



Nethrodaya
LET'S SHARE THE LIGHT

The Eyeopener...

Annual News Magazine

2017 - 2018

Celebrating life without sight...



...with foresight.

I am immensely pleased to share the journey of Nethrodaya, which has also been the story of my life for the last sixteen years. The idea of starting Nethrodaya dawned in my mind when I happened to become a witness to the everyday sufferings of the visually impaired college students and unemployed youth in Chennai. Nethrodaya became a reality on 2nd October 2002, and continues to serve the visually impaired and other differently abled persons for last



sixteen years. It is a matter of pride for Nethrodaya that more than 30,000 visually impaired and differently abled people have benefitted through our various support services. And, it gives me added satisfaction that we are the only organization in India to offer such a wide range of services on a massive scale completely free of cost. The Government of Tamil Nadu has twice awarded Nethrodaya as the best institution and myself as the best social worker for the differently abled community, bestowing me the rare honour of getting lauded by the former Chief Ministers Dr. M.Karunanidhi and Dr.J.Jayalalithaa. Nethrodaya's Special School and College of Special Education for the visually impaired and orthopedically disabled, is unique of its kind as presently this is the only educational institution in Tamil Nadu which is being run by a visually impaired. We continue to impart best quality education absolutely free of cost to the economically backward differently abled students.

I strongly believe that vibrant advocacy is the need of the hour to bring about real changes in the lives of differently abled persons. Not stopping with our various service programs, I have fought for several legitimate rights of the differently abled community. Obtaining judgements by the honourable High Court of Madras for a comprehensive scribe guideline in Tamil Nadu and exemption from the building approval fee for the organizations serving the differently abled, by amending the Town Planning Act, are only a few of the remarkable legal achievements we had this year.

Presently we are in the process of expanding our infra structure facility in order to cater to the educational needs of the differently abled children. This initiative will make our building barrier-free. We are confident that our institution will be able to provide quality service to the differently abled population in Tamil Nadu. I have come across many visually impaired families struggling to give a respectful funeral and perform final rites of the deceased visually impaired, due to their poverty. On the occasion of our sixteenth anniversary celebrations, Nethrodaya launches a unique scheme named "Death with Dignity" in all the 32 districts of Tamil Nadu.

With the kind-hearted support of all our donors, volunteers, patrons and committed team of Nethrodaya, we were able to achieve several milestones in making the differently abled productive and dignified citizens in the society in the last sixteen years of our journey.

Nominations

C.Govindakrishnan, founder of Nethrodaya is appointed as a member in the following Government committees:

- State Advisory Board, Government of Tamil Nadu
- Welfare Board for the Differently abled, Government of Tamil Nadu
- Multi-Disciplinary Grant in Aid Committee, Government of Tamil Nadu
- Executive committee for implementation of Audio Alert System, Government of Tamil Nadu
- Technical Committee for the welfare of Differently abled persons, Government of Tamil Nadu
- Zonal Railway users' consultative committee, Southern Railway

Recommendations by Nethrodaya to the Government of Tamil Nadu

Nethrodaya's recommendation to remove educational ceiling for the Marriage Assistance given to the visually impaired persons marrying the non-disabled

The State Government of Tamil Nadu introduced a pioneering scheme titled “Concession Given to the Normal Persons Marrying the Visually Impaired Persons”. Under this marriage assistance scheme, those sighted spouses marrying the visually impaired persons are encouraged and appreciated with cash, and 8 grams of gold. However, only those couple who are graduates are awarded with Rs.50 thousand cash, whereas others are given only Rs.25 thousand under the same scheme. Indicating the poverty and lack of opportunities for the illiterate visually impaired persons and their sighted spouses, Nethrodaya has strongly recommended for the complete removal of any educational ceiling.

Nethrodaya's recommendation to provide laptops for the visually impaired students studying post-graduation courses

Several visually impaired students enter post-graduation studies even amidst their disability and huge economic barriers. Non-availability of Braille text books poses a huge threat in pursuing their higher education. All of them are in need of quality laptops for their studies and career development. Nethrodaya has therefore recommended the Department of Differently Abled Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu to provide free and quality laptops for the visually impaired students belonging to the state of Tamil Nadu. It was further pointed out that with the help of these laptops, the visually impaired students could read their study materials, write assignments and complete projects without depending on others.

Nethrodaya's recommendation to appoint block level officers for the differently abled welfare in all 32 Districts of Tamil Nadu

Government of Tamil Nadu has launched various welfare schemes to the differently abled persons. However identifying and serving the differently abled persons at the grass root level continues to be a challenge. In order to address this much felt need, Nethrodaya has recommended the appointment of block level officers in all the 32 districts of Tamil Nadu to ensure effective implementation of these schemes.

Nethrodaya's recommendation to appoint independent State Commissioner for the Department of Differently Abled Welfare

At present, the State Commissioner for the Differently Abled under the Government of Tamil Nadu performs dual duties as the State Commissioner for the Differently Abled as well as the Director of the Differently Abled Welfare Department. As a result, the commissioner is not able to perform either of these duties effectively. Further, the recently implemented RPD Act, 2016 makes it mandatory for all the state governments to appoint an independent State Commissioner for persons with disabilities without fail. In order to provide better access to the schemes, policies and grievance redressal mechanism for the differently abled in Tamil Nadu, Nethrodaya has strongly recommended to the Ministry of Differently Abled Welfare to appoint an independent commissioner for the differently abled at the earliest.

Nethrodaya's recommendation for extending the benefits of the maintenance allowance given to the visually impaired persons from the Dept. of Differently Abled Welfare

The Department of Differently Abled Welfare provides a maintenance allowance of Rs.1,500 to each severely disabled person affected with mental retardation, muscular dystrophy and leprosy. Visually impaired persons, despite being the severely disabled, are not given any maintenance allowance. Since this is a gross violation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPD) Act, Nethrodaya has recommended the Department of Differently Abled Welfare to extend the maintenance allowance scheme to the visually impaired.



Launch of Audio Alert device by Hon'ble Chief Minister Thiru Edappadi K. Palaniswami



Best Institution Award to Nethrodaya



Best Social Worker Award to C. Govindakrishnan

PROJECTS

Nethrodaya Higher Secondary School for the Visually Impaired (Recognized by Govt. of Tamil Nadu)

Nethrodaya Special School has been imparting best quality education to the economically backward visually impaired as well as orthopedically disabled boys and girls of class VI to class XII, belonging to the state of Tamil Nadu. Specialized teaching-learning methods are used in Nethrodaya Special School, including Braille, audio, electronic and one-to-one teaching. Children are provided with accommodation facilities with various extra-curricular activities. Nethrodaya Special School has shaped the future of hundreds of differently abled boys and girls from the remote villages of Tamil Nadu.



Nethrodaya College of Special Education (Recognized by Govt. of India)

Nethrodaya College of Special Education which is affiliated to the Tamil Nadu Teachers' Education University imparts teaching skills to the visually impaired and orthopedically disabled boys and girls belonging to poor families, completely free-of-cost.



FACILITIES AT NETHRODAYA

Computer Lab

Nethrodaya's well-equipped computer lab provides much needed training for the visually impaired to work with Microsoft Office, Internet and emails on par with the sighted persons. Thousands of students who passed out from Nethrodaya with enviable digital competence and settled in decent IT jobs with attractive salaries, stand testimony to the success of Nethrodaya's computer training courses for the last sixteen years. This lab which is equipped with best quality screen readers, braille printers and free browsing facility for the visually impaired is the first of its kind in Tamil Nadu.



Digital Audio Library

Nethrodaya's Digital Audio Library is one of the best of its kind in India with thousands of audio study materials for the visually impaired. Having well-established connection with international digital libraries like Bookshare, our library has a wide variety of books and study materials ranging from Tamil Nadu school textbooks to competitive exam study materials and motivational books. These books and materials have so far benefited thousands of visually impaired students of Tamil Nadu.



Reading Centre

The warmth and liveliness of human reading can never be replaced by any machine. Realizing this truth, Nethrodaya has reached out to hundreds of kind-hearted volunteers who continue to offer their eye sight and voice to read out books and study materials of their need to the visually impaired students. These readers very often turn out to be excellent teachers and a window to the outer society to our visually impaired students, thereby contributing to their holistic development. Nethrodaya has a regularly updated library of printed books for this purpose based on the needs of student beneficiaries.



Fitness Center

Physical fitness is an inevitable ingredient for success, more so for the differently abled. Realizing this fact, Nethrodaya has established a fully functional high-tech fitness centre for our students where they can indulge in daily warmups, exercises and body building. Specialized masters are invited to take yoga classes to our students on a routine basis, so that they stay physically fit and mentally sound.



Music Center

Nethrodaya has a well-established music centre through which students are encouraged to learn playing music instruments from expert masters made available through our centre. Our students are enthralled upon learning music, which also paves the way for some of them to choose music as their career.



Free boarding facilities

A warm, healthy, safe environment is as essential to academic excellence as the right soil is needed for the growth of plants. Keeping this in mind, Nethrodaya offers boarding and lodging facilities to its Students and provides them with a place to stay and three meals a day for free. Meals are planned to be healthy and nutritious, so as to ensure that the Children get all the necessary nutrients for their proper growth and development.



Free Braille Books

Different types of Tamil and English language books printed in Braille script are kept at Nethrodaya's Library for developing the students' cognition, independence and braille literacy. Braille is an essential component in a visually impaired person's life, and it is the only classic method to offer real reading experience. Students are hence given the opportunity to read braille books of their needs whenever they feel like. Braille reading offers our students the satisfaction of self-reading and independence from readers or electronic devices.



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Nethrodaya's self-employment schemes for the visually challenged families

Visually impaired women are the most vulnerable and highly neglected section in the society. In spite of all the hurdles and discriminations they are subjected to, in the society and in the families, many of the visually impaired women take care of their children and their entire families by engaging in small-scale businesses. We at Nethrodaya identify the most vulnerable and highly committed visually impaired women from the interior districts of Tamil Nadu every year, who are given a capital fund to invest in their chosen business. This initiative was supported by Mr.M.V.M Velmurugan of Velammal Educational Trust. This money becomes a valuable seed-investment to make better gain. Further, these women now have more economic independence and comfortable life. As these women take care of their families through their small earning, this investment has also helped their children to have quality education, food and other amenities.



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Assistance to Educate the Children of Visually Challenged Parents

The sighted children of visually impaired parents need quality education in order to find a bright future as well as to take care of their parents later in their life. Nethrodaya devised a scheme to fund for the education of the children of visually impaired parents. This initiative was supported by Saritha Jain Foundation. Thousands of such children, who are sighted, have benefited from this scheme, because of which their poor visually impaired parents have been relieved off their burden to pay the school fees.



Individual Cattle Rearing Unit for Visually Challenged Rural Families

While visual impairment creates many challenges for any person, blindness coupled with poverty, illiteracy and rural background leaves the person devoid of any chance of survival. Nethrodaya identifies such families of the visually impaired in rural areas and provides them with a hybrid cow and calf. The cow is purchased under the supervision of cattle experts and experienced locals. Credible milk procurers are identified in the villages by Nethrodaya. Field visits are conducted periodically to ascertain the proper maintenance of cows and proper benefit of the visually impaired families. A cow is not only

an asset, it has become the source of survival for hundreds of visually impaired families through this scheme.

Nethrodaya's Free Medical Helpline

Access to timely and quality medical facilities is provided by Nethrodaya for the accident victims and cases of prolonged physical ailments. Thousands of differently abled people have been able to get quality treatment and proper medications in crucial times through Nethrodaya's Medical Helpline completely free of cost. As part of the medical aid, Nethrodaya recently rescued Mrs. Rani, a visually impaired housewife deserted by her husband and was suffering from a serious gynaecological problem. Nethrodaya admitted her in a reputed hospital where she underwent a surgery. Now she is completely recovered and has reunited with her family.



EVENTS

Nethrodaya's Fifteenth Anniversary Celebrations on 19th November 2017

Nethrodaya celebrated its fifteenth anniversary on 19.11.2017 in its premises with the gracious presence of Hon'ble Justice Thiru.Rajiv Shakdher, Madras High Court, State Commissioner for the Differently Abled Welfare Mr. Arun Rai, the Chairman of Velammal Educational Trust Mr. M.V.M. Velmurugan, popular playback singer Padmalatha and hundreds of visually impaired persons across Tamil Nadu.



First Stone Laying Ceremony on 15th July 2018

Nethrodaya Centre of Excellence is steadily growing every year with its ever-expanding educational institutions and student beneficiaries. In order to meet the increasing academic requirements in line with UGC and RCI guidelines, an additional floor is being constructed to house state-of-the-art classrooms, fully digitised audio and braille library and resource rooms. First stone laying ceremony for this construction was held at Nethrodaya premises on 15.07.2018. Honourable Justice of Madras High Court T. S. Sivagnanam, State Commissioner for the Differently Abled Welfare Mr. Arun Rai and popular playback singer Mr. Thippu graced the event as the guests of honour. Justice Sivagnanam appreciated the services of Nethrodaya and he was confident that Nethrodaya would make a huge positive impact in the lives of differently abled people in Tamil Nadu. Mr. Arun Rai detailed out the welfare measures and advocacy initiatives of Nethrodaya and indicated how Nethrodaya is functioning as a role model NGO by bridging the gap between the Government and the differently abled community. Tippu enthralled the gathering by singing some of his popular numbers.



EVENTS

Nethrodaya's South Indian Chess Tournament for the Visually Impaired

In order to motivate the sporting talent among the visually impaired persons, Nethrodaya has been conducting chess tournaments for the visually impaired at the South Indian level, for more than a decade. This year's South Indian Chess Tournament for the visually impaired was held at Hotel Radha Regent on 15.09.2018. Inaugurating the spectacular sporting event, Hon'ble Justice Madras High Court Kumari P.T. Asha appreciated Nethrodaya for taking such a massive effort to bring together all visually impaired chess masters from across South India. Honourable Minister for Differently Abled Welfare Dr.Saroja and playback singer Prasanna made the valedictory function of the event memorable with their glowing presence. Dr. Saroja spoke in length about the past achievements of Nethrodaya and expressed her immense happiness that Nethrodaya was serving the differently abled people by taking up their genuine concerns to the notice of the Government of Tamil Nadu, and also by extending its own services to the needy. She also distributed the winner's trophy and the prize money of more than Rs.60,000.



Nethrodaya Awards of Eminence 2018

Dr. Boopathi

Born a visually impaired in the remote village of a lower middle class family of a farmer, Dr.Boopathi went on to achieve greater and greater success with distinction in his academic career with his indomitable will, focus , perseverance, dedication and hard work. Dr. Boopathi joined Nethrodaya in the year 2009 for his under graduate degree in English from Presidency College and he made great use of all the learning opportunities offered by Nethrodaya such as computer training, digital library and reader services. Based on his merit and qualification, he was appointed as Assistant Professor in the prestigious Aligarh Muslim University in 2017. Dr.Boopathi is a shining role model and a great inspiration to the visually impaired community. Nethrodaya awarded Dr.Boopathi, one of its alumni for his excellence in his chosen field with the award "Role model in higher education".



Mr. V Shashi Kumar

Mr. V Shashi Kumar, an Engineering graduate from IIT with an M.S. in Entrepreneurship, has contributed immensely towards the welfare of the visually impaired community. In 1989, Shashi Kumar founded Phoenix Medical Systems, which soon became a leading Biomedical Manufacturer in India. Shashi Kumar was invited to IIT to review an interesting Prototype, Smart Cane. He found the Smart Cane not only commercially feasible but decided to undertake production himself, wanting to help a social cause. Today more than 40,000 visually impaired persons across the Globe are empowered with safe, independent mobility through the SmartCane. Nethrodaya honoured Mr. Shashi Kumar for his unique and outstanding service to the Visually Impaired Community with the award "Technological empoweror of the visually impaired"

Mrs. G.Vijayakumari

Mrs. G.Vijayakumari a Special Educator started her teaching career in 1989 for the visually impaired students. Her 28 year journey is spread across several Government run special schools for both boys and girls. She has been a picture of dedication, compassion and relentless hard work which promoted her to the post of Principal. Her dedicated performance during her tenure inspired District Collectors and Members of the Corporate World to extend generous financial support for Infrastructural Development for Government Special Schools. She has saved the lives of many Visually Impaired children in times of medical emergency. Nethrodaya honored Mrs. G.Vijayakumari with the award of "Role model in Special Education"



Mr. M.V.M. Velmurugan

The name, Mr. M.V.M. Velmurugan is an instant reminder for the sterling qualities of his strong will power, never say die attitude and above all, his compassion for the underprivileged sections of the society, which have enabled him to groom the Velammal Group of educational institutions to scale such great heights of glory, as it's CEO. His great compassion, love, affection and unconditional support have made a huge impact in the lives of the visually impaired students. His relentless effort towards eradicating poverty among visually impaired families by providing them self employment in the form of seed capital for entrepreneurial ventures, has led them to lead a dignified life. As a sports enthusiast he has played an active role in organizing various tournaments at the State and South Indian Level for the Visually Impaired. His commitment towards the welfare of the differently abled is inspiring and worthy of emulation. It was a moment of pride for Nethrodaya to honor Mr. M.V.M. Velmurugan with the award "Benefactor of the Differently Abled"



Mr. S.Pandiyaraj



Being Visually Impaired from birth and born in a poor family, Mr. S.Pandiyaraj completed his BA course, which later extended to MA, M.Ed and M.Phil degrees and he also honed his computer skills along with Braille and short hand. His sincerity, hard work and perseverance in learning attracted job offers from many leading institutions. He is a successful soft skill trainer, and his training programs and workshops have produced many computer literates as well as effective trainers from among the visually impaired community. By dint of hard work and diligence, he came out successful in the competitive Bank recruitment examination and has been appointed in a leading nationalized Bank. He continues to organize computer training workshops and various other skill development programs for the visually impaired across Tamil Nadu. Nethrodaya honored Mr.S.Pandiyaraj with the award for "Trend Setter in Social Work"

Unique Donor

Hariprasad, a visually impaired boy has donated Rs.1,500 towards the cost of construction for a square feet. His generosity and commitment towards visually impaired is laudable.



Appeal for Support

Donations:

In Cash:

- Celebrate your special days such as Festivals, Birthdays, Wedding Anniversaries, Remembrance Day
- High Tea: Rs.500, Breakfast: Rs.1,500, Lunch:Rs.2,000; Dinner:Rs.2,000
- Sponsor a student's monthly educational expenses Rs.2,000
- Donate a cow to a visually impaired family(for their self-employment) Rs.30,000
- Donate towards the monthly medical expenses Rs.10,000
- Donate towards the corpus fund of the organization

In Kind:

- Donate old Furniture, Utensils and Clothes
- Donate Provisions, Groceries and Sanitary Essentials

Contributions by cheque or demand draft may be drawn favoring “Nethrodaya”. Donations are accepted under FCRA.





Volunteering Opportunities

- For academic purposes: To read text books, to write assignments, to record lessons, to be a scribe for exams
- Volunteer for our events
- Professionals in the fields of motivation, counseling and spoken English/communication can also share their expertise.
- Help the students develop extra-curricular skills such as sports, music, martial arts, etc.



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