

Hill Echoes

Bulletin of Rotary Club of Thane Hills

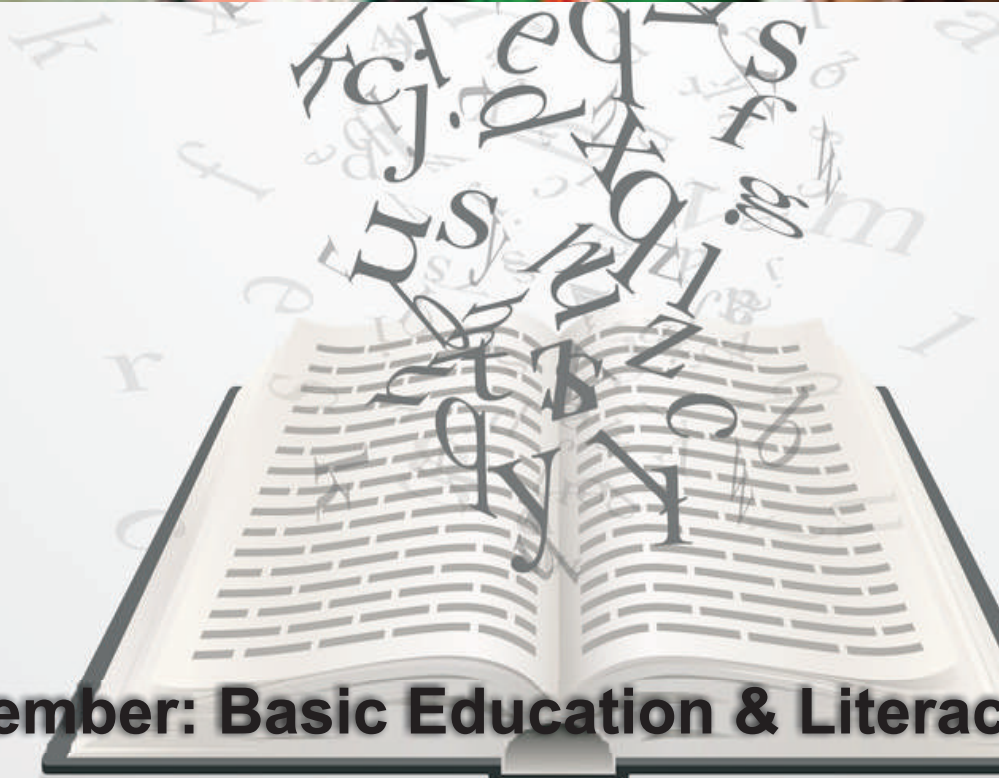
Issue # 3 - September 2022

RI President: Jennifer Jones

Club President: Jayram Mendon

Club Secretary: Samir Limaye

DG: Kailash Jethani



September: Basic Education & Literacy Month



President's Message

Rotary Pranaam to all Hillers

September is the month of Basic Education and Literacy.

Basic Education is one of our most important thrust areas. We are working on various projects.

In the month of July we set up a computer lab and donated books, slates, shoes etc to children from first standard to 7th standard.

Our Education scholarship fund is aimed for 30 to 50 children per year and we will be launching it in the first week of September. Formal committee will scrutinize the applications and decide the eligibility criteria. Team has been working since the last three months on deciding the format. Last year we launched it officially. However the eligibility criteria and other procedures are fine tuned and a formal committee has been set up.

Our Virtual Eye program for Blind is well received by all. We have completed 43 schools in Maharashtra and 28 schools in Karnataka will be implemented next month. We will be setting up computer labs in 10 blind schools of Karnataka. The program will benefit students from 5th standard onwards. With this program around 4000 students are benefitted yearly.

Our Foundation is working on the state of the art Autism center project to bring world class education and therapies along with best practices around the world to treat Autism with utmost care.

The Special schools along with multiple facilities knitted together to give the best education and lifestyle possible for the special children with Autism Disorder.

1. Early Intervention center with various therapies will detect the autism at an early age. Studies suggest that early detection and therapies will help recover autism with higher efficiency. The various programs and therapies are of global standard. Each therapies explained in detail in the report.

2. Autism school will have pre-primary, primary, Secondary and high school for children with ASD and other learning disabilities. The total 50 students will be enrolled in the early phase of the project, which will be increased to two fold based on the progress of the school.

3. Residence for Children with ASD is the need of the hour. The fast life and the struggle of parents to raise children with severe ASD is unmeasurable. The state of the art facility will ensure good hygiene. With timely required training and education it will help to improve the standards of life for both children and parents.

4. Teacher Training Facility is the main idea behind this project. Team RCTH has decided to build a world class teachers training center which will have various certifications in accordance with the Government of India. It will also provide the training courses on various therapies and knowhow of Autism. Facility will include the training of Parents, students, Shadow teachers as well. The center



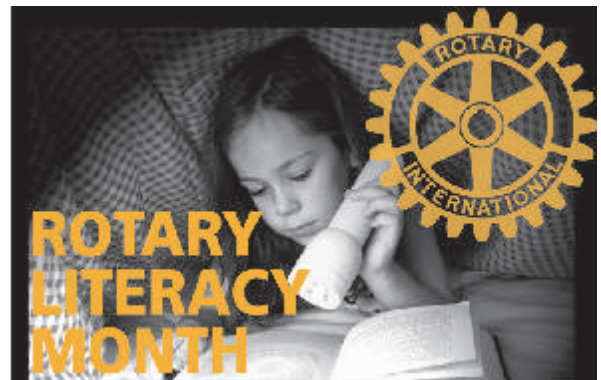
Editorial

Friends, September is "Basic education and literacy" month in Rotary calendar. And we have already carried out few projects related to this in August. We helped a child in need, distributed computer to a school, could get help for needy children from the help of Pawar Public School, Bhandup.

We also carried out other projects. All these projects have been initiated by active Rotarians. This is the magic of Rotary, it gives the conducive atmosphere to where such projects are initiated. Many times we think of good ideas to be implemented for the benefit of sections of society, be it underprivileged sections of society or their children, but we are not able to take any action on individual level. Once we are in the company of like-minded people, we find solutions coming our way.

Details of such projects are in the bulletin. You will also find excellent article on the topic by R/Ann Jayashree Mane who is active in this field for quite a few years through Pratham. The article is eye opener when we read about some statistics about the status of education.

Rajesh Salaskar



will tie up with world class Universities globally and equip itself with the latest technology.

5. Vocational training Setup: The beneficiaries are directly selected from the school or from the residence.. It will also help the children with ASD to develop certain soft & Technical skills. RCTH will be teaming up with various corporate in its own capacity to provide employment to these children. The facility will provide training as well as employment.

Our goal is to provide and improve the education standards across all types of disability. Rakesh Wadhwan School at Shenve is benefitting around 750 students. Above all shows the amount of effort put by the club. Education is the most important pillar in nation building and we as a club are committed to it.

Jayaram Mendon

President

Basic Education

Learning begins very early in life. Learning to crawl, learning to walk, identify people and things around is the beginning and by the age of five years a child learns 2 or 3 languages if multilingual environment and stimulating environment is provided. Formal education or schooling begins at the age of 3.

What is basic education?

Basic education includes the development of competencies, knowledge, attitudes and values as a basis for lifelong learning. It is the foundation for on which further levels of education can be build. Along with other basics, education is the key need to have a good quality life. In developing countries basic education is crucial to alleviating poverty, reducing inequality and driving economic growth.

What are the stages of basic education?

Basic or elementary education comprises of the 2 stages— Primary stage and upper primary stage usually starting from age 6 and completing by age 14. However, as defined by the New Education policy (2020) now it comprises of three stages - Foundational stage (pre primary to grade 2), pre preparatory stage (grade 3 to 5) and middle stage (grade 6 to 8).

What is the current scenario of basic education in India?

In recent decades India has made significant progress on access to schooling. Primary school enrollment has been a success story largely due to various programs and drives in remote areas. Improvements to infrastructure have been a priority to achieve this and now 98 percent inhabitants have a primary school (class I-V) within one kilometer and 92 percent have an upper primary school (class VI to VIII) within a three kilometer walking distance. Improvement in enrollment have also been bolstered by key laws, policies and programs such as the Right to Education RTE act (2009) and National Childhood Care and Education policy (2013).

Challenges

Despite these improvements, keeping children in school is still an issue and dropout rates continue to be high. Nationally 29 percent of children drop out before completing five years of primary school and 43 percent before completing upper primary school. High school completion is only 42 percent. This lands India among the top five nations for out of school children of primary school age, with 1.4 million 6 to 11 year olds not attending school. In many ways schools

are not equipped adequately- there is a teacher shortage and only 53 percent have functional girls' toilets and 74 percent have access to drinking water.

Additionally, the quality of education is a major issue and reports show that children are not achieving class appropriate learning levels. According to Pratham's ASER 2018 report, only 50 % children in grade V can read a grade II level text and do basic arithmetic operations. Without immediate and urgent help, these children cannot effectively progress in the education system, and so improving the quality of learning in schools is the next big challenge for both the state and central governments.

What needs to be done?

Helping children acquire skills of reading and basic Math by the end of grade II or beginning of grade III will significantly reduce learning gaps in later stages. Engaging parents, especially mothers in the early age group can help solve the problem to a great extent. Not only the enrollment but the awareness for educating children has increased and this can be leveraged to prepare the children at the pre primary stage.

Along with the government, several NGOs are involved in dealing with the problem of retention and improving basic literacy and numeracy skills. Pratham, one of the largest NGOs working in the field of education, has conducted ASER survey since 2005 and has showed that there is a major learning crisis in the country. Since 2006, Pratham and state governments have implemented "solutions" to the learning crisis by implementing variety of "catch up" programs based on the TaRL or "Teaching at the Right Level" approach. Post pandemic "TaRL" is needed more urgently than before.

NEP 2020 gives great hope by recognizing the problem and setting up a national mission on Foundational literacy and numeracy and aims to achieve this by 2025. As per this, the curricula will aim for

holistic development by equipping learners with key 21st century skills, reduction in content to enhance critical thinking and greater focus on experiential learning.



- Jayashree Mane

SEPTEMBER 2022 CALENDAR

Pre Official Club Visit - 3rd September

Onam - 8th September



Official Club Visit - 15th September

Club Picnic - 25th September



Wheelchair Distribution - Mid of September

Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM)

Formerly known as Rotary South Asia Society for Development and Cooperation (RSAS) aims to work towards total literacy and quality education in India. To achieve that RILM have designed a comprehensive program called "T-E-A-C-H" where:

T - Teacher Support

E - E-learning

A - Adult Literacy

C - Child Development

H - Happy School

Each of these programs has a specific focus and it is interlinked with each other in achieving the common goal of bringing total literacy and improving the learning outcomes of primary education, in various parts of the country.

The Teacher Support program

The aim of the Teacher Support program is to improve the professional skills and performance of teachers through training/re-training and recognition to outstanding teachers.

Training/Re-training instils confidence and strengthens skills in teachers which eventually lead to better performance in everyday classroom; it also reinforces teachers' content knowledge and improves the learning outcome of the students. Recognising teachers for their outstanding contribution in shaping young minds boosts confidence in teachers.

Achievements: RILM have successfully trained 1,80,707 teachers with the proactive role of Rotary clubs around the country. Apart from training, 30,972 outstanding teachers have been recognised with the Nation Builder Awards.

E - learning



RILM's E-learning program, "E-Shiksha", aims at improving the teaching-learning experience through the use of curriculum based audio-visual modules in local languages in Govt. / Govt. aided schools.

"E-Shiksha" is the program is a single classroom installation in Government / aided schools which aims to improve the teaching-learning experience through an integrated solution consisting of a LCD projector / LED TV / Smart LED TV loaded with the educational audio-visual software mapped with State curriculum in local languages. Software content can be offline entrenched in a SD card

/ pen drive or online rooted to any educational application depending upon the requirement of the project.

Achievements: As of now, RILM have successfully installed e-learning system in 27,368 government and government-aided schools across the country through Rotary Clubs, CSR and PSU support.

Through NCERT partnership, RILM has successfully taken its digital content to 15 million households through DD Free Dish, 420 million users through Jio Mobile, 70.26 million households through TATA Sky and also initiated million learning sessions through DIKSHA portal.

Adult Literacy

RILM's Adult Literacy Program aims to impart functional literacy to non-literate adults (15+ age) across India and then engage literate



young adults in skill development training through various resource organizations.

According to "Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2013-14: Teaching and Learning - Achieving Quality for All", published by the UNESCO, India has the highest population of non-literate adults at 287 million, amounting to 37% of the global total.

Although the Government of India launched the Saakshar Bharat Program in 2009, which aims to introduce a variety of teaching-learning programs for non-literates and neo-literates between 15-35 years of age, in rural areas, the issue of illiteracy among the large number of non-literate adults residing in the urban areas remains unaddressed.

Achievements: Under the Adult Literacy program 88,005 adults have been made literate through Diksha and Swabhimaan.

Who Is Literate Adult?



According to the National Literacy Mission Authority, Government of India, a literate adult is one who can: 1. Read aloud at a speed of 30 words per minute 2. Read and understand road signs, posters and newspapers 3. Understand and copy 7 words per minute 4. Take dictation at the speed of 7 words per minute 5. Read and write



numbers from 1 to 100 6. Perform simple calculations - addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

Child Development

Child development is also known as Asha Kiran.... A ray of hope is to bring children back to schools. The program is currently being implemented in 14 states in partnership with 33 NGOs.

Happy School

Happy School Program aims to provide/upgrade the infrastructural and co-scholastic facilities in state funded schools, to make them secure, attractive and happy learning places for students and teachers.



A positive and a cheerful school environment with all basic-infrastructure present can increase student enrolment, yield better attendance which leads to higher retention and improves concentration which leads to better learning outcome among students.

Achievement: Since the inception of the TEACH program, RILM have successfully transformed 3,112 government and government-aided schools across the country through Rotary clubs and districts.

Donation of electricity meters to ragpickers

Just few kilometers away from our home near Kopari dry waste center (near pipelines) there are huts. These women do sorting, cleaning, shredding and baling work for tons and tons of waste and trash which we throw in bin every day. Nobody cares what happens to that afterwards.

About a dozen plus women with family residing without electrical connection for many years. Imagine life in complete darkness after sunset.



RCTH helped them get power connection. Energised by MSEB. We have provided electricity meters to ragpickers so that they will have electricity at home. All meters have been installed.

Shri Krishna Janmashtami Mahotsav

“Do everything you have to do, but not with greed, not with ego, not with lust, not with envy but with love, compassion, humility and devotion.” - Lord Krishna, Bhagavad Gita.

India is a country with a diverse culture, different ethnicities, and rich heritage, all which have been co-existing for thousands of years.



One of the most significant parts of our culture is our festivals which are as diverse as our country itself. One such festival is the Shri Krishna Janmashtami, an annual festival commemorated across India with great pomp & show, to celebrate the divine birth of Lord Shri Krishna, the 8th Incarnation of Lord Vishnu, a multifaceted personality loved and worshiped by all strata of the society.

In the battle of Kurukshetra, Lord Krishna enlightened Arjuna with his sacred knowledge. Today known as Bhagwat Gita, this scripture



comprises of several life lessons that can be easily applied to our daily lives.

Our Rotary Club of Thane Hills celebrated Janmashtami in a style, only Hillers can do. The event was lead and conceptualized by Rtn Sucheta Rege who created an incredible sequence of events and our Hillers 'Old' and 'New', rose to the occasion to dish out what was a stellar performance by one and all. The camaraderie and the



bonding between our Hillers, which has always been our strength, were on full display to the delight of everyone present. The evening commenced with our National anthem, a short speech by President Jayaram followed by Induction of new Rotarians Ms Bhavna Jadhav, Mr Harsh Kathale and Mr Gururaj Agnihotri. They were welcomed with much affection and love which only Hillers can offer.



Chief guests for the event were none other than our own little Krishna (Mayank Gadkari) and Radha (Akanksha Mendon). These super cute kids full of innocence, graced and blessed our show. The colorfull attires of all those who were present, added a lot of glamour to the celebrations. The events that unfolded later were a joy to behold.

Superb compering by Rtn Pushpalata Chaurey, an energizing dance performance by our lil Shoumi Kundu, mesmerizing medley by Ann Sonali Korde, a melodious Bhaktigeet by Sanjiv Deshpande, a superlative dance performance by Ann's Nileema Nagavkar and Priti Kundu, followed by some beautiful Krishna songs by Ann Preeti Kasi, Rtn's Shrirang Date and Alpa Shah, Rtn Dr Anagha Karkhanis, Rtn Lata Sanjay and Sujit Gawayi and Ann Anuja Kulkarni. An innovate game concocted by Rtn Sunil Gwalani contributed fun element to the event.

After a frenzied activity of dance, laughter, fellowship and millions of selfies and pictures it was time to savor some delicious food. At the stroke of midnight, the curtains came down on what was one of the most memorable evenings of fun and frolic and fond memories.

We celebrated Janmashtami with signal school children (Courtesy Niravana studio).



Google, Sikandar and Serendipity...

Though as traveller (not tourist) our trips are never fully planned and we go by the flow, we were also Google-Ready for our Hubali-Hampi experience.

As a 'slow traveller' we enjoy strolls through local bazar. We also prefer auto rikshaw wherever possible and go by driver's suggestion.

Day 2 in Hubali, there was a young Auto driver waiting for his first passenger of the day. As he greeted us, we asked whether he knew Hindi/English. "*Hindi aati hai Sir*" he replied. The first spot was Chandramouleshwara Temple.



As we reached the temple, I noticed steps without any railing side by side to hold (a common issue at all the temples and historical monuments). As I started climbing the few steps, there came a helping hand of our auto driver, without we asking for it. He moved with us into the temple, keeping distance and quiet. The atmosphere was serene. With just a 'Pujari' and us, we soaked up the atmosphere sitting there peacefully.

As we moved around inside the temple and then around its compound marvelling at the superb architecture, the driver too was walking behind us, once again keeping distance and equally observing the structure.

"How beautiful this temple is, isn't it? And see there is no cement between the two stones but for centuries this temple is here intact. Our ancestors must have known so much about construction. Even there is no water inside the temple in spite of so much raining." – the 'driver' shared his observation.

He came back to support as I started getting down those high steps. As we got back to auto, I asked him what should be our next spot? He suggested 'Banashankari' temple.

As we entered the 'Banashankari' temple compound, we just stood there enjoying the marvellous structure, all in 'Badami' stones. "WOW! Beautiful, isn't it?" I said looking at the driver. "Yes, indeed and I am coming for the first time here." He replied. He just smiled when I looked at him in surprise. As we walked towards the temple, I saw him touching his hand first his forehead and then the heart, bowing his head. (as in '*Namaskar*')

We spent good time inside the temple sitting peacefully, with no one around here too, enjoyed the pious atmosphere. Yashodhara observed an interesting aspect of the idol, the idol was half Shiva, half Parvati with sari draped around, stood on the Shiva-Lingam at the base.

After few minutes a family of three came there. As they too were marvelling at the idol, I mentioned about the 'Shiv-Lingam' at the bottom, not fully seen due to the saree. Three of them too surprised and spoke something to each other, to which the Driver went inside the 'Garbha' area, and showed the 'Lingam' beneath the saree. The lady was so happy to see this unique idol and thanked us and the driver.

All of us were silent again for few more minutes with prayers on our lips.

Observing his good Hindi, I asked what language he speaks at home, "Kannada and Hindi", both, he replied. Then I casually asked his name. 'Sikandar' Sir, he replied avoiding my glance. Yashodhara and I was taken back. "So that explains his Hindi" I thought to myself. "I know little Marathi too Sir as few years back, I was in Kolhapur for two years" Sikandar shared - we were bit shocked and alert!

Yashodhara and I started chatting in hush-hush ('He' knows little Marathi too!) about he suggesting temple, coming inside the temples, bowing down to idols and behaving so elegantly as a faithful follower. Everything was bit different to our presumed 'understanding'.

As we continued our journey for the next few hours, Sikandar was friendly and kept on pointing out few important spots on the way. Observing flags everywhere and to many passing auto rikshaws too, I asked how come he has not hosted flag atop his auto. "*Ye flag jidharhonaudhar hi hoga to achchahai Sir*" - I was taken aback by his answer and also made me think for a moment. "Okay, but we are celebrating our 75th Independence Day by this way" - I persisted. To which he just kept quiet.

At the particular point as he went on driving, he suddenly slowed down and asked "Sir, do you know Gangu Bai?" and as I was about to speak, I saw the gate with 'Gangubai Hangal Memorial Music



Institute' signboard. We were thrilled! This was unknown to us; Yashodhara and I both are followers of Indian Classical Music. And here we are, at such a prominent place, unknown to us earlier!

As we got down, two youngsters greeted us. Both were students of the Gurukul. They shared about the institute and its activities. They

were in their fourth and final year of Degree. The entire initiative is supported by Gov of Karnataka and the students once selected do not have to pay anything for the four years of their 'Tapasya'.

We went up to the statue of the great legend Vidushi Gangubai Hangal, erected at the entrance of the campus and paid our respect. Sikandar too was happy to see us chatting with those students



enthusiastically. As we were about to move out, one of the students mentioned about Gangu Bai Hangal's home in Hubali where there is a private museum too. We were thrilled to know about it and before we could ask, "Ha maalumhai Sir vomuze, chalo" Sikandar replied to our great relief.

As Sikandar stopped the auto to our next halt, a small but beautiful bungalow with a courtyard at the front with boundary wall displaying the sign board 'Gangubai Hangal Sangeet Vidyalaya', was there.



As we entered the home, a charming portrait of Ustad Bismillah Khan and Vidushi Gangubai Hangal greeted us. The next 30 minutes we were in awe of the legend, her instruments, her 40 plus National awards and numerous photographs with many other

legends of Indian Classical Music and well-known personalities, hanging around the walls.

Ms. Vaishnavi, granddaughter and vocalist herself asked her young son to show us around. She chatted with us about her grandmother Gangubai, her struggles and how she encouraged all seven of her grandkids to get well educated. All her cousins are engineers except she, who did Masters in Music. While the engineer grandkids are 'Kansen', its only Vaishnavi who has been actively pursuing music, carrying forward the great legacy. She shared how she left her job, ignored the upcoming promotions and decided to go with her heart by settling back to her grandmother's home, restarting the music, conducting classes, organizing monthly sessions of emerging artist in that home. "I left the job, came down here. Money is not everything, at the fag end of our life, we should not have any regrets. Today I am young and capable, let me do what I like, pursue music and carry forward my grandmother's legacy, keep alive her memory in this very 'Vastu' where she stayed more than eight decades. These walls have listened so many great artists. All the great contemporary artist of my grandmother used to stay with us and have music sessions" - Vaishnavi shared as we continued our chats. We were at home with her warmth and friendly chat.

We narrated how we landed up to this place, first thanks to Sikandar and then to those two students. Sikandar was with us, equally engrossed in observing all the photographs and listening to our chat. "You are lucky, as one may not expect a Rikshaw driver, to know about Gangubai Hangal and her home, you got a good person to navigate. Its destiny, in a way." She observed as she spoke warmly in Kannada with Sikandar.

As we thanked Vaishnavi and left, Yashodhara and I realised how beautiful coincidence this has been. Sikandar knowing about Gangubai Hangal Gurukul and stopping there and then if not for those two students, that lead us here. It gave us opportunity to be with the legend, chat with her granddaughter. "Its sheer serendipity, isn't it? Yashodhara discovered.

When Vaishnavi learnt that we had not yet tested the real local Hubali food, she insisted we go to 'BaseshwarKhanawal'. She explained Sikandar to which particular joint we should go, as there are number of Baseshawr joints in Hubli. Sikandar obliged and we relished the delicious Hubali lunch! (Again, unknown and an unplanned, never came in Google search)

No Google search had showed us this unique Music School or the home museum of the great VidushiGangubaiHangal, in any of its 'Must Visit Places' or 'Things to do' and here is this auto rikshaw driver, uneducated fellow leading us to this pious experience just like a temple in its own way.

We realised, no matter how much our life is influenced by social media and over depended on Google for anything under the sun, there are few things in life, precious ones, that can be experienced by divine intervention of a fellow human being.



It was Sikandar, a fellow human being and not a search engine that made our day by facilitating a visit to the music temple! A sheer serendipitous experience!

Thank you Sikandar, 'Jidhar hona, udhar hi tum the'!!

- PP Atul Bhide

Thriller trek to Tikujiniwadi with RCTH Rotractors

6th August 2022

To walk in nature is to witness a thousand miracles....Marie Davis

How aptly said. Mother nature inspires us in the most amazing and magical ways and when you add a little "Mindfulness", what follows is an amazing experience which benefits both the body and the mind.



Mindful hiking is all about remembering to focus your five senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch, to enjoy the beautiful experience that mother nature offers when you are in her loving lap.

The hike commenced on a Saturday morning, with an enthusiastic bunch of young Rotractors and a few members from our Rotary Club



of Thane Hills. The plan was to explore the forest around Tikujiniwadi hills while enjoying the monsoons in their full glory. We also decided to collect the plastic trash during our trek.

The forest around Tikujiniwadi has many trails leading to some thrilling hikes all culminating at the top of a hill called as "Tiger Hill". Since our group was small (around 13 members), we decided to take the thriller "Mooli route". While the route is quite safe, the challenge and the subsequent thrill that follows, comes from



climbing the hill using all of your four limbs, holding vines, tree trunks, stones and whatever resources you come across, to navigate your way to the top. The continuous downpour made the going tough but we were all determined to reach the top as a team. The climb was successfully completed, thanks to great team work



by one and all. There was a sense of pride and accomplishment after this thriller hike. The plastic trash collected enroute was safely disposed off at the forest gate in earmarked trash bins.

I would like to thank my friends and fellow Rotarians from Thane hills Nilesh Puranik, Dwaipayan Ghosh, Vidhyadhar Naik and Ann Mukta Gadkari for their support as well as Sucheta for coordinating this trek.



To sum up as Paulo Coelho said, "If you think adventure is dangerous, try routine, it's lethal."



Looking forward to our next big adventure amidst pristine nature along with adventure seeking souls. The pics that follow unfold the story of this thriller.

- Jayant Nagavkar

Pawar Public School recognition

Our club recognised efforts of school kids, teachers and institution. Students helped three of the main cause of Rotary

- Basic education (donating stationery and bags) ,
 - Sustainability - tree plantation)
 - Disease prevention and Healthcare - raising funds for blood bank
- We also thanks to parents for believing in Rotary work and allowing kids of 8th and 9th standard.

We see these 40 kids encouraging and inspiring many many more to do community service.

Big thanks to R/Ann Radhika Padmanabhan for leading the project

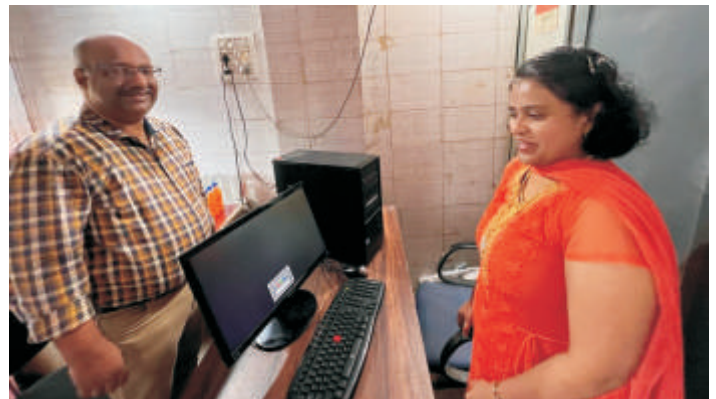


Rtn Koshy John and Rtn Anil Kumar at Pawar Public School ceremony

Computer to Hanuman Nagar School



RC Thane Hills donated computer to the school at Hanuman Nagar for slum children - courtesy Sujit Uchil. And we did flag hoisting at this school with the children of the school, distributed notebooks.



Hamari Pari



We have sent Sanitary Vending Machine to school at Satara (Courtesy Pawan).

Wheel chairs to old age homes and hospitals

We are providing 100 wheel chairs to seven old age homes and hospitals. The 100 wheel chairs are free issued to RCTH hence no funding is required for the wheel chairs.

Following is list of the organizations

1. Brindavan Old Age home - 5 wheel Chairs
2. Kalyan Old Age home - 5 wheel chairs
3. Shree Ganesh Vruddashram - 4 Potty chairs and 4 wheel chairs
4. Smit Old age home - 10 wheel chairs
5. Thane Civil Hospital (TMC) - 15 Wheel Chairs
6. Kalwa Hospital(TMC) - 15 Wheel Chairs
7. Special schools (20 schools) - 40 wheel chairs