

## Don Bosco Ashalayam

### News Clippings

December 2020

#### Felicitation program for Class X & XII boys and girls

The successful students who passed Class X and XII this year were warmly congratulated on 08 December 2020. This program is usually held soon after the announcement of results in May but had to be deferred due to the pandemic. In all 34 students – 20 of Class X and 14 of Class XII received gifts and certificates of appreciation from the Chief Guest Mrs. **Ananya Chakraborti Chatterjee - Chairperson - West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights (WBCPCR)**. The Asha Deepti and Baltikuri girls put up a song and dance performance for the audience. Seema Mardi and Probir Kundu gave a brief account of their experiences in Ashalayam. Our chief guest and many in the audience were visibly moved by their testimonies. Mrs. Chatterjee lauded the youngster's achievements and mentioned that we do not have leaders to look up to but she's hopeful that Ashalayam children will grow up as responsible citizens and be a source of inspiration for others as they're grounded in values and in a position to positively influence society. Notable achievers this year include Mariam Khatun 84% (Class X), Seema Mardi and Suraj Shaw (Class XII) both secured 85%. Seating was arranged as per the social distancing norms and only senior students and limited numbers of staff were invited to the program.



*Mrs. Ananya Chakraborti & Fr. Mathew flanked by Class XII (above) and Class X (below) students*



#### Cycling Champ - Hemanto Murmu

Hemanto Murmu out-pedalled all his competitors and crowned as champion in the 40 kilometre "Kolkata Racing Series" cycling competition. Organised by the West Bengal Cyclists Association on 22 November 2020, Hemanto edged out scores of professional level cyclists to secure the pole position. Congratulations to Hemanto on this superb achievement. Hemanto is in class XII and doing internship in Ecopark Kolkata.

### **Counselling, Therapy and activities for children**

No school, missing friends and other social occasions is contributing to the rising anxiety levels among children. The children missed the Durga Puja and Deepavali celebrations which were heavily muted this year due to government restrictions. Our counsellors have their hands and minds full trying to allay their fear and restlessness through regular individual and group counselling sessions. As per their recommendation 12 Ashalayam children went to stay for a week in Brother Nabin's village in Noorpur on the banks of the river Ganges, over 100 kilometres from Ashalayam. The children stayed for a week and hugely enjoyed the village atmosphere and rituals. Due to the risky situation public transport was avoided and the children were taken and brought back in the big

ambulance. Around the same time a group of senior boys went to Bhattanagar and got involved in activities there; fishing, swimming and games to their hearts content. They have had a competition of peeling the coconut husk with their teeth. Both groups had a good time in Noorpur and Bhattanagar. Besides the regular counselling sessions, the boys and girls are physically active through involvement in sports and games and other recreational activities.



***The finalists of the Coconut peeling competition in Bhattanagar***

### **Online education**

Despite the connectivity and other issues, online classes have become the norm. Our children are slowly getting used to it. More than a dozen smartphones have been purchased and existing



laptops made available for our children to attend online classes and tests. Due to poor connectivity and unfamiliarity with online teaching modes the teachers are also clueless about online teaching strategies resulting in teachers dumping assignments on WhatsApp at one go placing a huge burden on the helpless students. Staffs have been designated to prepare our children to respond to the given tasks and not feel lost or anxious about it.



## Life Skills Education Workshops

After an interruption during the severe lockdown phase, the LSE program has resumed for Ashalayam boys and girls. Life skills sessions on relationships, goal setting, effective communication and more were held for various batches of senior students in Ashalayam and Asha Tici hostels.



## Children's Day & Children's Carnival

14 November 2020 is an important day in India; it's celebrated as Children's Day in memory of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister whose love for children is well documented. In fact the entire week from 14 to 21 November was celebrated as Children's Carnival with programs on each day in Ashalayam or outreach project areas. In Ashalayam there were arts and dance competition and a special magic show. Coincidentally Diwali also happened to be on the same day; in the evening Ashalayam was lit up with diyas (earthen lamps) and children lighted sparklers. In compliance with the Calcutta High Court order there were no firecrackers. Children's day was also celebrated in ASSP centres, Howrah Station and other outreach areas.



*Children's Day in ASSP's Jagannathpur Centre*



*Magic show in Ashalayam*

## Awareness Programs

Programs were organised to inform and assist parents to help children cope with the disruption to normal life wrought by the pandemic. Awareness programs were also held on prevention of child marriage, child abuse and protection from Covid-19 infections. The Awareness programs were conducted in Howrah Station and in the ASSP Centres of Premchand, Jagannthpur, Bahirgangarampur, Dasnagar and Sijberia centre of ASSP.



*Awareness program in ASSP's Premchand Centre*

## DBA Covid warriors honoured

The plucky DBA staff members carrying out relief work of distributing food rations, hygiene materials, cooked meals and medicines in slum communities at considerable risk to their own lives were honoured at a special program on 05 November 2020. DBA Director Fr. Mathew appreciated each and every one of the brave staffers involved in this program by awarding them a certificate of appreciation.

## Children's stories

### Deepali Roy



One day Fr. Mathew got a call from a girl who was sounding familiar. She was Deepali Roy; Deepali grew up in Ashalayam but after her Higher Secondary studies her so called sister said that she will look after her. Deepali being young willingly went with her but to her shock she realised that her 'sister' was making use of her. She poured out her heart to me and begged me to take her back. She wanted to be safe. Deepali came back and was admitted to a short term hotel management course in Don Bosco Nitika. After completion of her course she was placed in a job in Bangalore. She was happy with her job and earning a decent salary but the lockdown resulted in the hotel closing down and she lost her job. With no job and no place to stay she was desperate to come back. She did come back and expressed a desire to do a nursing course so that she may have a stable career and life. She has been admitted to a nursing college in Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh where she begins a three nursing course along with six other Ashalayam girls.

## Sunny & Lakshmi Shaw



**Lakshmi Shaw**

Sunny left for home with his sister Lakshmi just a day before the Lockdown was announced. Sunny and Lakshmi live with their mother in a slum in central Kolkata. Lakshmi completed her Class XII this year and is selected to go for a nursing course in Assam. Due to the pandemic she had to attend online classes. An android phone was purchased for her to enable her to



**Sunny Shaw**

participate in the online classes. Meanwhile Sunny is happy that he's having regular meals and the time and facilities for studies in Ashalayam but he feels anxious lot for his mother who's living in a dilapidated hut in a congested slum. He worries that she may fall sick due to the unhealthy environment and also due to the fact that their hut was severely damaged during cyclone Amphan and his mother doesn't have money to repair the hut.

*Thank you dear friends for being there for us even during the hard times. God knows how many personal comforts you've sacrificed to help children in dire need. We're blessed to have you with us. Thank You.*

