



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It gives me great pleasure to include in this newsletter, for the first time, the events and activities of the Madhuran Narayanan Centre for Exceptional Children (MNC). MNC caters to children with special needs, and has been a partner with Bala Mandir in the areas of early childhood development for many years. This year MNC became a part of Bala Mandir, adding to the array of services that Bala Mandir provides to society and to children in need. We hope to cover more about MNC in the coming few issues as well.

This quarter has been packed with activities, initiatives and efforts, as always. This newsletter is but a glimpse into the myriad activities being carried out. In addition to what is covered here, we have many staff enhancement training programmes, different volunteers who spend or spent time with our children, and new opportunities to interact with different organisations in the same field. If you would like to know more, or participate in any of these activities, you could step into Bala Mandir, or write to us.

Finally, a milestone for BM Connect itself. This issue marks the first quarter of the fifth year running for our newsletter! Being its fifth year, we would love to hear from you about what you would like to see more / less of, and how you think we could improve – or we would love to just hear from you about your experiences that we can publish. Do write in to the mail ID below. In the meantime, happy reading!

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MADRAS YOUTH CHOIR PROGRAMMES

The Bala Mandir children who are part of the Madras Youth Choir's Junior Choir performed as part of the Madras Week celebrations at the Madras Literary Society at DPI, and Natesan Park in T.Nagar.



NEWS BYTES: JULY 2018 TO SEPTEMBER 2018

Varalakshmi Vrutham celebrations

The festival of Varalakshmi Vrutham was celebrated on August 24th by the children with prayers and bhajans. The theme of the festival, as it is celebrated in Bala Mandir, is women's empowerment, depicting women playing different roles in life, and possessing immense mental and spiritual strength.



Vinayaka Chaturthi celebrations in September

As is traditional, an idol of Ganesha was established in the Home. This was the first year in which there were not enough senior boys to perform the usual skit and dance, and it was performed this year by the girls. On the third day, the idol was taken around the complex to the well for immersion or 'visarjan'.



Samyam at the Madhuram Narayanan Centre

Samyam was celebrated at MNC on July 21st. This is a coming-together of past and present students, and new entrants for the year. The present students and the new entrants find motivation in coming together with the past students and interacting with them. The past students find guidance and reassurance in the teachers that they are on the right track.



Fathers' Day at the Madhuram Narayanan Centre

At the Madhuram Narayanan Centre, the role for the parents in the children's development is very critical. To promote this, Fathers' Day was organized on September 29th. 40 fathers spent the day with the children doing the daily activities with them. The response from them was very positive and emotional.



Krishna Jayanthi celebrations

Krishna Jayanthi was celebrated on September 9th. The usual traditions of prayers and bhajans were followed, as also the fun tradition of painting 'Krishna's feet' coming into the Home from the front door to the shrine. The dance and drama depicting the birth of Krishna, and the special snacks add to the fun of the day.



TEACHERS' DAY CELEBRATIONS

Teachers' Day was celebrated across Bala Mandir units on September 5th. In the **Schools**, Children from standard VI to X took classes for teachers on each subject. A celebration was held in with Ms. Padma presiding, and students presented gifts to the teachers on the occasion. In the Madhuram Narayanan Centre, parents organized competitions, games and lunch for the staff in appreciation of their work.



TREE PLANTING IN VIDYALAYA

World Environment Day was celebrated in the previous quarter on June 5th. As a follow up to this, a sapling planting activity was planned for all classes on August 20th. Children prepared the soil and planted the saplings, and took on the responsibility of watering and taking care of the plants in rotation through the academic year.



ORIENTATION FOR PARENTS

An orientation was held for parents of the new students in the Kindergarten section on August 28th, and for the parents of the new students in the Day Care Centre on August 18th. The objective of the orientation was to help parents understand the methodology used in teaching the children.



←
Orientation in the Day
Care Centre

→
Orientation in the
Kindergarten section



FOUNDER'S DAY

Founder's Day was celebrated on September 22nd in memory of Mrs. S. Manjubhashini (Manjumma). The Chief Guests, Mr. Thanasekarapandian (Joint Director of Social Defence), and Mr. Senthil Kumar (Regional Probation Officer), inaugurated the renovated rooms and toilets of the Infants and Toddlers Block, and presided over the first half of the day's celebrations held in the Bala Mandir Dining Hall. This was attended by the children in the Home and the Schools, the VTC trainees, the staff belonging to various units, and Members and well-wishers of Bala Mandir.



The children from Vidyalaya performed a Villupattu on the life of Manjumma. Two staff members, Mr. Rawther (Principal of the VTC), and Ms. Veena (Superintendent, Children's Programme), shared the inspiration they got from Manjumma's memories. Mrs. Jaya Krishnaswamy, and Ms. Vimala Kannan from MNC also shared their thoughts.

The Chief Guests spoke about the special place Bala Mandir holds in their minds, and exhorted the children to make the most of the good foundation provided by the institution. They also gave away Service Awards to the staff who completed 20 and 25 years of service. A special lunch was organised for all the staff.



The second half of the day had an interesting inter-unit presentation competition. The staff were asked to make a presentation on their unit, with the theme "How would you present your unit to the outside world?". Ten teams were part of this, including 1) Children's Programme – Main Block, 2) Bala Mandir Primary School, 3) Satyamurthi High School, 4) Day Care Centre + Infants & Toddlers Block + Adoption + Vidyalaya (Early Childhood), 5) Bala Mandir Main Office, 6) Bala Mandir Research Foundation, 7) Medical Unit, 8) Bala Mandir Cultural & Learning Centre, 9) Madhuram Narayanan Centre, and 10) Vocational Training Centre. The judges for the competition were Ms. Archana Natarajan (TNQ), Ms. Jithashree Jayan (Cognizant), and Mr. Ganapathi Manthiram (Rotary Club of Madras North). The presentations were made with great interest and pride by the units, through different channels, such as videos from ex-students in the VTC, speeches by children from the Main Block, old pictures capturing different personalities in the history of Bala Mandir, and interesting PowerPoint presentations. The experience was enriching for the presenters and audience alike, who learnt many new facets about the different units of Bala Mandir. The winners were the ECCD group (first place), BMCLC (second place) and BMRF (third place).



EXCELLING AT SPORTS



← The team from Satyamurthi High School was selected for an **All India football tournament** held in Bangalore, as one among 32 teams. The team lost in the quarterfinals.

→ The Satyamurthi High School **under-14 football team won** an inter-school tournament at St. Britto's against the host team



← A **football tournament** was held at MCC Higher Secondary School at Chetpet for Boys under 14 and under 17. They played well and came up to the semi finals.

→ The girls participated in a **throwball tournament** held in Vidyodaya, and won the **first place** in the under-14 category, and the **second place** in the under-17 category



INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

Independence Day was celebrated in all the units of Bala Mandir. In the Main Block, as always, there was a flag ceremony where a senior person in the Home hoists the flag. In the Schools, there was a celebration with the Indian flag hoisted by the Chief Guest, Mr. D. Chandrasekhar, President of the Madras Dyslexia Association. In MNC, the children celebrated Independence Day with a dance programme.



MIRANDA AND BENEDICT'S ANNUAL VISIT

Miranda Corti and her son Benedict (now in college) came to Bala Mandir for their fifth annual visit in July. They spent their time with the children, teaching them arts and crafts, sketching and knitting. The children also had a fun session learning baking crispy cakes, and making decorations on them. All the items for these activities were specially brought by Miranda and Benedict from the UK.



KAMARAJ DAY

Kamaraj Day was celebrated on 16th July'18 at Rajagopalan Hall. The Chief Guest was Mrs. Andal Damodaran. The children of BMPS and SMHS gave good speeches and performed a Villupattu about Sri Kamarajar's life and personality. Vidyalaya and VTC students attended the function.



MEDICAL DAY

The Medical Day celebration had an interesting cultural performance by RASA's differently abled students, depicting the theme of 'Inclusion' effectively through theatre art. The Chief Guest, Ms. Ambica Kameshwar (Director, RASA), and her team had an interesting session to help the children understand the concept of 'Participation & Inclusion'.



ANNUAL DAY AT SCHOOLS

The school Annual Day was celebrated with Ms. Jaya Krishnaswamy as the Chief Guest. The theme of 'Inclusion' was highlighted through dance, drama, mime and song.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

Different vignettes from the lives of our children!

The Vidyalaya children from Standard I and II went on a field trip to the Railway Museum on September 15th



A Bhagavad Gita competition was held to select which children will represent Bala Mandir at the Chinmaya Mission Gita Chanting competition on January 6, 2019



Activities were conducted for the children during the holidays by the social workers, including music accompanied by guitar, drama, dance, rhymes, craft and puppet shows



Children from Standard V onwards participated in the Shining Stars 2018 event in Cognizant Technology Solutions, Siruseri. They participated in different competitions.



The children went on an outing to the Gaudiya Math for Krishna Jayanthi to see the exhibition displayed for the occasion.



The Vidyalaya children celebrated Ganesha Chaturthi with prayers and dances

ALUMNI INITIATIVE

As Bala Mandir approaches its 70th year, it was decided that a new initiative should be taken up to connect with the alumni of the Home. This began happening every Sunday, with social workers and ex-Bala Mandir children working as staff spreading the word among those they were in touch with. The initiative has spread further through word of mouth by the alumni who visited the Home. A steady stream of alumni came to Bala Mandir each Sunday, and filled up a questionnaire, attended interviews by the social workers and volunteers, and then met with the Honorary General Secretary and Kalpagam Amma. The initiative was spearheaded by Mr. Vivek Gaitonde, who had the regular support of social workers Arul Raj and Pradeep Chellan, and of Ms. Lakshmi, ex-Bala Mandir staff. Some other volunteers also pitched in their time when possible. The alumni had a great time revisiting their Home and meeting old friends.

Formal alumni meets were held on Sunday, July 15th, Kamaraj Day, and Sunday, September 23rd, Founder's Day. The alumni who attended were taken on a guided tour to the units of Bala Mandir – Satyamurthi High School, Vocational Training Centre, and Vidyalaya – to see the present-day classes and activities. They enjoyed seeing the changes that have happened since their times, especially in the infrastructure. Some of the alumni were accompanied by the children as well, and while the older ones also went around Bala Mandir on the visit, the younger ones were looked after by the Bala Mandir caregivers, and enjoyed playing with toys and indoor games. On both days, a special lunch was provided by Sri Krishna Sweets.

The air of excitement, the bonhomie and the thrill of being back in Bala Mandir permeated throughout the Home on these days, infusing the caregivers, children, alumni and volunteers as well. The hope is to keep the alumni connect strong and ensure that they always feel welcome back in Bala Mandir.



Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Ms. Hepziba Beaulah, Vidyalaya Teacher
- Ms. Bindhuja, Assistant Warden, Nagercoil Home

Welcome to Bala Mandir!

- Ms. Pavithra Ravi, Speech Therapist, MNC
- Mr. Palani, Office Assistant, MNC

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