



Prabhat Education Foundation

World Disability Week (December 3-12, 2013)

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CITY

Samta show thrills kids with disabilities

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Samta Divas was organized by Prabhat Education Foundation on Saturday. As a part of a series of special events based on World Disability Week, children with disabilities were joined by others in games, dance and music performances and art at Bhatt village.

The event was attended by children from several schools and organizations like Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan, Riverside School besides parents and siblings of the children.

"The objective of the event was to create a greater awareness for people with special needs in our society. A change in attitude will go a long way in helping these children grow. We need to teach them to show the same respect as they would to everyone else," said Keshav Chatterjee, founder director, Prabhat.



Yogesh Chawda

ON EQUAL FOOTING

On Saturday 14 December at the Srinath Party Plot on the highway to Gandhinagar over 500 special children, 200 their siblings and friends, 200 parents and teachers came together in a joyous celebration of World Disability Week, demonstrating what inclusion is really all about: not 'them' and 'us' but the common humanity that bonds us all. As a teacher of Riverside School has put it, Samta Divas helped us all to "see how changing our world view could help each of us help someone even if we knew we could not help everyone".

The children represented disadvantaged communities across Ahmedabad and a range of disabilities that included learning and physical disabilities as well as cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, MR and others. Two participating schools, Riverside School and Delhi Public School, provided a fleet of 12 buses to safely bring children and families together and reach them home after the event. Doctors, medical students, social service organizations, Municipal officials, and other civil society partners (including Sarva Sikshan Abhiyan) joined in. New connections were made including the Sajeevta Foundation which shares the mission of inclusion. Donations in cash and kind were raised from all over Ahmedabad to cover the costs of a beautiful outdoor space, infrastructure, recreation, meals and refreshments, balloons and transportation.

Riverside students and teachers helped play host. Students introduced the events --- games, contest, music, dancing, magic and much else --- and made sure that not a single child was left alone at any time, and that every child participated and none was left behind. Wheelchairs

became as good as running legs! Perhaps the major theme of the day was music and dancing -- the children could not have enough of this, with every child reveling in the chance to be on stage and to be cheered and applauded as hundreds of balloons filled the clear blue sky. These wonderful young Riverside hosts focused on adults as well to underline the important message of inclusion through an amazing idea: Ayena Dekiya. In this, the Riverside team used computer photography to encourage visitors to see their reflection in a kind of distorted mirror. Then they asked, "You now look different, but do you feel different? Or are you still the same person?" Then they pointed out that people with disability may look different but they don't feel different, and that is why we should all accept them as equals. What a wonderful way to communicate the message of Samta Divas: inclusion!

This message was heard loud and clear and it will be remembered, as will the joyous celebration and a green setting with fresh air, blue skies and fun --- all very rare in the lives of those to whom this day and its events were dedicated. As one visitor expressed it "The expression on the faces of the children, their parents, the student volunteers and their teachers, conveyed the Prabhat message of respect and equality" and "days like this remind one why children and students are so special, and why we need to look around us to see the humanity in others and to see the joy that life can bring in the midst of so much suffering".

Prabhat now hopes to make Samta Divas an annual opportunity for strengthening hope and joy.









































