

# South Asian Autism Awareness Centre ANNUAL REPORT 2012





## ABOUT US

SAAAC is a grassroots initiative that takes a culturally sensitive approach in supporting individuals and families living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Our organization stresses a culturally sensitive approach, taking into consideration the barriers of language and cultural stigmas associated with autism and mental health related issues within the South Asian community.

Currently, we serve over 100 families in various capacities, offering services such as ABA therapy, speech therapy, music and creative arts programs, and social service support – all free of charge. Our programs and services by generous community members and business through private donations

By creating an environment of collaboration between autism experts, medical professionals, parents, volunteers, and community members SAAAC has allowed for greater autism engagement in our community, has increased access to vital interventions, has kept costs down, and has



created a supportive, open, and educational environment for parents and caregivers.

## MISSION

SAAAC was created with the intention of inspiring families impacted by ASD with a special focus on the cultural elements in the South Asian community that pose particular challenges. Our organization looks to create positive change in the lives of our clients through:

- Supporting intellectual, social and physical development of our participants raising their self-esteem and confidence
- Creating a supportive, open, and educational environment for parents and caregivers
- Raising awareness of the complexities of ASD in the larger South Asian Community

## VISION STATEMENT

SAAAC also looks to eliminate the culture of enclosure that pervades the South Asian community when it comes to issues regarding ASD and disability in general. We want to be instrumental in the development of a vibrant, open, and inclusive community that is composed of families, caregivers, and community members who are well equipped to handle the challenges presented by ASD.

# Programs & Services

## Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

ABA is the most common evidence-based treatment method for autism. It actively engages children who have communication, socialization, learning and behavioural challenges.

## Speech Therapy

Children diagnosed with the autism have an array of communication difficulties. Speech therapy involves assisting and promoting effective communication skills.

## Arts Program

Music, dance, and visual arts can be used as viable teaching instruments to facilitate social interaction, self-expression, communication, and self-development.

## Social Service Support

We work with families to navigate the developmental health system by providing necessary information on treatment and funding options. Our centre also encourages an environment of understanding and support amongst families through educational workshops and support groups.

## Community Outreach

SAAAC looks to eradicate the culture of silence, stigma, and shame that pervades families living with autism in all communities. Through effective outreach, we hope to create communities that are respectful, open and diverse.





## Message From Executive Director

What an incredible year it has been for SAAAC. Early in 2012 we became a registered charitable organization; by mid-year we were serving over 100 families in various capacities; and as 2012 came to a close we finally found a permanent space to house our programs and services. The changes and growth presented in 2012 have kept everyone at SAAAC in a constant state of motion, perpetually working to meet opportunities and challenges that presented themselves daily.

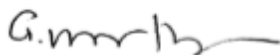
All these achievements would not have been possible without an unbelievable collection of individuals, community organizations, and business leaders. I really want to underscore the fact that SAAAC is not a story of a few, but rather a product of the talents, passions, and love of many. From dedicated young people to generous businesses and organizations, the reason SAAAC has been able to come so far is because we have been the benefactors of the best of our community. It is through such great collective efforts that we have remained true to our mission of supporting the intellectual, social and physical development of children and youth with ASD while also raising awareness of the disorder in the larger South Asian Community.

As we begin a new year, there are exciting initiatives to begin and challenges to tackle. Starting early in 2013, SAAAC will look to begin its day program for children, youth, and adults with autism. In addition, we are looking to address the challenges posed by adolescents transitioning into adulthood. How are our services going to address this eventuality? Well, we hope to put a lot of effort into our Training to Employ Adolescent Minds (TEAM) project, which looks to encourage young adults to develop practical, workplace skills and eventually give them opportunities to slowly become independent, self-reliant adults.

As I look into 2013, I am extremely hopeful. Given our new space, a continually growing volunteer base, a dedicated staff, and the support of a remarkable community, I believe SAAAC will continue to help children, youth, and families living with autism. There is a lot to celebrate after this year – the strength of families, the hard work of children and youth with autism, the dedication and passion of volunteers, the generosity of a community. All of this was possible because of a generous and engaged community. Thank you very much for your support and let us continue on this great journey for years to come.

Sincerely,

Geetha Moorthy



Executive Director

# RADIANT NIGHT 2012



Over 1200 attendees

March 3rd marked a watershed moment for SAAAC as we held our annual Radiant Night Gala. The newly constructed Scarborough Convention Centre accommodated the night's festivities, which attracted over 1200 guests. The purpose of the evening was to raise awareness surrounding Autism in the South Asian community along with raising funds to support SAAAC's therapies and social service programs.

Geetha Moorthy, our founder and Executive Director, was overjoyed at the success of the evening, "Nights like these are important because they illustrate the support and engagement of the community, including countless volunteers and committee members who give their time. Their contribution goes a long way to help the families and the great children we serve. With support like this we can help children with Autism realize their gifts. Every child is gifted. They just unwrap their packages at different times."

The event would not have been possible without the contribution of key business and community leaders which included the Hon. Rathika Sitsabeisan (MP, Scarborough Rouge River), Minister Brad Duguid (MPP, Scarborough Centre), Bas Billksson (MPP, Scarborough-Rouge River), Mayor Frank Scarpetti (Town of Markham), Councillor Logan Kanapathi (Ward 7, Town of Markham) amongst others. Individuals and organizations such as Scotiabank, Sorkkam, IWI Consulting Group, All Saints University, Vince Sinnadurai from CIBC, Cashpoint, VMS Travels & Tours and Dr. Shivajan Sivapalan were instrumental in making Radiant Night a possibility.

The goal of Radiant Night was to bring together an entire community to create change and celebrate hope for those families and individuals impacted by Autism. Ultimately, the success of the event will go a long way to help sustain, support, and develop the efforts of SAAAC in 2012.



Recognizing the best of our youth



Great Performances

# STYLE WITH A CAUSE



## SAAAC JEWELLERY

SAAAC's volunteers have been central to the development of many great initiatives. Early in 2012, Keerthana Singarajah, a longstanding volunteer, led an arts and crafts session with all of our kids that focused on jewelry creation. Initially, the project was to last two weeks, but it began getting rave reviews from families, staff, and volunteers. Some even wanted to buy the jewellery, and suddenly SAAAC Jewellery was born.

Customized by the children, youth, and volunteers, SAAAC jewellery has become an exciting venture that encourages creativity and provides avenues of expression for all those involved.



## YOU AUTA KNOW T-SHIRTS

Another dedicated volunteer, Thushanth Sivaanathan, who was also one of the founders of WOW Clothing, thought a T-shirt campaign would be a creative way to raise awareness. "We wanted to create a brand of T-shirts that were not only stylish and fun, but also made people do something" says Thushanth. "Our shirts say 'You Auta Know', which is an invitation for everyone to learn about autism and SAAAC."

Both our SAAAC jewellery line and T-shirts were incredibly successful throughout the year, garnering great attention from the community. They were also vital in raising raising money to help develop SAAAC services. These two successful ventures truly underscore the creativity and ingenuity that has long been a staple amongst SAAAC volunteers.





# 2012 BHAR-A-THON

DANCE TODAY. CHANGE TOMORROW

We wanted to try something new this year for our summer dance event, Bharathon. Last year, Bharathon was strictly a dance event, calling on the community to raise pledges and come out to dance for an extended period of time. This year, we wanted to incorporate a lot of activities for the event, making it a great, family friendly summer event.

We launched our SAAAC jewellery at this year's Bharathon, along with having a host of games and activities: face painting, henna designs, a basketball shootout, table tennis tournament and foosball!



Feeling the music

But, dancing wasn't forgotten! A staple of Bharathon has become the fun dance instructions that take place every hour. Led by members of talented dance crews, these dance instructions taught nearly 350 attendees some great new moves. As the event concluded, \$10,000 was raised for our SMART Arts Program.

Bharathon has always been about creating hope for families and individuals impacted by ASD. It's a rare event that brings together various individuals and communities to dance, enjoy great company while helping create a positive change in the lives of many.



foosball tournament



DJ providing the tunes



Basketball shootout



# Home Sweet Home

For the past four years SAAAC has operated out of temporary spaces. We began offering afterschool programs in From the basements of homes to neighborhood parks to offices after hours and community centre meeting rooms. There was no fixed place to lay down roots; no permanent home to give a sense of stability. Everyone worked with what they had, and out of such limitations grew a great deal of character and ingenuity.

For the past 2 years, the Canada Sri Ayyappan Temple was kind enough to provide their large basement hall space every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Yet a more permanent home was needed to provide consistent care, and so began a number of initiatives this year to find SAAAC a home. Countless community organizations, individuals, and business were generous enough to design fundraising events with the most notable being the Canadian Tamil Medical Association, who raised \$40,000 for SAAAC. These gestures of incredible kindness paved the way to SAAAC getting a space in December of 2012.

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Getting our very own centre allows SAAAC to concentrate more energy on developing programs and services that will better serve the families of our centre. We hope our new space will be a dynamic meeting ground for families impacted by autism, and through the work we do here we hope to continue to transform the lives of many.

It's such a beautiful feeling finding a home because it symbolizes more than an investment of land. It symbolized hard work, strength, passion, care, affection and most of all the coming together of our generous community to build a beautiful home. Not just any home, but a home filled with dreams and miracles; not just one person's home but a community's.



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South Asian Autism Awareness Centre  
Statement of Financial Position

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As at March 31	2012	2011
<b>Assets</b>		
Current Assets		
Cash	\$ 92,586	\$ 64,046
Short Term Investment	5,063	-
Accounts Receivable	27,321	3,650
Prepaid Expenses	1,650	-
	<b>126,620</b>	67,696
CAPITAL ASSETS (note 3)	<b>4,671</b>	-
	<b>\$ 131, 291</b>	\$ 67,696
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 10,926	\$ 1,984
Unearned revenue (note 4)	10,614	-
Harmonized sales tax payable	3,871	-
	<b>25,411</b>	1,984
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>105,880</b>	65,712
	<b>131,291</b>	67,696

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## South Asian Autism Awareness Centre

### Statement of Financial Position

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As at March 31	2012	2011
Revenues		
Fundraising	\$ 174,809	\$ 87,301
Contributions and other	12,868	7,925
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	187,677	95,226
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Expenditures		
Therapy	\$ 56,069	\$ 14,869
Event Expenses	41,792	22,824
Consulting Fees	13,800	5,000
Salaries and Related Benefits	11,375	-
Printing	7,217	6,679
Contract Service	6,417	-
Office	4,153	3,891
Advertising and promotion	3,109	-
Raffle Tickets	1,924	1,070
Interest and bank charges	829	710
Amortization	824	-
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	147,509	55,043
Excess of Revenue over Expenditures	40,168	40,183
Balance, Beginning of Year	65,712	25,529
Balance, End of Year	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>
	\$ 105,880	\$ 65,712



## South Asian Autism Awareness Centre

### Statement of Financial Position

As at March 31	2012	2011
<b>Operating Activities</b>		
Excess of revenues over expenditures	\$ 40,168	\$ 40,183
Adjustment for Amortization	824	-
	<b>40,992</b>	40,183
<b>Change in non-cash working capital items</b>		
Increase in short term investment	(5,063)	-
Increase in accounts receivable	(23,671)	(3,000)
Increase in prepaid expenses	(1,650)	-
Increase in accounts payable and accrued liabilities	8,942	1,560
Increase in unearned revenue	10,614	-
Increase in Harmonized sales tax payable	3,871	-
	<b>34,035</b>	38,743
<b>INVESTING ACTIVITY</b>		
Purchase of Capital Assets	(5,495)	-
<b>INCREASE IN CASH</b>	<b>28,540</b>	38,743
<b>CASH, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>64,046</b>	25,303
<b>CASH; END OF YEAR</b>	<b>92,586</b>	64,046