



Institute of Sathya Sai Education Australia
National Education Conference 2011

ROLE OF ISSEA HUBS AND ALUMNI IN CREATING FUTURE PROSPERITY

HUBS

My presentation is about our ISSEA Hub in Victoria and the ISSEA Alumni and share with you some of the inspiring stories.

Our hub in Victoria was set up in May 2007. The purpose or the objective of the Hub is to examine Swami's teachings and creating awareness in the community in its application in the day to day lives and sharing information about Swami's teachings. Early last year five Diploma holders formed a working committee to carry out the Activities of the Hub. The committee members have committed themselves in achieving the objectives by practicing Swami's teachings and by becoming exemplars. In the past two years, we have conducted book review sessions and organised talks and presentations on various topics relating to the practice of human values and spirituality. These sessions are open sessions and anybody could attend and have become popular now among the devotees.

One of our committee members is actively involved in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre as a teacher using her skills and knowledge gained through the Diploma course. The program is to reclaim youth who are into drugs and alcohol. Her sessions on meditation and relaxation have been well received by both the youth involved and the other volunteers. You will hear more about this program later today.

About three months back we organised a program on 'Healthy Food, body and Mind' presented by another Diploma holder in Victoria who runs an organic farm. Basically, the program was to create awareness of healthy eating habits and the effect of healthy food on the body and mind. This too was well received and at the request of the participants, a summary of the presentation was circulated later on.

Recently, another Diploma holder made a presentation on 'Teenage Brain' based on a book review that she did for her Diploma. Basically, the presentation was about use of alcohol, drugs and smoking on the developing brain of teenagers. Parents who attended this session were so impressed that they wanted this presentation be made at Centres. Later, it was presented at four Centres in Melbourne. She was also invited on the same topic for a discussion by local radio.

The hub also organised a picnic at one of our Diploma holder's organic farm for SSE children and parents. The objective was to provide valuable information on growing organic vegetables for own use and also how to conserve water. The farm depends on rain water as it is not connected with Melbourne water. Parents were so impressed; some of them have even requested that this picnic should be an annual event.

Recently we also organised a workshop on 'Positive and Negative Thoughts' at one of the Centres in Melbourne for Group 3 children. The feedback received has been very positive.

Our Hub invited Bob Molloy to give a presentation on 'Religion, Spirituality and Human Values'. This too was well received and devotees who missed out have requested to have repeat.

We also organised a workshop on 'Water Education' presented by a fellow Diploma holder from Canberra.

I have shared with you some of the programs we organised in the recent past. Very soon we will have a program conducted by a Diploma holder on the effects of television on teenagers.

ISSEA

In gratitude and recognition of the training and inspiration received during the Diploma and Advanced Diploma, the alumni of the ISSE decided to dedicate their time and energy to promote the philosophy of human values education to all sectors of our Australian society. We formed an active group in 2009. The alumni have pledged to create an association of active practitioners of Human Values and of Sai's spiritual teachings in our own lives and to make a significant contribution in promoting the philosophy of human values education in all sectors of the society. A tremendous sense of fellowship through active and regular communication between the ISSEA, its teachers and trainers and the Alumni has been generated over the last two years. The alumni are refining their collaboration with the ISSE to develop practical resources of practical on Human Values, and to actively promote Sathya Sai Education in the Regional Hubs of the ISSEA in Melbourne, Perth, Gympie and Murwillumbah. This is being achieved through a Working Committee with representatives from Vic, ACT, WA and NSW. The Alumni were inspired and formulated an action plan for the next two years was developed based on the suggestions and ideas given by the Alumni members. First was the Newsletter. Members were of the view that a regular Newsletter would not only include contributions by the Alumni members but also updates from the local hubs as well as recent developments from other countries with regard to Sathya Sai Education. The content will inspire

Alumni to update their knowledge on the philosophy of Sathya Sai Education and in some cases transform themselves without them feeling the change as it is gradual. This Newsletter is currently published bi-annually. This is circulated to Alumni as well as to all the Sai Centres in Australia. The bi-annual newsletter provides an opportunity for Alumni to share their experiences, views and suggestions. The newsletter brings everyone up to date about the Sathya Sai School and the U-Turn project. The newsletter has already created an interest at Centre level in the SSO as evident from the responses received so far. I have received feedback from education coordinators and Centre chairpersons that devotees have shown interest in reading the Newsletter as it provides not only important information about the future directions of Sathya Sai Education but updates on Sathya Sai School as well as sharing of ideas relating to the practice of values in day to day life.

Another suggestion made by members was to set up an interactive site for Alumni members. As members are located in different states, the interactive site provides an opportunity to discuss issues, ideas and views with other fellow members regularly. It took time to establish this site and will be in use shortly. Improvements will be made as it is being used, when we receive feedback.

Alumni members have also suggested that we work on a community project to use our skills and knowledge for the benefit of the community. We are in the process of identifying a project. Our view is to select a project on the same lines as a project that will assist 'At-risk youth' or assisting teenagers who are into alcohol or drugs. We have had positive responses for all of our programs.

Going forward,

As for the Hubs, we will have two presentations soon, one on 'Effects of Television for Teenagers' and the other on 'How to set up your own vegetable garden'. Once, the hubs in other states are fully operational, we would like to have a close interaction with them. We would like to make similar presentations in other states as well and they will be invited to Victoria for workshops and presentations too.

As for the Alumni, the community project we have in mind will give an opportunity for all Alumni members to make a significant contribution to our community.

All in all it has been a huge learning curve for me as the President of the Alumni in the past two years working with a dynamic group of ISSEA Alumni. With more members of the Alumni group inspired, I am positive we will be able to make our presence felt and also spread the message of Human Values to all segments of our community.