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AWARENESS CENTRE

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Geetha Moorthy

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Founder & Executive Director



It is always a privilege to write this yearly message to you, the supporters of the South Asian Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC), especially on the night of our 5th annual Radiant Night Gala. Since 2008, SAAAC has been nurtured and developed by the commitment of supporters like you. It is this spirit of community support that inspired us to make this year's Gala theme, "Community Helping Community".

Here is a look at what you have helped make possible:

- 120 families actively being served
- Free provision of Applied Behaviour Analysis, Speech-Language, Music Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Visual Arts programming
- Educational workshops and support groups for parents
- Non-violent Crisis Intervention Training for volunteers and parents
- Serving families in Mississauga through educational works shops and group play sessions
- Raising awareness about autism across the South Asian community

All this incredible work would not be possible without committed businesses, passionate volunteers, forward thinking government officials, and engaged community members like you.

Before we began SAAAC, South Asian families living with autism faced huge challenges in accessing important services. Language barriers, cultural stigma associated with special needs, personal shame, and lack of financial resources all created a culture of enclosure that left many families suffering in silence. To address this bleak landscape, we did not only need a few committed individuals, but we also needed communities to come together

and support our vision for change. And you did! Over the past six years, we have steadily grown to address pertinent issues affecting South Asian families living with autism because of the support we have received.

As we move forward, we are looking to address more ambitious challenges such as:

- Implementing early screening interventions, so children do not have to wait years before receiving an autism diagnosis and treatment;
- Developing our Teaching to Employ Adolescent Minds (TEAM) initiative, so young adults with autism can develop employable skills that can help them lead more independent lives;
- Upgrading current programming with specialized software (CARD) that helps monitor and track student skills development.

All of these goals can only be attained by the continued support and engagement of valuable supporters like you.

Jean Vanier, the great Canadian humanitarian and theologian, once said that when we work as a community "we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress, and perhaps help them find self-confidence and inner healing." SAAAC operates on this premise and has become a true example of Community Helping Community.

Thank you for your attendance and for your continued support. We look forward to working with you in the coming years.

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LEARNING TO LEAD

By: Thushanth Sivaanathan

My journey with SAAAC started with a simple question I asked a friend, "What are you wearing?" She had the letters "SAAAC" flowing across her shirt. It was then that I first found out about this magnificent organization. Fast forward five months later, I walked into a basement of a temple where SAAAC was holding their weekly sessions. Up until that point in my life I was the average third year university student who was pursuing his BSc in mental health studies. I was always intrigued with mental health and looked for opportunities to help out in the community. Autism was something I only read in books. Never had I witnessed or interacted with an individual with autism. It was this mix of passion and curiosity that encouraged me to get involved with SAAAC.

As I worked with various children and their families, I was always compelled to go the extra mile. I wanted the work I did to amount to something, to translate into meaningful developments such as a child saying a word or doing a math problem or sitting long enough to complete a task. I don't think I was alone in being passionate about my work. I had great friends around me who went above and beyond to help those they worked with. It was this supportive environment along with seeing my students developing various skills that encouraged

me to take greater responsibilities within the organization whether it was being a classroom lead for the Teaching to Employ Adolescent Minds (TEAM) initiative, being a junior therapist, or even organizing an all day sports event for the families and children of SAAAC (We Aut Play 2013).

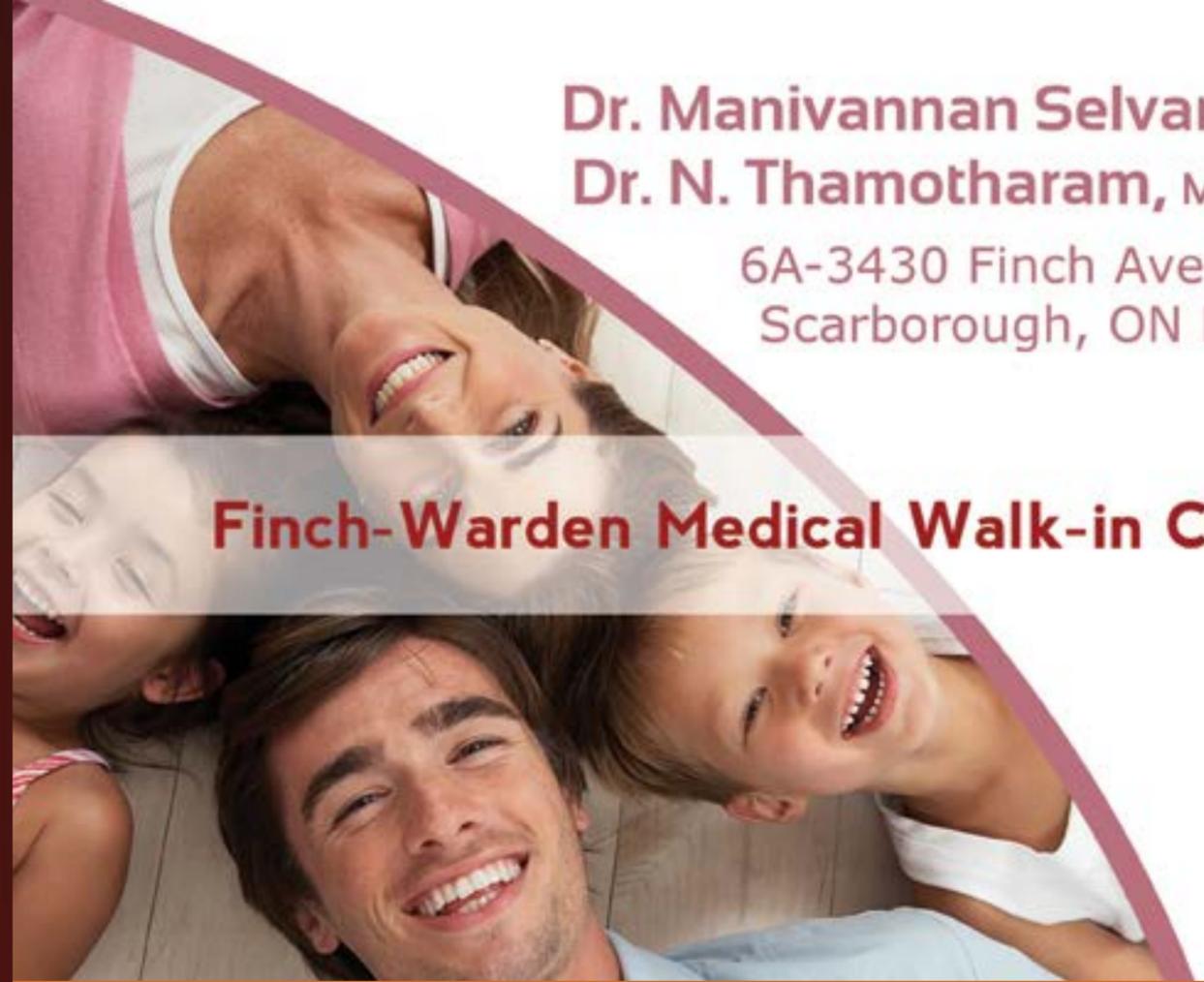
My personal definition of leadership is defined as seeing the greatness in others and getting others to believe in themselves. I've spent years trying to get the young adults and children I work with to see the greatness they possess. Though autism poses obvious challenges, it is an inspiration to see young men and women work hard and grow despite the personal obstacles they are met with daily. When I look back at my time at SAAAC, I feel fortunate to have learned as much as I have taught. I truly appreciate everyone at SAAAC, from the volunteers to the kids who have helped me and countless others find the greatness in themselves.

I want to conclude by recognizing all the volunteers who have made SAAAC an amazing organization. I've met some incredible people who inspire me, motivate me, and who help me become a better person. I am privileged to work alongside those who genuinely and passionately want to make a difference in the community.

Dr. Manivannan Selvananthan
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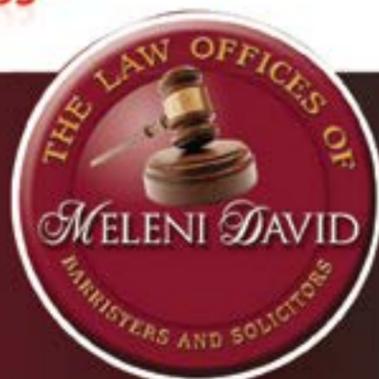
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YOU AUTA' KNOW



What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong disorder that affects how the brain develops and functions. Individuals with autism have difficulties with social interaction and nonverbal/verbal communication. Another distinguishing feature of many individuals with autism is their engagement with repetitive, apparently non-functional behaviors (hand-flapping, body-rocking, spinning, etc.)

It is important to understand that those with autism fall on a spectrum, with some individuals showing mild symptoms and others possessing more severe symptoms. No two people with autism are alike. They may share similar symptoms, but those symptoms may range in severity and as a result they would need varying degrees of care and treatment.

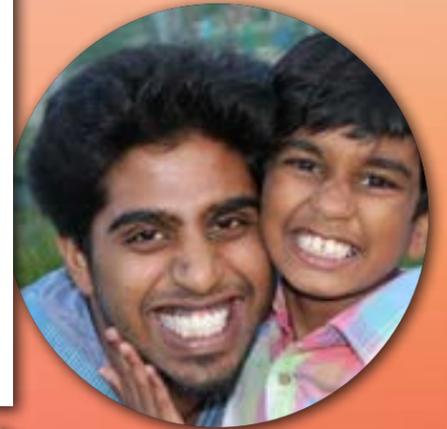
Currently it is estimated that 1 in 88 children have autism in Canada. While there is no cure for autism, there are a variety of therapies and programs that can help individuals develop basic communication and social skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

Autism landscape in Ontario:

In Ontario, children with autism wait years for a diagnosis and therapy. The Auditor General of Ontario's 2013 report identifies that some individuals have to wait four or more years in some regions to receive specialized autism treatments.

Autism services in Ontario are characterized by excessive wait times and severe shortages of services. Young adults with autism are especially vulnerable as they have little to no services when they finish high school or when their parents can no longer care for them.

ABOUT AUTISM



Symptoms of Autism:

Difficulty with social interaction and communication:

- Problems with non-verbal communication skills, such as lack of eye contact
- Those with autism have a hard time regulating emotions. When faced with anxious, stressful, or frustrating moments, they may experience "outbursts" such as crying or screaming, usually with disregard to place and time.
- Delay in speech development or unable to communicate through speech.
- Some people with autism continuously repeat words or phrases heard previously (echolalia).

Demonstration of repetitive behaviours:

- Common repetitive behaviors include hand-flapping, rocking, jumping and twirling, arranging and rearranging objects
- Individuals with autism need a strict consistency in their routines and environment. Slight changes can cause frustration and anxiety
- Repetitive behaviours can come in the form of intense attachments to objects, people, specific interests

For more detailed look at the symptoms of autism, please visit our website.

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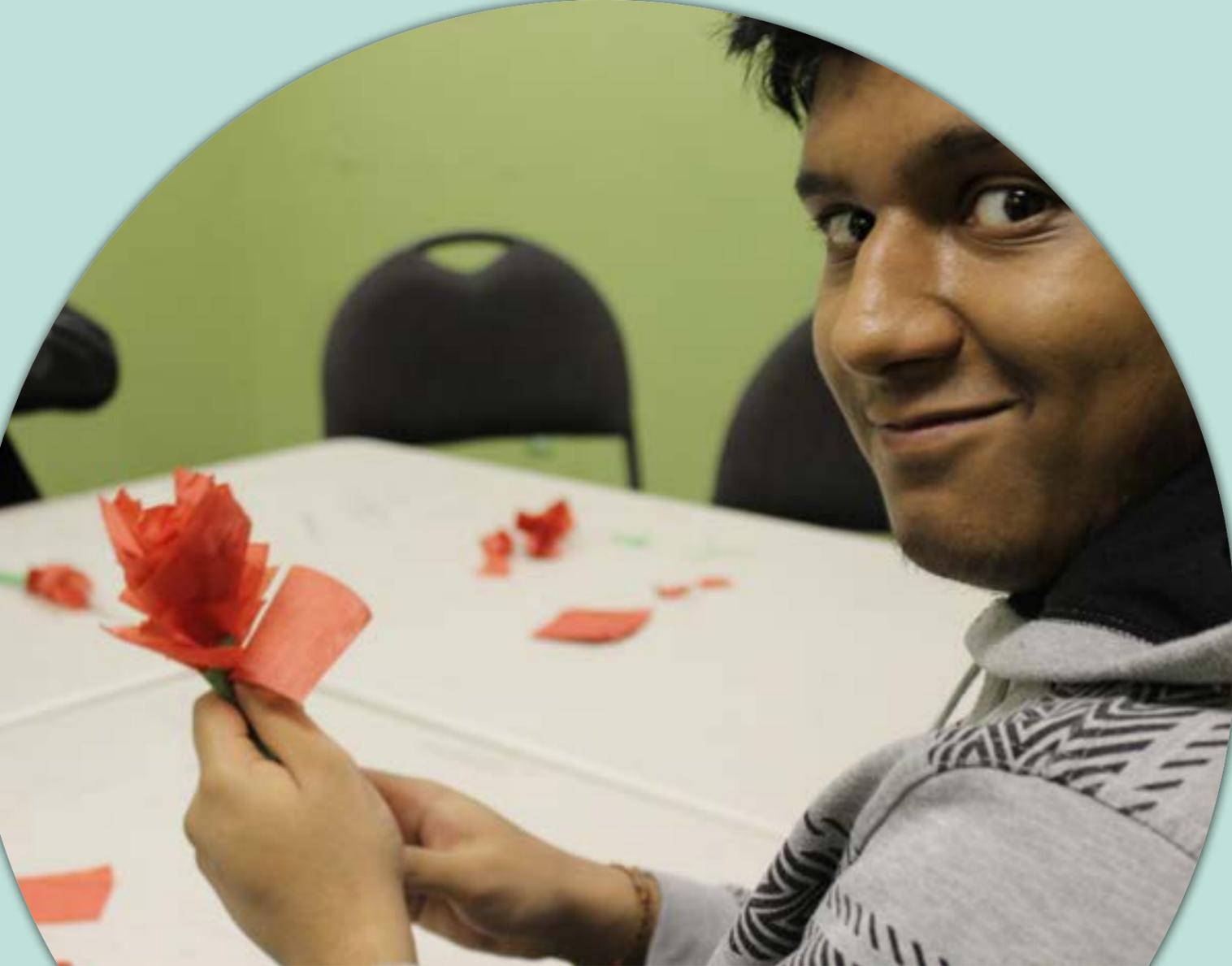
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A Work of Art

By: Michelle Kavita Sukhu

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”
- Pablo Picasso -

It is 7pm on Monday, and the room slowly begins to fill with the sound of children running, loud laughter, and everyone saying, “Hello”. The sound of tables moving quickly, and chairs shuffling, create a temporary chaos as we begin to assemble a large round table for the group to gather around. Not long after, the delicate sound of paper being folded, the squirt of glue, the crinkle of tissue paper, and the splash of paint are heard throughout. As I look around the table, I see smiles on many faces as they enjoy the evening’s activity, some with furrowed eyebrows deep in concentration as they create, and others in a state of serenity quietly creating a masterpiece. When the final product is done, I watch as each child holds up their work with a sense of pride and accomplishment. This is a small glimpse into Mondays at SAAAC.

My name is Michelle Kavita Sukhu, and I volunteer my time on Monday evenings helping with the arts program. My first day was very similar to what I’ve described to you above, and being a creative person myself, volunteering on Mondays was the perfect fit for me. I can’t begin to describe to you what a wonderful experience it has been thus far, and I never imagined that my passion for art and creativity would allow me to make such a meaningful connection with these children in such a short period of time. It is extremely rewarding to watch them be able to express themselves, communicate their feelings, and describe their emotions via drawing, painting, and sculpting, and I feel honoured that I am able to not only work with them, but also witness their work.

For those of you who have not had the opportunity to drop by on Mondays, we often center our activities on the seasons, festive holidays, and wherever else our imaginations take us. Many of you may have seen our wonderful Christmas ornaments on the tree during the holidays, or more recently our Valentine’s hearts hanging near the entrance of SAAAC. We are also responsible

for the silly turkeys made of our handprints during Thanksgiving. We try our best to engage the children with different materials week after week such as paints, modeling clay, feathers, markers, and crayons, while celebrating the excitement of the season.

The visual experience and creative process have been proven to enhance the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all children. Art can be extremely useful to children with autism in developing both communication and socialization skills, while also allowing them to develop their imagination and abstract thinking. Many children with autism respond well to visual experiences, and art allows them an alternative way to communicate, which can ultimately help the children in dealing with their emotions and behaviours. But most importantly, arts programming can be extremely fun, a great leisure activity, and no previous experience is required!

So if given the chance, please drop by and see what we are creating on Mondays. Get a little messy, paint with your fingers, and have some fun with glitter. After all, we all need a little ART in our lives!

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A TEAM Effort

Giving Young Adults with Autism A Chance to Succeed

My name is Neeran Kuni, and for the past four years I've been Program Director of SAAAC. I have over a decade of experience working with individuals with autism, and I can honestly say it has been an amazing journey so far. When you work in this field as long as I have, there are certain things you know that can be improved to help the development of the people you serve. One of those things I believe need urgent attention is addressing the lack of services and resources for adults with autism.

I think it's easy to forget that kids with autism will one day become adults with autism. There are many different services, funding, and other resources for kids and youth

with autism, but once a young person leaves high school all those avenues of support dry up. Suddenly, a lifetime of support is gone and all the milestones achieved might disappear. If appropriate services are not found, we are likely to see young adults become inactive and isolated from community life. This can lead to a host of tragic consequences from increased rates of depression and aggression to severely strained family dynamics.

Autism is a lifelong disorder and therefore needs a lifetime treatment plan. Building essential life skills, community integration and employment should all be part of a plan that supports development in adulthood. That's why I am proud to be part of the Teaching to Employ Adolescent Minds (TEAM)



initiative - a unique job and life skills development program. The purpose of the TEAM initiative is to empower young men and women by allowing them to develop vital skills that will serve them throughout their lifetime and integrate them with their communities.

We kicked off this ambitious journey by partnering with Kenley Kreation (www.kenleykreation.com) - a full-service event and wedding production company. Our participants, Thanuja and Mathumai, were tasked with setting up tables with place cards, wedding favours, and menus. Needless to say, they did an amazing job and finished ahead of time!

Our second TEAM initiative came when Work It Out Studios (www.workitoutfitness.ca) and Shaping Her Esteem (www.shapingheresteem.com/) hired our students to help set up audio and DJ equipment for their fundraiser. Akilan was trained at our centre and then used all that he learned on location when setting up the equipment.

I want to thank all these businesses for being able to see the capabilities that individuals with autism possess, and I encourage more businesses and organizations to participate in programs that give young people like Akilan, Thanuja and Mathumai opportunities for employment and growth.

Initiatives like TEAM are essential to our communities. They provide structure and support systems for adults with autism, helping them to build on a lifetime of learning. We are truly proud of this initiative, and we look forward to building stronger communities with businesses through this endeavour.

By: Neeran Kuni



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BRIDGING GAPS

Why South Asian Autism Awareness Centre Exists

By: Anji Vara

Culture is a pretty great thing. It gives us our values and principles; it gives us a framework to help develop our own identities. Yet culture can be complicated. Ask anyone who has spent their formative years in a place far from their homeland. They will tell you how confusing and frustrating it is trying to negotiate between many different cultures.

Understanding Challenges & Barriers

This confusion and frustration can be made worse when individuals and families deal with some extraordinary circumstances, such as raising a child with autism. When a family lacks the adequate language skills and the cultural literacy needed to navigate a specific space there are bound to be enormous difficulties... such as trying to acquire services and effectively communicate with professionals and staff working with their child.

Tasks such as reading medication labels printed in English or dealing with an emergency situation that requires immediate communication with law enforcement, paramedics, or medical staff can turn out to be overwhelmingly draining. Communication barriers that add to the alienation of a family from accessing services or finding support, can lead to feelings of isolation and poorer overall health outcomes for the family members.

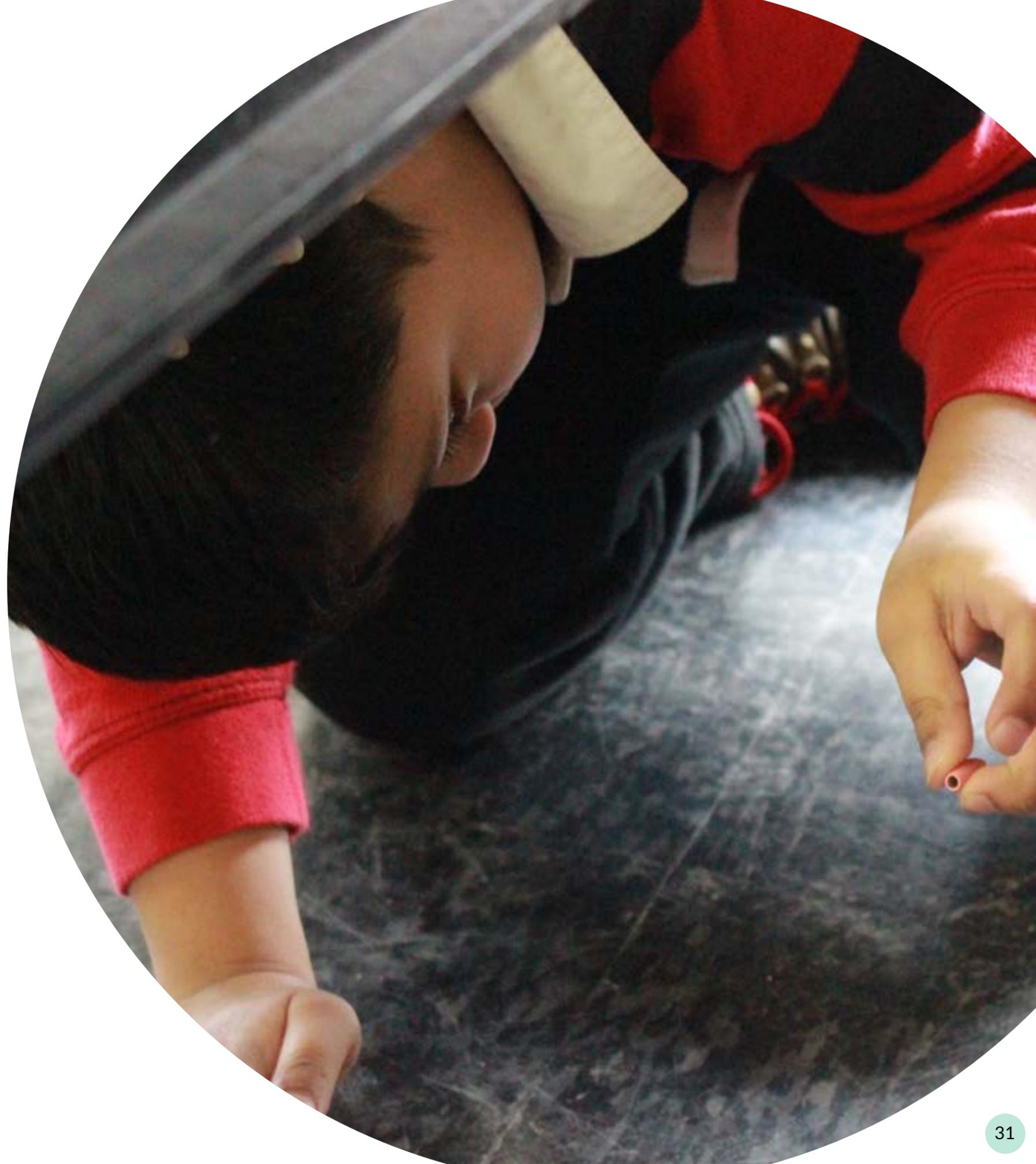
It is easy to imagine the feelings of exclusion or judgement that confront a family when first dealing with the baffling diagnosis of autism. In the absence of strong support from the community, feelings of confusion, embarrassment and isolation would overcome the family. This prevents them from advocating for their child and accessing necessary medical intervention. This is especially detrimental to the child with autism who is in greater need of access to healthcare.

The education system is another predominant structure in a child's life with its own policies and unspoken rules that a family is challenged to understand and navigate through. As children are in school during their formative years, it is essential to a child's outcome to have the appropriate support within the institution, which may be difficult to obtain due to language barriers for families.

SAAAC: Bridging Gaps

As a community, we can improve the overall wellbeing of families of individuals with autism by accepting these families and their children into our community and supporting them with the aid of organizations like SAAAC. SAAAC offers a culturally sensitive space for parents to not only understand autism, but it gives their children free and subsidized support through the provision of different therapies. Offering such services ensures that children receive the earliest intervention possible, which is critical for long-term improvements. SAAAC has also been able to assist parents connect with other services, such as offering a free interpreter service for those attempting to communicate with school boards and health agencies. SAAAC services also offers parents temporary respite to ensure their wellbeing and parent support groups that allow parents to connect with one another. Furthermore, SAAAC works in the community to raise the awareness and understanding of autism, which reduces the stigma associated with the diagnosis.

Sometimes, the gulf between one culture and another can be too great. This distance can lead to a great deal of pain. But organizations such as SAAAC act as a bridge, helping parents out of isolation and connecting them with the wider world.



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THE SOUND OF MUSIC

How Music Benefits Individuals with Autism



Music has played a pivotal role in my life. Ever since I was a kid, it has been there for me as a source of comfort and an outlet for expression. For a long time, however, I had taken it for granted, without giving much thought about the impact it made on my life. It wasn't until I started volunteering with SAAAC that I realized just how powerful music is.

Before my first day at SAAAC, I assumed their music therapy program was simply like any other music class—filled with a lot of theory and instruction; however, what I experienced on my first day was nothing like I had imagined. There was so much care, energy, movement, laughter, and joy in the space. Suddenly my outlook on music changed and it sparked my interest in how music can be used as a form of support and personal development.

Music therapy isn't necessarily a traditional music class - there are no notes to memorize or specific ways on how to play an instrument.

Rather, a music therapist uses music to help individuals with autism develop various skills such as attention and focus, verbal/non-verbal communication, and social interaction.

Check out some specific ways of how music therapy can be a useful tool in helping individuals with autism:

Calming the Nerves: How Music Therapy Reduces Anxiety and Negative Behavior

Changes in routine, an unfamiliar situation, or too much sensory input (light, smells, sounds, etc) can throw a child with autism into an anxious state, which can trigger a behavior or what has been popularly referred to by parents as "meltdowns".

Of the many techniques practised in music therapy, activities incorporating rhythm have shown to help alleviate anxiety. The predictability of the beats, rhythmic patterns, and familiarity of the songs

help regulate stress levels. Rhythmic music also has the ability to stimulate certain biological rhythms such as brain activity, breathing and heart rate, and can therefore be used as a relaxation technique.

Creating Connections through Music

Many children with autism have difficulty expressing themselves, so being in social spaces can sometimes be overwhelming.

A study published by the National Autistic Society found that children with autism showed more emotional expression and social engagement while in music therapy than in any other play session (without music). In a music therapy session there are various activities that will allow children to engage, share, and interact with one another. All of the activities revolve around collective participation and each child plays a role in creating this atmosphere.



Finding Ways to Communicate

According to several different sources, up to 25% of children with autism are non-verbal. As a result, many of these children are taught alternative methods of communication such as hand gestures, signs, facial expressions, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), amongst others.

Through music therapy, we incorporate activities to help children who are non-verbal to explore the various ways of communicating. For example, one of the songs we sing is 'Old MacDonald'. With this song, we ask each child to tell us the name of an animal and imitate the sound this animal makes. For children who are non-verbal, we have a variety of animal puppets for them to choose from. One thing we do is to hold out a few animals, and ask them to identify the animal that we mention. This allows them to associate the name of the animal and the corresponding sounds with the image of the animal.

Let's Dance

Almost all of the activities we do in the music program at SAAAC involve some form of action, whether it is clapping hands, stomping feet, jumping, stretching, acting/imitation, and of course - dancing. These actions help develop coordination, motor skills, and strength. Songs such as "Head and Shoulders", "Happy and You Know It", "Hokey Pokey" cover various forms of movement and self-awareness. We encourage parents to follow along and participate in these activities, so that they can use them at home as well. Movement makes things fun and provides additional means for interaction and communication.

The success and growth of SAAAC's music program has not only to do with the activities; a huge part of it has to do with the role that the therapists, facilitators and volunteers have in making this program special. Without their dedication, commitment, and care, the music

program would not be what it is today. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to volunteer with SAAAC and help facilitate the music therapy sessions. My appreciation for music and my connection to it has significantly intensified since this experience. Music is more than just a source of entertainment. It is what connects us to our hearts, our minds, to the Earth, to each other and the world around us - and music therapy can be used to create these connections.

By: Nadeesh Jayasinghe

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6 Ways YOU Can Help A Family Living with Autism

ONE

TWO

THREE

FOUR

FIVE

SIX

You might think autism is something that is experienced by one person, but really autism is often an experience shared by an entire family. Caring for a person with autism is a full time job that requires the full support of a household. Unsurprisingly, families who have loved ones with autism report high levels of stress, strained family relationships, and limited access to adequate public services, including financial and social supports.

Considering the overwhelming demands of caregiving for someone with autism, we thought it would be helpful to provide a list of things community members, like yourself, can do to help a person with autism and their family. Here are 6 important ways you can help:

ONE

Be aware of misconceptions, stereotypes, and your own preconceived notions.

Recognize each person has their own strengths and weaknesses - this is no different of individuals with autism. However, unlike other disorders with very specific symptomology, autism cannot be neatly packaged. Autism is a spectrum disorder and as such has a wide array of signs and symptoms. What does this mean? Do not judge, stereotype, or discriminate persons based on their abilities, disabilities, and behavior. Similar to when you initiate any relationship, get to know the individual - find out what they like and what they don't. Do not assume those with autism are cold or lack empathy, are violent, are savants or intellectually challenged or have mental health disorders.

TWO

Recognize and understand that certain behaviors, like flapping hands, spinning or "public meltdowns", does not warrant staring, snickering, or commentaries about the need to "discipline children".

Understand individuals with autism may be sensitive to sensory stimulation, like noise, light, smell, etc. Behaviours such as flapping hands, spinning or having "meltdowns" may be a coping mechanism to sensory overload. Do not assume they are doing this to seek attention or are acting out because of poor parenting. Instead provide some space, offer your assistance, and let the parent lead.

THREE

Call-out bullying and hold those responsible for their actions.

Bullying can happen anywhere - at school, work, family gatherings or public spaces. Although it is a serious issue affecting everyone, it disproportionately impacts children with developmental disorders, like those with autism. One of the most important things you can do is to "call out" acts of bullying and to hold those responsible for their actions. Bullying can be said to be the result of an intolerant culture that fails to support diversity. How do we break this cycle? Inclusion, acceptance, and tolerance of differences.

FOUR

Volunteer

Can you spare an hour or two a week? Find a grassroots organization and connect with a child or adult with autism and their family. Beyond completing your community hours for school or obtaining a reference, you will have an opportunity to develop a beautiful relationship that will undoubtedly change the way you see the world.

FIVE

Get political, social, and business leaders and organizations to advocate for issues affecting the autism community:

Find your "political voice" - what do you like doing? What are you good at? Use your skills and interests to communicate, perform, rally, or join forces with other like-minded people or organizations to advocate for change. Some things that come to mind include: musical/dance performances, writing petitions and letters to legislators, or connecting with business, social and political leaders to highlight and bring attention to issues within the autism community at large.

SIX

Recognize that autism is a stigmatized disorder, particularly in South Asian cultures, and it is everyone's responsibility to address and overcome this stigma.

Shame, disappointment, fear, and stigma can delay diagnosis and intervention. To avoid being the target of community gossip, parents may isolate themselves and their children. It is important to change attitudes about developmental disorders in general and one way to address this issue is by increasing your awareness about autism (understand facts and debunk myths). Inform your family, networks and community. Access to strong social networks is key to reducing the caregiver burden experienced by many parents.



By: Priya Nadarajah

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WHAT IS A HOME WORTH?

BY: ROHAN GEORGE

Since 2009 SAAAC has been doing some soul searching. Working out of the basements of homes and temples and community centres, the question of whether to put money raised in the community towards running programs for kids or to find a space to run programs from was always the prime question asked. The answer was always the same for the first few years of operations as we utilized generously donated spaces throughout the community—like the Canada Sri Ayyappan Temple. A permanent space was viewed as a luxury we did not need, so we operated every day based on this premise—moving materials back and forth from community spaces; scheduling therapy sessions in office spaces after hours; operating on the move like a nomadic tribe. Yet over the years as we continued to serve more and more children, we were faced with the inevitable question of whether we were providing the best services possible to our children and youth by constantly moving around. As we became more and more uncertain about this constant movement, the search for a place to lay down roots in the community began. The search for a place where toys and materials could be stored permanently; a space that would act as a refuge for children and families; an environment that would be welcoming and safe.



After much searching and with the support of the community, we found a space at 1970 Ellesmere Rd in the east end of Scarborough. Formerly a private Christian school, the space was a bit run down but filled with possibilities. Once the location was agreed upon for its accessibility, layout, and price, the volunteers and parents began to pour in everything they had to bring to life what was basically a dilapidated space. Volunteers came in shifts to paint rooms and tear out carpets; parents tiled and put in washrooms; the community showed up at our doorstep looking to lend a hand in whatever way they could. Desks and chairs and computers were donated; murals were painted; a home was built. Today, we have a space that has enabled us to serve our kids to the best of our abilities—rooms are designated for the different programs; there is ample space for the children and youth we serve to work and play comfortably on a regular basis.

Home is one of those elusive terms that no one can pin down with absolute certainty. The term brings to mind home-cooked meals, loved ones and belonging. For SAAAC one thing is undeniably clear---home is where help is never absent for too long.



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By:
Nina Patel

DANCE TODAY CHANGE TOMORROW



So, there I was - a huge crowd of people around me. The cheers were deafening. All I could see were people throwing their hands in the air and the pulsing of the dance lights. The bass shook the columns of the space we were in and people who had surrounded me watched with utter astonishment at what I would do next. So...I shut my eyes and danced like no one was watching.

This was one my many highlights from Dance-A-Thon. For those of you who don't know, Dance-A-Thon is a great big epic dance party, usually lasting seven hours. The goal of the event is to engage youth and families across the GTA to help raise funds for arts programming to benefit children with autism.

This year's Dance-A-Thon saw not one but three different DJs presiding over the evening: DJ Smoov, RLE, and DJ +More. Each DJ brought their own unique style and sound from hip hop to soca to house & techno. One of the coolest things about the night was that some of Toronto's most talented dance crews came to perform. paraDOX, UTSC Assassins, UTSG Phoenix all put together some amazing dance performances. And though their choreographed dances were unbelievable to watch, the highlights of the night came when spontaneous dance battles broke out. Large groups of people would circle around two dancers who would go back and forth, showing off their skills. Deafening cheers erupted every time a dancer pulled off an incredible move. The atmosphere was electric. I even got stuck in one of these amazing battles - and though I wasn't much of a dancer, the amazing people in attendance encouraged me. You could make a fool out of yourself and no one would care...that's the beauty of Dance-A-Thon!



2013 Dance -A- Thon

Another great aspect of the event was that it benefitted novice dancers like myself! Every hour there would be fun dance instructions. Led by members of talented dance crews, these instructions spanned various styles ranging from break dancing to ganna to hip hop. I was grateful for picking up a move or two to add to my very short (but growing) dance repertoire. I'll be ready for next year!

By the end of the night we had raised \$14,000 for arts programming and attracted 300 attendees. The majority of the funding was raised by attendees who had collected pledges from the community. And for those who collected the most pledges - well let's just say they were compensated with some amazing prizes. Winners received a trip to Florida, an Ipad, and even platinum tickets to a Drake concert.

Attending Dance-A-Thon was definitely a great experience for me. I remember leaving exhausted, but also with a great sense of accomplishment. Mostly because I just participated in my first ever dance battle! And, secondly because I knew I was a part of an event that would benefit kids who were trying to find their voice through the arts. I couldn't have imagined a better way to end my summer. Hope to see you all next year!



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Meet SAAAC's Health & Autism Professionals

It takes a village to raise a child.

By: Kingston Yogendran

In no other place does this age-old adage ring truer than in the lives of parents who have children with autism. Autism presents a variety of challenges that cannot be fully addressed by a doctor. Rather, a team of health, education, and autism professionals develop a treatment plan that takes into consideration the challenges of behaviour, communication, physical disabilities, and the external social factors that may impact development.

Meet the team of health and autism professionals that work together to help develop the lives of children and youth at SAAAC.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Specialists: Neeran Kuni & Sunitha Subramaniam

Applied behaviour analysis (ABA) is the use of principles and techniques that help individuals develop positive and functional behaviours. These techniques can be used in a variety of 'everyday' situations (dinnertime, doctor's appointment, barbershop, etc.). ABA can help develop basic skills like looking, listening and imitating, as well as complex skills such as reading, conversing and understanding another person's perspective.

Occupational Therapy: Shauna Eisen

Occupational therapy helps to remove barriers that prevent individuals from participating in daily life as a result of illness or disability and/or obstacles in the social, institutional and/or physical environment.

Occupational therapists help people participate in daily life including taking care of oneself (e.g., dressing, bathing), contributing to society (e.g., paid and unpaid work, school) and enjoying life (e.g., hobbies, sports).

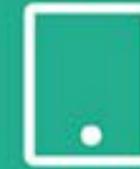
Speech-Language Therapy:
Vithangi Raman and Nina Jobanputra

Speech Therapists are healthcare professionals involved in assisting and promoting effective communication skills. The Speech Therapists involved with SAAAC pursue the following avenues to help children communicate clearly and effectively:

- Non-verbal communication: this includes communication through sign language, pictures, and symbols
- Develop articulation, pronunciation, and vocabulary building
- Build conversation skills specifically working on back-and-forth exchanges

Music Therapy: Michelle Eisen

Music is an avenue to facilitate communication among individuals with autism. Music has the unique quality of being a nonverbal platform that is both creative and emotionally appealing. Such qualities can be used as viable teaching instruments to facilitate social interaction, self-awareness, and self-expression - all crucial to the process of communication.



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Budget Breakdown

TOTAL EXPENSES



APRIL 2013 - MARCH 2014

- Programs 78%
- Fundraising 11%
- Other 11%

PROGRAM COST



APRIL 2013 - MARCH 2014

- Behaviour, Speech, Occupational and Arts Therapies
120 children served
- Case Management
50 families served

TOTAL INCOME



APRIL 2013 - MARCH 2014

- Community Fundraising \$250,000 (88%)
- Grants \$35,000 (12%)
- Total \$285,000
- Brought forward from 2012-2013 \$159,480
- Total Income \$444,480
- Shortfall 2013-2014 \$96,000

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT MARCH 31

2013

ASSETS

Current Assets	269,536
Capital Assets	13,107
	\$282,643

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities	17,282
Balance	265,361
	\$282,643

REVENUES

\$388,166

EXPENDITURES

Salaries (Therapies, Case Management)	139,970
Event expenses (Venue, Printing, etc.)	65,165
Rent & Utilities	20,981
Miscellaneous	5,933
Amortization	3,010
Interest and Bank Charges	774

EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES	159,481
BALANCE, BEGINNING OF YEAR	105,880

BALANCE, END OF YEAR

\$265,361

At SAAAC we sincerely believe in being good stewards with your hard earned money. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions that we have tried to address without boring readers too much. In our ongoing efforts to maintain accountability and transparency our annual reports are made available every fiscal year on our website (www.saaac.org) and the breakdown of our costs and revenues can be viewed by searching the Canadian Revenue Agency Charities Listing site. For any donors that still have concerns or have any questions please feel free to contact us at info@saaac.org

FAQ

Why don't you get government funding?

We're working on it. Government funds, at all levels of government, are not in abundance and we are constantly making efforts to secure long-term funding through whatever avenues are available. However, this is not as easy as we would like and we are continuing throughout this year in hopes of reporting some successes next year..

Can program costs be reduced?

At SAAAC we try to be as cost effective as possible through our wide use of volunteers. However, experts in their respective fields are needed to provide evidence based programming, training for volunteers and monitoring of programs to ensure quality. Because of this it is not feasible to reduce costs without reducing quality.

Why continue fundraising?

We need more comprehensive support to meet the ongoing demand for services. These include increased therapy hours, therapists and other resources to serve the ever increasing number of waitlisted families. We also need to hire additional qualified therapists to provide the best possible care to children with autism. These supports need considerable resources, and therefore currently, requires us to continuously fundraise to meet our goals.



THANK YOU

As you know, SAAAC has undergone incredible growth recently. Only six short years ago, we were serving about 5 children with autism. In 2014, we reached over 120 families through our year-round programs. We have been successful in reaching and supporting more families, in more ways, because of the commitment and dedication of our volunteers, community members, and sponsors.

We cannot thank our SAAAC 'community', listed below, enough for your contribution to SAAAC's achievements in 2013-2014. You make our work possible.

Thank You to the following Individuals and Organizations

Our Staff, Our Volunteers, Our Parents

Dr. Santhakumar – graciously provided space to have workshops in Mississauga

Mississauga Christian Family Worship Centre for providing space to run the group play sessions

Emil Alphonsus from Alphonsus & Associates for providing their expertise in financial services

All the great artists and creative agencies who helped raise awareness about autism and SAAAC around the world

DILANI BALA OF DILANI BALA PHOTOGRAPHY
KURU SELVARAJAH OF CLIFFSIDE PRODUCTIONS
ALLAN JOEY RAJADURAI
NINETY9THIRTY CREATIVE CONSULTING
PEARL MEDIA LIVE

ANKIT DESIGNS
VIPOOSITHA GNANENTHRA
OF OVYIAN PHOTOGRAPHY
CANADIAN TAMIL RADIO

Canadian Multicultural Radio (CMR) for their continued support in raising autism awareness since SAAAC's inception

Saran Siva for raising nearly \$3,000 to initiate a Piano Music Program

To Ragavan Paranchothy for being a tireless SAAAC supporter and for helping organize and emcee our annual Bridges: A Night of Hope, Community, and Innovation Dinner

Our Fund Raising Committee and Finance Committee

Our partners: Kenley Kreations, Luxury Events, RLE, Scarborough Convention Centre,

Canada Sri Ayyappan Hindu Temple for being our first home. We will never forget your generosity and accommodating spirit.

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