



A unit of Sringeri Sri Sharada Peetham  
Charitable Trust

## Activity Report:2018 - 19

*V-Excel Educational Trust*

#10/23, Sharada, Thiruvengadam Street,  
R. A. Puram, Chennai - 600 028

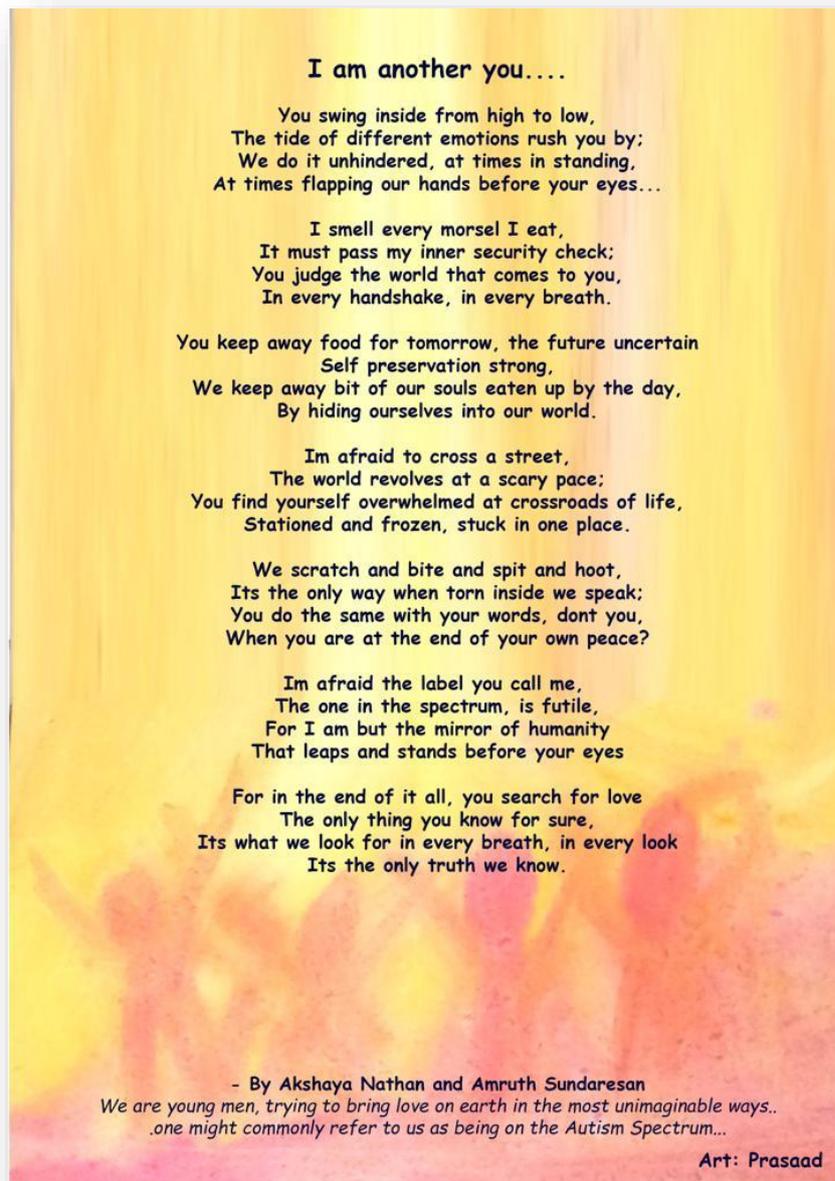
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## Significant Events

- The month of April is celebrated the world over as the Autism Awareness month. On 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, the **World Autism Day**, students from our senior school wrote a beautiful and profound poem, 'I am another you' which reached the general community in a significant manner. Social media and poster exhibitions included this poem, while newspapers talked of the interest generated in this extremely enigmatic group of individuals.



- We inaugurated the **10<sup>th</sup> center of V-Excel**, Anandam Learning Center, on 9<sup>th</sup> August at Anandam Old-Age Home, Ambattur, Chennai. This Resource Center provides remedial services for around 50 school-going children coming from rural and semi-urban areas, and assessed with learning

difficulties. These students are part of the economically disadvantaged communities in the area, and are provided after-school supplementary education by senior citizens residing at Anandam.

- **Sports Day Celebration** - The well-rehearsed and much awaited Sports Day finally dawned on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019. The two months of preparation and rehearsals culminated in a colourful display of dances, drills, races and other sports from all over the world. 'Around the world in eighty minutes!' was the theme, and all service units of V-Excel wove their games and races around it. The special school teachers and students explored the sports of Africa, Scandinavia, America, Cuba, Korea, Mexico, Philippines and designed their races around it. The costumes worn by the Austrian dancers as well as the Scandinavian troupe were really authentic and a very special thanks to the teachers who designed and got it ready in time! The drills were colourful and fun and the outstanding feature of the entire sports day remained the music which was authentic, bringing out the essence of each country. In keeping with the theme of, every item featured our children dressed in colourful costumes signifying different cultures around the globe. With rhythmic movements and entertaining music, the event featured several dances and races.



The parents, teachers and all staff and guests came together in a large dance and moved together singing "Havenu Shalom Aleichem", an Israeli greeting to say "May Peace be with you". It was a spectacular sight and also one where the whole place felt like one big community. These occasions are really very important in the life of an organisation, as all units come together in a seamless manner and the team work and bonhomie that results from such a coming together is unparalleled.

The soft launch of our **new initiative Tiffin Times**, supported by Rane Foundation and Hotel Savera, was also a part of the proceedings and a great success. We served sandwiches made by our trainees, along with Chef Rajnikanth from Hotel Savera. The food truck was driven around the ground for all to watch. Dr. Vasudha Prakash, V-Excel's Founder, briefed the parents about this new vocation.

- A farm facility '**Sreyes Farm**' has been developed by V-Excel's associate, ESVI Sarada Foundation for providing a farming experience and opportunities for training our senior students towards independent living skills. They are involved in different farm activities, which are very therapeutic and gives them a very good learning experience. Besides having to fend for themselves with their ADL's, the boys spend time in the actual work at the farm. Weeding, sowing, watering, harvesting, construction of the cow-shed are some of the activities they have been engaged with, all under the

able supervision of the efficient Trustees, Mrs. Usha and Mr. Rajagopal. The parents have been truly involved in this project and are happy with its development.

- On the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019, 20 volunteers from Wipro visited V-Excel Chennai centers. They were given a brief talk about the organization and a short orientation about disabilities. They were also told about the dos and don'ts around special children to ensure that sensitivity and dignity was maintained. They observed the students and teachers sing together, learnt about various vocational activities, and interacted with our students. They left with a sincere appreciation of the work and staff commitment.

### Achievements

- 4<sup>th</sup> August 2018 was a momentous day for us. The Graduation ceremony, with certificates and citations for 18 trainees, was held at Hotel Savera, Chennai. These were trainees who had moved on to be employed in various organisations or gainfully engaged in set-ups run by special parents. The event showcased the capabilities and potential of the differently-abled and set a new standard to aim for. The event was a grand success and an emotional moment for all.



- We are very happy that three of our trainees got offers from Blue Lagoon Resorts. Venkatesh, Karthik Ramani and Adithya Mahesh were absorbed in different departments of the Resort. They will be trained on the job and will have mentors to support them. We have sensitized the team.
- Our trainee Adithya Sai Anand was placed as Senior Executive at Hexaware Technologies (BPS – Thoraipakkam) on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019. This was certainly a huge breakthrough for us into the corporate sector as far as our placements are concerned.
- The first batch of students successfully completed the AIMS Media course, a vocational skills development program. A graduation ceremony was held on 19<sup>th</sup> June in the presence of their parents and Dr. Maria, Coordinator of AIMS. The students were excited to receive their certificates after 18 months of training in developing creativity and imagination for multimedia environments.



- Nine students participated in *Javate*, the cultural festival organised by Lady Andal School every year for showcasing the talents of children with special needs. It was a proud moment for us to see most of our students win prizes and accolades
- Two of our trainees are chosen as interns at the Sreyes Farm. They go on Tuesday and return the next day. Vegetables from the farm are brought back for sale. Money handling is a part of the training process. This hands-on experience is bringing out their hidden strengths and interests.



- Trainees from our printing and documentation unit have started digitalising the student files dating back to 2008-2009. They have scanned 38 files. Their speed has increased now and they can scan at least 10 files a week.

### New Initiatives

- 'Tiffin Times', a mobile food truck operated by young adults with special needs, had a fabulous start at the Springfest at Hotel Savera on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019. The dry run gave us great confidence. It was encouraging to see people being so receptive to this pioneering venture. Our trainees made fresh vegetable sandwiches, handmade chocolates and three types of juices. Training for this menu was done under the able guidance of the Assistant Chef Mr. Rajanikanth of Hotel Savera. Though it was a modest menu, the efforts of our trainees were highly appreciated. We sincerely hope that this initiative takes us a long way in our endeavour to empower these young adults.



- This July, we launched 'Heart of the Matter' (HoM), a very relevant training program for high school teachers, in association with Kuruvila Jacob Initiative. HoM gives teachers a fresh perspective on the challenges faced by an adolescent, and equips them to create emotionally resilient youth. We received very encouraging feedback and are eager to conduct this program across many more schools in the forthcoming year.

### Bonding Time

- September 5<sup>th</sup>, Teachers Day saw all the teachers of KLC having 'a day out of time'. They all came together to watch a movie together and then bonded over lunch. These special moments, though few in a year, are really the bond that keeps the team together and brings a spring in the step of weary feet! It was good to see the teachers as just 'individuals' other than the caring avatar that they are most frequently seen in.
- A group of 32 trainees and 10 staff members went on a 4-day experiential learning trip to Kumbakonam. Train travel was a first time experience for many, as was being away from the protective shelter of their parents. It was a practical lesson in social inclusion. Some made friends with their co-passengers while getting used to the constant movement of strangers getting on and off the train. Adapting to a new place and a new environment is always daunting for persons with

developmental disabilities, especially for those with Autism. We are proud to share that they all managed quite well, with active support of one another. These are times when friendships blossom, and it was no different for our students. The trip was a very memorable one for all.

- The school trip to Tirunelveli from 21<sup>st</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019 was a totally new experience for 47 trainees and 14 staff who embarked on this exciting journey. There were educative visits to Pathamadai, the mat-weaving unit, and Kaladakurichi Appalam-making factory. A full day was spent at the Amar Seva Sangam at Ayakudi with visits to their spinal care center and vocational center. The trip ended with a refreshing bath at Papanasam waterfalls before the train journey back to Chennai. The trainees carried loads of good memories, rich learning experience, and the confidence to manage themselves independently.



### Innovative Approach

- **Independence Day** - 15<sup>th</sup> August saw a touching, beautiful and a unique take on Independence. Old songs filled with patriotic flavour joined new songs equally meaningful. Students performed scenes like the Dandi March of Mahatma Gandhi. The most commendable effort of our school children was to bring out a newspaper called *The Indian Gazette*, which was released by the Chief Guest, Mr. Vasudevan from Equitas. In his touching speech he applauded the teachers and students for rendering a show par excellence and very different from any he had ever witnessed.



- Holi** was celebrated in KLC but with a difference. Keeping in mind, the scarcity of water in the city the students themselves opted for having a waterless Holi. So they became imaginative with using colours and each class decided how they would celebrate this festival of colours. So we had a grade playing with coloured flowers, another eating colourful food, another grade who requested teachers to be in white and the students to be in colour. It was an innovative and thoughtful celebration and the teachers were especially touched by the students own responsible decision.
- Summer Camp:** With the guidance of V-Excel Remedial Center, a summer camp was conducted around the theme 'Trees'. Innovative fun activities involving understanding and interacting with nature were the hallmark of this 5-day summer camp. The children were literally in tears when it concluded and were very reluctant to leave after the summer camp. At the end of the summer camp, Bank of New York conducted a drawing competition on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Our students participated, enjoyed, and also won many prizes.



- **Christmas cheer** – The Senior School student's performance of the play 'The Christmas Miracle' was a big hit. The concept and the script was decided by the students themselves. They all enacted in the play enthusiastically. Parents of these students were invited to watch the play; they could not believe that their students had been actively involved in designing it. After the play they were served rice vegetable upma made by our very own vocational students in the kitchen, along with green chutney. The play was written by Hari Prasad, one of our students with a little help from Raghu, one of our teachers. Parents enjoyed the play which showed the importance of grandparents, love of a mother, consciousness of our surroundings, caring, prayer and a miracle. Neha and Puja, our ace teachers, gave an hour long concert of Christmas songs and carols that was enjoyed by all.

### Bonding outside the school

- Young trainees from our V-Excel Centers at Adyar and Mylapore attended 'Idhyaganam', a musical program organized by Rotary Club of Madras East on Wednesday August 22<sup>nd</sup> at Vani Mahal. This is a unique program where the club members invite all the organizations supported by them and entertain the participants with music, dinner and gifts. All our trainees enjoyed the fun packed event for the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year. Thanks to Mr. Sudhir of Rotary Club of Madras East and all the other members for organizing such a show.

### Awards and Recognition

- V-Excel Educational Trust & Grundfos Pumps India Pvt Ltd. together bagged the MCCI TAFE CSR Awards 2018 for Project Thozhi, a project involving production and distribution of low-cost sanitary napkins as a vocational developmental opportunity for persons with special needs. These CSR

Awards recognise highly impactful CSR Projects implemented collaboratively by Corporates and NGOs. We received a citation and a cheque for an innovative and inclusive concept. We would like to thank the team at Grundfos Pumps, who are a constant pillar of support to us. This project has empowered our young adults with special needs to give back to the community.



- We are happy and proud to share that V-Excel has been awarded the **Advanced Champion Level - GuideStar India Platinum Certification Award 2018**. This has been an upgrade from the Gold Certification that we had received for the past two years. GuideStar India certifies NGOs based on their level of transparency & public accountability after a rigorous due diligence carried out by their team of certification experts. Due diligence is based on verifying financial and legal compliances through a thorough scrutiny of registration documents, tax returns, FCRA returns, audited financial statements & auditor's reports, public disclosures on our portal, reporting key facts to stakeholders as per our Annual Report disclosure template and confirmation of third party site visits and references.



- V-Excel Educational Trust is now ISO 9001:2015 certified for 'Providing Lifespan services for persons with cognitive and intellectual disabilities with an aim of promoting social inclusion'



- The V-Excel family congratulates our teacher-parent Mrs. V. Pon Rajam, on being the recipient of Sri Arunodayam's *Special Mom Award* 2019. Pon Rajam is a mother of two young adults with Autism. Her positive approach towards life, her sincere efforts in learning to do what it takes, and her dedication to this cause is highly commendable. She is a role model for many parents.

## Activity Report: 2018-19



- Dr. Vasudha Prakash was felicitated by The Bengal Association of Chennai. This was a **Woman Entrepreneur Award** for those who made a big difference in the society.



- We have been awarded the prestigious **Rane Pioneer of Change Award** on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2018. The project proposed was for 'Tiffin Times', a mobile truck which will train our trainees in culinary and other hospitality related vocations. Dr. Prakash Natarajan, our Managing Trustee, received the medal, certificate and the cheque on behalf of V-Excel. We are extremely honoured to receive this award from a prestigious company like the Rane Group. Through 'Tiffin Times' we have to create an impact in the society by training the young special adults towards employment and for helping them start their own hospitality venture in the future.



- Indian Overseas Bank had its 82<sup>nd</sup> Foundation Day on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019. The bank recognised and honoured customers and people who have positively impacted the society. V-Excel was one among them. IOB sponsored medals and head caps for all our students for our upcoming Sports Day.



### Community Support

- We would like to express our deepest gratitude to our Germany-based donor, Yoga Vereinigung Rajagopalan E.V. (YVR), for donating a 25-seater school bus to us. Thanks to their contribution, our students will now be able to experience convenience and comfort in travelling to school and for various outings that are planned for their experiential learning.



- V-Excel Educational Trust was presented with the Global Grant by Rotary Club Madras East (RCME) along with the Rotary Club of Romford and Rotary Club of Cataraqui-Kingston. Through this Global Grant, Rotary has supported V-Excel's Project E3 - Empower Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), Enrich the vocational programs, and Enhance the infrastructure. Through this initiative, we have established a complete Smart Class set-Up including state-of-art infrastructure, audio-visual equipment, laptops, tablets, application tools and software. The Global Grant will benefit V-Excel's centers in Chennai and its satellite centers across the country.



### Social Inclusion

- **Blue Blue Sky Choir-** For the third consecutive year, our choir was invited to perform at 'Svatantra', an annual musical festival at the Youth Hostel, Indirangar, Chennai. Despite the rains, the choir performed with earnestness, joy and love in the spirit of inner freedom, leaving the audience in total appreciation of this sincere bunch of children with special needs. The choir was also invited by the Madras Kids Education Revolution Summit on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at the prestigious IIT auditorium. It was enthusiastically received by nearly 600 students and their mentors from Teach for India of the Times of India group. On 7<sup>th</sup> December the choir performed in MCTM School and the students were flooded with cards and gifts made by their peer group from the host school. It was touching to see the outpouring of pure interest, love and wonder that greeted our children. A true step in inclusion.

- **Tarang** – Tarang has become a regular and eagerly awaited monthly program with popular artistes like Sai Sisters, Unnikrishnan, Saketharaman, Uthara Unnikrishnan, Mahanadi Shobhna and many others. This has become a hugely popular and successful endeavour. The idea was to bind those with special needs into an inclusive society, to give them the joy of experiencing the beauty and harmony of the creative arts, besides promoting healing and the therapeutic effects of the performing arts in special education. We thank each and every singer and musician who has come and performed with their heart and soul for our children.



- **Participation in Sale Mela** - Our products were exhibited at Dakshin Chitra Craft Mela from 19<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September. It was a successful event with a satisfying sale of our products. Programs such as these are an excellent platform for social inclusion. They give immense confidence to our trainees, while also creating an awareness among people about the abilities of persons with special needs.



- On 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> September, we participated in a 'NGO Carnival' organised by L&T at Manapakkam. Our trainee Gokulakrishnan participated in the carnival.
- On 26<sup>th</sup> September our trainees, with their teacher Divya, visited Hexaware Technologies and organised demo on cupcake and chocolate making for the employees of Hexaware Technologies. There was a loud round of applause and appreciation from the employees, which greatly excited and encouraged the newly 'trainee-turned-trainers'.



- Blue Lagoon Resorts at ECR, Chennai, organized a New Year celebration at their resorts for our 33 trainees. Social evenings are rare for our young adults, unlike their neurotypical counterparts, and they made the most of their time together. Fun, food and music filled this special occasion.

- Various jute products made at our Vocational Training Unit were displayed and sold at Cottage Industries exhibition held at Egmore for 10 days from 5th, February. One of our trainees, Saravana Prabhu managed our stall at the exhibition organized by Equitas Bank at Spencer Plaza, Mt. Road, Chennai, for the entire day under the guidance of Mrs. Kantha, our skill trainer.

### In the News

- V-Excel's placement initiative through vocational training programs featured in The Deccan Chronicle and covered the journeys of three of our trainees - Chandramouli, Ankit and Vijayasathy. It was a proud moment for the parents and the trainees themselves too, as they shared their stories and saw a sincere public appreciation of their achievements.

#### Chennai: Empowering those with cognitive difficulties

DECCAN CHRONICLE. | [DEBANJOLI NANDI](#) Published Jun 2, 2018, 3:47 am IST

**Chennai:** Chandramouli was academically brilliant, remarkably known for his photographic memory, which is believed to have contributed to his above 90 per cent marks at the board exams.

But could hardly make any friends and travelling alone was a challenge. Excellent board results encouraged him to take up engineering, things were going smooth. The setback came right after the third semester. "His main difficulty was in understanding concepts. Engineering is a technical course. Maybe his extraordinary memorizing skill got him through the initial levels, but it was not just helping him anymore," said S Ramadoss, Chandramouli's father. Chandramouli could not make it past 4th semester. Mounting pressure from college forced him out of academics.

Cut to eight years later. He no longer perceives himself as a 'burden.' Travelling alone is no longer a big deal. Ankit's area of difficulty was different. He would lag where application of mind was required. As long as it involved a routine work, he would be at ease. "If he is 12 years old, his mind is still functioning like that of an 8-year-old. He would often get fits. Plus he had some other health issues," said Ankit's brother Ravi Bhootra.

The child who once had to be taken off from regular school at a stage as early as 2nd standard, is now doing perfectly fine in the "regular" world. For both Chandramouli and Ankit Bhootra, city-based organisation V-excel Educational Trust has been giving new lease of life to people with cognitive difficulties.

Today Ankit is a part of Chennai's iconic Savera hotel, working with the front-office team. "Our motto was to make these people contributing members of the society. They need help to meet their potential and they should do something which culminates in something productive," says Vasudha Prakash, founder-trustee of the organization.

There are challenges in seeking employability of special people, Vasudha said. The organisation today has 650-700 students across all branches (Srirangam, Nasik, Chholapur, Tirunelveli, Erode) and has placed 15 students placed so far, eight in 2017-18 alone.

"We do have a lot of activities that help activate mind and body. Once the students reach a certain point, the foundation course begins, in which they are retaught independent living skills: from combing, dressing appropriately to functional academics- all basics basically," she said.

Foundation course is followed by vocation course, Youth Empowerment Services, at the Mylapore centre. Students are imbued with office skills, including answering phone calls, passing messages, doing photocopy, printing, cutting paper, documenting, spiral-binding.

"Besides, we have a bakery section where they help make smoothies, cookies etc and we have them delivered to the offices near the Mylapore centre. Students also get to try their hands at laundry, for which they get paid. After they go through all three years of training, they are accounted fit for placement," says Vasudha, who is also a psychotherapist.

Now what if someone is still not found eligible?" Not to lose heart. We have sheltered workshop where we get a lot of orders. They work within our organization," she said. On parents worrying what will become of their kids when they are gone, Vasudha says, "We have an overnight camp where kids are made to stay overnight and it lasts for two to three days. That way they learn to manage on their own."

Now what are the employers saying? B. Radhish Kumar, General Manager, HR & Admin, Savera group suggests more businesses should come forward. "We have not appointed them as employee though. They have been taken as children on a minimum stipend for six months, after which they might be taken as a management or operational trainee. We prefer to keep them off kitchen as we do not want them near fire," he said. Rajagopal P, managing director, Sangeetha Veg Restaurants (P) Ltd, has also created job opportunity for two such people.

"They are so good at their work that other staff get motivated. They are on cordial terms with one another. More people should come forward for this kind of causes," he said.



• Ankit and Vijay Sarathy at Hotel Savera.

- **Summer Bazaar at V-Excel** - An exhibition and sale of products made by our vocational students over the year was on display at our R.A. Puram building

Apr 27 - May 3, 2019

MYLAPORE TIMES



## THIS WAS A UNIQUE BAZAAR IN MANDAVELI

By Preeti Srivatsan

April 15 morning.  
V-Excel Educational Trust, a special school based at Thiruvengadam Street, Mandaveli, is buzzing with activity.



Soft music floats around the entrance to the campus. The special students who get skilled here are singing their favourite songs. At one corner, a few people are buying fresh vegetables on sale. At another corner, girls wait for their turn as the mehndi artist works intricate patterns on the palm of one girl who is enjoying the effort.

This is a carnival-like atmosphere. At the stalls set up on this campus, there was something for everybody, from home-makers to professionals. And all that was on display were made by the special students of V-Excel.

Gita Bhalla, the principal of the special school at V-Excel, Kaleidoscope Learning Center and the trust's executive director, says, "The products of students at three units, Kaleidoscope Learning Center, the youth empowerment services and the vocational training unit were displayed at this bazaar. Over 60 students, who have been skilled for a year now had something like 100 items to offer."

The items on display included jute bags, gift items, candle holders and decorative mirrors. There were a few unusual works - a memory board where you can hang memo notes and photographs and art and literature work of the students were also on display.

Says Gita, "Every year, we host such an event on a small scale. We have an exhibition, class-wise, to show to the parents what the students have been working on. This year, the children had made quite a few items, so we decided to have a bazaar."

A couple of parents, whose children have graduated here, have started self help groups. Items made by these children - like *idli podi*, *paruppu podi* and fashion jewellery - was also on sale.

In some ways, this bazaar pumped up the spirit of the students as well as their guardians as much as it connected with the community.

V-Excel is located at 10/23, Thiruvengadam Street, Mandaveli. Ph: 24956373.

## Staff Training

- A five member team from across some of our centers (Chennai, Erode and Nashik) consisting of our unit heads and teachers attended the three day Global Autism Convention (GAC 2018) conducted by Academy for Severe Handicaps and Autism (ASHA) Charitable Trust, Bangalore. The convention provided a platform for researchers, educators and professionals to present and discuss the latest happenings. In the disability sector. Understanding the various methodologies, interventions, employment and family support practices around the globe was a great learning experience for our senior professionals.



## Impact in the Community

- In the conventional set up, our children are always 'beneficiaries'. However we know and believe that they can be 'givers' and 'doers' too. On one such occasion - Kerala Flood Relief operations - our older students, with staff support, pooled in efforts to collect various necessary items for Relief. The candidates from our Teaching Academy also donated some items. We felt satisfied that we were able to put together 38 boxes and send it to Kerala through Pudiya Thalamurai at Ekkatuthangal.



- **Sreyes Farm Vegetable Outlet** was inaugurated at Sreyes, Shastri Nagar, by Mr. and Mrs. Rajagopal in March 2019. Vaidhyathan, a trainee from our Vocational Training Unit has been inducted as an employee at the outlet. He is accompanied by another trainee, on a rotational basis, as a part of the training program, supervised by a teacher. Vegetables (beans, bhindi, spinach, pudina, bitter gourd etc.) are periodically received directly from the farm and sold to the public at this special outlet.



- We accomplished the order of making 375 goody bags for RTR (Run T.Nagar Run) supported by Lennox International. Trainees from our vocational training units enthusiastically participated and

made this possible. While the bags got ready at Vocational Training Unit at Adyar, Screen-printing on those bags and Mug printing were done at Mylapore center through our Unit - Youth Empowerment Services. Thank you, RTR team and Lennox for all the trust and support.



- Samagra Siksha (Tamil Nadu -TN) had organized a State level orientation program on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 and it was anchored by Dr. Santhanam. It was attended by Principals of all leading schools across the state. The dignitaries on the dais included an Advocate in the High Court (TN), Income Tax officer (Center), Director of Education and Deputy Director of Education (TN). V-Excel's representative, Mrs. Meera Suresh, shared with the gathering about the organization, the Academy for Training and Excellence, and the different courses offered by us. The talk was well-received.
- December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, is a day when we consciously work on raising awareness among the citizens. In the morning our young students, teachers, and parents participated in a walkathon at Thiruvanmiyur Beach, arranged by Nandavanam. In the evening, we performed a short street play at Nageshwara Rao Park, highlighting the need to increase sensitivity and understanding of persons with disabilities.



## Satellite centres

- **Srirangam**

- Our satellite center at Srirangam, Abhyasa Kendra, has moved to new premises on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018. Students from Shri Velukudi Swamy's Paathshala performed the puja and vedic chanting. All the trainees, teachers, staff and parents attended the puja.



- Apart from weaving, training in tailoring is also being imparted, as part of the pre-vocational training. These trainees have been showing keen interest in learning and are enjoying.



- **Nashik**

- Ms. Jayanthi Viswanath, our Regional Director and Head of the Nashik Satellite Center, was felicitated on January 3, 2019 on account of Women's Liberation Day celebration, being the birth anniversary of Smt. Savithri Bai Phule.



- **A Visit by His Holiness Shri Vidhushekhara Bharati Swamiji** - The visit of His Holiness Shri Vidhushekhara Bharati Swamiji to the Nashik center on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019 was a uniquely divine and a joyous experience for all the staff and special students of Nasik center. His Holiness visited all the classrooms in the school and blessed the students and distributed fruits to all of them. Achyaryaji observed the children very keenly and enquired about the lessons, activities and therapies being imparted to them. Later, he listened to the students sing a bhajan and chanting of Ramraksha Stotra. His Holiness's visit has re-energized our spirits and all of us feel truly blessed.



- Saksham, a National Organization working for the welfare of the disabled, felicitated five employees of V-Excel Nashik Center with awards, in connection with International Day for Person with Disability 2018. The felicitations were done by an eminent citizen of Nashik, Dr. Vinayakrao Govilkar. Our students were given an opportunity to give a dance performance at the Award function.



- On 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December, our students participated in the Inter-schools Paralympics competition. Out of the nine students who participated in the various events, seven children won the first or second prizes in various competitions like book-balancing, soft throw ball and kick-ball. On 23<sup>rd</sup> December, our students participated in the Nashik District-level Sports Meet and won prizes there.
- **Solapur**
  - Our Early Intervention Center shifted to new premises on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019. The new building was inaugurated by Dr. Suneel Godbole, Developmental Paediatrician, Pune.



- The Center Head for Solapur, Shri Gopal Jahagirdar, has been awarded the "Adarsh Shikshak Puraskar" by Siddh Sung Pratishthan. He was one of the eight chosen awardees who were bestowed this honour on the occasion of Teacher's Day. Gopal is pivotal in running V-Excel Satellite Center at Solapur that offers Early Intervention, Special School, Remedial Services, and Vocational Programs for children with special needs.
- Solapur team arranged a free check-up camp and seminar on Autism and other behavioural problems and its solution.
- **Pollachi**
  - To inculcate values of empathy among children, an interactive session with Mr. Sukumar, a social activist, Kunjipalayam, was organized in our center on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Children were given a brief introduction about the social activist who serves 250 homeless people in Pollachi by providing them with one course meal daily and gives dress materials along with medicines. Our children donated the newspapers to pack the food items and contributed a small sum. Children learnt the value of empathy and they promised to help the needy.



- Rohini Swaminathan, a native of Pollachi, serving as International GIS Consultant at World Food Programme at Italy, and with a highly credible international work profile including United Nation, NASA and World Health Organisation, visited our center in March 2019. She was happy that such good remedial services were being offered in a small town like Pollachi. She interacted with our children and motivated them. Children were shown Ms. Rohini Swaminathan TEDx [video](#). Her experiences were enthralling and were an eye opener for us, as we travelled around the world through her experience.

### Success stories

- Monika's journey in V-Excel began in June 2018. She was previously studying in a mainstream school, and had difficulty coping with the pressure and expectations of that school. The school could not understand her individual needs and cater to them. Her struggle worsened, and sadly, she had to drop out of 11<sup>th</sup> standard. She came to V-Excel with low self-esteem, eyes filled with sorrow, with absolutely no hope for her future. The team at V-Excel welcomed her warmly on a promising note. She was given counselling, and art therapy to improve her self-confidence. She was admitted in at Bridges Learning Academy, a unit of V-Excel Educational Trust. She started preparing for her 12<sup>th</sup>

Grade NIOS (National Institute for Open Learning) Exams. The teachers gave her intense one-on-one training. She slowly opened up and cooperated well. She completed her exams in first attempt! She is now studying her first year Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in a college at Chennai. Monika is now a confident, cheerful and motivated student. Monika's parents are overwhelmed by her improvement. They have recorded their immense gratitude to V-Excel. The journey has been fruitful for both the student and the ever-dedicated team of teachers.

- A young 14-year old boy in the Autism Spectrum, with innumerable sensory issues and delicate health, was in pain and agony, violent, screaming, biting, crying and was having a meltdown. He was sent to the sandpit play area where he could be left alone to calm down, but the agony did not subside and he could be heard throughout the school. Watching him from the window, our Counselling Department Head, Parimal Pandit, began to sing a soft song and the shouting stopped. She could enter the space of violence and he began to hold himself together. The stress, pain, torment on his face was soon replaced within a few minutes by peace, calm and a look of being safe. It was almost like watching the stormy sea slowly subside into a peaceful lake. He began to swing and at the end of two songs, looked around, smiled deeply, and let out a big sigh. She could leave him alone at the end of a few songs and he was calm the rest of the afternoon. This is not one exceptional story. We see it happen day after day with music and children - obsessions and violent behaviour subside, peace reigns, incoherent and repetitive speech stops, and harmony prevails in the subtle space of music.
- **Sabarinathan**, 12 years of age, was attending a regular school but was not benefitting in any form. He was also being labelled a misfit in the class. He then came to our Bridges Learning Academy where he started showing interest in studies and his verbal skills improved significantly. Apart from academics, he has also grown in confidence. We are proud to share that he is a Level 2 Champion in skating and has participated in a 7 km. marathon. A commendable growth indeed!
- Divya, our special educator, shares her learning with a very enthusiastic and happy tone; for her it is no less than achieving a gold medal. Harshitha, one of her students, does not sit in one place and has a very low attention span. When Divya initially narrated a story "The Sun" to her without using any material. When asked, Harshitha was neither able to remember nor recall the story. The teacher then used, a few animals, sand, some cloth to represent the sun and other play material to make the story livelier and more visual. Harshitha was glued to one place and was also able to recall the story even after a week. This was a classic example of the quote by Ignacio Estrada, "If a child can't learn the way we teach, then teach the child the way they learn".