



THE AUTISM NEWSLETTER

Centre for Autism and other Disabilities Rehabilitation Research and Education
January-February-March-April 2024, Volume 8, Issue 1

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we come to the end of the first quarter of 2024, I am thrilled to share with you the incredible journey we have embarked on together over the past four months. At CADRRE, our commitment to excellence and advocacy for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) remains unwavering, and it is with great pride that I reflect on our recent accomplishments.

January marked the beginning of a new year filled with promise and opportunities for growth. Our dedicated team of educators and staff members worked tirelessly to create an enriching and supportive learning environment for our students. Through innovative teaching methods and personalized support, we continue to empower our students to reach their full potential.

In February, our focus shifted towards the preparation for the CADRRE International Filmlet Festival on Autism 2024. Months of planning and coordination went into organizing this prestigious event, which serves as a platform to showcase the stories of individuals with ASD.

Hosting an autism film festival was a pioneering endeavour for us, especially within the Indian community where such concepts are still relatively new. We encountered challenges in garnering good quality submissions and reaching an audience aware of both autism and filmmaking to participate in this unique festival. However, with perseverance and determination, we overcame these obstacles and succeeded in creating a platform that celebrates the creativity and talent of individuals with ASD while raising awareness about autism within our community.

As part of our advocacy initiatives, the festival took place on April 1st and 2nd, coinciding with World Autism Awareness Day. It was a resounding success, thanks to the participation and support of our students, parents, and community members.

Additionally, I'm delighted to announce that the Lifetime Contribution to Autism Award for 2024 was presented to Ms. Prathibha Karanth, celebrating her lifelong commitment to advancing our understanding and support for individuals on the Autism spectrum. Her dedication and tireless efforts have truly made a profound impact on the autism community, and we are honoured to recognize her contributions. Going forward, this award will be an annual tradition at CADRRE, reflecting our steadfast commitment to acknowledging the experts and pioneers in the field of autism.

CADRRE will be closing for the summer break in April. It is a time for our students and staff to recharge and rejuvenate before we embark on the next chapter of our academic journey.

Looking ahead, I am excited to announce that the next academic year, 2024-25, will commence on June 5th, 2024. We are committed to building upon the successes of the past year and continuing to provide the highest quality interventions and support to our students with ASD.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each member of the CADRRE community for their dedication, passion, and unwavering support. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of individuals with autism, and I am honoured to be part of this journey with you.

Wishing you all a restful and rejuvenating summer break.
Warm regards,

- **G. Vijaya Raghavan**
Hon. Director, CADRRE



Shaping the Dialogue: CADRRE's Director's Presentation at OTICON 2024

G. Vijaya Raghavan, the Honorary Director of CADRRE, delivered a keynote address at OTICON 2024, the 61st Annual National Conference of the All-India Occupational Therapists' Association (AIOTA). This event holds significant importance for occupational therapists, gathering professionals from across India and beyond to exchange knowledge, insights, and experiences on the forefront of Occupational Therapy. Hosted by the Kerala Branch of AIOTA, the conference serves as a platform for fostering collaboration and discussing the latest advancements, innovations, and strategies in the field. During his presentation, Mr. Raghavan emphasized the necessity to delineate the scope and specialties within Occupational Therapy in India. He highlighted challenges such as the shortage of occupational therapists, akin to past struggles faced by Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs), and stressed the importance of research, partnerships, certification programs, as well as the development of Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) and Occupational Therapy Doctorate (OTD) programs.



Honouring the Nation's Spirit: Republic Day at CADRRE

The center was alive with happiness as children dressed in the colours of the flag filled the space. Some waved the flag with glee while others watched a special video to learn about the day's importance. They marched happily in a line, holding the national flag tight. And to end the day, they sang songs that filled the air with pride and love for our country. You can catch a glimpse of the celebration [here](#).



Celebrating Excellence: Dr. Prathibha Karanth Receives CADRRE Lifetime Contribution to Autism Award 2024

We take immense pride in announcing Dr. Prathibha Karanth as the recipient of the CADRRE Lifetime Contribution to Autism Award for 2024. This prestigious honour celebrates her lifelong commitment to advancing our understanding and support for individuals on the Autism spectrum. The award was presented by Smt. Sarada Muraleedharan IAS, who currently serves as the Additional Chief Secretary in the Local Self-Government Department of the Government of Kerala, during the celebration of Autism Awareness Day on the 2nd of April at Lulu Mall, Trivandrum



As the Founder Director and Managing Trustee of The Communication DEALL Trust, Dr. Prathibha Karanth has exemplified unparalleled commitment and expertise in the field of speech-language pathology for over four decades. Her profound insights and unwavering dedication have significantly impacted the lives of countless individuals on the Autism spectrum in India and beyond. With a pioneering spirit, Dr. Karanth has tirelessly worked to bridge the communication gap for individuals with Autism, particularly those who are non-verbal, transforming their lives and empowering them to thrive in the society. Her seminal contributions through extensive research, numerous publications and authored works have enriched the academic discourse and is of invaluable guidance to caregivers and professionals alike. In honor of her exceptional lifetime achievements and unwavering dedication to the Autism community, Dr. Prathibha Karanth was bestowed with this esteemed award



CADRRE International Filmlet Festival on Autism 2024

We are delighted to share with you the success of the inaugural CADRRE International Filmlet Festival on Autism (CIFFA), a pioneering event dedicated to fostering inclusion and promoting autism acceptance. Held on April 1st and 2nd, 2024, in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, this significant gathering marked a milestone in India as the first of its kind festival dedicated to autism awareness through the medium of film.



The festival commenced with a special function on April 1st at Goethe Zentrum, where a select audience had the privilege of experiencing a curated selection of films on autism from around the world. It was a beautiful evening filled with hope and togetherness, as attendees shared their feedback on the movies and reflected on the pivotal role these films play in bringing the concerns of autistic individuals to mainstream society.

Additionally, there was also a segment wherein we showcased videos portraying the work of three eminent people who work in the field of autism - Ms. Merry Barua, Founder Director Action For Autism, National Centre for Autism, Ms. Anima Nair, Director Neurogifted, also the Co-founder and former Director of Sense Kaleidoscopes & Smrithy arasjesh, Psychologist and parent of an autistic entrepreneur

CIFFA offered a carefully curated selection of films, each providing profound insights into the lives of individuals on the autism spectrum. Despite the challenges inherent in sourcing submissions from filmmakers with a nuanced understanding of both autism and filmmaking, we are proud to note the quality of entries received.

The festival showcased remarkable achievements, with "Adaptation" by Rahul Ravi securing the esteemed Best Film award, and "Pathways Treaded by Lord" by Rahul Thankachan being recognized as the second-best film. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all winners and participants, including Alison Biji for "Finding Melody" and the creators of "Beyond Spectrum, which was chosen as the Popular Movie through an audience poll.

We are also proud to acknowledge the exceptional efforts of the festival coordinator, Parvathy C, whose dedication and expertise were instrumental in ensuring the seamless execution of CIFFA.

In addition, we were honoured to present Dr. Pratibha Karanth with the CADRRE Lifetime Contribution to Autism Award for her unparalleled dedication spanning four decades. Our esteemed Chief Guest, Smt. Sarada Muraleedharan IAS, graced the occasion, underscoring the significance of this event in promoting awareness and acceptance.



For those who were unable to attend, we are pleased to announce that select films will be made available on CADRRE's YouTube channel, ensuring wider access to this valuable content.

Looking ahead, CIFFA will become an annual event, reaffirming CADRRE's commitment to raising awareness on World Autism Awareness Day and beyond.



We extend our sincerest gratitude to our sponsors, Goethe Zentrum Trivandrum and LuLu Group International, Lulu Mall Trivandrum, whose generous support made this event possible.

Together, let us continue to celebrate diversity, promote inclusion, and foster a society where every individual, regardless of their abilities, is valued and respected.



This section gives you the latest updates regarding various interventions, activities/ progress of our students

Pre- Schoolers

Approaching the final stretch of the academic year, our pre-schoolers have become adept at navigating the school day with confidence and familiarity. From mealtime rituals to sensory circuits, yoga sessions to communication board usage, and even toilet training, they've embraced each aspect of our routine with enthusiasm. Continuing our tradition of themed weeks, this term saw us exploring the fascinating worlds of insects and wild animals, sparking curiosity and learning in equal measure. Fridays brought a medley of hands-on activities, from mastering household tasks like laundry and dishwashing to culinary adventures like sandwich and milkshake making. These practical skills not only engage our students but also empower them for life beyond the classroom. Alongside, friendly competitions in games like musical chairs and basketball, were conducted few of them showcasing their growing independence in following simple rules. We also celebrated birthdays with cake and song, creating cherished memories for our students. In March, we organized a delightful field trip to Akkulam Park, where the children revelled in activities like the musical fountain, toy train rides, and swimming. The term concluded with the celebration of Vishu, where students and parents alike delighted in experiencing the traditional Vishu Kani and receiving blessings. As summer vacation approaches, the excitement among our students is palpable.



Juniors

We've been diligently preparing our junior students for their transition to the Pre-Teen program next academic year since early January. Our focus has been on ensuring a smooth and comfortable transition for them. To support this process, we introduced social stories to help our students understand and adjust to the upcoming changes.

To further aid in this transition, teachers from the Pre-Teen program visited our classes to establish connections with the children. Over time, they began leading sessions with the assistance of our junior teachers and therapists. By early March, we successfully completed the transition, and it was met with seamless integration.

We have also been addressing some concerns raised by parents, particularly regarding their children's anxiety about salons and shopping. To tackle this, we incorporated salon and shopping activities into our Functional Friday sessions. We are delighted to share that parents have observed improvements, with children showing increased cooperation during shopping trips and adapting well to salon environments.

Academically, our students have been thriving. We recently conducted third term exams, and the children impressively followed instructions posted on boards and completed the exams with minimal support. On a lighter note, Vishu was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm. One of our children even dressed up as little Krishna, adding to the festive spirit.

As we approach the vacation period, we've ensured that our students will have a range of engaging activities to keep them occupied at home while maintaining continuity in their learning. Home plans spanning various disciplines have been provided to prevent any disruption to the curriculum.

Annual Exam: March 2024
Grade 1 - Science



II. Complete the table.
(Marks: 1x4=4)

Road Transports	Water Transports
1.	1.
2.	2.

III. Circle the correct one.
(Marks: 1x2=2)

a) I am a Talking Bird



b) I am a Dancing Bird



Pre-Teens and Teens

In this final term, we ventured into some exciting new initiatives for pre-teen & teen group. In our ICT classes, we introduced proofreading activities for our older students in the preteen group, with support from the ETP team. This served as a basic introduction to concepts covered in advanced ETP lessons. Some students have already shown great progress, mastering the art of proofreading short paragraphs. Additionally, we've incorporated cycling lessons into our occupational therapy (OT) sessions and outdoor playtime, promoting physical activity and motor skills development. Another highlight of this term was our sensory playtime activity during Functional Friday. Functional Friday is dedicated to addressing the everyday challenges children encounter. Recognizing the challenges some children face with sensory experiences, we curated a variety of items to stimulate their senses of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. It was heart-warming to see the children thoroughly enjoy exploring different textures, colors, tastes, and sounds, igniting moments of pure joy and wonder.



Employability Training Program

The fifth batch of The Employability Training Program commenced on January 3rd, 2024, with four trainees. Over the ensuing three and a half months, spanning from January to mid-April, the trainees engaged in an extensive curriculum focusing on various life skills essential for professional and personal development.

Throughout this period, the program curriculum encompassed instruction in fundamental living skills geared towards fostering independence, as well as training in social and communication competencies, computer literacy, and culinary skills. The instructional approach incorporated both classroom-based learning and practical application in real-world scenarios, facilitating the trainees' acquisition and application of learned skills.

Real-life experiences were integral to the training, with activities such as grocery shopping at supermarkets and visits to the Priyadarshini Planetarium and Akkulam Tourist Village offering opportunities for hands-on practice and social interaction. Notably, the trainees demonstrated their initiative and social acumen by creating greeting cards for female staff members at The Artism Studio on International Women's Day.

Furthermore, the program included instruction on utilizing online platforms for food and grocery orders, coupled with lessons in online payment transactions. Activities such as team outings to movie theatres and participation in the CADRRE International Filmlet Festival on Autism (CIFFA 2024) fostered camaraderie and raised awareness about autism advocacy among the trainees.

The professional outcomes of our trainees underscore the program's efficacy in facilitating meaningful employment opportunities and career advancement. Rohan's internship at UST Global in Trivandrum was extended due to exemplary performance, while Arnold continues in his contractual role at UST. Mukund's tenure at Westside has proven fulfilling, and Rohit's and Liya's internships at Ernst & Young were extended, reflecting their proficiency and dedication. Adithyan's employment at Taj Green Cove Resort, marked by the purchase of a new mobile phone from his earnings, exemplifies his personal and financial independence.

Additionally, Abhilash completed his bakery and culinary training at the Taj, Malavika excelled in her role as a support teacher at CADRRE, and Issac's tenure at Reliance Fresh demonstrates increasing independence and consistency. Finally, Aravind's continued positive feedback from supervisors at Aditya Birla Insurance underscores his commitment and performance in his role.



Skills Training Program

In our quest to continually enhance our training program, we follow a systematic approach. Firstly, we scout for skills that are in demand in the market. Then, we meticulously analyse each task to understand its nuances. Our dedicated staff undergo thorough training to ensure they are equipped to effectively teach these skills. Subsequently, we help our students identify the steps that align with their abilities. Finally, we develop comprehensive training manuals to seamlessly integrate these new skills into our curriculum, ensuring inclusivity for learners of all levels.

A recent addition to our curriculum is screen printing. Previously, when we needed custom prints on bags for packaging, we relied on outsourcing. However, in February, we organized a 3-day workshop to train our staff in manual screen printing, covering every aspect from screen preparation to printing techniques. This skill was then imparted to the parents of two trainees who showed potential for self-employment in this area.

Similar specialized training sessions were hosted for parents in March and April, extending our program's reach to include parents and to inspire them to be co-entrepreneurs in their children's initiatives. Gokul's parents learned handmade soap making, Ruwi's parent mastered candle making, while Karthik's and Pooja's parents explored bracelet making. These sessions aimed to empower parents with valuable skills, fostering collaborative entrepreneurship within families.

Moreover, our trainees enthusiastically contributed to fulfilling orders, crafting gifts such as decoupaged mobile holders, wood slice fridge magnets, beaded bracelets, and multi-layer canvas art. Their involvement added a sense of pride and accomplishment to their learning journey.

Additionally, personalized fridge magnets on wood slices were handmade by the students to be given as summer giveaway gifts to all CADRRE students. The magnets were packaged in cloth bags screen-printed with the CADRRE logo by the students of the skill center at Artism Studio.



CADRRE's Holi: Painting Smiles, Spreading Love

Our Holi celebration was an explosion of colour and joy! The trainees arrived dressed in dazzling whites, ready to embrace the vibrant festivities. They kicked off the day with a spirited rangoli making competition, unleashing their creativity with an array of colourful designs and combinations.

In the kitchen, they embarked on a sweet adventure, learning to make delicious *boondi* sweets with boundless excitement and curiosity. As the sun reached its zenith, it was time for the main activity - the color play! With organic watercolours in hand, they splashed and smeared vibrant hues, painting the air with laughter and cheer.

With music filling the air, they danced away, their inhibitions melting away in the rhythm of the celebration. It was a Holi to remember, filled with laughter, camaraderie, and cherished memories to carry home.



Embracing Vishu : Joyful Traditions at CADRRE

Amidst the vibrant halls of CADRRE, we embarked on a splendid journey of celebration, immersing ourselves in the joyous spirit of Vishu on the 12th of April. A majestic Vishu kani stood as the harbinger of festivity, warmly welcoming parents and children alike. Enthusiasm danced in their eyes as they beheld the Kani, some standing in awe to explore its intricate elements. The children, dressed in their traditional best, radiated charm and innocence, and we captured these timeless moments through the lens of photographs. Amidst laughter and fun, they savored delectable snacks and engaged in playful activities. A young Krishna, adorned in resplendent attire, spread cheer amongst his peers. In a gesture of affection, our esteemed Director, G Vijayaraghavan, presented each student with a personalized fridge magnet crafted by the skilled hands of trainees from [The Artism Studio by cadrre](#). CADRRE bid farewell to its students for a summer hiatus, eagerly anticipating the reunion with its cherished students on the 5th of June



Empowering Parents: Navigating Sex Education for Children on the Autism Spectrum

We are delighted to announce the positive outcomes of our recent sex education session, thoughtfully crafted for parents of children on the autism spectrum. Held in the last week of March, the session aimed to equip parents with the knowledge and tools necessary to broach sensitive topics related to sexuality with their children.

Led by Parvathy C, who is part of the Employability Training Program for young adults on the spectrum, the session delved into various aspects of sex education, tailored to meet the unique needs of children with autism. One of the primary focus areas was on guiding parents on how to initiate conversations about these topics in a manner that is accessible and comprehensible for their children.

Throughout the session, parents learned strategies on how to introduce concepts such as private and public spaces, safe and unsafe touch, and boundaries in a way that resonates with their child's understanding. By utilizing visual aids and interactive discussions, parents gained practical insights into fostering a safe and supportive environment for their children to learn about these crucial topics.

The session received an overwhelmingly positive response from participating parents, many of whom expressed gratitude for the guidance provided. For numerous parents who previously felt uncertain or overwhelmed about addressing sex education with their children on the autism spectrum, the session served as a beacon of support and empowerment.

In addition to addressing the basics of sex education, our session also emphasized the importance of normalizing sexuality for individuals with autism while maintaining an understanding of appropriateness in sexual behaviour. This nuanced approach aimed to empower parents with the tools to foster healthy attitudes towards sexuality in their children, promoting acceptance and respect for varied expressions of sexuality within the autism community. By acknowledging and addressing these essential aspects, we strive to create a culture of inclusivity and support where individuals with autism can navigate their sexuality with confidence and autonomy.

As we continue our mission to provide comprehensive and inclusive education for children with autism, sessions like these underscore our commitment to equipping parents with the resources they need to navigate every aspect of their child's development.

We extend our sincere thanks to all the parents who participated in the session.



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