

DAV Montessori School: Annual Day Celebration

Sunday 20th May was the 18th Annual Day of the DAV Montessori & Elementary School (DAVMS), the flagship of Arya Samaj Houston. Dev Mahajan and Shekhar Agrawal are legitimately proud of planting the seed of the school, unique in North America. This was the second batch of 5th graders to graduate. The morning started with the multi-*Kunda* Havan, surrounded by the children of the school. It was a sight to admire the children reciting all the mantras harmoniously with the Acharyaji and meticulously following the associated steps. Acharyaji delivered the customary sermon for the children to carry the core of the Vedic message that the DAVMS prides as “Academic Excellence with Spiritual Growth”.

Once the little children took to the stage, it was non-stop lively entertainment of delight, starting with the Welcome dance. The audience was thrilled to see small steps moving to the tune of the background music. It was planned and orchestrated in a fantastic manner that it functioned back to back, almost no time required for change over that kills a lot of time in such events. The sequence of dances was interspersed by short speeches. Stuti and Eshaan spoke with confidence and displayed their holistic development that became an integral part of their personality as they graduate from the school after a number of years. This was duly attested by the alumni of the preceding year who shared their experience how their formative years at the DAVMS helped them navigate life in the larger ocean of public schools, one of them appearing via a video link.

The school announced a new venture of its Alumni Association that had its first meeting over the lunch. A list of the very first attendees was displayed; the first attendees by now have graduated from leading universities and have secured jobs at well-known corporations such as IBM or joined graduate schools such as Princeton. There is no doubt that the AA will emerge a vibrant forum for their networking.

The Annual Report was made interesting by its director Arti Khanna, appended with a DVD presentation, voice lent by a school kid. Among highlights, the newly introduced bus service has helped a number of parents being relieved from transportation challenges during the rush hour. Shri Adhana, the Deputy Consul General of India, his wife along with their son joined the event as the Chief Guests. His remarks encouraged the parents to benefit from DAVMS that generates the ideal mix of the Vedic values of Arya Samaj with the American ones. He fondly recalled his association with Arya Samaj, a pioneering movement founded by Maharshi Dayanand in 1875.

The school's all-round activities include Havan training, Vedic recitation, Indian history and customs, Yoga, Hindi conversation, Indian music, dance, etc. The school leaves no opportunity to inculcate positive human values, be it Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas or Diwali, Indian Republic Day. The children hone their public-speaking skills. Their confidence and lack of stage-fear was visible to everyone in the dances well-choreographed by the school teachers. Qualified teachers of DAVMS cater to the needs of pre-school, kindergarten and elementary school, besides after-school care,

maintaining an optimum student-to-teacher ratio for each child to receive individualized personal attention. Needless to say, there is zero bullying and zero-bad language usage among students. Voluntary participation from the parents adds further value to the educational quality.

The second phase of drama and dance was quite mind blowing, to say the least. A mime skit very imaginatively conveyed the pitfalls of indiscreet or misuse of the cell phone. It cautioned to use cell phones judiciously and did so in a very humorous manner, drawing peels of laughter. Soon to be followed was a Bhangra dance. It was unbelievable to see little boys maintain the high beat and high octane required by the folk song, and they certainly delivered up to the mark. The girls were not to be left behind as they performed a Rajasthani folk dance. The program was to end with the Vedic stamp as it had started. The entire ensemble appeared on the stage to sing the Aarti, and as usual, there was a new feather in the DAVMS's cap in the form of a poetic rendition of the Veda-Mantra *Om Annapate ...* that is customarily recited before partaking the meal. Indeed, the event was capped by an equally delightful food served by the food committee of Arya Samaj. To know more about DAVMS, please, select DAV Montessori from the Schools drop down menu on the home page of Arya Samaj Greater Houston website (www.aryasamajhouston.org).