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Little bravehearts fight all odds, risk their lives to save others, win laurels

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Bengaluru: Cubbon Park on Monday came alive with smiles and giggles of thousands of children who had come here from across the state to join in the festivities on the occasion of **Children's Day**. As bystanders watched in awe, the park burst into a riot of colours as children dressed in bright attires showcased their talent in an array of events. Nearly 15,000 kids, accompanied by their parents and teachers, took part in the day-long celebrations at Jawahar Bal Bhavan, which also saw puppet shows, sports competitions and magic shows.

While five children were felicitated with the Hoysala and Keladi Chennamma Bravery Awards for exemplary courage, eight institutions and individuals were awarded for commendable service in the field of child welfare.

Hoysala and Keladi Chennamma Bravery Awards

The five children who fought the odds received a cash prize of Rs 10,000 each, along with a medal, citation and memento.

* Sukanya K S | 15 | Chikkaballapura

Sukanya was all of 15 years when she lost her life saving her friend, her namesake, from drowning in a pond. Her friend, also Sukanya, was washing clothes at a pond near Kotturupalli village in Chikkaballapura when she slipped and fell into the deep waters. Without wasting time, Sukanya KS, a Class 8 student, jumped into the pond, caught hold of her and managed to push her to the bank. Unfortunately, her own legs got stuck in the slush. When two girls on the bank came to rescue her, she refused, not wanting them to risk their lives, and drowned to death. Her tearful mother received the award on her behalf.

Chiranth D R | 14 | Shimogga

Chiranth was among the several schoolkids on a bus taking them to school when it toppled over last November. A resident of Amatekoppa in Shimogga, the 14-year-old displayed a tremendous presence of mind when the bus lost control and tipped onto the side of a pond. He broke the glass windows of the bus, pulled out his schoolmates one by one, saving the lives of all of them. The Class 9 student showed no overt emotion at being felicitated and only smiled at the thunderous applause.

Nithin H A | 14 | Kodagu

For a football enthusiast who never misses a game with his friends, things took an ugly turn during his school's marsh wetland football tournament this July. In between the competitive kicks and near-misses, the tragedy struck when his friend Sufiyan accidentally fell into the pond. A resident of Virajpet in Kodagu, Nithin didn't hesitate before lunging into the pond to save his friend despite not knowing swimming properly, bravely brought Sufiyan out of the water.

Shreyas N Rao and Shashikumar GM | 14 | Mysuru

The two friends showed exemplary courage in June this year when the school bus taking them and other children home accidentally caught fire. As the bus turned into an inferno, the Class 10 students opened the emergency exit door and jumped out. They then rescued other children stuck inside. Among the oldest kids in the bus, they pulled out several of their smaller friends to safety first. At the celebrations on Monday, the two teenagers wore confident smiles as the audience lauded their tremendous courage.

Child Welfare Awards

Cash prize of Rs 1 lakh for institutions; Rs 25,000 for individuals, along with citations and mementos.

Akshara Foundation | Bengaluru

The organization is credited with setting up 3500 libraries to encourage children to read, especially those studying in government schools. It also works towards honing the language and mathematical skills among children by developing learning kits for them. It has trained thousands of youths, who became its volunteers and work towards organizing the ongoing education activities. To their credit were students from six different government schools taking at the prestigious International Robotics Competitions. The organization works in tandem with the departments of education and women and child welfare and has benefited nearly nine lakh children so far.

Anthyodaya Social Service Society | Bagalkot

The society aims to empower children and equip them with the ability to make their own decisions. To this end, they have set up child rights clubs in the government schools of 35 villages of Modhul taluk. To boost growth of children belonging to backward communities, it organized children's parliaments in 10 villages where the kids were encouraged to seek solutions to problems using their own ingenuity. They also gained membership in the state's children's parliament. The organization has saved 20 innocent kids from the clutches of child labour and child marriage. They have also conducted awareness camps on child trafficking, child protection among other issues.

Margarashi Society | Kalaburgi

Among other things, Margadarshi aims to enhance awareness about many of the issues plaguing children today. From child marriage to sexual abuse, they have conducted a host of seminars and workshops not just to enhance awareness about these issues but also educate teachers and School Development and Monitoring Committee members on child protection. The society organizes health camps for children erstwhile engaged in begging, and has reunited a missing mentally challenged boy with his parents. To their credit, they have so far rescued 81 children under Operation Smile.

Parents Association of Deaf Children | Mysuru

Founded in 1982, the association aims at educating and guiding the parents of hearing impaired children in the ways to deal with them. It has started pre-primary centres which impart speech and hearing training. In a unique initiative, the teachers in its school are mothers of deaf children. Once the children are done with the basic training, they continue education in normal schools. The state-of-the-art facility also assists children in buying hearing aids and gives financial aid for surgery. Nearly 1,000 children have benefited from this.

Individuals:

Srirama Reddy | Kolar

A retired teacher, Reddy started Sri Byraveshwara Vidya Nikethana in Byrapalli with 80 children. The facility benefits nearly 3,000 children at present. His aims to provide modern education and facilities to rural children. The school, which has a computer lab, gives priority to cultural and spiritual programmes. Special training programmes are regularly held to enhance skills of the teachers. Motivated by the welfare of children, Reddy wants to prepare them for the outside competitive world.

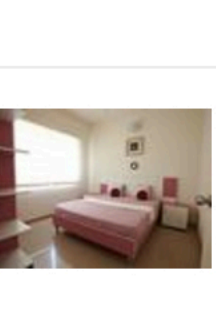
Sridhara Handhe | Udupi

Handhe has been training children in Yakshagana, a traditional theatre form, for the past 40 years. He has been training them in their homes during their free time. Handhe's idea is to balance extra-curricular activities with education for a holistic development. Children trained by him have put up over 2500 shows across the state, as well as in Goa, Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi. They have also performed abroad — in Atlanta, Buffalo, New York, Washington, Manchester and London.

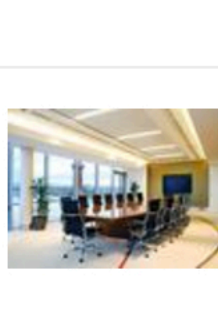
Nagarathna Sunila Ramagowda | Belagavi

Diagnosed with HIV, Ramagowda made it her life's mission to work for the welfare of HIV-positive persons. Her organization, Spandana Network of Positive People, works to help HIV-positive people lead a normal life. She has counselled pregnant infected women and children in government hospitals, speaking and drawing from her own harrowing experiences. She has been working to educate children in district government schools regarding the changes that take place during puberty and adolescence. Ramagowda also conducts group meetings, distributes school stationery and nutritious food to orphan HIV-positive children .

Fr. Santhosh Bapu | Bidar



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As the director of Sparsh Care Home, Bapu works for the benefit and welfare of HIV-positive children belonging to different backgrounds. He has fought for the rights of the HIV-positive women, farmers and the differently-abled in Bidar, Kalaburagi, Yadgiri and Vijayapura. Every year, 120 HIV-positive kids are imparted skill-based training to help them live an independent life. His organization also conducts blood donation camps in memory of Mother Teresa. Besides congregating on World Aids Day, the organization members meet every month to discuss the progress and well-being of those suffering from HIV.

BOX

Exceptional Achievement

Exceptionally talented children in the fields of art, sport, music, innovation, academics and other spheres were honoured with a memento and citation on the occasion of Children's Day. They will also be recommended for the 2016-17 National Awards. This year, 18 children have been recognized for their achievements and received recommendations.

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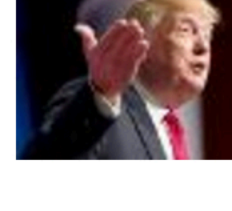
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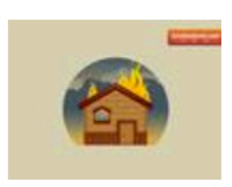


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