

# CARING, SHARING, HELPING AUTISM

Half yearly Newsletter of Assam Autism Foundation



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from the Pen of Director

*Dear Readers,*

*Greetings from Assam Autism Foundation!*

*We have moved 6 months in our timeline and we are happy to share our activities and progress of our children. Thank you for your participation in World Autism Awareness Day.*

*Happy Reading,*

*Dr. Shabina Ahmed*

*Founder and Managing Trustee of Assam Autism Foundation*

❖ **Social Awareness and Acceptability is an integral part of management.**

➤ ***WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY- Celebrating the month of Autism***

World Autism Awareness Day was celebrated on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2016 at Vivekananda Kendra Auditorium. The theme being – “Autism and Environment- Are We Responsible”. Our chief sponsor was ASDMA and Indian Oil and the programme was held with collaboration with Yi (Young Indians), students of NERIM and other philanthropists.

The programme was widely attended by all sections of people. The presence and involvement of Members of the Centre of environment research, Centre of environmental research and Disaster

management, Sudarshan School children, general public, parents of children diagnosed with autism and other organizations working for a greener planet gave due weight age to the event.

- **The events and the renowned personalities for World Autism Awareness Day have been profiled as follows:**
- ❖ WAAD was graced by watering a sapling to mark a fresh beginning with new hopes and aspirations and as a gesture of our lending a hand to greening environment.





❖ **The programme was attended by-**

- Miss Patricia Mukhim, Padmashree Awardee, Social activist, journalist and editor of Shillong Times who addressed WAAD as a Chief Guest and graced the occasion.



- Mr. Ved Prakash Gautam, Child protection specialist, UNICEF addressed the gathering as Guest of Honour. He highlighted issues of Child Abuse and Child Neglect



➤ The guest speakers of the event were:

- Mr. Simanta Kalita, Regional Head Project Coordinator, NE Cell of Centre of Environment Research Studies. His talk on Environment and Pollution was enlightening and aroused concern amongst the audience.



- Mr. Kripaljyoti Mazumdar ,Coordinator of ASDMA who spoke on Disaster Management and Preparedness. A short animated film on Disaster Management was shown.



- We were delighted to have Mr. Christoph Bresch, special educator from Berlin, Germany join us in the event and he gave a speech on the social welfare system in Germany and how the adolescents and adults diagnosed with autism are managed in the Comenius School, Berlin, Germany.



The event was also graced by:

- Ashfaque Ahmed ( President of AAF)



- Dr. Shabina Ahmed (Managing Trustee, National Awardee of Child Welfare, 2014) whose speech on WAAD was a stimulating one for all of us.
- A mesmerizing evening programme of dance performance by the students of Assam Autism Foundation with the support of their facilitators and Bhabarnav Gogoi our past pupil entertained the audience by his songs.
- Dance performance by the Students of AAF**



### **Performance by Bhabarnav Gogoi**



- Two documentary films was shown to create awareness which was developed by assistance of Doordarshan and Arena Animation.



- With the rise of new hopes and ideas, AAF released its first edition of E-newsletter recounting its various projects and activities by its members to have a greater understanding of autism and for creating disaster preparedness.



- Creating awareness of environment through use of paperbags to remove plastic bags under its project “**SWASHRAY**”



AAF is working since 2006 for the promotion of greener planet with a slogan to remove plastics and toxins in the environment.

- Dr. Mafuza Rahman ,former HOD Geography Department, Cotton College helped in the initial stage of the paper making project through RGVN. As a contributor was honoured along with other members
- The programme ended with the chief guest address ,who lauded the work of the organisation and said she would always keep a space for autism in her Shillong Times and requested the extension of such an organisation in Shillong.



➤ **PARENT COUNSELLING SESSION**

AAF organised a **“Parent Counselling Session”** on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 2016 on its premises on the account of World Autism Awareness Day- being addressed by Dr. Shabina Ahmed, Managing Trustee and Christoph Bresch, special educator, Berlin, Germany. The programme was attended by approximately 50 families.

The Main speaker was Mr. Christoph Bresch who gave presentation on Comenius School, Berlin, Germany with a round of discussions. The topics which were a part of discussions include- social competence, speech and communication, social interaction, perception, play and emotions. It was

followed by one to one sessions with the children's parents with Christoph Bresch and Dr. Shabina Ahmed involving inputs and discussions on their children's growth and development

➤ **RONGALI BIHU CELEBRATION**

Assam Autism Foundation witnessed a colourful celebration of Rongali Bihu on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, 2016 on its premises organised by Topcem Cement Company. The theme of the event being **“Rongali Bihu Rang, Anandamoy Houk Jibon”**. The guests of the event were our very own- Dr. Shabina Ahmed (Managing Trustee of AAF), Deep Bhattacharjee (Senior Executive) and Rudra Majumder (AGM) of Topcem Cement Company respectively. The event was graced by the performance of enthusiastic bihu dancers, by the staff of AAF, its students and their guardians whose presence were immensely appreciated.



➤ **VISIT TO SUDERSHAN SCHOOL**

Dr.Shabina Ahmed was invited as Chief Guest in Sudarshan Public School on 30<sup>th</sup> April for inauguration of their "SCIENCE EXHIBITION" where she spoke on Environmental degradation and peoples concern. Seen in the picture is a project of a " **smart village**" presented by class ix student.Mrs Sayeeda Mukit Principal of School co ordinated the science exhibition.



➤ **13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DAY OF AAF**



Assam Autism Foundation observed its “13<sup>th</sup> Annual Day” with the students and parents on 11<sup>th</sup> of July, at its premises.



The programme was graced by Mr. Lutful Karim, as the honorable chief guest, a Social Activist and former employee of Geology Department in Water Management Research Centre. The event proceeded with a thought provoking speech by the Director of AAF, Dr. Shabina Ahmed, who emphasized on all round development of the autistic children and the need for creating a social environment for these children. Thereafter a lilting dance was performed by the students of AAF, which touched hearts of the audience and their families.

Children's of Holy Child School attended the programme and interacted with our children and we also had participations of Interns from Handique Girls College and Psychology Students from Delhi University who expressed their experience in the organization.

Every child's effort was appreciated and prizes were given as an encouragement for the year 2015-2016.

On the occasion of Annual Day, **A SCIENCE EXHIBITION** was held keeping in mind to highlight the positive strength of our students through their projects and childrens presented with extraordinary talent.

➤ **INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION AT AAF**



Children of AAF celebrated Independence Day on 15<sup>th</sup> of August . The celebration started with a march past with beating of drums and the National Anthem .The children actively participated saying “ ***We are children of India***”

➤ **AAF CELEBRATES THE RAKSHABANDHAN**



Rakshabandhan was celebrated with full enthusiasm and zeal in AAF in order to make the students familiarize with the significance of the social bondage.

## ❖ WORKSHOPS AND PARTICIPATION IN SENSITIZATION PROGRAMMES

- Dr. Shabina Ahmed was invited to participate in the “**4<sup>th</sup> MINISTERIAL MEETING OF SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN(SAIEVAC)**” organized by Ministry of Women and Child Development held at Convention Hall, The Ashok Chanakyapuri, New Delhi on 11<sup>th</sup> of May, where Hon’ble Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh was the Chief Guest. The meeting highlighted the end of violence against children and to create a safer world for the children under SAARC.



- Attended the “**STATE LEVEL WORKSHOP ON REVIEW AND FINALIZATION OF HANDBOOK FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**” from 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> of May. The sessions were conducted by Dr. Mridula Baruah (Background of the workshop) and Dr. Bharti(NCERT, Modification and Adaptation of the Handbook). The sessions that were conducted by the resource persons were interesting, actively based and very informative.
- Attended the workshop on “**CARRER COUNSELLING FOR POVERTY LINE PEOPLE**” on 27<sup>th</sup> of May at Sisters of Charity, Kharguli.



- Participated in the meet on **“NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER’S CONSULTATION ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN”** organized by “National Action and Coordination Group for Ending Violence Against Children(NACG-EVAC INDIA)” at Assam Don Bosco University on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- **Invited as the “ Chief Guest” at IAP Action Plan for Neurodevelopmental Problems.**
- Attended the **“ REGIONAL LEVEL WORKSHOP FOR NEW SCHEME AND NEW WEBSITE NATIONAL TRUST”** on 21<sup>st</sup> June at Don Bosco Institute, Kharguli
- Attended workshop on **“Child Abuse and Sexual Violence”** in Don Bosco Organized by Shishu Sarothi in June 2016.



- **Sensitization programme** conducted in **Scholar's Home Public School** in collaboration with the Principal Mrs. Florence Handique on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016.



❖ **AAF'S ROLE IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT**





In today's world each one is looking for better job prospects and making their life more meaningful in their terms. It is an irony that our special students find themselves at cross roads not knowing what to do or how to engage themselves after the basic schooling and vocational training. Many of our students have come of age and now need to become economically independent. Even after vocational training the special needs person are unable to obtain jobs in industry and commercial establishments in wider society. The result is loss of hope and confidence, which sweeps their life when they have no option but to sit at home, actually resulting in unlearning what they have actually learnt over the years. Thus started the need for “ **SKILL DEVELOPMENT UNIT**”. The training program along with employment is a step towards working for their economic rehabilitation. ***“The philosophy behind the Skill development Unit is to train students in a vocation, which help them in becoming financially independent and productive members of society and to teach the students work place ethics”.***

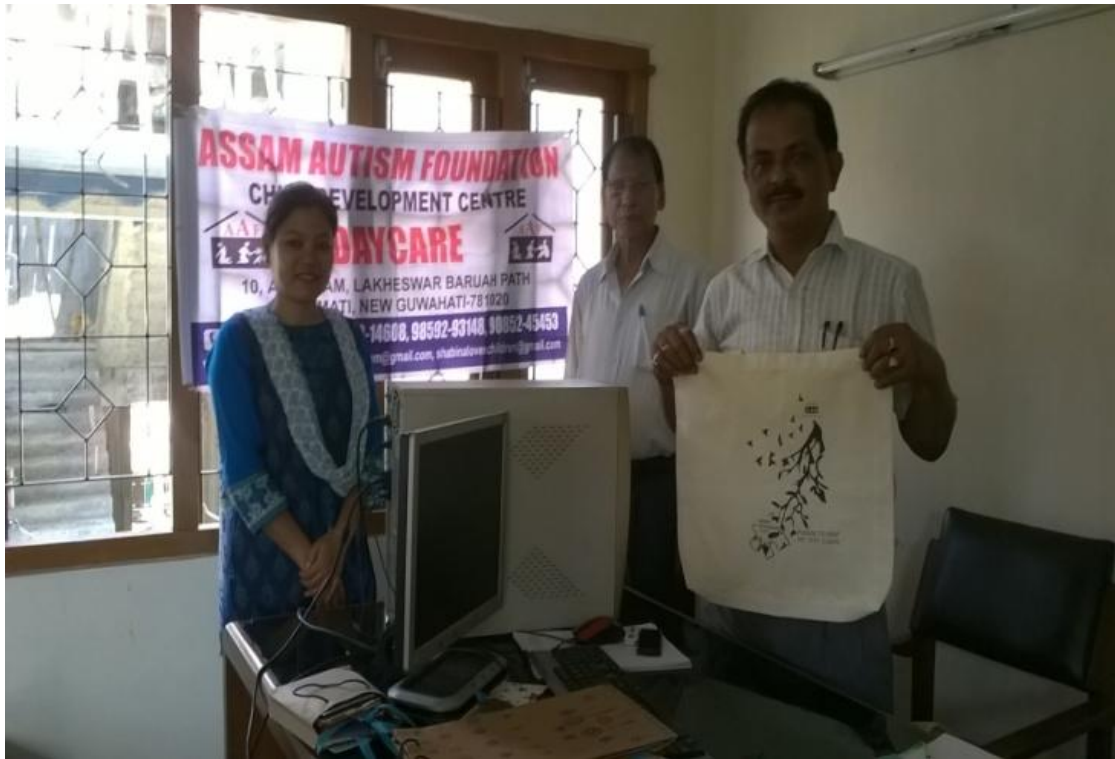
Keeping this thought in the mind, AAF set up “Baking **Section**” in the Skill Development Unit. Simple steps have been devised for teaching Baking to individuals with special needs which take into account their abilities and limitations.

Baking (Cake, Bread, Biscuits) is a simple cooking activity and after the process is broken into simple steps like identifying ingredients, weighing the ingredients, mixing transferring to moulds, baking, decorating and packing.

## ❖ GREENER PLANET AWARENESS

- With the rise of new hopes and challenges, and a change for the betterment, AAF under its project “**SWASHRAY**” took a new step by producing “ **Cloth bags**”, in order to create awareness amongst the general public, schools etc. In this regard Mrs Jennifer Brooks (Principal of Presentation Kindergarten) and Mr. Gautam Borah (Social activist) has always been a helping hand in our Greener Planet efforts. Posters are also being circulated for public awareness with the slogan- **Are we responsible for Autism? Toxin free environment, need of the hour**. The theme being: **Pledge to keep our city clean** and also keeping in mind and reminding our native people to reduce the use of plastics.





❖ PARENT'S CORNER- MESSAGE FROM A FATHER

## ***Assam Autism Foundation's relentless tryst with Autistic Children's cause***

I still vividly remember the day, nearly an year ago, when both of us, Munna's parents, met Dr. Shabina Ahmed and decided to enroll our younger son Munna, diagnosed to be having ASD(Autism Spectrum Disorder) in Assam Autism Foundation, Guwahati.

Since then, Munna is regularly attending the Day Care Centre and it is needless to mention that he has steadfastly showing signs of improvements over this span of time.

We, the parents, feel from the core of our hearts that AAF under the able and dynamic guidance of Dr. Shabina Ahmed is doing yeoman's service in this field of humanity. Words fail me to express my sincere gratitude to all her co-workers like Afifa, Tutu, Heera Baideu, Bandana Baideu, Idiya, Shil Sir, Ritul and all others and to each of whom we owe more than we can possibly express because they are selflessly rendering services to these children's suffering from Autism. Over this period of time, I have seen almost all the children's enrolled in this school improving their social skills and adapting to the norms of the society. The children's also enjoy the different occasions like World Autism Day, Annual Day, Birthdays of fellow pupils etc and these programmes will definitely go a long way in shaping their social abilities.

Last but not the least, we pray to the almighty to shower blessings on Dr. Shabina Ahmed and her team of dedicated workers and give them strength and patience to nurture and cater to the needs of these children's so that they become meaningful citizens of our country in future.

Regards.

Rajasish Dutta, Munna's father



## ❖ SUMMARY OF A JOURNEY IN AAF BY A INTERN

*“Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found not in finishing an activity but in doing it”*

This was my motto which I had in mind when I started my internship. Working in this organization was nothing new for me. I had an experience of working here during my graduation days. The love for children and the environment present in AAF, made me come back and work for them again. While working in the organization, I worked for the holistic development of each and every child by accompanying the teachers and at times all by myself. My work comprised of assisting the teachers in day to day schedule planned for each and every child. I worked with every different child as to have a varied experience about the different requirements of each child and to have a wide knowledge as to what caters to each child coming to the organization. Working in this organization I realized, I had a wonderful experience as it has always been my wish to be around children, to learn and play with them always does something for them.

The most interesting thing which I have learnt by working in the organization is that- “ If children cannot learn the way we teach them, we should teach them the way they can and want to learn”. This has taught me to be patient, a good observer and a listener at times to be able to cater to different child in a way they should be loved, handled, taught and to be with. What mostly fascinated me is that every teacher who works in this organization is trained to such an extent that they are able to manage any year old child when the need arises. When I felt it was difficult for me to handle any child when I am wanting them to do anything related to academics, then I used to approach my mentors who worked there as teachers and they guided me how to deal with that particular child. What I learnt from this whole process is that I cannot master every single art of dealing with a child in one day, it will require me to be patient, a good observer and be able to catch every minute detail of what the teacher does with the child, how she/he handles the child and then how the child responds to each and every particular way of being mentored by the mentor. Working in this organization for a period of twenty days has instilled that sense of awakening in me that is required in an individual.

After my joining in this organization, I got an opportunity to be a part of the parent counseling session which took place few days after “World Autism Day”. Being a part of this event, I realized the utmost importance of how parents of the children diagnosed with autism should be made aware and how they should be involved in everything that takes place in the lives of these children. This is because when these children come to school to play and learn and adjust to a new setting, the child similarly at home should be stimulated to do the same as we all have learned that ‘more and more practice always makes a man perfect’.

I would also like to mention here that I was intrigued by the fact how these children diagnosed with autism needs to be given training in each and every different field. Training which includes yoga and relaxation exercises and the art of practicing meditation once a week, developing their speech and their fine and gross motor skills, music training and teaching and training these

children the art of developing interest in having culinary skills. I have realized that 'play' is an important part in the lives of these children because some children always tend to learn through the different mediums of play activities. Play is important as it helps the child in having a joint attention, a sense of community and a medium to interact with others. Getting the experience to observe all these events take place in this wonderful organization and to be a part of it has also taught me that 'if a child does something repeatedly, we should try to figure out what he/she wants us to understand or say and the motivation for doing that particular act too'. And most importantly, to never force a child diagnosed with autism to perform any kind of task if he/she does not want to. It is important to give the child space and time but also trying to instill the art of learning in him/her the way they can learn.

Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Shabina Ahmed (Managing Trustee of AAF) for giving me this golden opportunity to come and learn and be part of this organization and work with the children and for them too.

**Iris Basumatary**

**Masters in Clinical Psychology, TISS**

## **OUR MISSION**

We strive to provide children with autism and other developmental disabilities

- ❖ The best possible opportunities for functional support and training
- ❖ assistance in helping them reach their best potential
- ❖ For them being functional to attain individual independence, productivity and livelihood
- ❖ Build a society that recognises and uses their potential abilities

## **OUR VISION**

We seek to develop for persons with autism and other developmental disabilities

- ❖ A state-of-the-art-rehabilitation centre
- ❖ special focus on speech and communication
- ❖ Respite home
- ❖ Develop vocational units for self-employment and independent living

## ❖ OUR PHILOSOPHY

❖ Our philosophy is to let no child behind, as social inclusion is necessary for total rehabilitation.



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