jeniffer A!



An Aadhar card camp was conducted for the children by the District Children Protection Unit



A poem by students of Standard IX A

A FRIEND RELATES HER EXPERIENCE WITH BM

Ms. Miranda Corti, who visited Bala Mandir in July 2017 for the fifth time, narrates how she spent her time here.

Let me introduce us. We are two volunteers from the UK. We are a Mum and Son team who have been coming to Bala Mandir for five years, for two weeks each July/August. We are supported by friends at the IFRS Foundation who generously donate funds and equipment each year. We are truly humbled by being associated with such an inspirational organisation. We have been so privileged to be able to come each summer and work along side the staff team in engaging with the children of Bala Mandir. What we love is the energy and enthusiasm of everyone.

What did we do this year? Well apart from arts and crafts, where we created some stunning work, we also prepared 300 crispy cakes, which disappeared very quickly. We taught on subjects as wide ranging as the solar system, British birds and the A-Z of transport. When stuck on W, we alighted on waste truck which we all agreed smelt very bad! Finally perhaps one of the things I would most like to forget was my Zumba (modern dancing) lesson. I can't dance, but each year I've been asked by the youngsters to teach dancing. So I bit the bullet and gave it a go. I think it raised the most laughs ever – not for being good, but for being so awful. There was an extensive audience and I'm sure they will agree to this!

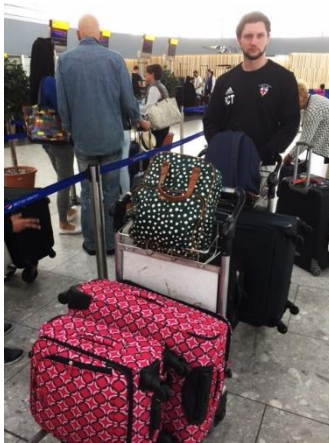
Each year Maya asks me what can be improved and I struggle to find things. You should all be truly proud to be associated with such an amazing organisation. I know all my colleagues at the IFRS Foundation share my respect for you and our delight in being associated with you. Thank you for letting us participate.

With fond regards and love to all,

Miranda and Ben and friends at the IFRS Foundation



Bake Sale to raise funds



With all the material for BM



Ben tells a tale!



Cakes baked by the children!



The children enjoy Zumba



Learning baking



Some fun craft work!

HR NEWS — JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2017

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Ms. Anitha, Social Worker, Children's Programme
- Ms. Srimathi, Craft Teacher, Schools
- Ms. Anandhi, Helper, Research

Biometric Access

Biometric access has been implemented throughout the institution to encourage safety. This has also led to an improvement in punctuality among employees

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