

Newsletter

MARCH 2017

Editor's note

Dear friends,
 Exciting news!!

In collaboration with a leading on line patient and caregiver health care platform, an article swap is being flagged off with **Leroy Lim's film "I Believe" a personal encounter between a person with autism and a youth leader,** commemorating WORLD AUTISM DAY (April 2nd)

On request by readers, a column dedicated to advice by the experts is being introduced. Exciting interviews, videos, unique accessible fest, more details on online library are awaiting your reading in this edition along with a note on job fair.

I take the occasion to remind that Connect Special newsletter is available for reading, sharing and subscribing on **info.connectspecial.com.**

Happy Reading!

Regards,
 Bhavna Botta

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Just Black & white

An interview with artist Swaminathan, an artist who is at ease while drawing and who is unaffected by the accolades

Swami what do you like the most weaving or drawing?

I love both weaving and drawing. I enjoy weaving .It is calm. I like finishing.

Swami, do you like to draw portraits or sketches of things around you?

I like drawing seeing photos or pictures-I like both .I see a clear outline in the pictures

Which color do you like or let me say which medium do you like both as an artist and an artisan

I am not particular about colors. I usually draw with a pencil or with a black marker pen.On the loom, I use all colors.



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Swami -your drawings always have features a bit stretched –a unique style!!

I try to draw what exactly is there in the picture- my style comes out

What are you- a spontaneous artist or an artisan

Artist

I notice you start your drawings from a particular point -is there a reason

Nothing, I want to complete the picture as it is.

What do you enjoy other than drawing?

I love to watch songs and serials in TV. . In the evenings, I walk for an hour .I like to go on tours to temples and hill stations

What changes do you want in the community?

Nothing



press to watch swamy draw

youtube link-

https://youtu.be/b0HFWE_B5LA

An expert's opinion –

Swami has shown a proclivity to draw geometric shapes and lines from when he was very young .He appears to prefer a 2dimensional photo or picture, to copy from ,and gives it his unique visual perceptual slant, in his art. It is not typical of the condition.

He has the knack of taking a3 dimensional view and creating brilliant 2 dimensional art work .A spatial intelligence is found in persons with autism but it's shows up differently in different persons

Regarding his thoughts on society- It's a simple reply,based on his happy life experiences! ,not based on huge reflections! It comes from a combination of contentment with his simple structured secure life and detachment that is a part of the condition that allows a live and let live in his case, I guess!!

He is such wonderful human being!!

Mrs .Usha Ramakrishnan, is Ex-Chairperson Vidya Sagar and acclaimed guru of autism who looks at autism through the lens of multiple intelligence



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I BELIEVE

-A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH AUTISM

Leroy Lim's film "I Believe" narrates a personal encounter between a person with autism and a youth leader.

Does it lead to friendship and inclusion in the group?

The film "I Believe" was part of the Temasek Short Film Project 20/20 in Singapore. It is an accurate portrayal of persons with autism and their interactions with people they meet.

It is based on a personal encounter the student from Lasalle, Singapore had with an autistic teenager.

As Leroy Lim mused in an interview "we hope the film's message - to understand and accept people who are different from us - will get across to anyone who watches it".

Read the full article here

<http://www.todayonline.com/>

entertainment/movies/film-students-short-film-be-produced-full-length-feature-mm2-entertainment

Kavita Sharma of PrayasLabs and a mother of a son with autism says: "It is the most appropriate representation of Autism. I could see my son there.

Empathy, love, forgiveness, no grudges are depicted beautifully. Repetition with respect to their interests and demand, sensory defensiveness is portrayed well. Inclusion at work place and in society is so important, it says all."



Pic credit: 20/20 - The Temasek Short Film Project

Youtube link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE4e26IOc4w>

This article was originally featured on our partner PatientsEngage site:

<http://www.patientsengage.com/>

[personal-voices/i-believe-personal-encounter-autism](http://www.patientsengage.com/personal-voices/i-believe-personal-encounter-autism)

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AN ACCESSIBLE BEACH FEST

To raise awareness about the critical issue of accessibility in India, a first of-its-kind, completely accessible 10 day beach experience has been planned to give 100 wheelchair users and their loved ones a chance to enjoy the sun, surf, and sand together.

Meet **Yeshwant Holkar**, CEO and co-founder of **Umoja**, India's first and largest travel platform for persons with disabilities .

Umoja , what does the name mean?

UMOJA is the Swahili words for inclusion, and that's what UMOJA is all about: Making travel more inclusive of people with disabilities and their families.

Why you have started this ?

Our mission is to unlock the world of travel for over 1.1 billion persons with disabilities by providing detailed and dependable information about exactly how hotels are or are not accessible.

We are India's first online travel platform which makes finding accessible hotels easy and fun for travelers with disabilities. By getting PWDs out of their homes and staying in hotels, we also aim to kick start a positive cycle of incentivizing hotels to invest in upgrading their accessibility features to attract more business.

We founded UMOJA in November of 2014 after a conversation with a dear family friend who is a wheelchair user. This conversation opened my eyes to how difficult it is for persons with disabilities to find hotels .

that are accessible for their needs, and how poor quality information can lead to serious travel disasters. Far too often PWDs receive

inaccurate or incomplete information about how wide a bathroom door is, if there is ramp access at the entrance, if there are restaurant menus available in braille, etc. This can create inconvenient, expensive, humiliating, and even dangerous circumstances for PWDs and their families.



What are the challenges, how you overcome
One of the biggest realizations for us is that many people don't believe that accessible travel is at all possible in India, and this is something we have to change.

To get people to experience accessible travel, we launched UMOJA's #WheelchairWanderlust competition, where a wheelchair won a completely accessible holiday for up to four of their friends or family at one of 15 amazing destinations across India.

We shared the story of our winner's trip with over 5 lakh people on social media to raise awareness about the possibility of accessible travel in India.

This fest is in collaboration with ADAPT (setup in 1972 by a parent, Padmashree Mithu Alur, Phd, an organization to provide the education and treatment for children with Cerebral Palsy combined with care and advice for parents, and moved from special education towards inclusion).

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This high-visibility + high-positivity event will not only demonstrate what is possible when venues are accessible, it will break down barriers and showcase what PWDs are capable of when given a chance.

In this spirit, the highlight of the 10 day event will be an attempt by Indian professional para-swimmer to set a Limca Record for the longest open water distance swim of 8km!

What is the response?

We've already received a tremendous response to these initiatives, with over 3500 entrants to the WheelchairWanderlust competition, and hundreds of wheelchair users getting in touch about coming to Goa!

Tell us about UMOJA's comprehensive guide to Goa for wheelchair using travelers.

In this online guide, available on www.UMOJA.in, wheelchair users and their families can find fantastic hotels, restaurants, bars, and tourist attractions all around Goa that are wheelchair accessible. Every place in our guide has been personally vetted by an UMOJA team member to be at a minimum step-free, and some places even have accessible toilets as well.

We also believe that seeing is believing, so all the places featured in the guide come with video walkthroughs of what is and what isn't accessible. The guide will be published on our website and social media channels in early October, right in time for the travel season in Goa! We have pulled together everything from accessible transport, to entertainment, to

accommodation, so that any wheelchair user and their family can enjoy all that Goa has to offer. This guide is UMOJA's first step in creating accessibility guides, and we plan to launch a similar guide for persons with visual as well as auditory impairments in the near future.

Your plans, contact person etc

While we are currently focusing on promoting accessible travel to Goa, we also can help people arrange trips to over 11 destinations in India, including popular spots such as Agra, Rajashtan, and Kerala. We will soon be offering trips to hill stations for the summer months, We have started working on wheelchair accessibility, but by no means will we stop there. Creating inclusive travel products for people with visual, auditory, or speech impairments is also a goal for UMOJA. Looking forward to an exciting beach fest –**MARCH 31ST TO APRIL 9TH, 2017**



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Bonding Rights with Oppurtunities

A Career Fair exclusively for the person with disabilities was held on 26th February, at Loyola College, Chennai by The Headway Foundation. The uniqueness of this event is a conference on disability rights was also held to sensitize employers.

The main speaker's Gnana Bharathi, Co-founder of Spinal Injured Person Association spoke on Government and private sector providing employment for person with disabilities. A P Mr Varadakutti, State President Tamil Nadu Udavikkaram, reiterated in his speech importance of Inclusivity.

Dr. Deepamala K Head

Development initiatives CII expressed the need to get the right candidate for the right job and providing the right skill set to the individuals instead of just churning out reports. Mr. K Raghuraman shared the efforts that Karna Vidya Foundation is taking to empower the visually by developing a softwares. Madhvilata an employee of Standard Chartered Bank is wheel chair bound, stressed that Right Policies and Laws need to be there and families need to be made aware of them.

Ummul, a lawyer by profession and is an activist. She has received many awards for her courageous and adventurous nature-she is known for a wheelchair rappelling!!



How to make a job fair accessible

-Bhavna, Editor ,Connect Special

A sensitive corporate sector working towards equal opportunities for all ,should follow these best practices for conducting a job fair. In fact these steps reflect the genuine interest and belief in an inclusive work force.

- All information regarding the job fair in accessible formats
- .An alternative format application form (large print, Braille or electronic)
- For on the spot registrations along with accessible formats ensure volunteers for filling forms
- Communication support at interviews
- Special aids and equipments should be made available
- Wheelchair accessible transportation Reserved parking Barrier-free meeting rooms / podium/speaker's platform
- Accessible lodging, rest rooms
- An assistive listening system
- Sign language interpreters
- Volunteers to guide and describe and lead to different counters, etc.
- A tech to help with assistive devices and screen readers (e.g., JAWS)
- Referral information for personal care attendants

Snippets



A "Special Phone" is a dialing system created specifically for people with special dialing needs. This application helps people with visual disabilities and physical handicaps. It creates a simple solution to dialing on a touch screen that will not only be of great use to the blind, but also to the elderly, children, and those that have problems using the flat touch surface to dial.

<http://www.aspecialphone.com/>

Proloquo2Go is an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) app that teaches children how to construct sentences using symbols and pictures. It also has text-to-speech (in American and British children's voices), word prediction, and a customizable vocabulary and interface



Letters to the editor

Dear Editor,

please give me more information on on line libraries

Devi

Editor-Thank you for writing to us ,please see below the information

Sugamya Pustakalaya: The online library of accessible books in India

Original Author(s): Prashant Ranjan Verma The Sugamya Pustakalaya is the aggregator of accessible versions of books available in India. This library has been created by DAISY Forum of India to provide access to books to persons with print disabilities. Bookshare, the largest International online library for persons with print disabilities is also integrated into Sugamya Pustakalaya. The files downloaded

from this online library can be read on computers, mobile phones, tablets and dedicated eBook readers. The benefits- Persons with print disabilities: get access to this library through any of the DAISY Forum of India member organization.

Organizations producing accessible content can upload their books collection to the Sugamya Pustakalaya and thereby reach out to print disabled across the country.

Organizations serving the print impaired, Universities, schools and libraries can take up DAISY Forum of India membership to be able to download books f Mainstream publishers can take up membership of DAISY Forum of India and can directly contribute accessible versions of their publications.

website, www.sugamyapustakalaya.in.

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Advice from Experts

Hi

I have a son with autism (8 years old),i have been advised about diet restrictions ,could you please explain

kavitha

Following a GfCf (Gluten free Cassein free) diet, is often seen beneficial to people with autism. Basically, the diet restricts the intake of wheat and wheat products (gluten) and milk and milk products (cassein).

Both these are not easily digested and absorbed, so it affects the gut of children with autism. As an after effect of this, sleep, adequate sensory integration gets affected and the child often seem to present behaviours like, hitting his own head, crying or anxiety, behaviours showing hypersensitivities.

Along with this avoid foods containing artificial colouring, preservatives and any processed or packaged food is also to be avoided. Sugar is to be avoided totally and to be replaced by palm jaggery. However, Ghee without preservatives can be included in the diet.

It will take about 8 months, after the diet is followed, for the toxins to be completely eliminated from the body and the benefits to show. A simple nutritious South Indian diet is what is considered ideal for people with autism.

Hi

I have a neighbour whose son has autism,he screams ,hits himself sometimes and grabs

food all the time.I read that children with autism have high sugar levels.is that true?

Ram

In some cases, children with autism can be seen to have low blood sugar levels. It's ideal to get blood sugar levels to checked in a good laboratory. Elevated blood sugar levels is not very common in isolation, (in younger children with autism) unless otherwise there is some other associated biological issue.

If it's an older person with autism, there are chances of high blood sugar, if there is a family history or there is some other biological issue.

It would be advisable for the person with autism, that you have mentioned, to get a proper assessment to find out the reasons behind those behaviours.



Mrs. Shirin Mammen, special educator, trainer working with people with autism for the last 20 years.

For subscription ,feedback, letters to editor-

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**For sharing and reading on the go-
info.connectspecial.com**