

Newsletter

August 2016

Editor's desk

Dear friends,

Many thanks for the feedback, its building my confidence as I tread this path. I got into a debate the other day about youth and opportunities, and how equality of opportunity is rare .I agree and also believe that the onus of ensuring an equal participation lies on the enabler of the opportunity .Technology is developing at a fast pace and its usage would ensure effective participation by all. This edition is looking at some of the advancements in technology for visual impairment, some initiatives which are emphasizing on equal participation. I feel proud to introduce the outstanding personality of the month, a volunteer who found his answers through his dedicated work. Happy reading!!!

Thanks & Regards,

Bhavna

botta.bhavna@gmail.com



Tech solutions

Beyond all invaluable traits bestowed upon mankind, Freedom is the one trait that leads each and every being in this world to a healthy development and persons with disabilities require more assistance both from nature and manmade tools like “Assistive Technology” to feel the freedom says K. Raghu Raman, coordinator, Karna Vidya Foundation.

What is the focus of your organization? Education and employment are the important factors that bring in economic freedom and social independence to all. But for persons with disability this is possible only if they have undergone training to use technology, Karna Vidya Foundation focuses on empowerment of visually impaired. The courses are designed to be undertaken by higher secondary and college students and unemployed youth

How do you design these courses? The state-of-art self-learning technology based environment and training along with soft skills and necessary communication skills gear towards placement opportunities.

Tell us about some of the technological solutions . For equal participation, accessible Learning resources are a must like Digital Access Information System (DAISY), E-Texts (in large print for low vision), Audio Formats, digital Braille Formats.

Are these assistive devices available for use in other areas like libraries and are they only in English? Yes, reading material is accessible with DAISY, providing the right solution for low vision, slow learners, as well as those with total vision loss,. BOOKSHARE international is an online library for the print-disabled. Reference books of Tamil literature, competitive exam books are converted and produced through KV DAISY production unit.

y4j--well matched

I recollect meeting a wonderful and energetic lady whose work impressed me. I share with you her work, her passion and vision. **Meera Shenoy**, founder, Youth4jobs, is the recipient of NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Award 2011, Vocational Excellence Award



2015 by Rotary Club, Woman Super achiever Award by World HRD Congress in February 2016, Vodafone Woman Achiever Award 2016, the only Indian to be inducted at the ceremony at Stanford into the Happiness Hall of Fame 2015 & Invited to speak about Y4J at the prestigious TEDxBerkeley 2015.

Equal participation is a right and can be achieved with innovative solutions. Youth4Jobs Foundation (Y4J) is a not-for-profit organization which sets up placement linked skilling centers for youth with disability. With core values like tapping the potential of the poor, transparency and a strong belief in Job to 1 member of a poor family takes the entire family out of poverty in a sustained manner, Y4J has scaled from 1 state to 11 states; from 1 training center to 22 training centers in 4 years. Youth with physical, speech & hearing disability and with low vision are enrolled in the programs and linked to job opportunities. Y4J also helps companies build a more inclusive workforce and acts as a one-stop shop offering companies a comprehensive end-to-end solution in inclusive hiring. With India having 60 million people with disabilities, and only 1% of them with jobs in the organized sector & Government job quotas remaining unfilled, we need many creative initiatives to achieve employment for youth. The situation of rural youth with disability, especially girls, is far worse. They are disconnected from education and markets and have low

self-esteem because their families and communities believe they are a burden. Y4J has created a solution to systematize the process of linking youth with disabilities to labor markets to ensure impact with both scale and quality. It encourages society to look at the ability of youth with disability, rather than their disability. Y4J works with companies to train and hire youth with disability. Y4J helps make the company HR policy inclusive; suggests simple work place adaptations; does company sensitization workshops and mentors the youth in jobs. Another important area is short term market linked training centers exclusively for the youth with disability.



Role Mapping, Market Scan and Employment opened new avenues of front line jobs Y4J also works with communities to motivate and mobilize youth with disability. 9000 young men and women with disability have been trained, Y4J has completed sector

wise job role mapping of 4 sectors (Retail, Health, Automotive and Hospitality) to identify suitable jobs for people with disabilities. Some of the high profile corporate include TATA. GOOGLE, Ford, KFC etc.

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Volunteer without barriers

An inspiring transfiguration of a normal next door boy to a dynamic personality--- Meet Hitesh, a volunteer with Thozhan, Nizhal, Arappor Iyakkam, precisely wearing multiple hats.

You are an amazingly busy volunteer, founder of JUST VOLUNTEER, how did this evolve-

I still remember my initial days of volunteering for Thozhan, a social reforming group. I attended Traffic Awareness Campaign (TAC) at the busy Tiruvanmiyur Signal on March 23rd 2014. I didn't know what to do, when I was on road for a good cause, I stood firm by holding a placard, insisting the public to follow traffic rules. I realized that I need to do this differently. I've transformed myself as a Leader at Thozhan. Week after Week, I was a regular volunteer for TACs. Volunteering has turned out a life changing experience for me. I've developed my communication and leadership skills during volunteering at Thozhan.

On 10th of August in 2014, I was part of the First Ever 100 Traffic Awareness Campaign at 100 Signals across Chennai on behalf of 68th Independence Day. I took a pledge to follow traffic rules forever and made 100's of fellow volunteers to take the same pledge in the past two years. Thanks to Thozhan for this wonderful opportunity.

You also volunteer with varied organizations what has been the experience--

A year later, I joined Nizhal, an NGO and attended their brain-child initiative - Free the Tree Campaign from abuse of being covered with banners and boards. We worked on sensitizing people and getting community support to stop these violations. YuVa team has taken up this and every Sunday, we hop on to new areas like Adyar, Besant Nagar, Mylapore, Mandaiveli, R.A Puram and Kilpauk. My love for trees began to increase day by day and I was awarded the 'Exceptional Volunteer of the Year Award 2015'. I began to love the nature and experiencing it from the heart.

My exploration took me to become a part of the consultative body of Arappor Iyakkam working towards a secular society and Government. Silent Walk for Lokayuktha was



our first major event and we worked both hard and smart to ensure people know about this independent corruption-free body and to implement it in TN.

What is the driving force behind you?

My love for the city, I still feel there are many alarming issues in the city - alone I can only count them but can't fix without a team, so it's important to volunteer with a dedicated team where your views and volunteering hours are respected. In the mid-2015, I began sharing the volunteering events on Face book and the response was amazing, I initiated Just Volunteer on October 2nd 2015 and started delivering volunteering opportunities on a Face book Group and on what's app. Every Friday, we post a Weekend Planner to let people know what's happening in the city and it became a hit. At least 10-15 students/working persons are spending their time by volunteering for the city and its environment.

What is the advice you will give to starters ?

Perform well and volunteer with a broad mind.