

## Glastonbury at Tiruvannamalai



Our Children On Stage in 2023

In February 2023 a grand musical event was held in the small town of Tiruvannamalai, organised by John Rajkumar. His charity Maithree organises similar events in the city of Chennai. There was some nervousness as to whether such an event would succeed in a rural setting. It proved to be a huge success, with 5,000 attending, and a credit to the hard work of staff and parents. A second event is planned for February 2025 at a venue which will hold 10,000 people. The proceeds will be a great help in moving us a little nearer our medium term target of becoming *Indian led and Indian funded*.

## Early Years Centre Moves

Since 2017 our non-residential Education and Therapy Centre has provided schooling and innovative therapy to over 100 early years children who have hearing impairments. In a new development, the centre has moved to central Tiruvannamalai and integrated within a mainstream school. The new location enables the pupils to be educated alongside their peers, a recommended good practice. It is also proving to be much more accessible. Hence the facilities are being used by many more young disabled children and their families.



Joining the Big School

## The Schools Celebrate Diwali

One of the most popular festivals in India is Diwali: it celebrates the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. The festivities are such that school breaks up for a few days to allow the children to join in their own family gatherings. Special features include light, decorations, party foods and lots of fireworks, referred to as crackers. This year 300 older students from neighbouring colleges visited Rangammal, bringing sweets, cakes and (of course) lots of crackers.



Party Games for Diwali

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8 Finkle Close, Woolley, Wakefield, WF4 2LU where donations may be sent. Forms for donations under the Gift Aid scheme may also be obtained from this address or from our website: [www.sylviawright.org](http://www.sylviawright.org)

# THE Sylvania Wright TRUST

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 326139

## Newsletter Christmas 2024

[www.sylviawright.org](http://www.sylviawright.org)

### Supporting

Residential School for 200 profoundly deaf children  
Education & Therapy Centre for 100 severely disabled children  
Nursing College for 120 students

*From CEO John Rajkumar*

*Dear Friends*



Season's greetings to every one of you from all the children, nurses, students, staff and members of the board of RMRS.

We are far apart geographically but totally together in our hearts and minds for the

advancement of children with special needs and young people seeking to become qualified nurses. It has been a year of continued blessings from the Almighty. The services supported by you all through Sylvania are continuing to benefit many hundreds of folks from the rural community. It is our endeavour to carry the baton forward. We are very thankful to God for giving this opportunity to us and we thank the Trust for having confidence in our leadership.

We are in the process of making a strategic plan for the next five years: a major thrust will be to provide employable skills to our school leavers, enabling them to achieve economic independence.

Wishing you and your families a joyful Christmas season filled with peace, hope and happiness. May the new year bring you all health, prosperity, and fulfilment.

Thank you once again for your commitment and support. We look forward to what we will accomplish together in the coming year.

Warmest regards

*John & Priya Rajkumar*

## Honorary Doctorate

Sylvia Wright has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Leeds Beckett University. She was a Senior Tutor in nursing at the university before she began 40 years of service in India. The graduation ceremony was attended by 700 students and some 3,000 of their family and friends. A lovely video of Sylvia's work was shown, together with a well-deserved, glowing citation. Sylvia gave a moving speech of recognition and encouragement to all the students about to embark on their careers in health.



*From Sylvia Wright*

*Dear Friends*



As you know, I retired from my work in India and returned to the UK in July last year. After 42 years of intense activity it was not easy to slow down and adapt to the UK of 2023. There have indeed been many changes here since 1982!

My new life was soon disrupted by the sad closure of my first home with the Little Sisters in Headingley and by breaking my elbow. However, several developments have given me great comfort. I have been immediately found an excellent new flat in a Methodist Care Home, also in Headingley. This is beautifully kept, very convenient for church and shops and within reach of many friends, old and new. These friends have rallied round with visits, excursions and practical support which I very much need in this "modern" world. It has by no means been easy to adjust to my new life, but gradually, by the grace of God I have been able to settle in.

I note with great satisfaction, the work which John Rajkumar is doing to continue and secure my service in India. I was blessed to be able to pay a visit to my projects in June this year. I will be 87 in January 2025 and will be making one final, farewell visit around that time to say goodbye to everyone. Please do pray for me as I settle down here in Leeds, which is now to be my permanent home.

I thank you for all the generosity and kindness you have shown me. May God bless you all.

*Love Sylvia*



## Successful Visit



*Our Trustees Meet The Indian Board*

Anthony and Joanna Gilpin, together with Tony and Christine Allinson, visited the Indian projects in October. They received the usual friendly welcome and came away encouraged and impressed. Things are going well in all departments, as is the transition to the new CEO, John Rajkumar. Managers reported on progress this year, interesting developments and plans for the future. The visitors met the governing body and visited some of the children's homes. The atmosphere was vibrant and optimistic. Although there is much yet to do, confidence is high.

## Home Visits



*A Warm Welcome*

When trustees visit the projects each year, they visit a few of the children's homes, to try to understand how families live in rural India. Trustees are accompanied by one of the teachers and usually the child concerned. Our understanding is always greatly enhanced. Welcomes have always been warm. Communities are close knit: relatives and friends fill the house to see the visitors.

## Sheltered Workshops



*Students at Work in Our New Training Workshop*

Children with special needs start in our Day Centre at the age of five. They receive care, education and therapy. Attention is now turning to how they can be gainfully employed when they grow older: currently there are 20 students who are over 18. A sheltered workshop is being developed in which they can be trained to produce saleable items. John Rajkumar and his wife Priya have considerable experience in this field through their six centres in Chennai which produce a range of attractive products. John's staff at Maithtree are helping to set up our workshop.

## Full Employment



*Recruitment Drive: Hospital HR Staff Promote Their Job Opportunities to Our Students*

Shortly there will be 40 nursing students qualifying from our college each year. Of the 240 who have qualified to date, every single one has found a post in a sound medical facility. Our graduates are much sought after due to the quality of their training: several major medical groups now visit each year to interview and select.

## Nurses Give Hair



*Before and After*

Over the years SWT supporters will have seen photographs of our trainee nurses with beautiful, long, neatly-tied hair. This autumn many have generously snipped off quite a swathe of their lengthy locks and given the hair to a charity based in India. The donated hair has been used to make wigs for patients who have lost their own hair while undergoing chemotherapy and other treatments.

## First Aid Training Launched



*First Aid Training: Demonstrating the Heimlich Manoeuvre*

A new law in India requires all public-facing employees (including police, fire services, bus and train drivers) to become proficient in first aid. Our nursing college seized the opportunity to become involved. To date our eminently qualified staff have trained hundreds of public workers very effectively, using an agreed programme. Over £15,000 has been received in fees over the last year! Work is underway planning for more courses in 2025. Enrolment continues for the year ahead.

## Parents' Meetings



*Meetings For Parents Are Well Attended*

The school for the hearing impaired is residential: most of the children are boarders. Their families live some distance away. The majority of parents have only the means to visit the school once a month. When they do, they are usually accompanied by their child's brothers and sisters. Meetings are held where staff report on learning and parents discuss progress, plans and issues. The day includes a picnic and other treats. It's a valuable opportunity for parents to become more involved in their child's education and a happy day out for all the family!