

Navjivan Vadil Kendra – Annual Report. From the Secretary

6th March 2008

Our life has changed. We live longer. Health consciousness is very prevalent. It is important that retired life is active and interesting. With this in mind, it was decided to start another elders group with the sole aim of improving the quality of life and bring greater health consciousness. Harrow Elders Group, due to limited accommodation, concentrates on the mentally stimulating card games. After its successful consolidation, and after getting a grant for the same, I wanted to do more for our elders and lonely people. Navjivan Vadil Kendra is meant to encourage greater health consciousness, take members on cultural shows and visits, arrange day trips during summer, and arrange overseas holidays for members. Harrow Elders Group and Navjivan Vadil Kendra have set an example by showing what retirement should be like and I hope that others will learn from our example and establish these centres in others parts of the country.

With this aim in mind, a meeting was called on 5th January 2007 to form an organisation to fulfil these aims, and to take advantage of various grants which were available. The government knows the growing elderly population needs initiatives to take care of them, and as such encourages any voluntary activity that will enhance this aim. Navjivan Vadil Kendra was formed at this first meeting at Sayer Centre, and after one year I am glad to highlight the achievements of this organisation.

- I went for trekking in the Himalayas in April, and I sponsored myself for the benefit of the Kendra. Friends and well wishers supported me whole heartedly and I managed to raise a large amount to boost Kendra finances. The trek was a great success, and I would like to thank all those who supported me from the depth of my heart. With all the funds raised by this sponsorship the Kendra's financial position became strong.
- Yoga classes were started and we had good response for those classes. Some members played cards. Hot lunch was arranged and enjoyed by everyone. Dipakbhai, the Yoga instructor, and soon one hour class was increased to 2 hours. Attendance climbed to an average of 50.
- After a few months of low key activities, the very first outing was arranged to visit the V & A Museum in the city. About twenty members participated in the same. Our own Dr Harshad Sanghrajka gave a tour of the Jain and Hindu relics and gave an in depth historical background.
- It was decided in July that we should have our newsletter to keep the members informed. The first issue of the newsletter came out in August. Since then it is being published on a regular basis.
- Our very first coach trip was arranged in August. Two full coaches visited Balaji temple in Birmingham, followed by a visit to Laxmi Narayan temple where hot lunch was served. Later we also visited historical Coventry Cathedral.
- Even though the Kendra was in its infancy, I submitted six grant applications to various funding authorities. There was disappointment when three applications got rejected. However, in August the first success came when £7200.00 was awarded by Awards for all. This news was received with great delight by all members.
- Following the first success, a second grant of £11,000.00 was awarded by the City Trust. The grant was awarded to be spent over a two year period.
- On 25th September, two coaches went to Brighton. First time ever, yoga lessons were conducted in the open in front of the ocean. Sixty members took part in these exercises. After that we went to a local temple where delicious lunch was served followed by tea. Two residents of Brighton, Chandrakant J Mehta and Bachoobhai Mehta prepared hot tea for us and gave two boxes of very delicious green grapes.

They also presented the Kendra with a gift of £51.00 which was accepted with thanks.

- A third trip, on 11th November, to Anupam Mission, Jalaram Temple and to Jain Derasar in Leicester to celebrate its twenty years was the last trip for the year. Two full coaches took part on this trip.
- The keen interest taken in yoga classes by about sixty or so members led to the planning of the most ambitious project in the first year of the existence of the Kendra. A Yoga retreat was booked for late November when those taking part would go to this resort and spend five nights and six days and practice yoga and eat healthily for the duration of the retreat. After initial hesitation, the retreat was full up, and many more had to be disappointed. The six day retreat was a resounding success, and demands for a repeat have been overwhelming.
- In November we got another grant for £2000.00
- In December we got confirmation that our Kendra has been registered as a charity.

The success of the Kendra owes lot of thanks to many people whose timely support became the cornerstone of this success. I would like to take this opportunity to thank these people and mention their contribution to the success of the Kendra as we see it today.

1. I would like to thank Jain Vishwa Bharti and Mr Manek Choraria in particular to give us the use of Sayer Centre without any conditions and without any demand in advance. When I first approached him with the idea, he wholeheartedly supported me, and kept telling me not to worry about the money side. Without his support, and encouragement I would not have had the courage or inspiration to create this Kendra. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his wonderful support.
2. I would like to thank Dr Natubhai Shah, who came at the first meeting and gave us encouragement by announcing funding for some lunches. The lunches were funded by Jain Samaj Europe, and this timely contribution gave a good start to our Kendra.
3. I would like to thank Hitesh Shah who offered four lunches when he found out about the formation of this Kendra.
4. I am most grateful and thankful to Dipakbhai Jashapara who gives such wonderful yoga classes to us on a regular basis. When I first approached him, he immediately and without any conditions immediately agreed to come and teach yoga. Even when we offered to pay him, he did not argue or question the payment we were making. His sincerity and wonderful method of teaching yoga has won hearts of our members, and from one hour classes we have two hour classes, and even after that members would like to have a few extra minutes. When he is not here, then his wife Sushilaben takes the classes and she is as good, if not better, teacher of yoga. The yoga retreat has become possible because of the support and enthusiasm of Dipakbhai. I would like to thank Dipakbhai and Sushilaben from the bottom of my heart, because without his support and dedication the Kendra would not have achieved the status it has done in such a short time.
5. I would like to thank Mansukhbhai B Shah and Dr Harshad Sanghrajka, who right from the beginning always supported and encouraged me, and stood by me all the way. Even though they told me that they were too busy to take part in such an organisation, I am glad to say that they have become our ardent supporters and regular participants.
6. I would like to thank Baburai T Shah, who has always understood me, always supported what I was trying to do, and has stood by me in all circumstances. He has been my guide and mentor when it comes to applying for grants. He always told me "I can show you many sources of getting a grant – you should worry more about how you are going to use those grants." Today our finances are strong thanks to his guidance in getting the grants. He successfully applied and got charity registration for us and he needs to be congratulated for this achievement. He assures me that any time

I need help in anything he is there for me, and I know that I can rely on that. He has agreed to become our treasurer, which shows his commitment to the Kendra.

7. Our treasurer, Jayantilal D Sheth, has always been supporting me, and encouraging me to start this organisation. At our request he accepted the post of treasurer but due to ill health of his wife he has not been able to undertake his responsibilities as he would have liked to do. I would like to thank him for his encouragement at every stage of the Kendra.
8. When we needed some one to look after the finances, and to take fees and keep a proper record, we were blessed with Himatbhai Mehta, who stepped in and did wonderful work for the past year in most trying circumstances. We are really grateful to Himatbhai for accepting this onerous duty when we most needed someone to do so.
9. I must mention Navnitbhai and Indubhai, who have always been at the forefront of doing any work. Whether it is arranging for lunch, or cleaning up afterwards, or to do any shopping both these gentlemen have been there with a smile. Their whole hearted support, and willingness to do any work with a smile has given us the encouragement and courage to do what we have achieved over the past year.
10. Jasuben and Naynaben have done their share of the work by always looking after the lunch, helping out in decorations and in parties, and whenever their help has been required.
11. I have to mention Pranalalkaka, who has been the pillar of strength for us all for years, and his support, enthusiasm and leadership has been the strength of pillar for us all and for this organisation.
12. Surendra Mehta has given me lot of support whenever I needed help. He created a directory for the Kendra, input all the fees and moneys received, and prepared the accounts for the year. He has helped in sending messages by email, and has always listened to any suggestion or offered advise when I have asked for it. He has not taken any post, but he has been pillar of strength for the Kendra.
13. When we started the Newsletter, I was struggling with doing the Gujarati section. Vinodbhai Kapashi offered help and has done the Gujarati page for some time, and I am grateful for his great help.
14. When we approached Chetan Parekh to be independent reviewer for our accounts, he agreed without hesitation. I am very grateful to him for putting lot of his time in reviewing our accounts, and finalising them with great speed, and of course to our great satisfaction. Without his help we would not have been able to satisfy Charity Commission.
15. This is our Kendra, and without the help of you all many things would not have been possible. Whether it is arranging tables and chairs at lunch time, or clearing up after the day, or help during day trips, members have been coming forward with all the help we can use. I cannot name everyone but I would like to thank all those volunteers who have made our task so easy.
16. I have to mention Ritaben who has been very helpful whenever we have asked for her assistance. She also helped in organising Antakhshri, and we are sure that we will always be getting lot of help from her. I will also take this opportunity to thank Rashmi Desai who came specially to chair Kaun Baenga Crorepati programme on New Year's party.
17. I must also thank Shramnijis to conduct prayers before our lunch, and to give religious guidance to our members.
18. When we started this Kendra our most pressing problem was how to arrange for lunch. Narendrabhai of Meera catering solved our problem by agreeing not only to supply but also to deliver hot lunch every Thursday. He has been very generous on the items and quantities he has been supplying. Without his generosity and the quality of food, our lunches would not be what they are. I, on behalf of us all, would like to convey our sincere thanks to Meera catering for the wonderful service he has been giving us.

19. But one person I have to mention in particular to whom I am really grateful. When I approached him if he would like to join me in doing something for the elders group, not only did he immediately say yes, but his support came from the depth of his heart. For my simple request, I got support and help I had never even thought could be expected from any one. For all the coach trips we have done, and which most have enjoyed, we have to thank this person for making them so successful and enjoyable. For every coach trip he has on his own done all the shopping and ensured that even the smallest thing is taken care of. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mahendra Kothary without whose support and help I would not have achieved all this. Thank you Mahendra for your great support over the years – and this I say from the bottom of my heart.

Due to space constraints, we had to close membership of the Kendra after only first two months of the year. If we can find a bigger place, or if we can find enough volunteers to do such work, then I would like to start a branch of the organisation so that we can satisfy all those members who would be disappointed because we could not take any more members.

We have achieved a lot in one year, but we have a long way to go. We want to create a healthy, happy and fulfilling retirement for our members, and I hope that with your support we will achieve that in time.