Dream Madras 2017 - Safe Streets for Chennai

As a part of Cholamandalam MS General Insurance's Responsible Road Behaviour initiative, United Way Chennai conducted a mega inter school exhibition - Dream Madras 2017, an inter-school competition including various events like workshops, exhibitions and cultural activities - all around the theme of Road Safety. The event took place in the prestigious Anna University, Guindy. The event was successful enough to attract as many as 150 government and private schools gathered under one roof and participated ever so enthusiastically in all the competitions, with the key objective being to spread awareness about road safety.

Activities that were conducted include an exhibition where students brought models that stood for road and street safety. These models had strong moral values and depicted safe roads and methods through which one can be safe and avoid danger while on the road.

In addition to the workshop some formal events like slogan competitions on Road Safety, a Workshop on Road safety through Robotics as well as a workshop on Emergency Roadside Response were held. Throughout the course of the program, children spoke about how the littlest things can make the biggest of differences. They explained how when neglecting minute things like avoiding the zebra crossing and reckless driving can lead to disastrous accidents. One student even said that, "Our streets are narrow. Our minds aren't."

The students were ecstatic: their models were colourful and extremely informative. They comprised of charts that had statistical data and few schools students even wore costumes that helped depict the message thy were trying to convey and had a lasting impact.

Other shows included the cultural programs - singing and dancing. The audience witnessed a plethora of dances that included folk, classical, Bollywood and western numbers, too. A group of students even sung a song on road safety that was accompanied by their rhythmic clapping. While few danced to the music, others performed dance dramas which narrated stories, resonating of the theme, "Road safety".

It was a great opportunity for so many schools to come together to showcase their talent .The students made an optimum use of the occasion. They hadn't just come to participate, but to bring awareness and inform people of the devastating consequences small mistakes can lead to. They were full-fledged aware of traffic rules and how people regularly and ever so conveniently broke them. One student even mentioned how his parents do not follow the signal at times. He said, "Rules are one and the same for everyone. The cost of life is precious and all our lives are important to us. Waiting at the signal is better than waiting outside the ICU".

Students from both government and private colleges seem to be aware of the status of deaths and accidents that take place in the country and said it was very sad. Few even conducted surveys on the traffic of other countries and explained how maintaining decorum on the road can maintain peace in our lives .The current generation is definitely underestimated. When asked why so many accidents occur, a student answered, "Instead of using our phones, we

should use our brains. Our life, the steering is in our hands. It only takes us where we drive it". He spoke about how reckless driving puts the life of all the passengers in danger and how if one isn't confident if they can drive, they simply shouldn't. Drunken driving cases were also caused due to reckless behaviour.

Beside the exhibition Dream Madras had a talk on a mobile application, "ALERT" – Immediate emergency response app during road accidents which provided insight for the participants on how to respond in the emergency situations. The first workshop on Robotics explained the evolution of the robots, types of robots their size, function etc, the session was kept interactive and informative for the children and the second workshop was on 'The Alert App' in which the students were explained about first aid concepts, response to accidents, do's and don'ts during accidents.

"Being safe is important to all of us. It is important to keep in mind small precaution while on the road. We have to drive our vehicles slowly, should not use mobile phones while travelling and we should not park our vehicles on middle of the streets." said a student of Janani School. The program came to an end with the prize distributing ceremony where students were awarded with cycles as a reward for their outstanding performances in talent programs and the exhibition.

The exhibition winners are as follows:

1. Sri Ramakrishna Mission Higher Secondary School

2. The Schram Academy, Madurovoyil

3. Smt. Narbadadevi J Agarwal Vivekanda Jr. College &

The PSBB Millenium, OMR

4. Young Technoprenurs- L M Dada Senior Sec School

5. Outstanding Innovators- St.Marys girls higher secondary school

6. Best Team Efforts- Nathella Vidhyodaya

7. Madras Visionaries- Bharath Senior Sec School

Talent contest (Individual event)

1. P S Sr. Sec School – Nishant Mahesh

2. NSN Chrompet - Kalaiyasaru

3. SBOA JC – Mukhil Murgan

Cultural contest (Group event)

1. Government Girls Hr. Sec School, Ekanampet

2. Chennai Boys Hr. Sec. School, Saidapet

3. Perum Thalaivar Kamrajar Govt. Girls hr sec. school, Ambattur

The winners of the exhibition took home cycles sponsored by TI Cycles (BSA & Hercules) they were also awarded with shields, medals & certificates of commendation. All the participants were given certificates of appreciation & pens sponsored by Rorito pens.

Around 130 volunteers came forward & took the responsibility to manage various activities on the day, like registrations, Food & Beverage, Workshops, Backstage management, Talent & Cultural contest committee, Visiting schools etc. The volunteers were from various colleges in Chennai namely, M.O.P. Vaishnav, WCC, Stella Maris, Patrician College, AC tech Anna University, Jeppiyar college and corporate volunteers from RR Donnelley, and NGO volunteers from Swabodoni, YRG, Vasantham, V excel and Sri Arunodhaiyam contributed to the event.