



Event Date : May 14, 2017
Time : 5.30 PM
Venue : New Woodlands Hotel,
Mylapore, Chennai

*It's only in the black of night you see the stars...
Sri Arunodayam salutes its Special Moms!*

15 incredible mothers of 'special' children were honored with a cash prize of **INR 15,000/- each** and a Special Lifetime Pass to free services from Sri Arunodayam.

This event commemorates our **15th year of service** to abandoned intellectually disabled children.

Celebrating Mother's Day - May 14, 2017 in a unique way, Sri Arunodayam honored 15 mothers of 'special' children for their incredible courage and for not taking the easy way out by abandoning their children. The mothers received a cash award and a special lifetime pass to free services from Sri Arunodayam, in a ceremony held at New Woodlands Hotel, Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, Mylapore, Chennai.

Mr. A J Suriyanarayana, Director of Karur Vysya Bank - our Guest of Honor, and **Dr. Sumitra Shanmugam**, an eminent Gynaecologist and the **President of the Tamil Nadu Woman Doctors Association** together with Sri Arunodayam's benefactors gave away the award and a host of other prizes to the 15 finalists.

Before the event, **Dr. Sumitra conducted a closed-door workshop for the 15 special moms** who were very happy for the opportunity to connect with such eminent faculty and freely discuss their personal health issues. More workshops and sessions on new caregiving techniques, mental health, stress control, special education, and other hot topics are being scheduled by Sri Arunodayam for the finalists, in the coming months.



Sri Arunodayam's Special Lifetime Pass was a pleasant surprise and much appreciated by the mothers and their families.

The Pass was carefully thought out to provide a lifetime of benefits and free services to each year's finalists and their children. The promises that Sri Arunodayam made to these mothers includes:

- *That they will be given access to regular training programs and workshops with materials to help them advance in their caregiving abilities.*
- *That they automatically become members of Sri Arunodayam's Special Mom Forum - a project aimed at empowering them to share and advocate their issues at all levels of society, through collaboration with each other and with the help of the Forum. Such empowerment will help shape them into powerful agents of change against unjust and rigid societal mind-sets concerning the differently abled.*
- *Understanding their anxiety concerning the future of their 'special' children on their demise, Sri Arunodayam offers them the option to appoint us as custodian and official guardian of their 'special' children. Sri Arunodayam will network with peer organizations and enable a safe home for these children on their parent's demise.*

The mothers, their special children and around 150 of their family members enjoyed a wonderful evening together with Sri Arunodayam staff and children, donors, benefactors and a large crowd of well-wishers. The program commenced with 5 ladies lighting the lamp – Dr. Sumitra, Girija Sriram (the oldest Special Mom), Akshaya (our special girl child), Sanyukta Gupta (our long-standing donor & well-wisher), and Mala Manyan (Executive Producer of First Copy Productions, who helped choreograph the event).

Each mother's story, captured on film and presented at the time of the awards, moved the audience to tears as everyone present witnessed the true essence of motherhood brought to life through hardship. The struggles and the achievements of both the mothers and their children clearly showed them to be people of incredible strength and positivity.

Some of the mothers spoke of how people encouraged them to kill off or abandon their special children – a dark and disturbing trend that came to light, especially in a society perceived to be educated, God-fearing, and culturally and morally sound.

During the event, Sri Arunodayam's special children gave an exhilarating dance performance which left the audience awe-struck, and a well-known dance team performed on the most trending song of "Baahubali" to entertain the audience. An exciting entertainment program followed in which all the special children participated and danced with gusto – clearly enjoying themselves! Typical Chennai South Indian meals followed for dinner, which was a gastronomical delight and much appreciated by all.

The Special Mom Award is a longstanding dream of Iyyappan Subramaniyan – Sri Arunodayam's Founder & Managing Trustee. Henceforth, the event will be an annual one as we quest applicants from across the country to pick the 15 most deserving mothers to honor for steadfast commitment to their 'special' children.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

- *Sri Arunodayam received over 100 applications from mothers across South India and a group of eminent panelists screened every application carefully to arrive at the 15 finalists for 2017. More information on the Special Moms and their stories are available at: <https://sriarunodayam.org/special-mom-post-page/>*
- *Event videos are available at: <https://www.facebook.com/Sri-Arunodayam-Charitable-Trust-793664707409451/>*

Welcome Speech



Greeting our Special Moms



Welcome Dance by our Children



Honoring our Special Moms



Entertainment Highlights



100% of this event was funded by a group of kind benefactors.
 Sri Arunodayam is ever so grateful to: Satyabhama University, Lions Club of Golden Roses, La Renon Pharmaceutical Company, Indeco Hotels., Deepakraj, Madhuri Amin, Steve Borgia, Lakshmi Pradeepa, Avinash Gupta, Subramanian, Dr. Mythili, Karpagam, Ravinder Sokhi, G Sethukumari, and R Saratha.



I never imagined that I would be recognized for my role as mother to a 'special' child. Who would even think of doing this? I am humbled and so grateful that Sri Arunodayam helped me see my own worth. My family is deeply touched by the warmth, affection and honor we received. It's something I can't describe. We were worried about the future of our special children but after this wonderful program, our fears have been laid to rest because we know that Sri Arunodayam will honor its word. I'm so happy to be part of the Sri Arunodayam family.

- Thilagavathy D, Mother of 2 special children, and one of the 15 Special Mom Finalists

I thank the Sri Arunodayam team for giving me this rare opportunity of sharing my views with the Special Moms who are stressed and really need mental support. I am very pleased at the way this program is arranged with a view to enlighten them on the need to take care of their own health in order to support their special children. I wish that Sri Arunodayam organizes more such interactive sessions. I wish the team all success!



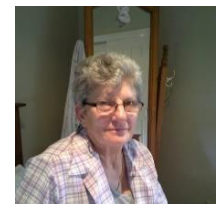
- Dr. Sumithra Shanmugham, President of the Tamil Nadu Woman Doctors Association; Recipient of the Best Woman Doctor, and Lifetime Achievement Awards from Dr. MGR Medical University



Brilliant! Kudos to the team that worked behind the scenes for months to mark a special day for the Special Moms and a special event for Sri Arunodayam! How I miss bringing every one of my friends and relatives to this wonderful event. Iyyappan, Jayachitra and the team continue to amaze me with their relentless pursuit of excellence in everything they do – and doing it all with a smile. I take a bow!

- Nanda Kumar Nagarajan, a software professional for over two decades, and one of Sri Arunodayam's Trustees

No mother wants to relinquish the child she has given birth to. Poverty, lack of knowledge, guilt, judgements, discrimination - all impact on mothers to relinquish their differently-abled children. Disability remains a misunderstood issue. By providing advocacy for mothers of special children, Sri Arunodayam has brought about a cultural alteration. In order to support a child living with a disability, society must first support the mother. The best carer for any child, irrespective of capacity is the mother. This is an astute long-ranging initiative from the Sri Arunodayam team. The organization serves in congruence with its core values - working towards the well-being of differently abled children. This Sri Arunodayam Charitable Trust (SACT) concept has the potential to influence thinking, nationally and internationally. Congratulations SACT!



- Marie Mills, an Australian Medical Professional and Volunteer



When a person's life gets entwined in an unresolvable situation, it takes a lifetime of coping - all by oneself. The mother of a special child gets little or no support; on the contrary she faces severe ostracism from friends and family. Somewhere deep inside her crippled spirit, she finds the courage and conviction to dedicate her entire life for the child. She becomes not just mother but God to the child. For without her, the child cannot survive.

For almost two decades I have been associated with several organizations involved in caring for the intellectually disabled. My life has been immeasurably enriched simply by getting to know many such special mothers. Isolated and with no frame of reference, they must often go through moments of extreme doubt on whether they are doing the right thing. But for Special Moms at the awards evening, all their doubts would have been vanquished forever. Because, they themselves would never have realized the magnitude of the nobility they have achieved so silently and selflessly. I pray that this event becomes the frame of reference for all such mothers. An infinite pool of strength and support in their moment of need. I commit myself to this cause heart and soul. Iyyappan.... such an honour to know you.

- Niranjana Arcot, Creative Consultant

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Home for Mentally Challenged Destitute