

Help the Blind Foundation

PIONEER IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Issue 1

July 2018 to December 2018

The HTBF graduate graduates in life too!

The highlight of this period was the wedding of one of our alumni Mr. John Michael with Ms. Panjami in Bengaluru.



John Michael is a past recipient of HTBF scholarship. He joined Bank of India as one of its directly-recruited officers and is presently posted in Chennai.

HTBF Scholarship Distribution: Rewarding work focused on goals

The five-month period of July - November in any year is the most active period in HTBF when the process of scholarship distribution is completed. During this period, our volunteers visit the colleges, identify applicants,

interview them, understand and document their needs and counsel them.

This is followed by processing of applications at Chennai office with collection of suitable clarifications and additional information. When the scholarship is approved, the cheques are handed over to the students and the colleges or the funds remitted direct to the colleges' bank account. This is the most satisfying and probably the most exciting part of a volunteer's role at HTBF.

We are extremely pleased to bring you pictures of our scholarship distribution functions at various locations around the country.



NAGPUR: At Vasant Rao Naik Govt. College, cheque distribution programme on 19th November at the hands of Director Dr. Sunetra Maharaj Patil.

"Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light." – Helen Keller





CHENNAI: Scholarship Distribution at Queen Mary's College



DELHI: Scholarship distribution at Kirori Mal College



COIMBATORE: Scholarship Distribution at a popular mall



INDORE: Distribution of cheque at Jijabai government college



BENGALURU: Scholarship distribution at a popular mall at the hands of Mr Venkat Rao, ED Canara Bank



MUMBAI: Scholarship Distribution at SIES College



DELHI: Scholarship Distribution at Shyama Prasad Mukherjee College



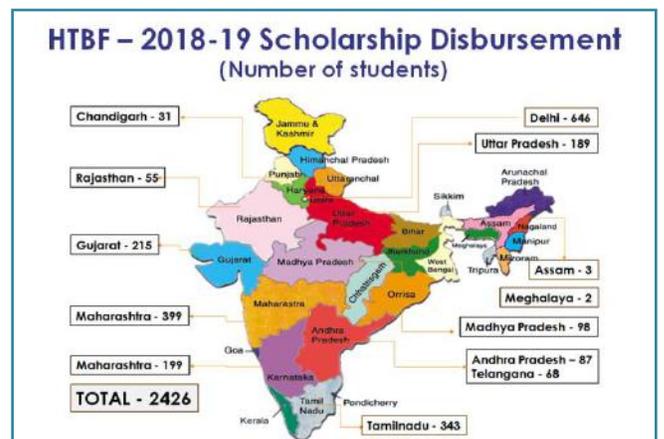
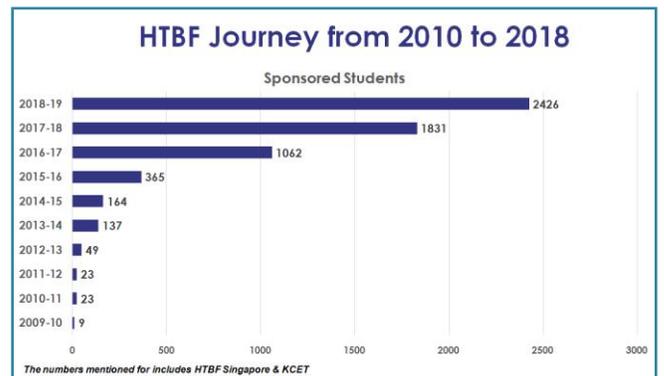
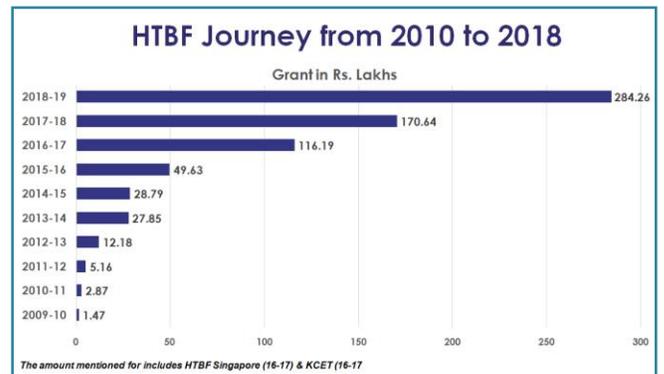
VARANASI: Scholarship Distribution at BHU by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Rakesh Bhatnagar



PUNE: Scholarship Distribution at Wadia College

This is a good time to revisit HTBF's pioneering work in the field of higher education for the visually impaired. Here is a snapshot of our work – we currently serve

2426 visually impaired students, disbursing over Rs.284 lakhs across 12 states.



Career Awareness Programmes continue

Just like the previous quarters, this quarter also saw more career awareness programmes at different centres in the country conducted by HTBF in association with Enable India Bangalore and the local NGOs.

The first of these was in April at New Delhi where the two day programmes was conducted under the able leadership of our Trustee Mr. D K Sharma, at the Hindu College and there was a record participation. The participants liked the programmes immensely but they also suggested that more time could be spent on discussing the job opportunities for the Visually Impaired students and the type of skills training that Enable India can offer for students interested in private sector in finance and IT industry.



The third of the Career Awareness Programme was held at Nasik where our volunteer Mr. Vitthal Saokar organized it with the help of the local unit of National Association of Blind where over 52 students participated. As Mr. Saokar observed, "All the students were very happy as the workshop was a great eye-opener for the Visually Impaired students. There was voluntary participation and full involvement of students in the programmes as this was the first programmes of its kind in Nasik."

All the three programmes generated a lot of interest and there is a demand for more such programmes from all the three centres.



The second programmes was at Mumbai where despite last minute notice HTBF students participated in a Career Awareness programmes organized by Enable India and sponsored by Bank of America. In the words of our volunteer Mr. Bala, "Over these two days topics, discussions, demonstrations, and live sharing of experiences by successful Visually Impaired personalities certainly opened up a new thinking in the minds of these Visually Impaired students.....they learnt to stay focused with what to do, when and how to do in achieving their life's goals.



Meet our beneficiary: Gaurav Mishra

From Delhi



Gaurav Mishra is currently pursuing his MA (Hons) History from the University of Delhi. He graduated from St. Stephen's College in History in 2018 and was actively involved in the Enabling Unit (for differently-abled students) and the Students' Union as Vice President and Secretary respectively. Gaurav Mishra was also a Bronze Medalist at the 2014 Youth Asian Paralympics' Games in 100 m sprint and is the Team Captain of the National Blind Men's Kabaddi Team. An avid reader of Hindi literature and Indian history, Gaurav was also the Vice President of the Hindi Literary Society of St. Stephen's College.

Gaurav has been actively involved in the theatre arena for visually challenged students and has been part of prize winning plays in the University during his undergraduate days. He coordinated the finance team of St. Stephen's Model United Nations 2017 and was also involved in the organizing the 2016 Political Summit in college.

Born in Deora, UP, he did his schooling from JPM School for the Visually Challenged, Delhi. Always known as a fighter, he considers challenges as opportunities to grow. He is a vital link between the administration and differently-abled students in college.

Meet our beneficiary: Deepak Jaiswal

From Bangalore



Deepak Jaiswal, HTBF beneficiary, and student of the Indian Institute of Management, chronicled his internship journey in GE, calling it an immense learning curve professionally and personally.

Deepak took the route of primary and secondary research to fulfill the objective of his project, which was to enable GE in adopting a GIG model which essentially facilitates GE to leverage diverse and high-quality gig workers for their challenging and complex tasks.

Deepak says, "The autonomy and accountability over the projects infused a sense of ownership and continuously stimulated me to contribute confidently and enthusiastically. It has been rightly said that "change is the end result of all learning".

You can read more about Deepak's personal journey at <https://insideiim.com/summer-tales-of-my-b-school-life/>

News from around the world

From Paris

Audio description in film has finally been recognized. In 2018 the French Confederation for the Advancement of Blind People created an award to honour the writers of this essential component of the blind cinema-going experience. The first “Marius de l’Audiodescription” (named after Marius Pontmercy, the hero of Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*) was awarded to Hubert Charuel’s *Petit Paysan* and the second was awarded to *Pupille* directed by Jeanne Henry.

To pick their winner, the jury of around 60 blind and sighted film fans, watched the seven films nominated for the best film César – awarded annually by the Académie des Arts et Techniques du Cinéma – while listening to the audio description soundtrack. Everyone voted for their favourite description and the film with the most votes won. At the time of writing the 2019 best film César went to “*Custody*” directed by Xavier Legrand.

From San Francisco

At age 45, Chris Downey had pretty much constructed the life he’d always wanted. An architect with a good job at a small housing firm outside San Francisco, he was happily married, with a 10-year-old son. He was an assistant little league coach and avid cyclist. And then, doctors discovered a tumor in his brain. He had surgery, and the tumor was safely gone, but Downey was left completely blind.

In an interview with Lesley Stahl of 60 Minutes, Chris Downey shared insights about how he is coping and continuing to flourish in his chosen field of architecture. He did not give up – he has found a new way of

continuing to work as an architect, and picked up a few new talents on the way.

Downey feels that the creative process is an intellectual process, and has discovered new tools for visually impairedness in the field. Downey found a printer that could emboss architectural drawings so that he could read and understand through touch. In other words, it feels a little like Braille. He also used malleable wax sticks to show his modifications to others. That apart, Chris Downey says he now “hears” architecture, in a way he had never done before, and feels he has actually got better at his job after going blind. Read his interview with Leslie Stahl at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/architect-chris-downey-goes-blind-says-hes-actually-gotten-better-at-his-job-60-minutes/>

From Seattle

Michael Forzano, suffering from blindness due to Norrie’s disease, wrote yet another encouraging story about how he has been doing as a visually impaired software engineer at one of the largest companies in the world, Amazon. Recruited straight from college, Michael has been working for Amazon for six years, no mean achievement. Forzano is among a small population of fully blind people to be employed, much less as software engineers.

He says most people, with whom he interacts on email, simply do not know him to be blind. At his recruitment interview, he used a laptop with screen-reader software, which converts all computer usage to audio cues, and was recruited when he completed the two coding questions successfully. Needless to say, Michael had been teaching himself coding from high school days.

“I faced a lot of the same challenges as any new hire out of college: new technology at work, transitioning to a working schedule, moving across the country, living on my own, making new friends. As for my blindness, I can’t read their minds. It seems like people are pretty open-minded here. When I interact with people over email, they have no idea I’m blind. Let’s say I’m at a meeting with someone I’ve never met in person, my blindness has yet to come up in conversation,” he says in the interview. The greatest challenge, he adds, came from within. You can read the full interview at <https://www.fastcompany.com/40555815/what-its-like-to-be-a-blind-software-engineer-at-amazon>

HTBF signs MOU with Cognizant Foundation

We are extremely happy to announce that Cognizant Foundation (CF) will be supporting about 200 visually challenged students through scholarships and Help the Blind Foundation (HTBF) will be the implementation partner managing the overall program. CF is also keen to support the students with additional training on English, technology and employment readiness - HTBF will be responsible for the effective management of the entire program including the components of additional training modules and will engage suitable vendors/ NGO partners for delivering the same towards meeting these objectives. HTBF are in the process of engaging vendors and NGO partners at six different centres (New Delhi, BHU Varanasi, Indore, Pune, Chennai and Coimbatore) and the training program will commence from June 2019.



Mr. Madhavan and Ms. Rajashree of Cognizant Foundation and Mr. Ramani and Mr. Nataraj of HTBF at the Grant Agreement signing ceremony.



Donate to Help The Blind Foundation

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IFSC Code	HDFC0000206
Address	Help The Blind Foundation, New No 50/5 (Old No 69/5) Bazullah Road. Nagar Chennai 600017
Contact Number	90033 30197

Comments, Questions?

Please write to sivaji@helptheblind.in with “newsletter feedback” in the subject line.