

DSFI E-xpressions

News from across the country



25-year-old swims against tide, creates waves



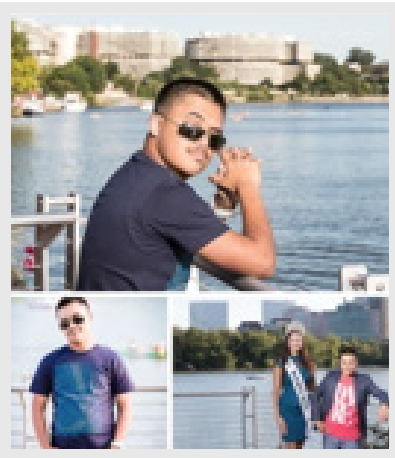
Arti Krishnamoorthy
Besant Nagar, Chennai.

Arti is aiming to compete in the next Special Olympics Chennai: The dive into the pool, the will to reach the finish line and memories of a medal, bring out the best in 25-year-old Arti Krishnamoorthy. Silver and bronze medallist in swimming at the Special Olympics 2013 - Regional Games, in Australia, Krishnamoorthy is first an athlete and then a person with Down's Syndrome.

Introduced to the sport 15 years ago, the girl from Besant Nagar, who was refused regular academic education by institutions, has learned that public perception doesn't matter when it comes to achievements. "The sport has been the most inclusive field where people are given a fair chance and judged on their ability. She trains with children and adults at Velachery swimming complex and is treated as an equal," says Sandhya, Arti's mother and coordinator at Down Syndrome Federation of India, Chennai branch.

Swimming, which started as a hobby, turned therapeutic and before long Arti was training for her first state meet in 2007. It was her coach at the Down's syndrome centre, Veerabhadra, who picked her out of a group of children to take up swimming. "It is remarkable how she overcame her fear of water. In the water she has become more disciplined," says Sandhya who has been inspired by her daughter to become a Special Olympics coach herself, despite her fear of water. Ask Arti about what she thinks about when in the water and she quips, "I want to be first". But she takes her titles lightly as there are more feats to be conquered by her.

Jacob Varghese Exemplifies Living Life to the Fullest with Down Syndrome



Jacob Varghese
Exemplifies Living Life

Jacob Varghese, 14, enjoys sports, music and fashion—he also has a new interest: girls. What sets him apart from many teenagers, however, is the fact that he has Down Syndrome. Like any other kid with Down Syndrome, Jacob's parents encountered many challenges when it came to raising him. He was a heavy kid and had several developmental and health issues—including three holes in his heart. Yet, not only did he survive, he has since flourished.

Today, Jacob is in his last year of middle school and completes all of his daily tasks independently, such as settling his own restaurant bills and—the typical teenager request—insisting that his privacy be respected. Jacob's ability to lead a mostly normal life is largely due to years of dedication and support from his parents. From an early age, they provided him with venues for growth, which included swimming and percussion lessons. As his interest in swimming and music started to grow, he also learned to play the keyboard and drums. His passion for music and sports has only increased over the years.

Recently, Jacob had a particularly memorable moment. His love for fashion and celebrities is well-known among his peers. When he was introduced to Miss Maryland World 2015, Syanne Centeno, he couldn't control his excitement—he requested a photo shoot with her, and Centeno agreed. The two did an exclusive photo shoot in historic Georgetown. His dad's friend, Anand Jayaraman of AJPhotoz, was more than happy to capture the moments. Looking through the pictures, one can't help but agree that all three did an amazing job.

Fighting Down's syndrome with a flourish



Usha Subramanian
Chennai

Ramnath finished school with flying colours and is now pursuing his BBA through distance education

Chennai: Usha Subramanian comes from a family that holds high faith in education and strives to raise children who love academics or become academicians themselves.

So, when she walked her son Ramnath into the SIET Dyslexia Centre on his first day at school, her heart broke a little, knowing he wasn't welcome into the system that she had grown up revering.

But to this day, she and her husband K Subramanian - both bankers -are grateful for their prudence in choosing to educate their son all the way through, when they could've easily succumbed to the prophecy of a doctor that he wouldn't live beyond the age of 18.

Ramnath who celebrated his 21st birthday on Monday says he loves studying as much as he enjoys watching Ajith films. The family saw its years of fighting naysayers pay off for the first time when Ramnath passed his Class X, with 94% and Class XII with 73%. Right from the year he finished Class IX, Usha spent her evenings getting additional notes from his class mates and taught him once again at home. Now, since he has started college, she has opted for voluntary retirement and spends time taking lessons for him at home, in addition to what he learns from a private educator. "She is equipped to get a degree in BBA herself," jokes Subramanian.

But this success didn't come easy. "The only person to keep our morale high was Ramnath's educator, Shivakumari, who pushed us to enroll him in a special school, at a time when we could've easily lost heart over the rejection we faced from several mainstream schools. This is pretty much the most crucial point for parents," says Usha.

"If more parents of Down's syndrome kids ensure that they finish their education, we can ask the government to give them clerical posts, in banks and in railways. But such change begins at home, with unrelenting parents" says Subramanian.

True inspiration! A 22-year-old girl with Down syndrome runs a cafe in Mumbai



Aditi
Mumbai

She owns a cafe in Bhoomi Mall, CBD Belapur in Mumbai. Aditi's Corner serves light snacks, homemade meals and delicious cupcakes and chocolates.

Meet the 22-year-old Aditi from Mumbai who's condoling the pity. Aditi is the owner of Aditi's corner, a cafe she runs in Bhoomi Mall, CBD Belapur. The cafe serves light snacks, homemade meals and delectable cupcakes and chocolates; but what keeps this cafe lit is Aditi's hard-work and determination. She takes orders, wipes the table, manages accounts and if the place is running short on inventory, she will make a note.

"I used to get bored at home," says a proud Aditi when asked about why she enjoys coming here. "Here I can do whatever I want." The cafe was gifted by her parents who wanted to keep her busy and happy. They wanted to ensure that she becomes self-reliant. The cafe is now in good shape and achieved its break even within the first three months.

"Please don't take them as a problem. They are special people and they can do whatever else a 'normal' person can do. If you have a special child, let him or her do what they want to with their lives. Don't stop them." reports The Better India. Aditi's story is for everyone to feel inspired and thrilled about their passion. If she can do it, so can you.

Special kids showcase their talent on World Down Syndrome Day



Mumbai: On the occasion of World Down Syndrome Day, a group of special children showcased their varied talents in dance and dramatics at the Oberoi mall. The event was organized by Parents of Down Syndrome (PODS India). "These special kids created a mesmerizing show on the stage at the mall. The event also helped in spreading more information and awareness about Down Syndrome," said a spokesperson.

World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) is observed on March 21. On this day, people with Down Syndrome and those who live and work with them throughout the world organize and participate in activities and events to raise public awareness and create a single global voice for advocating for the rights, inclusion and well being of people with Down Syndrome.

Many of these events are recorded on the official World Down Syndrome Day website. Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always been a part of the human condition, being universally present across racial, gender or socio-economic lines, and affecting approximately 1 in 800 live births, although there is considerable variation worldwide. Down syndrome usually causes varying degrees of intellectual and physical disability and associated medical issues.

From basketball court to a film set, he's done it all

Chennai: Karaan Subramaniam's list of achievements is long. But then, the 22-year-old, who was diagnosed with Down's syndrome as a baby, has worked long and hard to reach every milestone. His efforts earned him the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Games gold medal in basketball in 2013, a meaty role in director Santosh Sivan's 'Inam' in 2014, World Down Syndrome Foundation UK award for outstanding achievement in chess in 2015, a sportsmanship award from Loyola College just two days ago, and a degree in animation from the Visual Communication Department of Loyola College this year.

In fact, Karaan's passion is so infectious, says his mother Geetha, that after he joined Loyola and excelled, the college has become much more open to admitting students with special needs. "In the last three years at Loyola, I have been treated on a par with the others," says Karaan

"When he was born, the doctors were discouraging, but I was determined that he would lead a normal life," says Geetha, who ensured he went to mainstream schools. "He switched five schools, but never lost his will to achieve," she says, adding that Karaan is one of the few Down's syndrome chess players in the world.

Karaan competes with the state level players of his age group, even goading grandmaster Vishwanathan Anand to play with him in 2015 at a blind chess documentary screening. "His victories at inter-collegiate and state level contests have given him confidence," says Geetha.



Madhya Pradesh: Health dept announces testing facility for down syndrome



Bhopal Madhya Pradesh health department has announced to introduce testing for chromosomal abnormalities during pregnancy. It would be a part of the advanced facilities at its state early intervention centre to be set up at Link Road 3 in Bhopal.

The facility would also include free test to diagnose down syndrome before birth (prenatally). The announcement comes ahead of World Down Syndrome Day on March 21. Marking the start of weeklong awareness programmes for down syndrome awareness and identification of patients, district collector Nishant Warwade held a press conference here on Wednesday.

"The incidence of down syndrome in the population is about 2.5%. About 200 patients in Bhopal have been given necessary care for free in the last year. Our focus is on creating awareness and helping more children as early as

possible," he said. Early intervention, acceptance and awareness are key to managing down syndrome. "State early detection centre would provide for testing of pregnant women. It would include tests for down syndrome," said district chief medical and health officer (CMHO) Dr Veena Sinha.

Aquatherapy for persons with Down syndrome.

Aquatic activities have been reported to be one of the most popular physical activities among children regardless of condition. The benefits of aquatics, both physical and psychological, are well documented. The benefits of aquatic exercise and/or activity are multiple and range from physical to psychological in nature. The experiences of persons with disabilities, mostly affecting mobility, in relation to aquatics was studied and the researcher emphasized that the buoyancy of water negates the effect of gravity by supporting joints, which gives persons with limited mobility increased movement and flexibility. The opportunity for increased movement due to water's buoyancy may lead to improved cardiovascular function as well as muscle strength. Participating in aquatic activities and aqua therapy lessons have the ability to improve circulation, mobility, strength, coordination, range of motion, pulmonary function, sensory perception and spatial awareness, muscular and vascular endurance, relaxation, and decreased pain and bone loss in people with disabilities associated with spinal cord injuries, orthopedic impairments, cerebral palsy, acquired brain injuries, developmental disability, and autism. Claims have also been made that persons with physical disabilities may experience a difficult time negotiating land activities due to their condition; however, in an aquatic environment, the buoyancy of water permits this group of individuals to hold their bodies up themselves so that they can attain simple movements that can lead to an improvement in their physical well-being, strength, and endurance. The water also provides resistance that can improve the muscle strength of individuals in this group. The movement of the water also improves the experience of individuals with sensory deficits resulting from their physical disabilities, and the warmth of the water can relax tense muscles.

At the Down Syndrome Federation of India center, our physiotherapists are looking at Aqua therapy as a tool to improve the physical aspects of persons with Down syndrome and give them a psychological boost.



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