



Andhra VI students awarded scholarships

Help the Blind Foundation, Chennai has provided scholarships worth Rs. 6.4 Lakhs, to 64 visually challenged students from Andhra Loyola College as well as colleges in Vijayawada and Guntur. The scholarships were processed through Higher Education for the Persons with Special Needs (HEPSN) wing of ALC. Each one of the students was awarded Rs 10000 for this academic year.



Dr ILLA RAVI, Principal, SRR and CVR Govt Degree College, Vijayawada was the chief guest at a function held to distribute the scholarships. Addressing the gathering, he said that vision is not in one's sight. It is how one makes use of his abilities to see the future and equip himself. He advised the students to make use of the scholarship as well as the training facilities

provided by the college to enhance their skills and secure a job for themselves.



Principal Rev.Fr. G.A.P. Kishore SJ, presided over the programme. Correspondent Dr Sahaya Raj, Vice Principal Fr Rayappa, Treasurer Fr Melchior, Coordinator of HEPSN Dr G Sahaya Baskaran and volunteers of HEPSN attended this function. Visually challenged students thanked the foundation for their crucial financial support to enable their studies.



Vedant Mundada, HTBF beneficiary, is awarded gold medal, soon to be CA

LokmatTimes

SPPU to honour Vedant Mundada with gold medal

LOKMAT NEWS NETWORK
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Vedant Umesh Mundada, a student of KTHM College will be honoured with the 'President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma Gold Medal' awarded by Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU). The university has announced various gold medals for the academic year 2020-21, in which Vedant has been selected for one of the gold medals.

Even after losing his vision at the age of one and a half years, Vedant has never given up and had



always stepped a foot ahead towards success. During his time as a student of first year M Com,

Vedant attracted the attention of Savitribai Phule Pune University through his academics, participation in various competitions and social work.

The University selected him for 'President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma Gold Medal' and he will be honoured with the medal at the university's graduation ceremony. Meanwhile, it is a matter of pride for KTHM college on Vedant's achievement and principal Dr. V. G. Gaiwad has expressed confidence that other students with disabilities will also get inspiration from Vedant.

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Vedant Mundada from Nashik - HTBF beneficiary from Nashik pursuing CA, is winner of Shankar Dayal Sharma medal

Vedant Umesh Mundada is bright student of KTHM College of Nashik. He is a recipient of HTBF sponsorship since his undergraduate studies. He also was given first laptop through the special efforts of Mr. J. V. Ramani four years back. Now he is engaged in climbing the ladder of Chartered Accountancy and pursuing his articleship.

It is indeed a great privilege that he has been selected for the award of "President of India, Shankar Dayal Sharma Gold Medal" which is the highest award given by Savitribai Phule Pune University. This prestigious award /Medal is bestowed on those who have outstanding cultural, educational and social achievements.

Vedant acknowledges and believes that the helping hand extended by our foundation has been instrumental in the entire journey of his education.

Vedant has been recently felicitated by the Governor

of Maharashtra during his visit to Nashik in a function arranged by National Association for the Blind.

My colourful dreams

"Hello to one and all! I'm Santosh Kumar, currently pursuing my studies at Ramakrishna College, Coimbatore. I think of myself as a dreamer. As Dr. Abdul Kalam's quote goes, "A dream is not that which you see while sleeping, it is something that does not let you sleep."

There are so many sights big and small that I long to see: Letters in the board from the last bench, flying planes in the sky, colourful rainbows, birds in the sky, finding someone amidst a huge crowd, finding my exam number on the notice board, another person's eyes, feathers of a bird, lost coins in the sand, small insects crawling, tiny fishes in the pond, oysters on the seashore and so much more. My dreams and longings are always so full of color.

I was in the 1st standard when I started facing difficulties reading. I was even struggling to copy from the boy sitting next to me, but my visual problems existed right from birth. Fortunately, I had great teachers who understood my difficulties and helped me as much as they could. I managed until the 8th grade, but then I started having trouble understanding things, especially in the Math class. As we know, Math is based on step-by-step learning, this made it difficult for me to cope. Slowly I figured a method. I started listening and remembering all the steps while my teacher was doing it on the board. Then I worked the whole thing in my mind. With some effort from my side, I was able to pass with good marks.

Since my school days, English has been one of my favorite subjects. My English teachers have left a deep impact on me. I had a curious bent of mind and wanted to learn more, so I chose literature as my subject of

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study.

In the future, I want to become an English professor, because I have a strong love for teaching, and there is no better way to transform the youth in our country!

There are two incidents that I will always hold very close to my heart. This first happened while traveling in a crowded bus. I was standing on the steps and had a file with me which contained all my original certificates. I handed it to a person sitting inside but I was unable to see his face since my vision is blurry. Once I reached my destination and got down, I waited for the person who had my file because it was difficult for me to spot. Most of the passengers came out of the bus but I couldn't spot the person who had my file. Then I got in and shouted asking if anyone had a blue file but no one responded. I was shaking with fear because the file had all my important documents. I didn't know what to do. At that time, a friend who accompanied me also started searching. He called two other friends and my dad too arrived. They took the bike and followed the bus. They started gathering information on the passengers sitting on those seats but everything was in vain and even the conductor had no clue. We started our bike to return home and suddenly one person stopped us to ask where we were going. We told him of our grief. Then he took out a file and asked us to return the file to whoever it belonged to. There were no words to express my happiness.

This next incident is about my first Power Point (ppt) presentation. It was a competition and my PPT got selected as one of the best. I was supposed to explain it before many students and the concerned staff. But what I didn't realize is that, while presenting, the screen is on the top and that makes it quite uncomfortable even to get a blurred glimpse of the slide, but it was not corresponding with the slides displayed on the screen. The gathering was huge

around 500 people were present. That time I asked for help from the person who was operating the slides. With his help, I managed to put up my thoughts and I secured 4th position in the competition. At that time, I felt a little disheartened but I knew that failure is the stepping stone for success and there will be many more presentations coming my way.

Apart from my curriculum, one of the best things to have happened in my life is being a student in Help the Blind Foundation. I would like to express my genuine gratitude to Shivaji Rao Sir, Natarajan Sir, and Kishen Sir for their whole-hearted support and compassion. It is after coming here that I have started exploring my true potential. I thoroughly enjoy learning communication and computer skills from my dedicated trainers- Ambika mam, Jagan Sir, and Geetha mam. They have groomed and equipped me with a positive mindset to work hard and believe in myself. I have even started a blog of my own! There are still so many things for me to learn and so much growing to do. HTBF has changed my life for the better, and I will always be grateful for everything this organization has given me. I would like to end with two quotes I firmly believe in-"Eyes are useless when your mind is blind" and "Even without sight there is still vision". My vision is to leave a strong impact on the generations to come, and I will take every day as an opportunity to take another baby step towards this dream of mine. You can view my chat video here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C6PI4ap54ILPYg9sJi-ESa8WzdrpoWbh/view?usp=drivesdk>

Meet Sandeep, HTBF Beneficiary, from Haryana

My name is Sandeep Kumar. I was born on 19/01/1998. I am a resident of village Raliawas, district Rewari Haryana. My father is a farmer. My mother is a housewife. I got my early education at MD Public High School. Slowly my eyesight started to go away. I

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studied Braille script from 4/06/2007 to 15/08/2007 at AICB in Rohini, Delhi. When I was in class five. From July 2008 to 2015, I studied at JPM Secondary Senior School from class VI to XII. From 2015 to 2018, I graduated in history.



Then I started preparing for the banking sector. I used to take the help of YouTube for my preparations, where I listened to various channels like Adda247 and Study IQ Education. I did not take any special coaching class. My selection was held on 31/10/2019 for the post of Junior Associate in SBI. I joined on 13/01/2020. On 20/05/2020, I was selected as Probationary Officer in Allahabad Bank, which is now merged with Indian Bank. I joined Indian Bank on 05/10/2020.

Help the Blind Foundation helped financially while I was pursuing my undergraduate education. Help the Blind Foundation encourages various visually impaired students like me to move forward by helping.

Chiranthana helps the visually impaired explore their all-round personality

In 2020 we started a series of online training programs with our EMET students and also EMET trainers, using a Bangalore based NGO called Art Courtyard, a Chiranthana initiative. Chiranthana is an organization that runs training for differently abled students helping them to gain confidence through various art forms. We wanted to offer a different type of training from what the students usually experience in their college classrooms and felt Chiranthana's approach through acting and drama could help them learn in a different way.

For the trainers the course ran for a period of 8 months covering topics such as working on confidence, voice modulation, communication skills, leadership skills, building their own brand and learning how to be a more effective trainer. For the students, we held batches of 3-month courses covering topics such as confidence-building and basic English-speaking skills, interpersonal communication skills and job readiness.

Chiranthana's classes were conducted through Google meet, twice weekly for a duration of 1 and a half hours each session. In total we will run 7 batches with about 150 students attending the program. We are also currently running a 1-month pod-cast class for a selected group of 15 students, and plan to start a 3-month drama program, from March to May, for another 20 students who showed more promise in acting.

Teaching was done through story-telling, debates, interactive discussions and games. A lot of emphasis was placed on getting every student to speak during the classes. Due to COVID most of the students were at home and attending their college classes online through their phones.

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During the training course, students were asked to prepare videos of themselves either doing a Self-introduction or talk about a favorite person/interesting situation. Initially we had also planned for them to do a group play but because of difficulties with getting video recordings (students faced difficulty in getting a sighted person to help them record themselves), we switched to doing audio plays, which were scripted by the students themselves.

Currently we are in the process of getting feedback from the students about how effective they felt this type of training was. But in general, the training can be seen as having some success especially in giving the students an opportunity to meet and interact with other visually-impaired students from across India, practice communicating in English and having an opportunity to share their ideas and experiences.



HTBF beneficiary from Indore talking about her aspirations through Chiranthana's training

Moving story from Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

“Success will be so beautiful but not the success in making”. My name is Gokila Priya and I am from Tirupur, the city of textiles. Currently I am pursuing my master's degree at Government Arts college, at Coimbatore. Though my parents are agriculturists and they are illiterate, they ensured that I am well-read and educated. “One of the greatest titles in the world is parents, and one of the biggest blessings in the world is

to have your parents beside you in every step and milestone of your life.

I am a person with low vision. I have had this problem since the fifth grade. I could manage to write all the exams till my tenth grade, however during the 11th grade my vision started to deteriorate. It was quite a challenge for me. After that I started taking help from my friends for writing and class notes. I felt quite hopeless and dejected wondering how to write exams and face challenges. I pursued biology during my pre degree, but right before my final exams, one of my teachers ensured that I shifted to arts, although I was confused. Finally I made up my mind and shifted to arts curriculum.

Although I knew my abilities were limited, I had to prove myself to the professors and to everybody who whispered behind my back when I walked through the corridors, I had to come first and I was ready to put my heart and soul into my goal. I studied day and night, until at last my hard work bore fruit. I had secured 196/200 during my first mid-term examinations. From then on, the journey was smooth. My teachers and friends took time from their busy schedules to help me out. Results were soon out and I had come out with flying colours. I managed to secure first rank in the state.

I am very interested to learn how to use computers and all about them. However, there were no opportunities to learn it. After I spoke to Meenakshimam (HTBF volunteer at Coimbatore), she showed me a way to learn. That's when I came to know about this opportunity HTBF is whole heartedly providing. Now a technically illiterate person such as myself can operate on MS office, send mails, work on Excel sheets, send feedback forms. I learnt a lot of other things as well from the EMET training. I hope I will get better job opportunities through this.

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My whole-hearted gratitude to our trustee members, kind-hearted and dedicated trainers and also everyone involved to make us able and efficient. In each day, there are 1,440 minutes, which means we have 1,440 opportunities daily to make a positive impact and to make a difference in somebody else's life."

Visually-impaired student now has his heart set on MS (Computer Engineering)

Meet Soheb Ahmed from Andhra Pradesh. Soheb Ahmed was born with visual impairment. His story is an inspiration to every visually impaired person.

Soheb was initially admitted to a regular school, but the school found it difficult to meet his special needs. That's when Haseena Begum, his doting mother, identified the Devnar School of Blind as an ideal place for her son to learn. Soheb was a bright student, and quite inquisitive.

Once, in his middle school, his teacher took the class to a science fair. Soheb got hooked to science. "It's Maths, Physics and Chemistry for me", he decided.



Soheb Ahmed, HTBF beneficiary from Andhra Pradesh, with his mother, Haseena Begum.

Given that these subjects require practical work in laboratories, he was initially refused admission into the MPC (Maths, Physics, Chemistry) stream by the Intermediate Board. But Soheb and his mother were not willing to give up. With quiet perseverance over several months, they finally got the approval for him to get admitted into MPC. From then, there was no looking back.

How did he cope with the lab requirements? "I had very good teachers, who helped me understand lab procedures, and I was able to clear without a hitch", he says.

Next came the hurdle of college admissions. He went through YouTube tutorials by Byju's and other Edtech companies to help him prepare for the JEE. He was selected at IIIT, Kurnool, where he is currently pursuing graduation. "I am deeply thankful to Sivaji sir of HTBF for coming to my help", says Soheb.



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Now he has set his sights on clearing the GRE and going abroad for higher studies. He has the support of his mother. But financing higher studies is a problem. “I have a second child who is pursuing his 12th grade. I have to find the right balance between my two kids. It’s going to be an uphill task,” she says.

Haseena Begum’s story is her son’s inspiration. “My mother was married at a very young age, but she managed to study and write examinations through her two pregnancies. I admire my mother’s grit and determination. She is today in charge of the Braille printing at Devnar School for the Blind. She is my sole inspiration!” says Soheb.

So what does he want to do long-term? “My desire is to work and earn money, and help the needy in my community. That is my mission in life”, says this smart young lad.

Pune VI students given laptops

Pune Blind Men’s Association, HTBF and Rotary club distributed 23 laptops to select visually impaired students, of which 6 were for our HTBF beneficiaries from Modern college Shivajinagar and 4 from SP college Pune. Mr. Satavlekar and Mr. Sanjay Kulkarni, HTBF Volunteers in Pune attended the programme at the PBMA complex. Mr Shivaji Rao and Mr Nataraj, HTBF trustees, participated in the program online.



All in the family

Three visually-impaired sisters, Saritha Chourey, Jyothi Chourey and Pooja Chourey, have done their family proud by winning a bronze medal each in the 9th National Blind Para Judo Championship held at Lucknow from 18th to 21st March. Their win has brought glory to their state and Panjra Kalon, their village. Saritha Chourey had already won the bronze medal in the Commonwealth Games held in England in 2019. Pooja, who won the bronze in the 52kg senior category, dreams of winning the gold medal and is working towards it. All three sisters study at Indore, and are HTBF beneficiaries.



तीन बहनों ने ब्लाईंड पैरा जूडो चैम्पियनशिप में जीते कांस्य पदक

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MPIONSHIPS
A. S. Singh

आप का मत

कोरोना का संक्रमण फिर बढ़ रहा है, ऐसे में क्या कदम उठाये जाने चाहिए...

- बाहरों में फिर से लोकडाउन लगाना चाहिए
- बिलों की सीमा पर सख्ती करके बाहरी लोगों के प्रवेश पर रोक लगाना चाहिए
- लोगों को मास्क पहनने के लिए सख्ती करना चाहिए
- अमजन से सुझाव लेकर ही कोई भी कदम उठाए

Vote

View Results

इंदारसी। एक छोटे से गांव से निकली तीन बहनें, अपनी प्रतिभा के दम पर खेल में न सिर्फ अपने गांव का, बल्कि संभागबाद जिला, मप्र और देश का नाम भी रोशन कर रही हैं। हाल ही में लगभग 9 वीं नेशनल ब्लाईंड पैरा जूडो चैम्पियनशिप (9th National Blind Para Judo Championship) में कांस्य मेडल जीत चुकी हैं। इस प्रतियोगिता का आयोजन 18 से 21 मार्च को किया था। ग्राम पांजरकाली की तीन बहनें सारिता चौर ने 48 किलो रॉनिंगर वर्ग में कांस्य, ज्योति चौर ने भी 48 किलो रॉनिंगर वर्ग में कांस्य और पूजा चौर ने 52 किलो वर्ग रॉनिंगर में कांस्य मेडल जीतकर अपने गांव और प्रदेश का नाम रोशन किया है। सारिता ने बताया कि वे चार नेशनल और एक इंदरनेशनल में मेडल जीत चुकी हैं। 2019 में उन्होंने इंग्लैंड में हुए कॉमनवेल्थ गैम्स में इस खेल में कांस्य मेडल जीता था। पांजरकाली में कभी और यहाँ प्राथमिक शिक्ष के बाद वे इंदर पढ़ने गये। देवस से बोर्ड परीक्षा उत्तीर्ण करने के बाद अब रीजुएशन (बीए फाइनेल इंथर) इंदर में चल रहा है। पूजा इंदर भी आगे मेडल जीतने के लिए मेहनत कर रही है। उनके भरोसा है कि वे जल्द ही अपने देश के लिए एक मेडल लाएंगी।

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Amazon has been helping charities through donations every time a purchase is made by its customers. Customers can opt in for the donation by choosing their favourite charities. We are glad to announce that



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Help the Blind Foundation America is now registered with Smile.Amazon.com.

We appeal to all our well-wishers and volunteers to spread the word.

Can you please ask your friends and relatives, especially youngsters, to select HELP THE BLIND FOUNDATION AMERICA as their preferred charity at smile.amazon.com? That will help us generate some regular donations from Amazon. You will be helping us - Amazon will make a donation to HTBF America on your every purchase without any cost to you.

It's so simple and easy. All one needs to do is to click HELP THE BLIND FOUNDATION, AMERICA as their favourite charity from the drop-down menu. Amazon then contributes 0.5% of every purchase the person makes through Amazon. This donation is borne by Amazon without any increased price to the purchaser.

Please remember to choose HTBF, America as your favourite charity, a one-time effort only! And please don't forget to spread this message to all your contacts and friends.

“Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.”

In these difficult times, our beneficiaries are showing extraordinary concern for each other. Sudhir, our volunteer in North India, sent us this heartening note:

“Just want to bring to your attention the commendable efforts of few students from Delhi, in helping other students applying online for HTBF scholarship:

(1) Rajesh, VI student who graduated from Guru Nanak college and has got admission this year in PG in Hansraj college has helped around 15 VI students from different colleges (Hansraj, PGDAV, Guru Nanak). He is continuing as a beneficiary of HTBF

(2) Shrinkla, who is sighted student from Lakshmi Bai college 2nd year, also helped few VI students in applying. I am sure many more such students must have lent a helping hand in various centers.

(3) Arjun Prajapat of Jai Narain Vyas college, Jodhpur is another student who has helped others.

Rajesh is the first student who started making enquiries with me, when I asked that if he would be able to guide others, I shared his contact number with other students who sought my guidance. Similarly, three other students who were active throughout as well, deserve appreciation from all of us - Poonam Singla - 2 nd year Miranda House college, Shiv Kumar - 3rd year Hindu College, Arlita Saha – LSR.”

HTBF is sending out appreciation letters to all of them.

Appeal

With the COVID situation, online learning has become the norm for all visually-impaired students. However, many of them do not have access to laptops or smartphones, which are essential for full and active participation in the online learning sessions.

We earnestly appeal to all our supporters to donate laptops and smartphones to enable their online learning. Your donation would throw a lifeline to needy students. Please come forward to donate your old laptops/ smartphones.

Please contact sivaji@helptheblind.in for more details. Or contact us at info@helptheblind.in or call us at +91 90033 30197

Comments, Questions?

Please write to sivaji@helptheblind.in with “newsletter feedback” in the subject line.

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