

Site visit to Ashray Akruti

-Lalitha Podila (Chapter Coordinator, Danbury)

I visited Ashray Akruti's (AA's) preschool and early intervention center and girls' residential facility site on August 12th 2016. This was the first time that I was visiting both the early intervention center and residential facility. I had previously visited AA's school for the hearing disabled children in 2013 and 2015. The day of my visit coincided with Varalakshmi Vratam (a festival) when schools are closed. I met with Devaki, project coordinator and we reached the site by car ride. The 1-hour ride offered Devaki and me an opportunity to catch up on personal front as well as exchange updates on AA and Asha Danbury. On reaching AA, I met with the center director and founder, Mr. Babu to discuss goals, support, and funding. I handed over stationary items and chocolates that I had bought for distribution to the children.

In 2015, Asha Danbury had provided hearing aids to older children in AA's school. The new preschool program was strategized to detect hearing disabilities at a younger age, rectify the problem, and stimulate speech and learning skills at an earlier age. All children are offered hearing aids free of cost. The program has a tie-up with Apollo hospital in Hyderabad and offers cochlear implant surgeries to children through additional fundraising effort.

I saw the preschool/early intervention program in action. The teacher asked children questions on their name, age and what they have been up to. It was great to see children with their hearing aids on respond to questions. While the speech was unclear to me and difficult for someone like me to understand, I saw smiles on the children's faces as they responded with feelings. I am always amazed to see the level of communication and interaction between teachers and students at AA. They understand each other and communicate very well. Teachers put in a lot of efforts and have demonstrated patience. I spoke with parents who had accompanied their children to the center. As in my previous site visits, I got to hear heart-wrenching stories from mothers on the negative impact that disability in poverty has on their families. These are families that earn Rs.15-40 (25c-75c) per day and once again expressed deep gratitude for Mr.Babu and his team at AA.

From there, I went to the girls' residential facility. Although the school that I had visited in previous years was closed on the day, I was able to see the girls at the residential facility. They were enthusiastic and happy. The residential facility was set up to retain underprivileged children with hearing disability at AA's school. The facility provides night shelter when their parents are compelled to migrate in search of jobs. I toured the rooms where children study, sleep and eat. The facility was kept clean. I had a conversation with the lady who prepares meals for the children. She has nowhere to live and lives at the residential facility. She shared a lot of information and also offered me a dessert that she had prepared in celebration of the festival. As I walked around, it was obvious that AA was being well supported in its efforts. Utilities had been donated by generous hearts and the items carried their names. There were a couple of girls who had graduated from grade 10 from AA, but wanted to utilize the residential facility at night on return from their college. Although the facility is primarily for girls up to grade 10, wanting to support AA's girls through college education, Mr.Babu and team agreed to accommodate them at the residential facility. By this time, I was convinced that I had met the objectives of my visit.

I saw progress at AA from 2015. Plans for a tie-up with Apollo hospital for the early intervention program that were shared by Mr.Babu with me on my previous visits were implemented. Goals were being pursued aggressively and funds utilized effectively. AA offers children and families hope, 'hope' that is aligned with Asha for Education's mission. I recommend Asha Danbury's support for the preschool program and girls' residential facility for 2017.

Visit to preschool and early intervention center at Ashray Akrti: August 12th
2016



Visit to girls' residential facility at Ashray Akruiti: August 12th 2016

