



AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

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American Center

Colombo

December 2013

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A Tribute to Nelson Mandela by the American Center



On December 16, 2013, the American Center organized a Tribute to Nelson Mandela with H.E. Mr. G.Q.M. Doidge, High Commissioner, South African High Commission as the Guest of Honor, and Dr. Lionel Mandy, former Fulbright Scholar and academic as a guest speaker. Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy, William Weinstein, delivered the opening remarks. The program included screening of the

documentary "Mandela's Life Story" and a video tribute by Poet Laureate Maya Angelou.

High Commissioner Doige, who knew Nelson Mandela personally, shared an inspiring message and took questions from the audience, and as Mr. Weinstein concluded, "Many people, in America, in Sri Lanka, and around the world, have lived a spiritually richer life because of the ideals and leadership of Nelson Mandela."

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Upcoming Events

January 7, 2013, 10:00 am

Lecture on "Digital Libraries" by Ms. Beth Sandore Namachchivaya at the American Center Auditorium. The lecture will be linked to the American Corner in Kandy via DVC.

December 28, 2013, 2:30 pm

Monthly storytelling program at the American Center Auditorium. The story *Rikki-*

Tikki-Tavi will be read by Mickie A. Crume.

Immediately following the club at 3:30 pm, the American Center will screen the movie *A Christmas Story*.

For more details on any program please visit our facebook page: www.facebook.com/usembassycolombosl or call 011 2498100.

**WISHING YOU ALL
A MERRY X'MAS
& A VERY HAPPY
NEW YEAR**



"16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence"



Panelists in Colombo (L to R) Ms. Dilrukshi De Alwis, Hon. Thalatha Athukorale MP, Ms. Shyamala Gomez, and Dr. Selvy Thiruchandran.



Audience at the American Corner, Jaffna at the screening of documentary film 'Saving Face'.

On December 2, 2013 the American Center commemorated "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence" by screening the award-winning documentary film "Saving Face" to highlight issues of violence against women. This was followed by a panel discussion of prominent persons working in the area of gender issues. This program was held simultaneously in Colombo, Kandy and Jaffna.

In Kandy, the program was in collaboration with the International Center for Ethnic Studies. Plastic Surgeon Dr. Mohammad Jawad, featured in the documentary, connected with the Colombo audience via Skype. The discussion in Colombo was moderated by Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni while in Kandy it was Dr. Mario Gomez, Executive Director of ICES and Ms. Shanthi Satchinandam, Founder of Viluthu in Jaffna.



Audience in Kandy engaging with the panelists after viewing 'Saving Face'. (L to R) Dr. Deepika Udugama, Dr. Sumathy Sivamohan, Dr. Mario Gomez, and Mrs. Visaka Dharmadasa.

Recently honored with a Best Documentary Short Oscar, SAVING FACE is a film set in Pakistan, and chronicles the lives of acid-attack survivors Zakia and Rukhsana as they attempt to bring their assailants to justice and move on with their lives.

Gender Harassment Awareness Workshop for School Students



Students involved in drawing posters advocating freedom from harassment.

workshop on "Gender Harassment Awareness" for school students to commemorate the "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence", an annual program launched by the United Nations. This workshop was held to educate teenagers about the negative effects of gender harassment. Nearly seventy students from fifteen schools (in Colombo, Kandy and Jaffna) participated in the workshop and learnt how teasing and harassment impacts girls and women.

Ms. Mahina Bongso, a young gender activist / TV presenter and journalist did a presentation on "Harassment in Public Spaces" and shared her own experiences in overcoming such situations. Ms. Nirosha Ambagahawatte, a young artist and illustrator with experience in conducting art workshops explained the designing of effective posters to convey a strong message visually.

On December 3, 2013, American Center hosted a

American Corner, Jaffna Celebrates International Disability Day



Hearing impaired students from Nuffield School Students engaged in activities.

On December 01, 2013, the American Corner in Jaffna invited hearing-impaired students from Nuffield School to commemorate the 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities'. Nuffield School is a residential school for hearing-impaired and visually-impaired students in Jaffna. Fifteen students accompanied by two teachers participated at the program organized by the American Corner Coordinator and Youth Forum members. The students performed martial art, dance and drama showcasing their talents. They enjoyed the time spent at the American Corner and appreciated the resources available for their use.

Meanwhile on December 03, 2013, the American Corner, Jaffna in collaboration with Jaffna Youth Forum members and Vadamarachchi Organization

Regional English Language Officer Sara Dene-Bolton Visits Sri Lanka



for the Deaf (VOD) organized another event for hearing-impaired community in Jaffna to commemorate the day. The goal of this event was to promote a wider understanding in society about the abilities and needs of the hearing-impaired community. Many youth and children with hearing-impairments in Vadamaracchi took part in creative activities helping in their concentration abilities. They also performed a dance program showcasing their talent at the end. They enjoyed the time spent at the event and appreciated the American Corner and VOD for organizing the event. Guests included President of VOD, Divisional Secretary for Vadamarachchi and members of the Lions Club.



Speeches by the guests were interpreted into sign language.

VOD is a Jaffna-based organization that was awarded with a Youth Empowerment Grant by the U.S. Embassy in 2013.

Regional English Language Officer (RELO) Sara Dene-Bolton conducted a workshop on teaching methodologies at the National Institute of Education on November 25, 2013. Twenty five teachers participated in the workshop. Sara Dene-Bolton, who is based in Kathmandu, also visited the English Access Micro Scholarship Program (Access Center) in Mathugama on November 26th, where she had the opportunity to mingle with students and present books.

Sara Dene-Bolton also was the chief guest at the closing ceremony of the English Access Micro scholarship Program in Puttlam.

Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam – ‘Season XIV’



The American Center hosted ‘Poetry Slam - Season XIV’ on November 21, 2013. The poets enthralled

the audience with emotional presentations of their original works. They covered various themes based on performers’ feelings and experience. U.S. Embassy’s Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni emceed the event. On behalf of the American Center, she presented certificates and gifts to the winners at the end of the program.

The American Center will continue to serve as a platform especially for talented young Sri Lankans to express themselves freely and creatively by hosting an ongoing series of poetry slam competitions every other month. Youth are encouraged to participate in these events. The American Center will hold the next Poetry Slam - Season XV on January 30th, 2014.

“Shades of Living Wild”

“Shades of Living Wild,” an Art exhibit showcasing works of artists Sujeewa Chandana and Indu Jayasooriya was declared open at the American Center on December 12. Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni welcomed guests to the exhibition which features paintings depicting a wide range of Sri Lankan wildlife and plants.

The exhibit is open for viewing Tuesday to Saturday, 9am to 6pm, through January 15, 2014.



Video Webchat on “Internet Entrepreneurship”



Cultural Affairs Officer Dawn Suni welcomed the audience and moderated the discussion in Colombo.

On November 25th, 2013, the American Center Colombo hosted a video web-chat on “Internet Entrepreneurship” with Ambassador Matthew Barzun. Ambassador Barzun discussed his experience as an entrepreneur and answered many questions raised from different countries including Sri Lanka. At the end of the web-chat, participants in Colombo engaged in a lively discussion and shared their experience and issues on entrepreneurship. Dawn Suni, Cultural Affairs Officer welcomed the audience and moderated the discussion in Colombo.

Participants included entrepreneurs, journalists and some from the business sector.

Workshops for Women Entrepreneurs in Kandy and Jaffna



Participants and resources persons in Kandy workshop

During Global Entrepreneurship Week, two workshops were conducted for over 60 women entrepreneurs at the American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna on November 19th and 23rd, respectively. The workshops were organized with the Women's Chamber of Commerce in Kandy and the District Secretary's offices in Jaffna, and included best practices on micro-financing, record keeping and marketing to improve enterprise profitability.



Section of participants who came for the Jaffna workshop

Business Development Managers from both areas and a few management students from the University of Jaffna participated in the program. The workshops were conducted by Ms. Renuka Ratnahewage, CEO of Sewa Finance, and by Ms. Thevaranchany Sivaskaran, Senior Lecturer in Management at University of Jaffna. The women entrepreneurs who attended were very enthusiastic about the practical training they received and felt their operations would benefit greatly from their learnings.

"Hour of Code"



On December 9, 2013, the American Center in Colombo hosted "Hour of Code", a weeklong global

campaign held during December 9-15, 2013 to encourage children and adults across the world to try computer coding. The American Center Colombo joined hands with Aeturnum and Xiteb to conduct the workshop, and participants had the opportunity to develop their first game and then ask their friends to play. A certificate awards ceremony was held at the end of the workshop.

In a video released to mark the launch of the campaign, President Obama said "No one's born a computer scientist, but with a little hard work — and some math and science — just about anyone can become one."



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A Tribute to Nelson Mandela From page 1



Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. William Weinstein delivering the welcome address.



Guest of Honor, H.E. Mr. G.Q.M. Doidge, High Commissioner of South Africa delivering his speech.



Guest speaker Dr. Lionel Mandy delivering his speech.



Access students, teachers and embassy officials.

Access Students Visit American Center

Over 40 students of the U.S. Embassy's English Access Microscholarship Program in Mannar visited the American Center on December 16. Public Affairs Officer Christopher Teal presented Access scholarships to the students and highlighted the importance of learning English.

The Embassy funds 12 Access centers across the country, teaching English to over 300 students.

US Government Support for New Hospital for Palai Division in Kilinochchi



On December 3, 2013, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director Sherry Carlin, along with Dr. P. Sathiyalingan, Minister of Health and Indigenous Medicine, Northern Provincial Council, inaugurated the newly constructed Divisional Hospital in Palai. The hospital, at a total cost of \$525,000 (approximately 69 Million SLR), consists of an emergency treatment unit, 24 inpatient beds (12 beds each for pediatrics and maternity ward with delivery room) and a pharmacy. The hospital will also provide preventative health services through

outpatient services.

"This new hospital will have a significant impact on thousands of people living in the surrounding communities by offering accessible, quality healthcare," said Ms. Carlin at the opening ceremony. "The Divisional Hospital will act as the primary healthcare facility in Palai, until other medical facilities within the Province can be reconstructed and rehabilitated to help support the medical demands being placed on surrounding medical facilities. This means the medical staff here will be able to treat people more quickly, offering urgent medical attention when needed while also offering less costly preventative care for the entire family."

This hospital is one of nine hospitals being funded by a combined effort with the Civil Military Support Element (CMSE) from the U.S. Embassy in conjunction with NGO Medical Teams International, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Health and Northern Province Directors of Health Services, World Health Organization, and a diverse group of engineers and specialists. An additional five hospitals will also be opened in early 2014.

On November 1, The US Agency for International Development celebrated its 52nd birthday. For more than 50 years, USAID assistance has been at a work, helping Sri Lankans build better lives.

USAID is providing safe water, proper sanitation facilities and improving hygiene practices among resettling communities in Sri Lanka's East.



A Trip to the Zoo



Twenty-five youngsters aged 6-16 from the American Center Library went on a fun and educational field trip to the National Zoological Gardens in Dehiwela on December 20.

Pubudu Weeraratna, a well-known zoologist and founder of the Species Conservation Center of Sri Lanka, conducted the program, along with help

from the Young Zoologists Association of Sri Lanka. Pubudu Weeraratna and Indu Jayasooriya talked about the importance of protecting wildlife and their natural habitats, and then the children went on a tour of the zoo to learn more about fish, birds and other wildlife at the zoo.

After the lectures, the children engaged in some fun face-painting, featuring animal faces – fun!



The Winners of Essay and Photo Contest

The winners of the "Learn about America" essay competition held in March/May 2013 and the winners of the "Celebrate World Environment Day" photography contest held during June –August 2013, received their awards on December 9, 2013, at the American Center in Colombo. Ms. Juliana Spaven, Information Officer of the U.S. Embassy Colombo, presented the certificates to the winners. Ms. Faima Farisz, Editor of *Junior Observer*, also participated in the event.



Photography Contest Winners - June –August 2013

Standing (L to R) S. Sajith Madushanka; Supun Wijenayake; Shenal Anthony Fernando; Thilina Alagiyawanna; Shabnam Muhseen; Anagi Shakya Kottahachchi; Tilan Perera and T. Aarthiepan. Seated (L to R) Ms. Juliana Spaven, Information Officer, U.S. Embassy Colombo and Ms. Faima Farisz, Editor, Junior Observer.



Essay Winners, March-May 2013

Standing (L to R) Shamalka Deshani Bandara; Dinithi Kurukulasuriya; Naadir Thassim; Dylan Nuwan Archier and U. A. Tharusha Dillon Rajakaruna. Seated (L to R) Ms. Juliana Spaven, Information Officer, U.S. Embassy Colombo and Ms. Faima Farisz, Editor Junior Observer.