

“The Best We Can Be”

VOICE

The

of SHANTI BHAVAN

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14 MAKE HISTORY

Our First Set of Graduates Head to College

The sixth of June, 2010, was a day to remember. At the stroke of ten, the entire school body consisting of students of six and above, the aunties, teachers, Dr. George's family members, parents and around thirty three volunteers and well wishers gathered to acknowledge the graduation of the first batch of students of Shanti Bhavan. 12th grader, Karthika was the master of ceremony for the function. She started by thanking everybody for being present. She said, "We are glad that you are present to participate in this momentous occasion." From there, she went on to announce the occurrence of each event of the function, from speeches by the founder, Dr. George, the vice principal, Miss. Beena Nair, students, chief guests, by the volunteer representative, Michelle Miller, and parents, to the distribution of diplomas and gifts.

The girls dressed in grand sarees and the boys in formal pants, white shirts and a tie, the graduates proudly received their passing out certificates from chief guest, Mr. Rolf Saligman, the Consul General of the Republic of Germany and special members of the Shanti Bhavan community - Ajit George, and his mother, Mrs. Miriam George.

But the most awaited event arrived when Karthika announced in a slow, suspenseful tone, "Now we present the special awards for achievements in the various academic streams." With her call, Rajini, Mahalakshmi, and Viji walked up to the stage

to receive the awards for being the top students in the Science stream, Business stream and Liberal Arts stream respectively. Rangini Pushpa was all smiles as Mr. Shibulal, the co-founder of Infosys, handed her the award for being the valedictorian, as her proud mother and all the people who had played a role in her upbringing looked on.

At twelve, the historic celebration commenced with the singing of the Indian national anthem. After this, the crowd dispersed for a fulfilling lunch consisting of richly cooked ghee rice and curry. The parents of the graduates gathered for a photo shoot alongside Dr. George and anyone who wanted to be a part of it.

As the day came to an end, the parents and dignitaries left, and the school community retired to their residences to catch up on their sleep after an entire week of running around to make things happen. But the fun was not over yet.

At six that evening, the entire school assembled in the school building to raise a toast to the successful young graduates who were all set to venture out into the world and make their stand.

In a deep, emotionally loaded voice, Dr. George, raised his toast to the graduates by saying, "This is a remarkable day in the history of Shanti Bhavan. I wish you the very best."

by Amrutha Harish, 12th Grade Student

IJNM's DAY OUT

Journalism Students Pay a Visit to Shanti Bhavan

On the 31st of July, Shanti Bhavan played host to seventy six students and two professors from the Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media, Bangalore.

The Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media (IJNM) is one of South Asia's leading post-graduate schools of journalism and media.

The guests who were paying a visit, arrived at ten in the morning. They were greeted by students of grades eleven and twelve, who escorted them on a tour around their school.

After a quick refreshment of coffee, the students and professors attended the school assembly where they got to interact with the entire school.

While introducing himself at assembly, Professor Ron, said, "I am really happy to be here with you today." From there he went on to talk about his experience as a teacher at the journalism school.

Apart from being welcomed warmly and being treated hospitably the guests were also given a carrot

each. These carrots were from our farm. "I've been to many markets in my life and seen many carrots. But I have never tasted such tasty carrots before", said one of the students with a note of sincerity in his voice.

After the assembly, Dr. George addressed the guests. While talking about the mission of Shanti Bhavan, he stated, "You have to spread the message that if there were a thousand Shanti Bhavans around India, poverty would be eradicated." His talk left them with something to think about as they were escorted on tour around the campus by the senior students of Shanti Bhavan.

"We wish we had teddy bears like yours", commented one of the students at seeing the soft toys sitting on the younger children's beds in the dormitories.

"They seemed really impressed with my school. Some of them were complaining about how they don't get to wake up to the sound of music in the morning as we do. It was really exciting to have them", said eleventh grader, Francis, after conducting the tour. Twelveth grader, Shilpa Raj, who is an aspiring journalist herself was just as excited. While talking about how she felt that day, she said, "It was great interacting with the students and professors. I can't wait to go to IJNM to study journalism five years from now. I am so excited."

by Kumar Narayannappa, 11th Grade Student



DR. GEORGE SPEAKS TO STUDENTS

A NEW BEGINNING

Lakshya's Experience at Shanti Bhavan



Lakshya, joined Shanti Bhavan this June. His parents are both teachers who are currently working at the school. His elder brother studies in 7th grade while he studies in the 6th grade. In this piece, eleven year old Lakshya talks about his new school and the things he likes the most about it.

When I came to Shanti Bhavan, I was amazed to see the high buildings and the beautiful campus. I was amazed at how different this school was from my previous school in Lucknow. Here the students do not pay fees whereas I did in my previous one. I like all the teachers and aunties.

Here I get to meet so many volunteers from different parts the world. The playground is big and I enjoy playing soccer. I enjoy roller skating even though I fall frequently.

On Saturday, we have half-day school. At night after dinner, we wash vessels taking turns. We have prep until 9 p.m. On Sunday, we do community work and watch movies in the evening. There are many snakes on campus but I am not afraid of them. I have many friends both within my class and outside. There are two libraries with many books in them. My previous school had only one library. I enjoy cycling around the campus on my bike. I love Shanti Bhavan a lot and I am enjoy studying here.

A leaf breaks off from a tree
In the deep jungle of the Amazon.
An infant is born in Nepal,
It's life clock starts ticking.
A man slips and falls
In the cold streets of Moscow.
Another straps a bomb jacket on,
In a corner in Baghdad.
A grinning girl stands up in Sydney,
To a thundering applause after a violin recital.
A flower blooms in the prairies,
Just as a butterfly peeps out of its cacoon.
A cricket chirps to the darkness,
Its response is silence.
A pianist finishes his piece
with a high lingering key.

The Interim

A Poem by
Praveen Kumar Kasma
Eleventh Grade

Keeping the Heart of Art Beating

Volunteers Enrich the Spirit of the Arts at SB

Sharing is a great virtue. People share their time, money, energy and abilities with one another. Here, at Shanti Bhavan we have people who come as volunteers from different parts of the world and share not just their time, talents and interests but also a part of themselves.

Being exposed to people like them is one of the most unique aspects of Shanti Bhavan. This exposure enables us to learn from them and imbibe humane values like honesty, generosity and kindness which adds to our overall personal development. Names like Yazmany Arbodela, Mary Mitchell Campbell, Summer and Allegra Boggess, Mitchell Johnson and Ravi Huthseeing and many others are just the perfect examples of people who work for the simple reason of wanting to making a difference.

The world may know him as the 'publicity seeking artist' for his exhibition titled, 'Assassination of Barack Obama/ Assassination of Hilary Clinton', but here at Shanti Bhavan, Yazmany Arbodela, a New York based artist and founder of the Glassless Glasses Studio, has a different name tag- Mr. Discipline. Walking around the campus with a serious and strict air, Yazmany gets his message across to the children- Discipline is priority, so sustain it. But this artist has a totally different side to himself too. The younger kids can't help laughing with glee in his English, Social Studies and drawing classes which are packed with surprises and fun.

By profession Yazmany is an artist and a scholar. His line of interest lies in painting, architecture, photography and fashion. He is using his time at the school trying to share facets of his diverse talents with the students by working on developing short films which centers on their lives at Shanti Bhavan. He is just as eager to learn from them as they are to learn from them.

When asked what he enjoys doing the most with the students he replied, "I love laughing and connecting with the kids. I always look forward to teaching them and in turn be taught by them." To the question what is art, he answers, "To me personally, art is something that changes you or moves you. Good art evokes feelings and changes who you are." But there is never one definition of art.

Summer Bogess, a celloist on Broadway who has volunteered at Shanti Bhavan on several occasions has a slightly different interpretation of art. To her art is any form which people use to express their emotions and find truth. "For me, my form of art is playing the cello. Art says something that has never been said before. So when I listen to a great piece of music that really speaks to me it is very comforting," she adds.



Playing the cello is Summer's deepest passion. While volunteering at the school, she conducts private and group classes with students of the eighth and twelfth grade.

"I hope to play the cello like Summer one day. Her humility inspires me", says 12th grader Karthika who takes her music classes very seriously. Like her, Shashi of tenth grade has a desire to excel at learning a musical instrument. He has a ear for music and a talent for making each key on the piano ring with quality.

"I always look forward to my piano sessions with Allegra. She works really hard to make me understand each piece rather than just learn the notes," he says.

Allegra Boggess is Summer's younger sister. Being sisters is not the only thing that they have in common. Both Summer and Allegra have volunteered several times at Shanti Bhavan and are strong believers in its cause.

"I think it is important to reach out to people and be there for each other. And I reach out to people in need through my art", she says. Allegra is a well accomplished pianist and even plays the oboe. She participated in a musical programme in Afghanistan which was attended by the President himself and walked away with his admiration. She gives English classes for the tenth graders. Currently, she is also the volunteer coordinator between Shanti Bhavan and ASTEP.

ASTEP (Artists striving to end poverty) is a New- York based non-profit organization founded by Mary Mitchell Campbell. It stands on the aim of reaching out to people in need through art and bringing about a meaningful change in their lives.

The founder, who is a music director, orchestrator, vocal coach and pianist to some of Broadway's most successful performers, is a strong supporter of Shanti Bhavan and has volunteered at the school a number of times, conducting piano and choir classes.

"We love having Mary with us. She has the power to bewitch the choir into singing like angels", says 10th grader, Vinceya who is a member of the school choir.

When asked what her first memory of Shanti Bhavan was, Miss. Mitch(as the students affectionately call her) replied, " I remember coming into the school building while the rehearsals for school day were going on in the year 2005. I was impressed to see a piano because it was the first time I was seeing one in India. I was overwhelmed by the energy of the children."

When asked what Shanti Bhavan is to her, Mary replied after great thought, "Home. There is no place in the world where I am



happier than I am in Shanti Bhavan.” And coming to Shanti Bhavan is her way of taking a break from the world of drama, theatres, long nights and hours of playing the piano which makes up her demanding career as a musical director on Broadway.

While commenting on Mary Mitchell’s philanthropic activities, American singer, song writer, guitarist and former member of the Hanson band, Ravi Hutheesing says, “ She is running a wonderful organization which not only gives artists the opportunity to go out and use their skills to end poverty, but it inspires them to, maybe, do something that they didn’t realise they were capable of doing.”

But Ravi is no stranger to philanthropy. He is the founder of Sunshine in the Shades, an organisation which provides musical instruments and/ or education to underprivileged kids. Beginning this year, he has been dedicating significant time towards personally taking part in non- profit/ charitable activities in different parts of the world.

This November, he spent three weeks at Shanti Bhavan teaching guitar and public speaking classes for the senior students. He also gave a few concerts where he performed songs he has written.

“Ravi was one of the people who has made a difference in my life. He was just as good at taking guitar classes as he was at entertaining a crowd. My favorite song of his is ‘I don’t need you any more.’ He even showed us his guitar which was flexible”, says 12th grader, Ramesh who had Ravi for a teacher.

He even accompanied the school choir, standing at the side and setting his guitar to magic while Michele Johnson, another volunteer, was conducting. Michele succeeded in teaching the choir a song in German which they performed at the Christmas party hosted by friends and supporters of Shanti Bhavan who are all Germans. The party was held at the Asoka hotel in Bangalore.

The choir has had the privilege of having people like Ravi, Michele, Mary, Summer and Allegra teach them and help them bring out their voices to its utmost power.

These are the kind of people who come into our lives and leave behind their footprints and like the song from the Broadway show Wicked we find ourselves “changed for the better.”

by Shilpa Raj, 12th Grade Student



MARY



RAVI



MICHELE

MEMORIES DON'T FADE

*It's been almost eight months since the first batch of students graduated from Shanti Bhavan, and eighteen year old **Thomas Kennedy**, who is studying at St. Joseph's is still homesick. He has taken courses like Math, Computer Science and Electronics. "Math is a challenge but is still enjoyable", he says when asked how he finds his subjects. In this piece, Thomas talks about his new life, college, friends, food, his plans for the future and certainly how much he misses Shanti Bhavan.*

1. Do you like college?

It's okay.

2. How many students are there in your class?

Fifty.

3. Have you made any friends?

I have made five to six friends in my class. I talk to everybody.

4. Have you been ragged?

No.

5. How was the transition from Shanti Bhavan to college?

Tough(smiles) I was so scared. I didn't know what to do. And of course, it was very difficult to leave the school and all the people who have been a part of my life for so long.

6. What do you miss the most about Shanti Bhavan?

That's tough to say because I don't know one thing that I do not miss. I do miss my friends, my teachers, certainly the food and strangely the daily assemblies too.

7. What has college life taught you so far?

To manage time and use one's freedom wisely. It's really easy to get distracted now that we don't have our aunties and teachers constantly looking out for us and guiding us.

8. What are you plans for the future?

I have always been interested in mechanical engineering, so I might take up engineering.

9. Why is it important to you that you get a college degree?

Getting a college degree is important because it opens you up to various opportunities pertaining to both job opportunity and social opportunity.

10. What is your message to your juniors at Shanti Bhavan?

To work hard and value every single thing that they do because when they leave they are going to miss it terribly. And they should work hard.

Looks like Thomas has come a long way from being a four year old who had never seen a book or used a pencil before to getting enrolled into college and dreaming about the future. We wish him the very best in everything he does. Way to go, Thomas!



SAYING GOOD-BYE TO PENNY

It was a sunny day in Shanti Bhavan. My friends and I were walking down the pathway towards the dining hall for our morning snacks. When we got to the dining hall, I noticed that everyone's face was filled with sadness and shock. "What's wrong?", asked one of my friends. Suddenly a girl from one of the lower grades came up to me and said, "Preetha, did you know that Penny died?" She walked away even before I could answer her.

It took me a moment to realise what she had said. I began crying. My friends comforted me. Only then I realised how much I loved Penny. The shock of her death hit me hard. Through my tears I observed that I was not the only one who was crying for the loss of our dog. Penny had been in Shanti Bhavan for a long time. All the children adored her and enjoyed playing with her. She was almost human as she walked along with her mate, Peepers on the grounds of Shanti Bhavan, barking affectionately or nudging or rubbing against our legs, indirectly asking us to pet her. In the afternoon a burial ceremony was held near the utility building. With a heavy heart, we placed Penny's body in the grave dug in the garden, after observing a moment of silence. I really miss Penny who was a good friend of mine.

by Preetha, 8th Grade Student



HELPING OUT ON THE FARM

First it was carrots and now it is weeds. Ever since Miss. Beena informed us at assembly that after classes end at three thirty five we are to go to the farm and pick carrots, we have been doing just that.

"For the first two weeks we were really excited about picking carrots but after that we became bored of it," says fifth grader Vijay. His classmate Ajay adds, "I used to enjoy carrot picking because we could eat some of the carrots that we had picked."

The carrot season didn't last long, and there were mixed feelings about that. From carrots, the students have moved on to pluck weeds. On weekends, grades six and above spend an hour or so removing weeds that are growing on the plots where vegetables like beet roots, beans and tomatoes are being grown.

The fully matured vegetables are then plucked, brought to the kitchen, cooked and then served for meals. After all, with labour comes reward.

by Kishori, 10th Grade Student

STUDENTS VS. TEACHERS

Apart from concentrating on their studies, the students of Shanti Bhavan always find the time to have fun and learn outside class hours. And one of their great sources of fun has always been the celebration of the two Indian holidays of Teacher's Day on the 5th of September and Children's Day on the 14th of November. And this year it was no different- the celebrations were just as splendid, entertaining and a great way of exhibiting talents.

Anybody who had viewed the shows hosted by the students and teachers in honor of each other would almost say that the students were just as good at mimicking their teachers and aunties as they were good at dancing and singing.

Organised by the senior most grade, the twelfth grade, the two hour long show comprised of a variety of dances including both western and classical, songs sung by the school choir, skits performed by the younger children, mimickery and playing pieces on the cello and the piano. "Having known them for all these years, I had never doubted their talent in leaving the audience in awe with their performance. But they still took me by surprise," commented Miss.Beena the vice- principal of Shanti Bhavan.

Within two months it was Miss. Beena's turn to get up on stage and take upon a different role other than that of a teacher. Dressed in a man's shirt, pant and suspenders, she greeted the students by saying, " I wish you a very happy children's day." The students had looked forward to this day and when it finally arrived their excitement was difficult to contain. Unable to control their laughter the students watched as their teachers, aunties and volunteers let go of their serious inhibitions and performed several dances, plays, songs and mimickery. " I enjoyed watching the volunteers imitate our enthusiam in class," said 12th grader, Tara.

By the end of the day nobody would disagree that the adults had surpassed the student's expectations. Teachers day is the only one day in the entire year when we get to see the grown-ups in different roles other than that of teachers and aunties. And we always look forward to it.

by Pavethrea, 12th Grade Student





THE MUCH AWAITED ARRIVAL OF SANTA

SANTA COMES TO BALLIGANAPALLI

With Christmas not too far away, the excitement is hard not to be infected with. In the state of Tamil Nadu, Christmas has still not set in except in the rural village of Balliganapalli, where the festival has gotten Shanti Bhavan in its firm grasp.

On the 16th of December, the 11th graders hosted an early Christmas party for the entire school.

The evening started out with the perfect note with the school choir singing several carols. After that, the students took part in various indoor games like building a tower with cards and treasure hunt which was conducted by the 11th graders who had organised the party.

The evening was well underway and yet Santa had not arrived. Dinner, which consisted of puris, ghee rice, sour and sweet chicken and cake, was ready. But the feast did not begin until Santa had made his presence felt by everyone. This time Santa Claus did not climb down from a chimney or land with his reindeers. He arrived at Shanti Bhavan in a cardboard box and broke out of it. He was greeted by the excited students who had been good the entire year so that Santa would not deny them their Christmas presents.

The 12th graders, for whom this was their last Christmas party at the school as they will be graduating in June, participated in a game where they had to grab chocolates that were hanging on a string; not with their hands, but with their mouths. "I had so much fun. It was quite an experience", says 12th grader, Chaithra grinning.

The evening came to an end after dinner was served, Santa had given away his gifts and the students were exhausted after dancing.

This was certainly a night to remember.

VOICE

The

of SHANTI BHAVAN

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Dear Friends,

We the ninth graders have worked as a team to successfully complete this newsletter.

This issue contains various events that have taken place since the start of the new academic year in June. We are very proud of our seniors who are now studying in college. We thank everyone who contributed to this edition. We thank Yasmany Arbodela for all his help.

We wish you a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

- The Editors (Shanti Bhavan's Illustrious 9th Grade Class)

