



A unit of Sringeri Sri Sharada Peetham Charitable Trust



Activity Report: 2017 - 2018

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V-Excel Educational Trust

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V-Excel Educational Trust

Significant Events

International Paper Presentation - This year's DISES roundtable conference in Sofia, Bulgaria concluded on June 30, 2017. Dr. Vasudha Prakash presented a paper on the "Impact of In-service Training on Teacher Attitudes towards Inclusion in India". The paper drew attention to the positive impact made through enhancing teachers' outlook towards children with learning problems.



The Lion King - We had a very exclusive annual day where nearly 100 of our special children participated in various roles in the musical, "The Lion King". The show went on stage on January 11th, with a thronging audience and ended with a standing ovation. The props made by the trainees of Vocational Training Unit were exceptional and mind-blowing in setting the stage to represent the savannah lands! The most important aspect of the show was that it was the first time ever, that a forum like was utilised by a group of youngsters to enhance public awareness about disability.



Awards and Recognition

We are happy to announce that our Guidestar India Gold Certification for financial transparency has been further extended into 2018.

Vasudha Prakash was conferred the Award of Excellence in Social Significance at BWW Global's Inspire Awards 2017, held at the University of Madras, Chennai, on November 26.

Mrs. Lekshmi Ramesh, the Program Director of our Remedial Programs, received the Redington "SAHYOG" Teacher Award 2017 for her exemplary contribution in promoting education.

Mrs. Usha Rajagopal, Program Director, Vocational Training and Rehabilitation Services, was honoured on March 8, 2018 at the International Women's Day celebration organised by Thursday Ladies Club, for her relentless service as a volunteer towards empowering persons with special needs.



Jayanthi Vishwanath, the Regional Director, was formally inducted into the prestigious Inspection team (which constitutes 10 members) of the Government of Maharashtra, to assess the Day-care and Residential facilities for the special populace, currently existing in the State. Also, at an event celebrating International Women's Day (March 8), Mrs. Jayanthi Vishwanath, was felicitated by the Rotary Club of Nashik Grape City for her work in the disability sector.

Blue Sky Choir – On 5th October the Blue Sky Choir was invited by Pathshala, the Krishnamurthi School in Tiruvallur. It was an uplifting experience for both the receivers and the givers. The Choir, which comprises of the children and a few teachers, was at its busiest in December 2017. Five concerts in five different schools were held. The children had a wonderful experience and their confidence of facing an audience seems to have increased. New songs have also been added to the repertoire of songs. On 26th January, Republic Day, the Blue Sky Choir performed at a Fete at PSBB Millennium, Chennai.

Tarang – Tarang, a music series of concerts by renowned singers and musicians, has been a popular program among our children and artists alike. The concept behind Tarang has been that of providing equal opportunities to cultural events for the special population, which otherwise is unable to attend formal concerts due to social exclusion.

Wipro Marathon - Many of our trainees from our different units participated in this annual event. Our student Preethi was applauded and recognised at the Wipro marathon for her determination and courage, and for completing the 10 Km run. Also, for Chennai Wipro Marathon, we got orders for 60 mugs and 65 boxes of chocolates to give away as gifts, and Bhoomi Mitra shopping bags were made for the runners of Chennai Wipro Marathon.



Javate 2018 at Lady Andal School, Chetpet happened on 17 February. Our children have been winning prizes for the last 4 years in a row.



Media Interactions – V-Excel’s and Dr.Vasudha Prakash's journey were featured in a recent online article by 'Your Story'. We also had a press meet on December 7, 2017 where we were recorded by

around 18 newspapers and news channels regarding V-Excel organization and the ATE Course. The preparations and events leading up to our staging of the Lion King were covered in the New Indian Express and many other publications.

Resource Development

Tech Mahindra Smart Class+, an ATE (Academy of Teacher Excellence) program supported by Tech Mahindra Foundation and Annamalai University was inaugurated on Saturday June 10, 2017 at our premises in R.A. Puram with 42 candidates. The courses run include Special Education for Multiple Disabilities, Inclusive Education, and Vocational Training.

We had the **Continuing Rehabilitation Education (CRE) Program** conducted by NIEPMD at our R.A. Puram Center (Chennai) in March 2018. 30 Special Educators availed of this advanced program.



Three months Certificate Program on **Specific Learning Disabilities**, jointly organized by V-Excel Educational Trust and SDS Institute of Behavioural Sciences was inaugurated on January 20, 2018. More than 30 professionals enrolled for the program.

Ms. Dheepa B., our Erode Center Coordinator, has topped the B.Ed. Special Education offered by the Tamil Nadu Open University.

Learning Opportunities for students and staff

As a part of the experiential learning our trainees were taken to the Fortis Malar Hospital in Adyar, this month. The trainees were shown the emergency ward, Lab, Out Patient department, help centre, bill counter, ICU and the General wards.

Another journey of experiential learning was the 3 hour session conducted by St. Johns Ambulance on First Aid. Health emergencies as well as emergencies due to injury were discussed. The trainees also did Helmet awareness in Adyar, as a part of the Down Syndrome day.

Charumathi and Meera Suresh from V-Excel went to Bangalore to attend the Mission 1000 event organized by Enable India. Various NGOs working in the area of Social Inclusion in job markets assembled and shared their experiences. It was a very good enriching workshop.

Parimal attended a 3 day workshop on "Unraveling the Will" in Theosophical Society. It was mainly facilitated by movement therapist and eurythmist Dilnawaz Bana and Sabine a curative teacher and physical educationist.

On January 14, our senior special educators, Gita and Shashi attended a workshop on “Good Parenting” held during the Hindu Lit Fest 2018 at Lady Andal School. It was a general lecture on parenting.

Disha, the Parents Forum of V-Excel, invited Dr. Balu Pitchiah, a GMC Registered Psychiatrist practicing in the UK, to conduct a workshop on Anger Management, Aggression and Depression in Adolescents with Special Needs. This was attended by several parents and members of our teaching staff.

British Council and Dr. Reddy’s Foundation arranged a talk on Breaking Barriers At Workplace - Inclusive Workforce for Persons with Disabilities, a talk delivered by Justin Jesudas, who is paralyzed chest below and who has broken all barriers and left people across countries awestruck with his amazing accomplishment. It was an inspiring talk that was attended by some of our teachers.

Bonding outside the Special school

Friendships across children extended to parents and in a spirit of sharing and community living. Shakila, mother of Aquila from Grade 6, invited the entire class and their parents and a few teachers for an overnight trip to Yelagiri.

Parents of our special school, Kaleidoscope Learning Center (KLC) went a step further and organised a weeklong trip to Sri Lanka for their families, the special children included, with a few teachers. It was one of the most beautiful experiences they shared as families and friends.

Our Disha, a Parents’ forum, organised trekking for their special children and parents to Kolli Hills. These initiatives are not just enjoyable, but also help develop bonding between the parents and their children as well as build relationships among the parent community.

Café Samarth - Cafe Samarth had a special event in November. A well wisher from Malaysia wished to celebrate his mother's birthday with a small group of 15 persons. The Blue Blue Sky choir from Kaleidoscope Learning Center, our special school, and Vaidyanathan of our Vocational Training Unit enlivened the evening with music.

Showcasing our products - A kiosk dedicated to V-Excel products was inaugurated at Poompuhar premises in January, 2018. The kiosk will help showcase the wide range of products made by trainees of vocational training unit at this official outlet of Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation. We are proud that one of our young trainees, Balambiga, works there as a Sales Officer and has grown independent in handling customers and having a meaningful and convincing interaction with them.



Collaborations

We launched our product "Thozhi", a low-cost sanitary napkin brand produced with project backing from Grundfos Pumps Limited. A V-Excel product kiosk was set up at Grundfos Pumps India, Chennai on Monday Oct, 9, 2017, as a part of their initiative to setup festive stalls for their employees.



We started work with **The Live Love Laugh Foundation**, an organization inceptioned by actor Deepika Padukone, to create awareness amongst high school students and teachers on mental health issues. We covered 2,700 children from about 10 schools this year and will continue to work in partnership.

We were requested by Inner Wheel to conduct a pilot program with a Government school in Chennai for Class 6 to Class 10 on building emotional resilience, creating awareness about safety and on dangers of falling into bad habits. This was a completely different experience, given the diverse group.

Community Impact



Vasudha Prakash gave a talk to medical professionals on "Special education and disabilities - A professional perspective" at an event organized jointly by the Indian Medical Association, Solapur and Solapur Academy of Pediatrics at Solapur on November 12, 2017.

Vasudha Prakash was a speaker at the National Summit on Quality in Education - Promoting a Positive Approach towards Inclusive Education, held on August 18, 2017 at the CII Institute of Quality, Confederation of Indian Industry, Bangalore.



An Orientation program was organized at ITC Grand Chola on 24th March 2018 for all their senior managers and management team. This was to create awareness about the disability sector and facilitating social inclusion for young adults with special needs.

Mrs. Jayanthi Vishwanath, Regional Director of V-Excel, visited Latur to address a gathering of 800 Rehabilitation professionals in a two days seminar organized by Government of Maharashtra. She spoke on need for Early Intervention for children at-risk and those with developmental challenges.

Maharashtra State Commissioner for Disability Welfare along with the Nashik District Social Welfare Department conducted a 2 day conference on Nov 8 and 9, 2017. The aim of this event was to spread

awareness about health of challenged children and their early detection and intervention strategies. The number of participants on both the days exceeded 700. The main organizers of the event were V-Excel Educational Trust (Nashik), Prabodhini Trust for Mentally Challenged, Mailale School for Hearing Impaired, and NAB-Maharashtra. The event received rave reviews and was covered in all the leading newspapers and dailies.

As a part of Daan Utsav our trainees of both foundation group and vocational group visited our neighbourhood and generated awareness. Many residents across our centre welcomed our trainees and gave their old books, clothes and toys. Our trainees collected and sorted the gifts.

An orientation program was organized by V-Excel Outreach Remedial Center, Pollachi in two schools, on March 24, 2018. Around 60 parents and 20 teaching staff attended the session from both schools.

Vocational Services

We are proud and happy that two trainees, Harshitha and Srinidhi, of our Youth Empowerment Services Unit have joined as interns in the baking unit of Hotel Savera from March 2018. Also, our trainees, Vasudevan and Karthik, placed in Sangeetha Bakery, received their first salary in July, 2017. It is a huge step for them to be in inclusive work environment. The employers are very open and have been sensitized regarding their strengths and needs.

Vocational Services at V-Excel have been buzzing with activity this year. Our Baking and Confectionery Unit received an order for 100 kg. of assorted chocolates from 'Chakra' a placement service company. In our Printing and Documentation Unit, we received an order of printing 1,750 Invitation Cards and 400 coupons from the Alumni Club of Anna University. For 'Run T.Nagar Run' Marathon printing on 581 bags was done. Printing on 1,000 Chocolate boxes as done by our trainees. Gada bags from our unit that were stitched by our trainees have been exported to United Kingdom on specific order.

AIMS Media, a vocational skill development training initiative, has started its second batch in multimedia programs, specially designed for children with special needs. The first batch of students has shown a marked improvement on various developmental parameters and confidence with designing and production of projects.

Other Areas - Exploring of Gardening as a vocation started with growing vegetables and greens in the pots around the school. As a part of vocational training, an automobile wash and service facility has been identified in the vicinity. Four of our male trainees go there every day for on-the-job training. Solar lamp assembling project has started again this year. The trainees assembled 89 solar lamps within three days. The Loom training has started and trainees are attending the classes as per their allocated time.

Valued Visitors

Sri.U.Ve. Velukkudi Krishnan Swami visited our premises on June 16, 2017 to get an idea of the vocational practices and training being conducted in Chennai. He spent time interacting with the staff and trainees. As an involved partner, our Srirangam Satellite Center is supported by him.

Loveleen Kacker the CEO of Tech Mahindra Foundations came to meet us on September 20th. She interacted with our team regarding the Special Education Courses and shared her satisfaction and happiness about the way V-Excel professionally conducted all the programs.

From our departments

Bridges Learning Academy (BLA), a dedicated pull-out program for children who are unable to cope with academic curriculum in mainstream schools due to cognitive and/or emotional disorders, was inaugurated on 12th June. Besides remedial intervention, we offer learning support to students who are unable to undertake the standard board curriculum (CBSE, ICSE, State Board) and train them under National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS).

The Penguin Company, a pantomime group from England, came to our Special School and entertained the children for nearly an hour. It was a great experience for the children and they were all heard chuckling and laughing loudly at the antics of the performers.

As a continuation of the experiential learning in the area of safety, the trainees were exposed to safety in Public Spaces like malls and theatres. At the Phoenix Mall, Velachery, our trainees were encouraged to go through the scanning process by themselves and assemble near the information centre.

Highlights from our Satellite centres

Nashik – July has been a great month for Nashik centre. On July 21, 2017, the center was formally registered under the Maharashtra Government under the section 'Rehabilitation of the Disabled'. Our Center received a letter from the Commissioner of Disabilities (Pune) for doing good work in the areas of (1) Awareness Generation (2) Early identification and (3) Early Intervention of disabilities. Additionally, the Center was chosen to provide Early Intervention services to the children living in the slums of Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) limits.

We are thankful to Fortuna Engineering Company Pvt Ltd., located at AmbadIn Nashik; they donated a Tata Winger Van for the Nashik school children.

Srirangam –The month of July saw an energetic kick start for a new vocation - laundry. The trainees were laundering all the clothes given by the neighbours and gradually mastering the new vacuum steamer ironing machine. Abhyasa Kendra Areca Leaf Plate Vocational unit delivered its first order of 1,400 plates to Kinchitkaram Trust for their Navarathri Yathris. The vocational food products unit produced 10 kgs. of *Paruppupodi* within a week and delivered it at Chennai for Navrathri Golu. The Srirangam centre got an opportunity to participate and display their products in SARAS Exhibition conducted by Ministry of Rural Development in association with Trichy DDAWO on 6th January 2018.

Solapur– In October, a broom-making workshop was started for older students. On 7th January, at an exhibition held at the Inner Wheel Club's national meet, a stall was put up to exhibit some of the products made by the students. The public response was very good.

A Few Success Stories

1. Abhishek Sanyal one of the students of KLC who had been receiving art therapy from our therapist Puja was pleasantly surprised when three of his charcoal paintings were selected by a company for their guest house. It was great moment of pride for him and all those who worked with him.
2. A student of Youth Empowerment Center was initially shy, reticent and reluctant to change his schedule and come for individual art therapy sessions. It was interesting to watch him transition from anxious eyes to watch joy emerge in his eyes when he saw two colours mix to create a third. Within a few sessions, his theme of rainbows, experimentation with colour progressed to create

landscapes, tell stories and initiate conversations. For a boy who needed reassurance for every move, it was heart-warming to see him explore his freedom with the brush with such enthusiasm.

3. When our counsellor Pushpamma started in the Olcott School, teachers came with lots of complaints about a girl who was in the 3rd standard. Her classmates complained about how she behaved in the class, even boys were afraid of her, she bullied them, and sometimes was physically aggressive. Despite the counsellor not knowing the local language too well, her care and acceptance made the girl develop trust and slowly she became comfortable in sessions. By the end of 3-4 session she could share about her family with Pushpamma. She seemed to be coming from a difficult family where she had been neglected and witnessed quite a lot of aggression at home. Slowly her behaviour changed, she became friendly and her studies showed great improvement. She was not good in the beginning with her academics but with the remedial teachers help and love she found her own self. Last year before the final exam she promised the counselor that in academics also she will show improvement and told her she would come within 5 ranks in the class. She got 4th rank and was doing well and had kept her promise.
4. A nineteen-year-old boy on the Autism Spectrum, whose hands were always cold, no matter what activity he did, was always tired and sleepy with low energy. Cold hands are reflective of poor circulation of blood to the hands, anxiety, and not being very present in the body. He chose a project during his therapy sessions- to write a fictional story which is still running over 75 pages! The act of writing a story that reflected what he was going through was so special, that he was energetic, and communicated better. His hands and feet- instantly warmed up, red and alive! "Warming Up" one realised was not just the physical act of making circulation and metabolism in better condition. It is also the inner joy and striving that pushes and moves the blood that makes all the difference!