

1195 students from 217 schools felicitated as Young Achievers in the 20th Annual 'Can do' Workshop

A 20 year journey, 91000 scholarships, 8.72 lakh young minds touched. Ullas Trust continues to spread its roots of igniting minds – wider and deeper

Chennai (India), October 03, 2017: The 20th edition of Ullas Trust's Annual Workshop, which took place on 24 September, '17, turned out to be a sheer celebration of the children (incoming and current Young Achievers of Ullas) and Alumnus moulded over the years. The event saw 1195 students from 217 schools being awarded with Merit Scholarships at The University of Madras, Centenary Auditorium. They were the celebrities and the order of the day was to appreciate and felicitate these stars. **Smt. Valarmathi, Deputy Director, PDMSA – ISRO, Shri. Ganesh Kumar, Executive Director – RBI and Dr. Ruchi Gupta, (MD, MPH) Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Medicine – Northwestern University** were the guests of honour. The highlight of the event was the homecoming of over 100+ Ullas Alumnus.

A movement that has been growing from strength to strength, marked the 20th anniversary this year. In the last 20 years, Ullas Trust has distributed over 91,000 scholarships and has reached more than 8.72 lakh students through the SUMMIT and Touch the Soil programs. Ullas Trust was started in 1997 to recognize academic excellence in students (Grade 9-12) from the economically challenged sections of our society and encourage the 'CAN DO' spirit towards chasing their dreams. Its focus is on High School students during the most vulnerable phase in their lives - adolescence. To shape these young, fertile minds, Ullas conducts two integrated and holistic programs - the weekend 'SUMMIT' program for urban children (aka Sunday Classes) and 'Touch the Soil' workshops for rural children that help trigger their aspirations in their adolescent years.

Ullas' core tenet is to engage and mentor children in their adolescent stage (translating to students in grade 9 to 12), from Corporation, Government and Government-Aided schools, by not just providing merit scholarship but also inspiring them to dream with the strong belief that "If they can Dream It, they Can Do It".

The journey of Ullas 'Young Achiever' begins through an initial selection process - Ullas Entrance Examination (5300+ students from over 200 schools wrote the Ullas Entrance Examination this year conducted in June). These selected students then attend the 'Diary of Dreams' workshop which marks the start of the Young Achievers' 4 year journey with Ullas. The workshop publicly recognizes their achievement/enrolment into Ullas, facilitates interaction with inspiring role models from public life, nurtures the 'CAN DO' spirit in them and encourages them to put down their dreams on paper, helping commit the dream to their subconscious.

The 'Diary of Dreams' workshop caught the attention of the students who were present and made a strong imprint on their minds. Unique and interactive in nature, this was conducted by **Arun Jain, Chairman & Managing Director, Intellect Design Arena Limited & Founder, Ullas Trust**. The students thoroughly enjoyed the interactive workshop and the process of penning down their dreams and making a commitment to achieve the same in the 'Diary of

Dreams' book autographed by Former President of India, (Late) Dr. APJ. Abdul Kalam. The event witnessed children leaving the venue with the assurance of not being alone as there have been many who have taken the same path as them.

The guests of honour shared their experiences, their journey in life, how they turned the opportunities around and ignited a sense of belief "Yes I CAN" in these Young Achievers. Numerous awards were presented – Ullas Young Achiever Awards (from Class 12 - one each from Corporation, Government and Government Aided schools), UEE Awards (for Ullas Entrance Exam Toppers), EEE Awards to schools (Encouraging Excellence in Education) and also to those that put together the best canvas for the themes of Festivals in India, Forms of Mythology and Dance Forms from a Painting Competition.

Speaking on the occasion, **Arun Jain, Chairman and Managing Director, Intellect Design Arena Limited & Founder, Ullas Trust said**, *"Ullas is our way of giving back to the society that we live in and the nation on the whole. And the best way to do this is through children; who are the future. The trust has been instrumental in encouraging children from the underprivileged sections that they can achieve anything they put their heart and mind to and we will help them get there. Ullas provides a great platform for associates of Virtusa Polaris and Intellect – their friends and families to reach students from both the urban and rural environment – igniting young minds, to believe in the power of their dreams and raising their aspirations."*

He further added *"It is a humbling and inspiring experience for all of us, to be able to reach more than 2 lakh young minds across the country this year through our flagship programs – SUMMIT and Touch the Soil. In working with like-minded partners and the youth (college students) we have been able to further scale our reach and impact. We have been taking the concepts of 'Design Thinking' to college students as a skill and way of life, adding strength to our SUMMIT program in schools."*

In the year 2016-17, Ullas reached 6,200+ students annually across 397 schools in 5 cities (Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune) and 2,06,000+ students from 740 schools, in 280 talukas, 82 districts, in 5 states (AP, Delhi NCR, Maharashtra, Telangana, Tamil Nadu).

The afternoon session saw a reflection circle lead by Arun Jain along with the Friends of Ullas and over 100 alumnus who shared their heart touching stories of transformation and the magic of Ullas they witnessed. Here are some of the excerpts,

"I always had the fear of going on stage, I couldn't bring myself to speaking in front of a gathering. But here I am today addressing an auditorium packed with over 3000 people. This is what Ullas has done to me. This is the magic of Ullas."

"Before Ullas happened in my life, I used to score very poorly in all subjects. It came as a surprise to me that someone like me even cleared the Ullas Entrance Exam. But life changed, I went on to not only do my Masters but now I'm pursuing my Ph.D."

“I was an introvert, shying away from being social at all times. It was at my first Summit class that I saw myself break away from this shell. Today, I’m a Mentor at Ullas and I reach out to other children like me.”

“To come from a Corporation School background and to make it in college isn’t an easy task. At least for me it wasn’t! But it was Ullas that helped me have that edge throughout my college days; I also continued as a Higher Education Scholar with Ullas. When I finished college, I had not one placement offer but four. Ullas to me is belief. Belief in oneself! Belief that I can do anything!”

About Ullas Trust

Ullas Trust, (A Polaris Foundation Social Initiative) was started in 1997 with an aim to integrate the employees with a larger community and nurture a ‘Can Do’ spirit among the students. The Trust recognizes and rewards academic excellence through annual scholarships. Ullas Trust has been organizing an annual workshop for the past 20 years, with the aim of exposing young minds to role models and achievers from the real world. Every year, the workshop culminates with the Trust awarding merit scholarships to students from Corporation and Government schools in the 5 cities (Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune) identified through a selection process.

The SUMMIT comprises of 20 modules spanning across crucial life skills including communication skills, confidence building, memory skills, active team work, public speaking, and leadership skills. It is graded from Level 1 to Level 4, with Level 1 beginning for Class IX and finishing with Level 4 for Class XII.

The ‘Touch the Soil’ program reaches young minds in the districts through its ‘Diary of Dreams’ and ‘Planning’ workshop for Class IX and X students. The program spreads the power of believing in dreams to high school students across the rural areas of the country. For more information, please visit www.ullastrust.org