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Madras Dyslexia Association

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Intensive Teacher Training

MDA Announces its 8-week Intensive Teacher Training Course starting on 2nd February 2015

Greeting cards made with the artwork of our children is available as a set of 10 at our office.

MDA Wishes its readers a very Happy 2015

MDA welcomes R.Ashwin as its Goodwill Ambassador

***Ashwin bowls to stump dyslexia now!
Cricketer Ashwin is Dyslexia Association Ambassador!
Ashwin bats for Dyslexia Cause!***



These were some of the headlines that hit the papers in October. Let us hear the inside story. With the focus on dyslexia awareness, Bhavani Giddu of Global Media Network suggested getting a Goodwill Ambassador as the cause would get more exposure with a popular figure. The spontaneous choice was R.Ashwin, our own all rounder from Tamil Nadu. MDA approached him and he readily agreed. He visited the MDA office, interacted with Team MDA, and visited the Ananya Learning Centre with his wife. He came in sporting a T-shirt with the words "Creativity is my weapon" which was befitting an ambassador for dyslexia. He wove his magic on them much as he weaves a spell on the batsmen with his off spinners. His enthusiasm was amazing as he went all out to understand the students, interacting with them, looking at their written work, and of course signing autographs and posing with them. What a red letter day for our students!

At the Press Meet that was arranged at RKM Sports Ground on 10th October 2014, he made this very important announcement of being the Goodwill Ambassador. The leading dailies in English and the vernacular and the electronic media were present. While the Founder and President of MDA, Mr.D.Chandrasekhar, welcomed the gathering, Mrs.Harini Mohan, Coordinator Awareness, presented some facts on Dyslexia. Speaking on the occasion, the off spinner reminisced how in his youth he had seen children with learning difficulties being targeted. Bringing about a better understanding of the condition is the key and there is an urgent need to raise awareness about the disorder. "These are specially talented kids. However, there is a low level of acceptance of such kids among parents and peer groups," he said.

Continued on page 5

Madras Dyslexia Week November 24-29, 2014



Awareness about dyslexia being one of the prime objectives of MDA from inception and with the spurt of having its Goodwill Ambassador R.Ashwin, was looking at other avenues. Here again came a suggestion from Bhavani

Giddu of celebrating a “Dyslexia Week”. Most Dyslexia Associations around the world celebrate a Dyslexia week every year to create impact on some aspect and create greater awareness. Each year they choose a special focus. British Dyslexia Association (BDA) celebrated the week in November this year with the special focus on ‘Dyslexia Matters.. in Education’, and looked at the different ways that dyslexia matters to everybody. Dyslexia Scotland had a blue ribbon campaign during their Dyslexia week to get more people to take cognizance of the condition. Madras Dyslexia Week was celebrated by MDA in the last week of November 2014. Our special focus for the week was the fact that dyslexic children have many talents that need to be recognized and nurtured as many of them don’t get an opportunity. It was a week full of activities; competitions for children in the various areas, a Panel Discussion, a Puppet Show in Tamil in a busy market place and lots of newspaper as well as TV programmes on dyslexia awareness.

The slogan of the week was “Embrace, Empower, Elevate” which is simple and self-explanatory. The logo has the 3 letters of MDW for the Madras Dyslexia Week.

The Panel discussion

“Dynamic Alternate Paths” was a Panel Discussion planned to highlight the fact that children have options of choosing exciting new career paths in line with their interests. Who were these panelists? They were people who followed the calling of their hearts, a diverse group who had the courage to opt for an alternate path to chart out fascinating futures for themselves. Some of them were in mainstream career paths yet chose another stream unmindful of whether it was lucrative or not. Can answers be found from their experiences for parents, teachers and students?

The panel was moderated by Mrs.Usha Ramakrishnan, Chairperson of Vidya Sagar and a proponent of Multiple Intelligences. She plays an

important role in “Hydra”, enabling SLD children find their talents and potential. Poised and soft spoken, she kept the audience rapt, as she took them through the lives of these 5 courageous people and helped them to see the underpinnings.



Panelists: Sushma Somasekaran, Dr.Jyotsana Jagannathan, Rohini Sankar, Sai Prapanch, Vasana Sowriraja and Siddharth Chandrasekar.

Sushma Somasekaran - Sushma qualified as a Certified Public Accountant and was brought up in Singapore. Her divine music can mesmerize anyone, which she did at the end of the programme with a Bharathiyar song “Paayum oli nee enakku”. Her parents put her into singing as they thought it was a good way for her to be in touch with Indian culture in a foreign country. She started singing at the age of 4, though she didn’t enjoy singing at that age. Her teachers felt she was talented and she sang on stage as early as 6 and 7. Her teachers had great faith in her talents and encouraged her to apply for competitions which she won effortlessly. It was then she realized that she was throwing away a God-given gift. Her parents had seen the talent and backed her all the way. Sushma has given up a lucrative corporate career to pursue full time music which has fetched her many honours. In her words:



*When you are naturally inclined, things come effortlessly.
Sometimes you have a talent, don't be afraid to pursue it.
Go, pursue it, though initially you will be cautious.
Initial support may not be there but when they see your passion then success will automatically follow.*

Dr.Jyotsana Jagannathan - She is a qualified physician from Ramachandra Medical College who spent her initial years in Kenya. She showed interest in Bharathnatyam even while in Africa but there were very few opportunities to learn there. She watched dance performances; the dance, the song and the aesthetics made a strong impact on her mind and ignited a spark in her. She started learning dance at 17, which is late

by all standards. Later she came to India to be around dance. She got into medicine and continued to dance. During her internship things changed; she wanted to dance and not do anything else. She feels that the challenges dance provided, medicine did not. Getting straight 'A's or passing medicine was not as difficult as getting the "aramandi" right or the stamina for dance. Everyday the bar is higher. In her words:



It's a beautiful journey working on something you love and enjoy. When the inner urge is there, you can't stop the flow and you move on creating and improving.

With passion, momentum will follow, allow your children to fly, to dream, to follow their hearts.

Rohini Sankar - She holds a Post Graduate degree in Psychology. She is an ardent dog lover who has turned her passion for dogs into a career as Canine Trainer and Behaviour Counsellor. She is an active volunteer at the Blue Cross of India. Initially she had a lot of obstacles with her education and her parents, teachers, classmates were not aware of her difficulties. She would convert what she heard into visuals. Her coping mechanism was her dog who was a great stress buster. Being an animal lover she used to feed stray dogs and acquired one of her own. She feels that her pet helped her to study better without which schooling and college would have been a nightmare. She attended a training school for dogs in the U.S in 2001 and returned to India in 2002. She has trained nearly 1500 dogs and many behavioural cases. She was involved with Dr. Dog and used to take pets to special schools where she realized how pets can get the best out of non-verbal children. In her words:



Find out the learning style of children and teach them according to their strengths as mundane teaching methods don't work.

Sai Prapanch - He is a first year Computer Science student, a diehard Chelsea fan and is now a celebrated writer of a fiction novel. Like all kids he too

watched cartoons. Japanese animation concepts made a huge impression on him because he found the concepts unique and the story line is different. It urged him to think of his own plots and made him start reading a lot of books. A certain idea clicked when he was in the 9th class and he would sit for hours daydreaming which annoyed his mother. He tried writing as a hobby and keyed in a few pages into his computer. A friend who read it, just loved it giving him the impetus to write more. "I didn't write with the idea of writing a book, as I kept writing I enjoyed it and a figment of my imagination was brought to life. That feeling was amazing". He kept writing but his real chance came when at the end of 10th he broke his arm and was forced to stay at home. After 2 years of writing and rewriting and improvisation his book was released in October 2014. "I visualize and I write it in words", says Sai. His friends became avid readers which encouraged him to know that he was a change maker. In his words:



Losing yourself in what you are doing is important.

*Don't be afraid to take the path less traveled
Till you try it out you won't know you have a flair,
I didn't know I had a flair till I tried
If you have an interest try it and succeed
Parents please be as supportive as possible.*

Vasan Sowriraja - He is an academically oriented techie from IIT Madras who has developed a software called '1000lookz for ladies' which deals with cosmetics, makeover and virtual choices. In a humorous way he took us through his journey, of being in a Ph.D programme and in a job in New York. He then dropped all that to start his own company of computer coding and makeup back in India. He says it was by sheer accident that he saw a woman trying cosmetics which sparked the idea. Till then he knew nothing about beauty or hair. He became a full time makeup and hair style artist. He feels "Writing JEE is easy, but not this as every hair is different and very woman's face is different!" He has not had much support from his family initially due to the connotation



of being a barber in India. According to his friends he is probably the most educated barber! It is indeed laudable that he is today a Lakme Franchisee holder. In his words:

We should celebrate failure and easiest way is to play sports. We can't all be first. Sports is the only place where you face failures and you know everyone can't win.

Siddharth Chandrasekar - A dyslexic with amazing creativity and spatial abilities. He has dabbled with many things and moves on to more and more interesting pastures. He had difficulties with his studies. He just could not do some subjects, so he opted for the NIOS stream where he could drop them. He used to doodle a lot and started by drawing what he observed and from then on to graphic design, designing brochures for corporate and movies. He has even tried his hand in directing a movie. He is currently into creating spaces for corporate sectors. While discussing the movie or spaces with the top management he doesn't take notes. "How I remember in detail is because I visualize". When friends from school who have been toppers now want career counseling from him the feeling of self-worth and self-esteem surfaces. In his words:



If you can't do a few things don't feel bad about it. If you don't enjoy what you are doing, you won't give your best. You must love what you have done. My life is like a buffet I pick and choose what I like.

For the students: You have everything in you. Don't be bothered about what others say. Do what you want and do it to you best. Do what you like, enjoy what you do, if you don't enjoy it don't do it. It comes from within, keep doing whether it is perfect or not. Believe in yourself.

According to the theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner, it is not how smart you are but how you are smart. All of us have a unique profile of intelligences and this comes out in the panelists who are all different. In the panelists, we can see the linguistic intelligence of Sai, the musical intelligence of Sushma, the logical mathematical intelligence of Vasan, the dynamic spatial intelligence of Siddharth

who can take anything to a visual form, the naturalistic intelligence of Rohini and the bodily kinesthetic intelligence of Jyotsna. We all have a combination of intelligences. In children with learning difficulties we mainly emphasise only on linguistic and mathematical intelligences and ignore the other areas. We need to look beyond. 'Take the path' or be one of the crowd. Parental pressure does exist and the fact that a life beyond being an engineer or doctor or accountant is there. There are a lot of avenues available to students today and it is important to find them, says Mrs.Usha Ramakrishnan.

A song that strikes a chord is "Climb every mountain" from the movie 'The Sound of Music'

Climb every mountain,
Search high and low,
Follow every byway,
Every path you know.
Climb every mountain,
Follow every stream,
Follow every rainbow,
'Till you find your dream.
A dream that will need
All the love you can give,
Every day of your life
For as long as you live.

Let our children have the liberty of choosing what they want to do in life. Some can take that call easily and independently but some might need the support of the family and school. But the role of the environment is clear and defined. Let the society at large, the parents, teachers and friends help the children to find what they are good at and in achieving what they really want to.

Thank you, panelists for the wonderful insights. Thank you, Mrs.Usha for moderating and highlighting the salient points.

The Puppet Show Road Show for dyslexia awareness

As part of the programmes for Madras Dyslexia Week, on 22nd November evening, a puppet show was organized with the help of Mr.Thomas at a busy market place in Avadi. He is a motivated parent of a dyslexic child and created the script with the help of Mrs.Anne, a mainstream teacher who is also a MDA trained remedial teacher. Mrs.Geetha.R of MDA spoke to the onlookers about the Dyslexia week and the importance of knowing about dyslexia. The show clearly reaches out to the viewers and tells about

dyslexia through a simple story in Tamil. More such shows are being planned in public places like parks and malls. Here is the You tube link for the road show in Avadi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xaro2PyrPyQ>

The competitions

During Madras Dyslexia Week, competitions for children with dyslexia were held. Children from many of the city schools and learning centres participated with a lot of enthusiasm.

Painting

There were 3 categories: Sub Junior, Junior and Senior. The topics for the Sub juniors were: 'Favourite Festival/Planet Earth', the Juniors' topics were: 'Conserving energy/ Lost on an island' and the Seniors' topics were: 'Swachh Bharat/ India in 2019'. The ideas were wonderfully depicted and the vivid colours in the paintings were really eye catching. Though each category had three prizes and one special prize, the judges struggled to choose from the many wonderfully painted pictures. The feeling that the judges got was that these young artists were trying to express themselves through the painting and were trying to get a message across to the world.

Fireless cooking

The chefs from Metropolitan Accord graciously accepted to conduct this innovative competition which ignited the imagination of the children. A pre-event demonstration a week before the event was held at Accord Metropolitan Hotel, where the children were shown a variety of dishes, which could be made without fire. This pre-event kindled the interest and registrations poured in. On the day of the event, the children were brimming with excitement and had great fun participating in this novel competition. The three judges were simply taken by surprise at the way the children could cook up so many interesting varieties without fire. This event was a super hit among all the competitions.

Elocution

The topic chosen for this event was "Let's build a new world". Majority of the children who participated were first timers. It certainly did not deter them from talking about some really wonderful ideas to make our world the best place to live in. Both judges unanimously said that everybody is a winner and the spirit of participation is more important than winning prizes. Their useful tips will come in handy in future.

Storytelling

It was an open competition where the children had to narrate a story of their choice within a specified time. There were popular stories from the fables, fairy tales and mythology told by the children who made the afternoon enjoyable for the listeners. The real treat came in the end when one of the judges trained in storytelling narrated a humorous story. It was enjoyed not only by the children but also by the parents and teachers who were present there.

Dance

Kavadi and Kashmiri folk dances stole the show. With the well choreographed dances and the colourful costumes, the judge said that she found it difficult to pick the winners and that everybody deserves to be a winner.

Music

Music competitions saw children participating in solo and group performances. The children were so eager to take part in the competition, that they spent a sleepless night and could not wait for the start of competition. They felt honoured to represent their school. The three judges were floored by the children's singing.

As we bid adieu to a fun-filled and fulfilling Madras Dyslexia Week 2014, the take home message is loud and clear. Let us help our children with identifying their talents and interests, nurturing them and allowing them to follow their heart. Dear parents and teachers, let us make a note of this.

Continued from page 1



Subjecting the kids to undue pressure forces in the long run could turn them into delinquents. D.Chandrasekhar, said "By ostracising them, the community is failing to capitalise on their huge

potential". When quizzed on what Ashwin can add to the cause of the children, he answered that the Indian spinner's status as a national icon would provide significant mileage to the cause of spreading awareness. (The New Indian Express report on the event) Ashwin was presented with a painting done by one of the talented children with learning disabilities.

His personal involvement was infectious and got his mother-in-law, Mrs. Neela the Director, Community Services, Rotary Club of Silk City also interested. She immediately asked for a dyslexia awareness programme by MDA at their club. Ensuing out of this was a request to bring about dyslexia awareness in 100 schools in and around Chennai.

<http://www.nba24x7.com/ashwin-becomes-ambassador-for-madras-dyslexia-association/>

<http://netindian.in/news/2014/10/11/00030882/cricketer-r-ashwin-be-goodwill-ambassador-madras-dyslexia-association>

<http://understandingdyslexia.com/ashwin-bats-for-a-noble-cause-of-dyslexia/>

<http://www.indiansportsnews.com/out-of-box/26803-ravichandran-ashwin-becomes-goodwill-ambassador-of-madras-dyslexia-association.html>

Roots - Another Remedial Centre opens with MDA's assistance

MDA has been helping schools in setting up resource rooms. As a first, Roots a private Learning Centre started by Surbhi Sethia who trained with us a few years ago, had its inauguration in a space at Taylors Road, Chennai on 11th November. The very beautifully done up space was a veritable feast for the eyes. Ribbon cutting was by Mrs. Nirmala Pandit and lighting of the lamp by Mr. D. Chandrasekhar. The Centre will undertake to remediate school children with a Specific Learning Disability. Mrs. Pandit in her speech, brought out the importance of the Centre being a remedial centre and not a tuition centre. She appealed to the parents to give the remedial teacher enough time to train the students with skills and strategies and not think they have been remedied the moment they start reading and writing. MDA welcomes Surbhi and her team on board and wishes them all the very best in their endeavour.

Children's Day Celebrations

At Ananya, it was celebrated with great vim and vigour. Junior School had a 10-day celebration from 4th to 14th of November. They used remedial techniques like a Talking Board, a Web, a Spring Board etc to learn more about Chachaji. On the concluding day, they had Treasure Hunt which was very exciting. Children had to also fix a rose and cap on to Nehruji. One of our little boys, Charukesh spoke about Nehru. Ananya Senior School organized activities like elocution, painting and fireless cooking. There was enthusiastic participation by all the students, making it a very enjoyable event. The MDA Remedial centre organized competitions for the students: Drawing, Story Telling and Recitation in English and Tamil. It was an opportunity for the students to showcase their talents. The parents enjoyed themselves along with the children.

Reaching out to teachers in Corporation Schools

MDA has been playing an active role in training programmes being organized for teachers in Corporation schools. The Department of Medical Genetics, Tamil Nadu MGR Medical University along with MDA and funded by Indian Council of Medical Research took an active role in organizing a 2-day workshop on 9th and 10th of October. About 100 odd teachers from Chennai Corporation Schools attended this training on Academic and Behavioural difficulties in children.

Subha.V, Geetha.R and Sujatha.R were the Resource persons who conducted the programme in Tamil. We wish more agencies would take such initiatives which would enable the training of the Corporation teachers.

SSA runs programmes for special educators and teachers from Government schools. Under the aegis of Department of Integrated Education, SSA conducted two workshops on teaching methodologies on 20th November and 9th December. Geetha.R. and Sujatha.R. were our resource persons.

Both these programmes were conducted bilingually and predominantly in Tamil.

News at MDA / ANANYA

Spreading out

The last three months, MDA saw a lot of activities outside Chennai. Our resource persons traveled to Kerala, West Bengal and to other parts of Tamil Nadu conducting workshops and presenting in seminars. Rashmika Learning Centre, Coimbatore along with the Department of Special Education, Avinashalingam Women's



University and MDA organized a National Seminar. "Samyojana 2014" was held on 30th October and 1st November 2014 at the Avinashalingam College premises. Lakshmi Radhakrishnan, our former Academic Chairperson inaugurated the seminar and Dr. Sheela Ramachandran, Dean of the University presided. It was well attended with 320 participants of whom many were students of the University. Lakshmi.R and Subha.V presented various sessions on "Know the child", "Classroom accommodations for dyslexic children" and "Remedial teaching of English Language and Math".

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/learn-to-cope-with-learning-disabilities/article1203000.ece>

Manochetna(MARC) a part of the Manovikas Kendra organized a 3-day Seminar in November, for bringing about better awareness of SLD and dissemination of knowledge to teachers, special educators, counselors and parents in Kolkatta. Our resource person, Subha.V conducted a whole day session on "Understanding and teaching children with Attention deficit disorders".

The newly formed Travancore Dyslexia Association along with The Trivandrum National School, the Indian Medical Association and MDA, organised a 1-day Workshop on SLD to create awareness in that region. It was attended by about 110 participants that included even some school students. Our resource persons Subha.V and Geetha.R conducted the sessions and were happy that their inputs were translated in Malayalam and reached everyone present.

<http://m.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/identifying-dyslexic-kids- important-workshop/article6648461.ece/>

Coimbatore beckoned yet again and this time it was the Faculty of Disability Management and Special Education of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University. They invited MDA resource persons to be the Chief guest at the inaugural function as well as to conduct a full day programme for a group of SSA special educators on the 18th of December. Mrs Subha.V gave the inaugural address and Swami Abhiramananda presided over the function. The rest of the day, a hands on knowledge sharing mainly in Tamil by both resource persons Subha.V and Sujatha.R was conducted.

OT Forum

At MDA, we felt that the need for networking of the different professionals working with the SLD children in order to support them better. 6th November was a special day for us. 15 Senior Occupational Therapists practicing in Chennai, attended this meet at MDA with Mrs.Nirmala Venkateswaran moderating the session. Being a veteran in the field with her 50 odd years of experience, she brought in a lot of meaningful inputs. The interaction that ensued was heartening. Apart from this, the idea for creating Directory of Occupational Therapists was mooted. We wish this could continue periodically considering its importance.

Erratum: In the last issue, we regret referring to Mr.S.Sundaram as Mr.V.Sundaram.

MDA News Snippets

- 05.09.14 Dyslexia awareness conducted by Harini. M at Latent View,
12.09.14 At Vels Vidyashram
24.09.14 At Tata Consultancy Services, Sholinganallur
09.10.14 At ESAB, Ambattur
15.10.14 At MWA Matriculation HSS, Gopalapuram
16.10.14 At Rotary Club of North East Chennai
- 10.09.14 & Workshop on Dyslexia for KG teacher trainees at PSBB, T.P.Road conducted by Geetha.R and
11.09.14 Harini.R
- 24.09.14 & Workshops for teachers from Corporation schools on handling children with learning difficulties
25.09.14 organized by Sri Ramacharan Trust at the Corporation Girls High School, Jones Road, Saidapet
conducted by Geetha.R and Sujatha.R
- 09.10 - Latha.V attended the 3- day International Workshop “Read 2014” organized by Maharashtra
11.10.14 Dyslexia Association at Mumbai.
- 25.10.14 Weekend teacher training for mainstream teachers commenced at MDA.
- 11.11.14 & Post Graduate Diploma trainees in Multiple disabilities attend 2 days of sessions on building skills
12.11.14 in reading, conducted at MDA
- 22.11.14 A one-day workshop on teaching methodologies for teachers at Olcott School conducted by
Sujatha.R
- 15.12.14 & ‘Understanding and identification of Dyslexia’ and ‘Teaching Methodologies’ for PG Diploma
16.12.14 trainees at Spastic Society of Tamilnadu (SPASTN) conducted by Geetha.R and Subha.V
- 15.12.14 Teaching methodologies of basic Math concepts for teacher trainees of Vidya Sagar,
Kotturpuram conducted by Sujatha.R

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