

Under The Canopy-February 2011

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February 2011

Greetings from The Banyan!

Since the time the residents of our Transit Care Facility ushered in the New Year with an enjoyable light music programme conducted by the Smile Orchestra, we have witnessed so many events and positive developments at The Banyan that we want to share with you! The visit by Mr. Desiraju, Additional Secretary to the Union Health Minister to our various projects is yet another indication of what impact the work of The Banyan is making in our society and therefore on the highest policy makers of the country!

ADAIKALAM

At our Transit Care Facility joy overflowed through the celebration of the festival of Pongal. Right from decorating the compound with elaborate kolams (motifs drawn on the floor in aesthetic patterns, usually with rice flour) filled in rangoli colours, to cooking delicious pongal in a large mud pot, the residents matched their enthusiasm with the spirit of the festival.



Republic day at Adaikalam saw residents hoist the National Flag and sing patriotic songs. Students from Mar Gregorios College held cultural programmes in which the residents joyously participated.

Through Vocational Therapy, our residents are involved in creating products such as bags and purses in jute, gel candles etc which are very popular at the stalls they are showcased in. Group therapy includes two new games, one specially aimed at a group of residents speaking Hindi, to get them ready for reintegration. This is done through flashing cards with pictures of different activities practiced in villages, thereby reminding the observers of their homes and early lives. This will assist in igniting their memory and get them to talk about their homes. The other is Roses and Thorns, a therapeutic board game to keep our residents engaged.

For the staff at Adaikalam, a Suicide Awareness Training Programme was conducted on the 27th and 28th of January by volunteers from SNEHA, an organisation that provides positive support against thoughts of suicide.

A Workshop on Hearing Voices was organised for the professionals at Adaikalam. It gave an insight into and a different perspective on auditory hallucinations and their interventions.

Best Resident of the Month was awarded to Mariam Swamy. Originally from Paripoornatha in Kolkata, Mariam is undergoing training at the Vocational Therapy Unit of Adaikalam as a day care client.

Token Economy System, a Success Strategy:

This is a form of behaviour modification, encouraging desirable behaviour and reducing occurrence of undesirable behaviour, through the use of tokens. Individuals exhibiting desirable behaviour are awarded tokens. Tokens thus collected could be exchanged for objects or privileges of choice. While this system is often resorted to in institutional settings like psychiatric hospitals or correctional facilities to manage aggressive or unpredictable behaviour, their larger goal is to teach appropriate behaviour and social skills that can be carried forward into one's natural environment.

At Adaikalam a group of 6 individuals has been chosen, targeting behaviour of self care, ie.washing, bathing, brushing, grooming, interpersonal skills and occupational skills such as accomplishment of allotted work. With each task accomplished, a token in the form of a star is rewarded. In a day a maximum of 3 stars are given. After a week of observation including therapeutic sessions, reinforcement in the form of complimenting the desirable behaviour is given. A minimum of 15 stars for the week is maintained. As the group starts getting used to practicing the behaviour, rewards are delayed, eg. Rewards received only once in two weeks. Among this group of individuals with normal functioning, this system has helped strengthen the desirable behaviour.

2 other groups were formed targeting abstaining from using bad language, improved social skills, communication etc. Though this was a group of individuals functioning moderately, with close monitoring and group therapy sessions they showed remarkable improvement.

For February, Adaikalam looked forward to:

Creating a Support Group among residents to address 'Hearing Voices' and Disorientation.

Assessing residents on their symptomatic features and to give provisional diagnosis, to quantify such assessments.

A second Eye Camp was conducted on February 5th by doctors from the Aravind Sai Eye Hospital.

Rehabilitation and After Care Department:

3 Leave of Absences (LOAs -allowing residents to visit home for a limited period, then come back. These visits are spread over a period, to give both residents and families time to get used to each other), 7 short stays and 1 readmission relocation were some of the achievements of .

this department. The Rehab and After Care Department is making significant progress in empowering its clients to apply for Disability Cards issued by the Government.



URBAN MENTAL HEALTH PROJECTS (UMHP): **LOYOLA COLLEGE AND K.K.NAGAR DAY** **CARE CENTRE**

UMHP (URBAN MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME):

The Urban Mental Health Projects at both Loyola College as well as in K.K.Nagar received 222 clients, both new and regular for utilisation of psychiatric services. The Day Care Centre at K.K.Nagar now has 17 clients engaged in activity or getting prepared for employment.

The Difference after The Banyan Experience:

Sivaraman seemed a normal school boy till standard 10. After joining a different school to pursue higher studies he became withdrawn, disinterested in his studies and sleepless. He received treatment through drugs to combat psychosis. In a while his symptoms deepened to include

complaints of hearing voices, laughing to himself, incoherent speech, wandering aimlessly etc. Though he completed a B.E.course, he had a huge set of arrears to clear. Regular medication no longer seemed to make a difference to his condition, because of which he remained unproductive, with no initiative or ability to take up even simple jobs. Then he was referred to the Day Care Centre of The Banyan. He has since improved enough to enrol in our AutoCAD class and keep up the interest in the course. Individuals like Sivaraman are yet another reminder for all of us at The Banyan about how invaluable our services are in our society and how more precious is the support we continue to receive from our well wishers i.e. Our donors, our volunteers and our advocates!

COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT, (CMHP):

Community Mental Health Project(CMHP):

At our Community Mental Health Centre and the Community Living Project (long stay facility for our residents), both in Kovalam

Bank Accounts have been successfully opened for 5 of our residents

3 Outpatients have been successfully employed at Mamalla Resort in Mahabalipuram

Training Program for Staff: 1) Suicide Awareness by volunteers from Sneha

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2) Spoken English by 2 interns from Loyola College

3) South Zone Consultation on Census 2011 and Disability by the M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation



In the future is a plan to link with other NGOs.(Non Government Organisations) for follow up and reintegration, as also a plan to increase the number of leave of absences to facilitate smooth and more permanent discharge.

What CMHP has planned for the following month:

Introduce music as part of therapy

Take residents of Community Living Project and Health Centre on a 1 day trip as part of recreation
Start ID card system for all patients

Improve business done by SHGs (Self Help Groups)

Refer members of SHGs to DMHP (District Mental Health Project) Outpatient Clinics.

Short Film on CMHP and Community Living Project

A Day of Significance:

On 8th January 2011, when 90 caregivers and clients were present at a Disability Allowance Meeting conducted by the CMHP, it was announced that representatives from The Banyan would visit the Collector's Office in Kancheepuram to hand over a petition- for provision of Disability Card to avail Disability Pension issued by the Government. Clients and caregivers were told it was not compulsory to turn up for the occasion independent of help from The Banyan in arranging transport etc., but doing so was beneficial to them, it showed their strength collectively. On the day of handing over the petition a large number of clients and caregivers were already present when The Banyan team reached the venue.



After the petition was handed over, the group acknowledged the enormous difficulty faced in reaching the Government and expressed their deep gratitude to The Banyan for the support in turning around their lives!