

# Newsletter

133, Vajira Road, Colombo 4. [www.visakhav.org](http://www.visakhav.org)



VISAKHA VIDYALAYA OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2011

**Editor: Madhri Senanayake**

A Very Happy 2011 to you all! As we return to work and our usual routines after the holiday season (and its inherent festivities), let us give a few moments thought to those extra calories we may have consumed, bearing in mind that obesity is on the rise worldwide. From 1980 to 2008 childhood obesity has tripled the world over. Ironically, while a large proportion of the world suffers the pangs of hunger, another group are battling the consequences of overeating.

Obesity is closely accompanied by Diabetes and the incidence of this lifelong disease has reached epidemic proportions in many parts of Asia. The figures are staggering and many national and international health organizations including the WHO have adopted measures to reduce the incidence of this disease.

In Sri Lanka as elsewhere, Diabetes is becoming more common in every age group and surprisingly this is seen in every sector of society. People with family history of the condition are naturally at risk, but there are many modifiable risk factors such as body weight, diet and stress levels which contribute. Sadly children have been no exception to this trend.

What gave rise to this alarming and dangerous trend richly deserves consideration. Aren't more and more school and preschool aged children suffering the difficulties of being overweight, a relatively rare phenomenon a few decades ago? Do the Visakhians of today also show this trend?

Sedentary lifestyle, long hours of television-viewing and computer games, coupled with unhealthy food habits are important contributors. Increased availability of calorie-dense junk food, poor food choices and children leaving home without time for breakfast has become the norm rather than the exception. The increased number of extra tuition classes children attend, the lack of play space and play time have not only robbed a happy childhood but left in its place the seeds of disease and ill health. Studies in Colombo on activity patterns of children aged 5-8 years have shown that they spend far more time indoors than outdoors, even during weekends. Tuition classes, television and computer games feature prominently in the lives of these children and the advent of these pastimes has brought major lifestyle changes in its wake.

Physical exercise patterns and food habits created in childhood have a large bearing throughout adulthood. No wonder the fast food conglomerates focus on the 5-11 age group and even give away free gifts with trays of food!

Recently the state decided to take a firm hold on what students may eat during school interval time. Not only do many schools advocate only grains and rice to be brought to school, but limitations will soon be enforced by law according to the proposed legislature, to prevent calorie dense fast food being sold in schools to unsuspecting masses of students. However school meals make up only a fraction of a child's meals and what is eaten at other times may have greater impact on overall nutrition. Encouraging children to eat a balanced diet and develop a taste for healthier food choices is something that will stand them in good stead throughout their lives; undoubtedly a boon to preventing many chronic illnesses including diabetes and heart disease.

Children who develop a liking for sugar, salt and fatty foods tend to carry those taste preferences into adult life. As mothers we can have a profound impact through the preparation of healthier meals at home. The art of cooking a healthy balanced meal is a valuable skill. Children need to learn to value home-made food over shop bought fast food. We need to place the correct emphasis on food diversity and healthy foods and discourage parents from stuffing their offspring simply because a chubby child is perceived to be 'sweet to look at'.

Nutrition advice detailing wholesome balanced diets for children, ensuring food diversity and food based guidelines are available through the Family Health Bureau of the Ministry of Health for public education.

**Acknowledgements:**

Prof. Manouri Senanayake, Consultant Paediatrician, Lady Ridgeway Hospital, for Children.

Ms. Visakha Tillekeratne, Consultant in Food and Nutrition.

## THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2010-2011

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>President</b>          | Mrs. Sandamali Aviruppola                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>30 to 40 years</b>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Vice Presidents</b>    | Sharmini de Almeida<br>Ramani Gomes                                                                                                                                                                                   | Nishardi Athukorale<br>Dilka de Silva<br>Udani Dharmadasa<br>Ayomi Kaviratne<br>Malsha Munasingheearachchi                                                                                                |
| <b>Hony. Jt Secys.</b>    | Sujeenie Gunasekera<br>Anushi Senaratne                                                                                                                                                                               | Chandi Palawela<br>Somini Ponnampereuma<br>Eranthi Premaratne<br>Priyanka Premawardene<br>Madhri Senanayake<br>Iresha Senarath<br>Kanchana Suduwarachchi<br>Nanduni Wickramatunga<br>Chami Wickremasinghe |
| <b>Hony. Treasurer</b>    | Punsirini Malawi                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Asst. Treasurer</b>    | Sarala Kodagoda                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Committee Members</b>  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Staff</b>              | Prabodha Arambage                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>60 years and above</b> | Srini Karunaratne<br>Jayani Pinnawala                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>40 to 60 years</b>     | Yasinthabeywickrama<br>Asha de Silva<br>Sabitha Gunatilake<br>Mihiri Gunawardene<br>Chandima Karunatilake<br>Deepthi Kumarasinghe<br>Anusha Malwatte<br>Anoma Perera<br>Samitha Samaranayake<br>Amali Wijesiriwardene | <b>Below 30 years</b><br>Thathya de Silva<br>Amaya Ellawala<br>Savanthi Kodagoda                                                                                                                          |



Seated: (Left to Right) Jayani Pinnawala, Punsirini Malawi, Sujeenie Gunasekera, Sharmini de Almeida, Mrs Sandamali Aviruppola (Principal), Ramani Gomes, Anushi Senaratne, Praboda Arambage

Standing, first row: (Left to Right) Malsha Munasingheearachchi, Yasinthabeywickrama, Priyanka Premawardene, Iresha Senarath, Chandi Palawela, Kanchana Suduwarachchi, Anoma Perera, Eranthi Premaratne, Sabitha Gunatilake, Deepthi Kumarasinghe, Thathya de Silva, Amaya Ellawala, Somini Ponnampereuma

Standing, second row: (Left to Right) Ayomi Kaviratne, Chami Wickremasinghe, Amali Wijesiriwardene, Udani Dharmadasa, Anusha Malwatte, Nanduni Wickramatunga, Dilka de Silva, Savanthi Kodagoda, Madhri Senanayake, Nishardi Athukorale

Absent: Asha de Silva, Mihiri Gunawardene, Srini Karunaratne, Chandima Karunatilake, Sarala Kodagoda, Samitha Samaranayake

## CONVENERS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

|                            |                                            |                   |                       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Archives                   | Somini Ponnampereuma & Chandi Palawela     | Fundraising       | Anusha Malwatte       |
| Cafeteria                  | Yasinta Abeywickrama                       | Medical officers  | Nishadi Athukorale    |
| Correspondence             | Ayomi Kaviratne                            | Membership        | Savanthi Kodagoda     |
| Education                  | Eranthi Premaratne & Priyanka Premawardene | Newsletter        | Madhri Senanayake     |
| Equipment                  | Iresha Senarath                            | Religious         | Nanduni Wickramatunge |
| Foreign Branches & Website | Priyanka Premawardene & Savanthi Kodagoda  | School matters    | Prabodha Arambage     |
|                            |                                            | Secretariat       | Mihiri Gunewardene    |
|                            |                                            | Social activities | Udani Dharmadasa      |

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2010 – 2011

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                             |                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>January 16<sup>th</sup></b>  | Bodhi Pooja – In commemoration of the 94 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school<br><i>Inquiries: Nanduni Wickramatunga</i><br>0773-147-610                                                     | <b>May</b>                  | Fundraising event (to be arranged)<br><i>Inquiries: Anusha Malwatte</i><br>0773-634-459<br>anushamalwatta@yahoo.com.au                           |
| <b>February 19<sup>th</sup></b> | Meditation program – conducted by past pupil, Rev. Swana Sil Mathawa of Daham Medura, Kurunegala, at the Visakha Bodhiya; 8am – 11am<br><i>Inquiries: Nanduni Wickramatunga</i><br>0773-147-610 | <b>May 21<sup>st</sup></b>  | Vesak Project- Annual Donation to Cancer Institute, Maharagama<br><i>Inquiries: Nanduni Wickramatunga</i><br>0773-147-610<br>nanduniwj@gmail.com |
| <b>March 19<sup>th</sup></b>    | Biennial reunion trip<br><i>Inquiries: Udani Dharmadasa</i><br>0773-447-014<br>udanid@srilankan.aero                                                                                            | <b>June</b>                 | Annual General Meeting 2011 (reunion lunch to be arranged)<br><i>Inquiries: Udani Dharmadasa</i><br>0773-447-014<br>udanid@srilankan.aero        |
| <b>March 25<sup>th</sup></b>    | Founder's Day: Pirith & Dane<br><i>Inquiries: Nanduni Wickramatunga</i><br>0773-147-610<br>nanduniwj@gmail.com                                                                                  | <b>July 14<sup>th</sup></b> | Esala Sil Program<br><i>Inquiries: Nanduni Wickramatunga</i><br>0773-147-610<br>nanduniwj@gmail.com                                              |
| <b>April 2<sup>nd</sup></b>     | Avurudhu Pola<br><i>Inquiries: Dilka de Silva</i><br>0777-879-527<br>dilka@cis.lk                                                                                                               | <b>July 23<sup>rd</sup></b> | Susan George Pulimood Oration - Prof. emerita Preethi de Silva,<br><i>Inquiries: The Pulimood Trust</i><br>Shantha Gunaratne<br>0112-588-156     |

## EVENTS FROM THE PAST YEAR

### VESAK PROJECT – CANCER INSTITUTE, MAHARAGAMA

The Annual Wesak project saw the VVOGA donating much needed items at The Cancer Institute, Maharagama, once again. It is planned to continue this meaningful and fulfilling project annually.

### ESALA SIL PROGRAM

Was well attended and well appreciated.

### VISAKHIANS IN CONCERT

Staged in January, *Visakhians in Concert* raised much needed funds towards upgrading the school library, showcasing the talents of a constellation of part pupils who excel in the fields of music, dance and drama.

### DINNER DANCE 2010

The Dance committee succeeded in organising an event that surpassed expectations and importantly brought in unprecedented profits yet again. It was a glamorous, fun-filled evening of camaraderie which continued in full swing well into the wee hours of the morning.

### HIGH TEA – GET-TOGETHER

The fifteen most junior batches of the OGA met over High Tea at Water's Edge in June, 2010. It was a resounding success with many requesting this be made a regular annual or biennial event.

### CAR BOOT SALE

November 2010 saw another car boot sale conducted in the school premises. Bad weather conditions necessitated hasty conversion into a table sale in the main hall, but it was well attended and enjoyed by young and old despite the dismal weather.

### OVERSEAS BRANCH DONATION

The *Visakha Alumnae Association of Southern California, USA*; VAASOCAL, has once again been at hand to assist in the hour of need, sponsoring the VVOGA's website hosting and domain name for the next 10 years.

## Breakfast Time! NESTUM Time!

For many of us, NESTUM was one of the first breakfast cereals our mothers gave us. They loved NESTUM because it was good for us and we loved NESTUM because it was very tasty. That's why, for 25 years, it's been passed on from mother to mother, making it one of Sri Lanka's most trusted names. Today, NESTUM is just as good as it's ever been. It's full of nutrition because it's enriched with Iron, Vitamin B1 and Niacin. So give your child a yummy bowl of NESTUM, which is full of taste and goodness, every morning for breakfast.



NESTUM! For every happy milestone!



## PROJECTS SCHEDULED FOR 2011

### **FOSTER SCHOOL – GEDAWELA KANISHTA VIDYALAYA, BADALKUMBURA, MONERAGALA**

In keeping with a school link-up project spearheaded by the Ministry of Education Visakha Vidyalaya has 'adopted' this less privileged school for sponsorship and development projects.

In the first phase, a group of volunteer alumnae medical officers, will conduct a Medical Camp at this school in January 2011, provide gift packs and sponsor construction of a toilet complex as requested by our Principal.

### **HOSTEL PROGRAM**

A seminar on personal hygiene, health and etiquette will be conducted jointly by the Social and Religious Subcommittees and the Alumnae Medical Officers of the OGA, for School Hostellers in January, 2011. This will be followed by dinner and games.

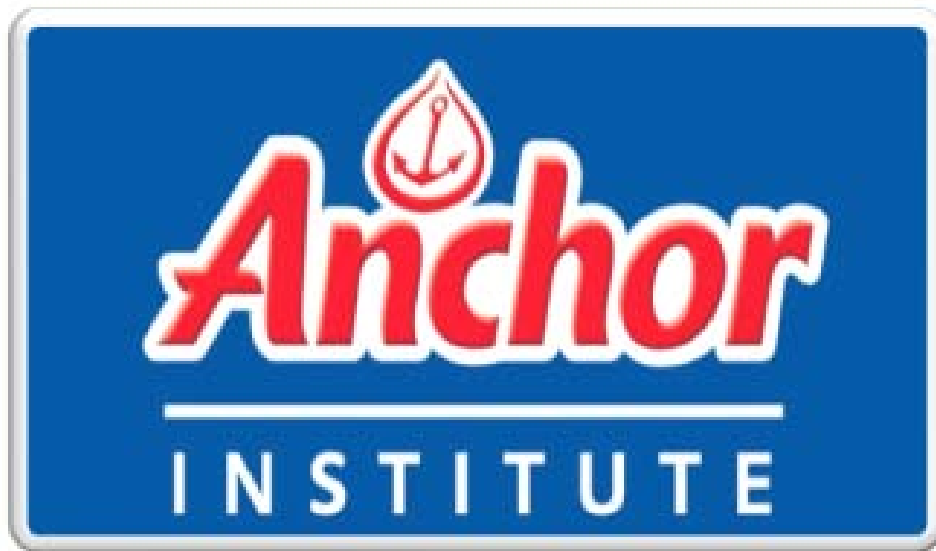
### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS**

The OGA continues to conduct a program to improve English reading skills in the Primary School by sponsoring reading materials and resource persons to coordinate this program.

A similar program to enhance English Language reading and conversational skills among School Hostellers, conducted by a group of volunteer past pupils continues under the auspices of the OGA.

It is also hoped to conduct elocution competitions within the school once or twice a year to reward and thereby encourage English proficiency within the school.

With Best Compliments  
From



Fonterra Brands Lanka (Pvt) Ltd  
100, Delgoda Road,  
Biyagama 11650,  
Sri Lanka.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### BENEFACTORS PLEASE NOTE

All items and events available for sponsorship will be announced on the OGA notice board at the secretariat (and on the website, as far as possible).

### STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

The Education sub-committee seeks generous donors willing to provide scholarships of Rs 3,000/- per month for a period of two years, to deserving OL / AL students. Those interested, please contact;  
Eranthi Premaratne on 0777-572-056  
eranthip@mashholdings.com or  
Priyanka Premawardene on 0777-587-155 or  
priyanw@hnb.lk

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR HOSTEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Volunteers to assist hostellers with English reading and encourage English conversation, from 5-7pm are requested to contact;  
Eranthi Premaratne 0777-572-056  
eranthip@mashholdings.com or  
Priyanka Premawardene on 0777-587-155 priyanw@hnb.lk

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

English language teachers are sought to serve on any two days of the school week, from 8.30 – 11.30am to improve English reading skills of Primary School students. Renumeration offered is Rs 8,000/- per month. Applicants are requested to contact the OGA secretariat.

### CORRESPONDENCE

A reminder that all correspondence directed to the Old Girls' Association should be sent to the OGA Secretariat, with both sender's name and membership number clearly stated.

### REPLACEMENT OF HALL CHAIRS

Chairs in the school hall are dilapidated and in urgent need of replacement. Members interested in sponsoring chairs are requested to contact;  
Punsirini Malawi 0777-222-988  
punsirini@yahoo.com

### MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

Members are reminded to submit data to update the membership directory.  
For further information please contact the membership subcommittee;  
Savanthi Kodagoda 0776-072-382  
savanthi@msn.com

### VOLUNTEER STENOGRAPHERS

The school office requests a few hours of voluntary work per term from past pupils with proficiency in stenography. Those with relevant skills and experience are requested to provide contact details to the OGA secretariat which will coordinate with the school office.

### SECRETARIAT STAFF

Volunteers are sought to serve in the OGA secretariat from 7:45 – 1:30 on schooldays.  
Those interested, please contact;  
Mihiri Gunawardene on 0773-912-089  
mihiring@sltnet.lk

## OBITUARIES

### **Mrs Sita Joseph (née de Saram)**

The OGA notes with sadness the death of Mrs Sita Joseph, a music teacher who gave yeoman service to the School Western Band and Western Music unit over several decades.

### **Dr Manel Panditharatne**

It is announced with sadness that Dr Manel Panditharatne passed away after a brief illness.

## FROM THE EDITOR

Each paper copy of the newsletter consumes valuable money and paper, not to mention time of many volunteers whose services ensure this is addressed, stamped and mailed.

I look forward to a time when all those with the necessary facilities opt to receive e-newsletters to the inbox rather than copies by post. Please let me know how you feel about this and whether you wish opt for the e-newsletter instead of a paper copy, to:

Madhri Senanayake: [editor.vvoga@gmail.com](mailto:editor.vvoga@gmail.com).

How can we make this newsletter better? If you have burning comments, suggestions, information you feel should appear in the newsletter, or are interested in advertising with us, please feel free to contact the Editor, at: [editor.vvoga@gmail.com](mailto:editor.vvoga@gmail.com).

Please note that mail will be replied by the current editor Madhri Senanayake. Hence mail addressed to the OGA, or on matters unrelated to the newsletter will not be entertained, and may not receive a reply or any action.

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