



# THE VMS NEWSLETTER

“

Thank you for taking the time to read this first ever newsletter of the Victoria Memorial School for the Blind (VMSB), established in 1902, a boarding school for boys, dedicated to helping, educating, empowering and enabling blind or visually impaired young men on their way to overcoming the challenges of being blind. We endeavour to help our students, most of them from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to reach their full potential, unbound by their visual impairment into a brighter world and future! Education is imparted free of cost along with all other needs, with help from the philanthropic community.

”

## History

Upon the death of Queen Victoria, Empress of India, on 22nd January 1901, prominent citizens of 'Bombay', spearheaded by the then Sheriff and the then Governor of 'Bombay' decided to commemorate her death by collecting funds and utilising them for charitable causes. An amount of Rs. 2,53,800 thus collected and known as "The Victoria Memorial Fund" came into being. At a meeting of donors held in the hall of the 'Bombay Municipal Corporation' on Friday, 14th February 1902, it was resolved that the fund would be used for establishing a school for the blind to be run by a Committee of Management, "to ameliorate the condition of the blind and make them useful citizens." **This was to be the first institution of its kind in the country** and a forerunner of many

modern activities for the blind. **It was decided that the school would not have any classes in religion but special attention would be given to good moral behaviour and character. We endeavour to inculcate these principles to this day.** The Victoria Memorial School for the Blind thus came into being. Since then, the School annually celebrates 14th February as Founders Day.





On 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1903. It was decided by a Resolution that a Trust be formed in whose hands the school funds be vested. The first Trustees who were of impeccable credentials were the likes of Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy, Baronet, Sir Bhalchandra Krishna Bhatavadekar, Knight, and others. Several other prominent citizens were later Trustees such as J. B. Petit, P.R. Cadell and Dinsha



Eduljee. J. B. Petit also served as Honorary Secretary for some years. Sir Pherozechand Mehta was a distinguished member of our Management Committee in 1908 and

later Mr. Vijay Merchant, another eminent citizen. **The Chief Justice of Bombay High Court was to be the ex-officio Chairperson. A tradition that is being followed**

**even today.**

The school was started and run at different rented locations in 'Bombay' before moving to its present premises at Tardeo. The present school building at



Tardeo was inaugurated on 2nd April, 1914, by the then Governor of 'Bombay', Lord Willingdon, who later became Viceroy of India. We have received the coveted IHS Heritage Award in 1992 and 2001.

Several luminaries and visionaries such as Mahatma Gandhi, Helen Keller, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Smt. Indira Gandhi and Shri A. P. J. Abdul Kalam have visited the school giving us the impetus to carry forward our efforts towards the welfare of the blind.

## Our programs:

We offer a variety of programs at VMSB. In addition to academics where we follow the SSC Board curriculum (upto class 8) and boast of 100% results, we offer extracurricular activities at our gym, sports programs including cricket, field trips, computer literacy programs, and more. Our music group comprises of students learning and playing the tabla, harmonium, guitar, flute, keyboard, etc. Our computer centre provides special software, namely JAWS-Job Access With Speech, making it fascinating for our students to access the world wide web.

## Academics:

Apart from the regular school curriculum (which is in Marathi), Spoken English classes are encouraged and is a regular feature in the school. ABACUS and Vedic Maths are also offered, serving as great memory boosters and enabling students to solve complex mathematical problems with ease.



## Library:



Our well-equipped Library cum Resource Centre has more than 850 visually impaired/partially sighted members from the city. This library is a great source for learning where student workshops are held on various topics and especially for guidance to appear for interviews for those seeking employment. We are proud of the numerous success stories that we have helped create with it.



## Computer Literacy:



The VMS - Radha Subrahmanian Computer Centre set up with the initial aid from IBM International and IBM India. It has helped to date approx.500 students with visual impairment visually impaired students from the city as well as the school to successfully complete various different courses, providing meaningful employment in organizations such as The Western Railway, Reserve Bank of India, several other public and private banks, The Income Tax Department, and other government/private organizations. Every student of the school is computer educated by the time they leave our portals.



## Vocational Services:

Our highly successful Massage Therapy Training to adults with visual impairment, both boys and girls, has provided meaningful employment in organizations such as the salons at Hotel Leela, the Domestic Airport, Hotel Taj Lands End, and the MIG Club.

## Standard Chartered Conference Centre:

This comprises of a boardroom, seminar hall, amphitheatre and central hall which we let out to corporates and other organisations to raise funds. The Standard Chartered Bank helped set up this Centre.





## Our Learning Centre

The VMS Learning Centre provides services to boys and girls with special needs. It is a day school started in 1999 in collaboration with the Special Needs Centre of the SNTD Women's University, Mumbai. Currently we have 70 students who are given individualised Academic, Functional and Pre-Vocational Training. Pre-Vocational Education and Training focuses on the pre-requisite abilities of persons having disability to make them qualify for Vocations to prepare them for useful, productive work in different jobs according to their abilities.

Our in-house Therapy Centre, namely The Vijay Merchant Centre for Life-Skills and Development offers comprehensive, coordinated services such as Diagnostic, Speech and Communication, Occupational, Remedial, Counselling and Art Based Therapies all under one roof. This team works together to help children with special needs reach their potential in physical, cognitive, speech and language, educational social and emotional development. We also provide psychological services such as counselling for emotional, adjustive, educational and psychological problems for all age groups. Aptitude Testing and Vocational Guidance is also provided.





## Recent Upgrades:

- Kitchen and Dining Room Area were extended to accommodate all 100 visually impaired students with donation from Sahachari Foundation and Bajaj Foundation.
- Water recycling system was upgraded with support from Eureka Forbes. We are an eco-friendly establishment.
- With support from Sevantilal Kantilal Trust we have installed solar panels in our premise and we are using solar energy.
- A sensory garden cum play area was developed with support from Morgan Stanley
- Rubber tiles were laid in our general play area with support from Tata Housing making it now a safer area for the students.
- Competitive coaching classes for adult visually impaired members of our library were started, leading to successful employment for many.
- Major structural repairs to the school building was possible with timely aid from TCS.
- The H.T. Parekh Foundation helped to carry out painting within the school premises
- A covered pathway was installed for students to move easily between the Learning Centre and the school building with support from Australian Consulate General.
- A Domestic Electrician Vocational Training Program has been started recently with help from DBWRF.
- Massage Therapy Training Course continues to be successful in providing good employment opportunity to the adult blind from the city.
- With the kind courtesy of the Cipla Foundation and SCORE Foundation, a help desk (toll free number: 18005320469) has been set up in the school premises to help/guide any visually impaired person from the state of Maharashtra and Goa.
- CCTV Cameras and Fire Alarm System were installed with the help of a donation from the Actor and former MP Rekha Ganesan's MPLAD Fund.

## Recent Special Events:



117<sup>th</sup> Founders Day on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019 was a grand success when students enthusiastically participated in putting up an exhibition with a subject of current interest for us all, namely Save Our Earth. Visitors were amazed at the models made and the knowledge the students had on the subject.



The visit of former Australian pace bowler, Michael Kraspovicz was truly exciting especially for our cricket team. He charmed us all even blindfolding himself to get a feel for what it is to play the game without any sight!

Ustad Zakir Hussain's visit was truly enthralling. The maestro interacted with our young tabla players, gave them tips to hone their talent and thrilled us all by playing a few beats!

Students from the music group had a wonderful experience when they were chosen by the well-known theatre personality, Raell Padamsee to appear on stage for her Musical, 'The Sound of Music'.

## Our Goals for the Future:

- To redevelop the VMS Learning Centre so as to offer special needs services to more children
- To develop our tactile lab with the latest and the best equipment
- To start new skill development training programs for students after Class 10 and for adult visually impaired library members
- Continue organizing Continuing Rehabilitation Education (CRE) programs for in-house teachers as well as for teachers from other special schools, parents, siblings, and society at large
- To build up our school corpus
- To develop 'Rainwater Harvesting System' in the school premise.



## Special thanks to our current major donors!

Sahachari Foundation, Mahalaxmi Temple Charities, Morgan Stanley, Cipla Foundation, UTI Mutual Funds, Volkart Foundation, Babulnath Charities, SHM Modi Trust, Alkyl Amines Chemicals Limited, HT Parekh Foundation, TCS, Blue Cross Laboratories, Navnit Manilal Shah Foundation, Australian Consulate General, Nihchal Israni Foundation, and many more.

Our dedicated Board of Trustees and the Committee of Management who are constantly striving to keep up with the times and upgrading our facilities, look forward with confidence to a bright and meaningful future towards our cause for the visually impaired and the learning disabled.

## The Trustees / Committee Members

The Hon'ble Chief Justice of the High Court of Bombay

Mr. Ramesh D. Chandak

Mrs. Mala Goenka

Mrs. Anjali Laud

Mrs. Meena S. Deshpande

Mr. C. V. Kothari

Mr. K. Ramkrishna

Mr. Sanjiv Navangul

Mrs. Janhavi Apte Kothari

Mr. Jagdish Thackersey

Mr. Anami Roy

Ex- Officio Chairperson

Vice-Chairperson / Trustee

Hon. Secretary / Trustee

Jt. Hon. Secretary/Trustee

Trustee/Member

Hon. Treasurer/Member

Member

Member

Member

Member

Member

## Mission:

To provide quality education and rehabilitation opportunities to the differently abled.

## Vision:

To encourage, nurture and develop differently abled individuals; to empower them to take their place in the world and society as confident, productive adults.



## Value Statement

To strive for a better quality of life for every visually impaired and intellectually impaired by providing education, training and rehabilitation opportunities; thereby making them self-reliant individuals.

