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STEMED
THE NEED OF THE HOUR



ECONOMICS AND MULTIACTIVITY CAMPS

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THOUGHTS THAT STEMED FROM

STEM is the new fashionable tool introduced to make learning more interdisciplinary. It is engaged in making the future employees of the world more tuned into technology, and this is my take. Is it good or bad or irrelevant? Time will tell. But whatever it is, the world of education is making the shift, some have and many are still grappling with it. In Trailblazers, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) has two more letters incorporated E & D and so it is now called STEMED (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics Environment Design).

The idea is to make learning more relevant to the times. We are in a digital age and moving faster than ever before. Therefore the idea is to introduce coding

as a subject for children at an early age, so as to let them understand the process as a new language. This will equip them so they can better handle the future which is already at our doorsteps. Drones, robotics, artificial intelligence automated vehicles - the present and the future are both rife with infinite possibilities. I am no psychologist but what bearing it will have on their minds is difficult to say now.

So as we continue to rob children of their childhood and continue to make them slaves of technology, it concerns me that we have forgotten to add Environment and Design to this abbreviation. Using interdisciplinary modes of teaching and including Environment and Design will help children understand the impact of their

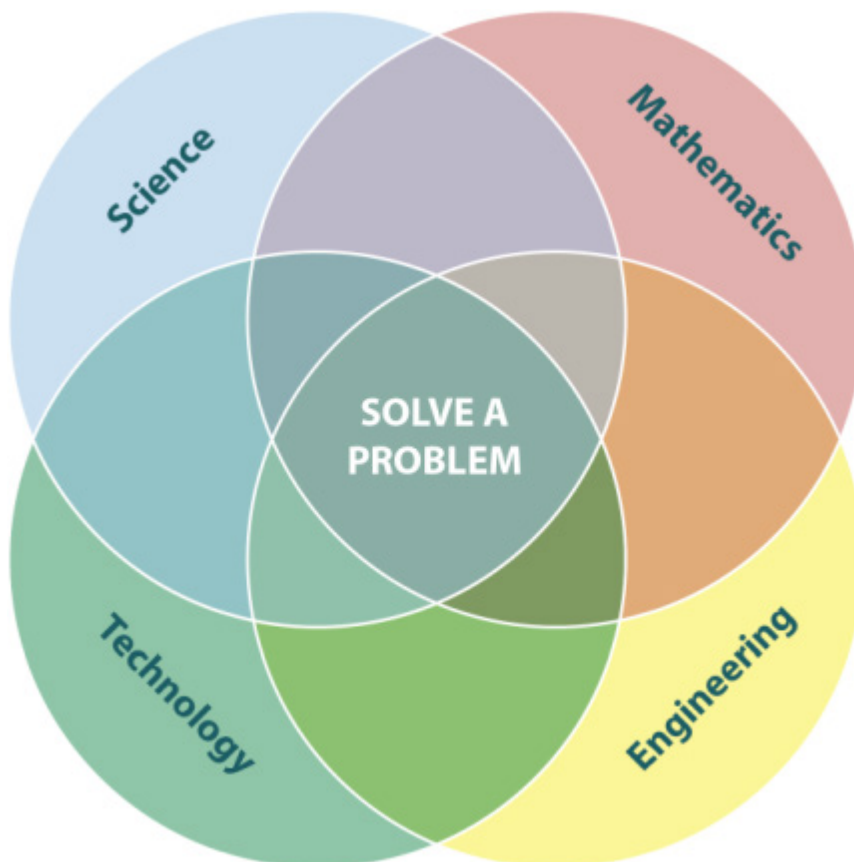
actions. Now it is fashionable to talk of plastics, wait till the next bomb comes our way- into the ecosystem. Batteries complete with Lead, Cadmium, acids and other high octane pollutants that comprise these. How do we dispose of these batteries which will leach deadly pollutants into the environment? Never forget the commercialization of battery driven vehicles is not the solution. These companies are not wanting you to buy one vehicle, they will want you to consume more, thus more batteries thrown to the environment, we have to deal with this and even more deadly toxic elements.

STEMED is not the new panacea but it is a beginning to equip the next generation with the tools to cope with the techfuture.

Ranjan Biswas

Editor

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On the Brink...

The Great Indian Bustard is found close to the Indus River delta in the North West Region of Rajasthan and Gujarat. The resident Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigricaps*) is listed as Critically Endangered, with an estimated global population of less than 300 birds left in the wild. Historically this was a widely distributed species across 11 states in India with an estimated population of 1,260 birds in 1969. They are now principally present in Rajasthan with fewer than 15-20 birds in of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. They favour flat open landscapes with minimal visual obstruction, adapting well in the grasslands.



Image courtesy: Dr Sudhir Gaikwad-Inamdar

Since only one egg is hatched in a year, the survival chances of newly born chicks are also rare as predator species like Stripped Hyenas, Indian Fox, Golden Jackal, Indian Wolf and raptors species are known to hunt them. The biggest threat to these birds is habitat destruction due to cattle grazing, poaching, collisions with high tension electric wires, fast-moving vehicles and free-ranging domesticated dogs.

It has been identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India as Project Great Indian Bustard. Under the this programme, establishment of Community / Conservation Reserves and ecotourism in privately owned land is promoted along with restriction on even low pastoral activity during breeding season. Removal of invasive species, providing more support and equipment to park staff, considering ex situ conservation breeding programme as an insurance against extinction are recommended to protect this beautiful bird.

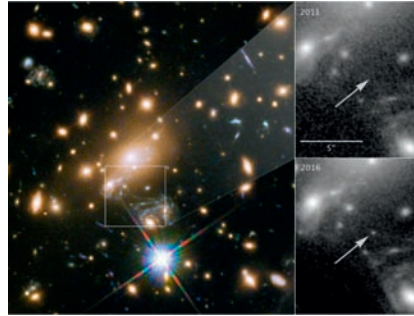


Image courtesy: Left: Reuter/NASA Right: The Sun, or the Fall of Icarus (1819) by Merry-Joseph Blondel



FARTHEST STAR EVER TO BE VIEWED

Icarus, the farthest star ever to be viewed was recently detected more than halfway across the universe. Named after the Greek mythological figure whose wax wings melted when he flew too close to the sun, Icarus is situated 9.3 billion light years away from us! Researchers used NASA's Hubble telescope to spot this star, said to be a million times more luminous and twice as hot as our sun.

Officially called MACS J1149+2223 Lensed star-1, it is a blue supergiant, a star that is extremely hot and bright-with surface temperatures of 20,000 to 50,000 degrees Celsius, Around 20 times that of the sun, they give out more light than 60,000 suns added together. So how do you spot something at the other end of the universe? This is done through gravitational lensing

which takes place when the gravity of supermassive objects bends and amplifies the light from behind them. Astronomers exploit this property, lining their faint object up with a massive one to get a better look. When Icarus was discovered, astronomers were actually using a galaxy cluster 5 billion light years away in the constellation Leo, to get a better look at Refsdal, a supernova. Because the light of this star has taken so long to reach, it is like looking back in time almost to the time of the Big Bang. In January, astronomers announced that they had imaged a galaxy 13.3 billion light-years away using gravitational lensing, the farthest galaxy ever captured. In February, researchers also announced that lensing helped them find possible signs of planets outside our own galaxy.

COMPASS OF LIGHT

Researchers have discovered a new method of underwater navigation based on polarization patterns, inspired by the mantis shrimp that has polarization-sensitive vision. Though you could get lost in the expanse of the ocean, the light's air-to-water transmission and in-water scattering can be used as a compass. This technology opens new possibilities for undersea navigation and understanding the migratory behavior of marine animals. It also gives an insight into how pollution might affect migration patterns as an increase in particulate matter would affect the polarization patterns. For e.g. more whales are being stranded close to the California shore, where they have never been observed before, perhaps an indirect effect of pollution. The study, *Bioinspired polarization vision enables underwater geolocalization*, is published in Science Advances.

BONE IDENTITY

A single human finger bone found in Saudi Arabia at a site called Al Wusta in 2016 has changed our view of Homo sapien migration out of Africa. The bone is approximately 88,000 years old, when the landscape of Arabia was a verdant grassland, with numerous lakes; this is supported by the discovery of aquatic and semi-aquatic animal fossils. Al Wusta yielded 380 stone tools and 860 nonhuman animal fossils from the same time.

Some of those animals, including hippos and gazelles, originated in Africa and no longer inhabit the Arabian Peninsula. It was believed that humans started dispersing out of Africa only 60,000 years ago though the bone hints at more geographically diverse human migration across the interior of the land, not coastlines. One thing is certain, there is still a lot more to unearth in the sands of Al Wusta.

INCREASING CONNECTIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT

are you connecting with your students?

GET

Get to know your students.

PLAY

Even a college classroom is more connected with a fun game.

LISTEN

to your students' body language. Don't push them.

MOVE

the classroom set-up. Switch desks, groups.

GIVE

them back the electronics, have them solve problems with it.

CONNECT

with the world. Who and what can enrich your students?

FLEX

to keep an open heart and mind.

JAM

with your hands, keeping the tech aside. Grab pencils, crayons markers.

MUSIC

Ask students to find music that expresses what they're thinking.

WATCH

what your students watch. Learn how they think.

INCLUDE

your students in designing their curriculum.

HUMANIZE

Be fallible. Let your students know you as you are.

USE

stories. Lots of them!

PUT

the power in the students' hands. Empower them!

TALK

to your students' families. What is their culture? What are their struggles?

TAKE

a deep breath before you respond to a student.

ASSIGN

roles for the classroom, encourage accountability, responsibility.

FIND

Ask students to find and bring new content to class and share it.

ASK

other teachers how they relate to their students.

ADD

visuals to everything you do. Bring alive their sense of wonder.

BREAK

Let students decide when they need a break.

CHAT

Create a chat time. Get students to discuss what they chatted about.

PRESENT

7-second presentations about things they're passionate about.

SOLVE

find a complex problem students have to apply their minds to find a solution.

PAUSE

frequently and check if everyone is on the same page.

GROUP

Create small group times.

SUPPLY

students with empathy, help them grow.

CONFIRM

that the student is doing well.

BE

nice. Simple, assertive, empathetic, a good listener.

APPROACH

students. Let them know you care.

By Mia MacMeekin

<https://anethicalisland.wordpress.com>

GATEWAY TO FRIENDSHIP



Trailblazers organized a two-day Mumbai Darshan camp for a renowned school for their Swiss Exchange Programme. The young Swiss nationals were hosted by their Indian counterparts to help them experience Mumbai city, beginning with the historic sites. Then they visited heritage museum where they indulged in some block printing and surveyed many historical relics. This was followed by a visit to a museum dedicated to the Father of the Nation where they witnessed the life history of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Students were introduced to Hindu traditions and mythology as a part of which they visited a temple. They enjoyed a trek in the green lung of the city - Sanjay Gandhi National Park and finally enjoyed a Bollywood tour.

WALKING ON THE WILD SIDE



Everyone wants to see it! The pride of India, the majestic tiger. Trailblazers organized a camp for the students of a Mumbai school to the famed Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in India. Set in the scenic Aravalli hills, the rugged terrain of this reserve is also home to leopards, sloth bears, sambhar, wild boars, spotted deer, nilgai and numerous birds. Open air cantors added a bit of thrill to the safari experience. The royal cat eluded us but we were

able to sense its presence through its pug marks and claw marks on the trees. The jungle did grace us with sightings of sloth bears, crocodiles, wild boar, sambhar and the ubiquitous spotted deer. We also spotted a family of peacocks and loads of rufous treepies. The treepies have become habituated to humans and frequently approach the cantors. Students were delighted to see the birds from such close quarters. The next visit was to Ranthambore fort,

built in the 10th century and ruled by many dynasties, including the Chauhans, the Mughals and finally the East India Company. Amazed by some of the stories of the fort, students thoroughly enjoyed the visit. A brief introduction to Indian wildlife was offered by the Trailblazers team through engaging games, which students enjoyed. Camps such as these motivate us to continue giving our best to spread the message of environment conservation to students all around.

WANDERING THROUGH WONDERFUL WAYANAD

Wayanad, the green paradise nestled among the mountains of the Western Ghats, forms the thick belt of tropical forest in Kerala. Clean, pristine, enchanting and hypnotizing, this land is filled with history and culture. Located at a distance of 76 km from the sea shores of Kozhikode, this verdant hill station is full of plantations, forests and wildlife. Wayanad hills are contiguous to Mudumalai in Tamil Nadu and Bandipur in Karnataka, thus forming a vast land mass for the wildlife to move about in this natural abode. Trailblazers conducted a student camp in this green paradise for a reputed international school. The objective of the camp was to appreciate wildlife, history

and culture of Wayanad. As part of camp, students visited a wildlife sanctuary where they explored semi-evergreen forests through jeep safaris. Wayanad is considered to be, bio-geographically, one of the richest tracts of peninsular India. Students were delighted to see an elephant, jungle fowl, owl and herds of spotted deer. A trek to the prehistoric rock caves followed the sanctuary visit. These caves have evidence of a prehistoric civilization or settlement in this region. Inside the caves are pictorial carvings believed to date to at least 6,000 BCE. Students enjoyed the trek as it gave them a taste of adventure and thrill. Waterfalls are a great place to relax

and that is exactly what the students did at one of the famous waterfalls of Wayanad. Although the climb down needed some effort, the natural wonder that awaited us at the end was worth it. Students had a great experience with bamboo art at a bamboo village. Creativity of the students was put to the test with an art activity conducted by the Trailblazers team. The students also experienced Kalaripayattu - considered to be the mother of all martial arts. The students were kept engaged throughout the camp with site visits, games and activities. The camp was a fantastic success and appreciated by all.



CHILLI YARD CHRONICLES

Guntur is a district in the state of Andhra Pradesh, famous for its chillies. It has one of the largest chilli yards in Asia and the chillies from here have been designated as the geographical indicator of the region.

A group of students from an international school of repute joined Trailblazers for a camp in Guntur to explore its intricacies. Together we explored the 4th century ancient caves that were occupied by three different religions at different time periods. Exquisite sculptures adorn the caves, and the dark corners of the caves also attract bats.

Students received their daily dose of physical exercise by trekking up to a 14th century fort. This fort lies near the Krishna river. Like every other fort, it has seen a series of rulers, starting with the Musunuri Nayaks, the Reddy dynasty, the Qutubshahi dynasty and finally ending up in the hands of the East India Company. After independence the Archaeological survey of India is entrusted with the maintenance of this historic fort. The fort is surrounded by a forested area; these forests have the white sander tree locally known as Tella poniki. Its soft and light wood is used in crafting Kondapalli toys, another speciality of the region. The trip would be incomplete without a visit to a chilli farm. Students got a chance to pluck green chillies and

interact with farmers. A question and answer session with farmers and Trailblazer experts satisfied their curiosities about chilli farming. Various pest traps piqued the interests of students, as they peered into them to see the kinds of insects that get caught



in them. It was an experience like none other for the students and it was made better when they could buy chillies to take back home.

Thousands of birds awaited the students at a nearby bird sanctuary. The sight was spellbinding and students stood transfixed as they gazed at these winged wonders. Trailblazers experts explained the concepts of migration and shared some knowledge on bird ecology. Outdoor teaching methods were used at all sites to ensure effective learning.



Interactions encouraged students to ask questions and fulfill their curiosities. Safe to say, it was yet another successful camp for Trailblazers, especially due to the enthusiastic participation of students and teachers.

LAND OF THE FORGOTTEN

Hampi is a geological marvel dotted with giant stones, interspersed with wild, bushy trees, carpets of paddy and banana plantation irrigated by the Tungbhadra basin- an eclectic mix of brown, green and blue. The great empire of Vijaynagara was a well-planned kingdom, fortified with seven walls of stones. Among its kings, the rule of Krishnadevaraya is considered a glorious chapter in history. Trailblazers set off with a group of students from an international school of repute to explore this wonderland with the objective of becoming aware of the rich tradition and culture of this part of India and understanding the conservation movement of UNESCO heritage sites. Students visited the Royal center, an

iconic temple with musical pillars and chariots, a palace with cooling pipes and guarding towers, magnificent elephant stables depicting a blend of Jain and Indo-Saracenic styles of architecture, and stepwells with conduits delivering water from the nearby Tungbhadra. Trailblazers experts shared the information on history and architecture with students, after which they trekked to the top of a hillock to experience the beauty of the landscape. Students were left awestruck by the largest statue in Hampi, the Shivlingam, the Ganesha, Hemkuta and Virupaksha temples and Hampi Bazaar nearby which they shopped for souvenirs for friends and family. They also debated the pros and cons of the Tungbhadra dam - the



lifeline of the region, after which they had fun enacting stories from Ramayana. The group also visited the nearby sloth bear sanctuary and spotted two bears, a mongoose and peacocks. We look forward to more majestic adventures with these youngsters!

A CO-OPERATIVE COUNTY

Kolhapur, the land once ruled by Silaharas, Yadavas, Rashtrakutas and Chalukyas in the medieval era and an erstwhile Maratha princely state ruled by Chattrapati Shahu Maharaj is famous for its Kolhapuri chappals, a geographical indicator; and spicy food – missal, tambada and pandhara rasa. The region is rich in culinary delights; and sugar, milk and jaggery, also abundant in natural resources - water, soil, natural vegetation, animal wealth and minerals. As a result, Kolhapur is one of the most agriculturally advanced districts of not only Maharashtra but also India. It is fast becoming an industrialised district as well and already a frontrunner in agro-based industries. No doubt, the district has the highest per capita income in the Maharashtra State and one of the highest in the country. It is also an important religious place and is called as Dakshin Kashi. Kolhapur is the seat of Goddess Mahalaxmi and is one of the Shaktipeeths mentioned in Indian mythology.

Trailblazers took a group of international school students to explore the co-operatives in Kolhapur as it is one of the shining examples in the co-operative movements of India and an apt destination to study the world of co-operatives. Exploring various co-operatives they learned how resources are pooled together and used for the benefit of all co-operative members, be it a farmer who owns a small or large resources in terms of land, cattle or finance. Students visited sugarcane farm, sugar and jaggery cooperatives to learn about process of sugar and jaggery making. During the visit, Trailblazers experts explained the different stages of the sugarcane crops and processes, in their journey to become sugar - crushing, juice extraction, clarification and crystallization. Students also got a chance to eat the sugarcane and taste the final powdered and crystalized sugar. They also interacted with industry experts to get more out of the visit. At the jaggery unit, students saw mechanized harvesting and enjoyed and drinking sugarcane juice. India is one of the world's largest producers of milk. Thanks to the scientific approach and vision of Dr. Verghese Kurien - The Father of the White Revolution. The students visited a

milk co-operative and learned how milk from thousands of farmers reaches the cooperative, undergoes pasteurization, homogenization to break down the fat globules, cooled, stored and packed for distribution to vendors and end users. The processes for manufacturing shrikhand (Indian dessert), flavoured milk and dry milk powder were also explained. Students received a pleasant surprise when the milk co-operative provided them with cold, refreshing Lassis.

The visit to the textile cooperative was an interesting one as students were able to see raw cotton turned into yarn, which was then woven into fabric used for shirts and other garments for exports. Students also saw the dyeing unit where stacks of yarn are dyed with different colours in huge vats. This raw yarn is wound around a large spindle in accordance with the colour and design of the end product. This is the warp of the textile. The weft consists of bundles of thread that are positioned on bobbins and which flit in and out of the warp to create the desired design.

After the textile cooperative, they visited a Kolhapur chappal unit and homes of the women labourers who help sew the chappal soles. A very interactive session ensued between the labourers and students and some even helped the artisans polish the dye onto the

chappals. After the session was over, most students purchased chappals for their families. Students also took blessings of Goddess Mahalaxmi at the ancient Mahalaxmi temple and prayed for peace and prosperity of all. Trailblazers experts conducted a reflection session to reinforce the learning from the visits during which the students presented their learning from the visits and data collected creatively in small groups supporting and motivating each other. We hope these visits have sown the seeds of inquiry in the minds of youngsters and will spur them on to further research. The overall objective of the camp was achieved successfully with students learning a great deal about the world of co-operatives.



MULTIPLY THE MESSAGE: RURAL REACH

The guests strolling on the picturesque lawns at a popular hotel in Maharashtra were attracted to the badminton court from where shrieks of laughter could be heard. Curious visitors who wanted to know more visited the site, eager to take a closer look and if possible partake in the fun-filled proceedings as well. They saw a bunch of adults engaged in what appeared to be a role-play being executed through a game of Catch. The visitors were fascinated to know that this 'game' was essentially a training session in progress wherein the players assuming predatory and prey roles were simulating the food chain. This was just one of the scenes from the many such sessions at the 9th Dow-Trailblazers' Multiply the Message Teacher Training Workshops organised on December 27th-28th, 2017 with "Water – Gift of Life" and "Plastic - a boon or scourge" as its themes.

That the children accompanying the curious guests asked if "they could play too"; validated the relevance of the 'learning-by-doing' pedagogy that the workshop has innovatively promoted every year, since its inception nine years ago. Like each year, this workshop too demonstrated how information dissemination need not be a passive process ensconced in books; but that knowledge can be innovatively gloved in fun; especially when the outdoors becomes a classroom. The day-long workshop was organised exclusively for student-teachers from three B.Ed. colleges and in-service teachers across Ratnagiri district.

Elementary concepts like the food chain, survival of the fittest, determining the quality of water by assessing dissolved oxygen etc. were explained through simple yet innovative teaching pedagogies that used unconventional methods like audio-visual tools, outdoor games and indoor science experiments. An engaging session by Dr. Medha Tadpatrikar, from Rudra Environmental Solutions, a social enterprise which has pioneered the technique to convert plastic waste into bio-fuel wowed the participants into pledging their support towards responsibly using plastic. "Thank you for teaching us how to teach," quipped Fatima Mulla, a B.Ed. student from B. A. Alias Educational Institute. "As teachers we are often told

to make children do, to make them learn. This workshop gave us simple yet innovative ideas on how we can keep children engaged and excited while they learn," she added. Sucheta Ghospurkar, a teacher from Dyandeep Vidyamandir school shared that she felt joyful "like a child" during the sessions at the workshop and said she'd like to learn about the energy crisis next! "Environment is everyone's subject and every teacher therefore should attend such workshops as part of their drive to improve and excel as teachers," added Shilpa Katkar from New English School, Karanjali.

Trailblazers Foundation was honoured to welcome Mr. Deepak Mhatre and Mr Vinayak Vaidya from Dow Chemical International who motivated the participants to view the workshop as a "beginning" of all the positive changes that would follow once every teacher in the room multiplies the message

of environment conservation to their hundreds of students.

The year 2017 drew to a resplendent close with the successful completion of Dow Chemical International and Trailblazers Foundation's 9th Multiply the Message Environment Education Workshops. The hotel came alive with the chatter and laughter of 90 teachers and soon-to-be-teachers (B.Ed. students) from Khed and Dapoli tehsils of Ratnagiri districts who enjoyed the role-reversal of being at the receiving end of the classroom while they learnt about innovative methods on incorporating "environment" as a subject and as a teaching methodology in their classrooms. Designed to demonstrate the power of the outdoors and the activity-based approach in promoting learning outcomes, the workshop practiced what it preached through a series of sessions that involved the participants "learning by doing".



1. Mr. Deepak Mhatre, Manager - Quality and Mr Vinayak Vaidya, Technologist from Dow Chemical International inaugurating the workshop. Dr. Medha Tadpatrikar, Rudra Environmental in background 2-3. Mr. Sachin Sata and Ms. Nayantara Deshpande of Trailblazers Foundation conducting the activities during workshop.

CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE: CAMP KARMA



'I survived because the fire inside me burned brighter than the fire around me.'

In November 2017, Trailblazers conducted its 4th Camp Karma- India's ONLY Burn Camp for Children with the support of KEM Hospital and Burns Advocates Network Ltd.

On a bright Friday morning, we set out for a power packed and fun filled weekend to a hill station in Maharashtra. The group consisted of 22 young burn survivors, and a team consisting of doctors, burn advocates, nurses, therapists, concerned volunteers, and a team of 6 Trailblazers experts.

The objective of the camp was to provide the young burn survivors with an experience unlike any other in an environment that fosters friendship, personal development and inclusivity. Upon reaching the green and sprawling resort- our campsite for the weekend, the team was welcomed with drums, flowers and a refreshing drink. The survivors and volunteers were divided into 4 teams, who called themselves Karma Superstars, Sairat, Igatpurikars and Gabru Bachche. They would constantly battle it out amongst themselves to decide who would be the ultimate winner.

The challenges presented to the team were varied. From map-making, where the campers learnt how to read a compass, and a basic orientation to the campsite, to a Master Chef Challenge,

where the teams were given a variety of ingredients, aprons and chef caps, and were to explore their culinary skills. The judges had a difficult time picking the best dish from the chaats, sandwiches and crackers that were made. Some were mouth-watering to taste, while others were beautifully decorated with garnishing on the side. A mini football world cup, where the campers got to sweat it out and a mind boggling treasure hunt with secret clues and hidden gifts, were some of the other challenges, and the 4 teams were battling it out neck-to-neck.

Apart from the team challenges, the campers got to experience a range of other exciting activities. Nehru Planetarium experts conducted a fascinating session on stargazing, where they spoke about the origin of the universe, possibility of life in outer space and constellations in the sky. The campers were astounded to see Saturn with its rings beautifully surrounding it, and the Moon with its craters, through the telescope.

Our in-house birding expert conducted a fun session on bird-watching, where the children got to understand the different colours and calls of birds of the hills and forests. The campers also got a chance to test their nerves and overcome their fears with exciting adventure activities like Burma bridge and river crossing. After an intense adrenaline activity, the campers got to soothe their nerves

trying out the enticing arts of coffee painting and candle-making. What is an evening without a bit of dance and music! The campers attended a dance and theatre workshop where the dance trainer helped them shake a leg and groove to the latest beats. Last but not the least, what is a camp without a campfire! In the chill of the night, the campers enjoyed a bonfire with music, dance and smores, which were made with marshmallows, chocolates and biscuits and were baked in bonfire by the doctors, volunteers and Trailblazers.

The camp concluded with a prize distribution ceremony for the great performances and showcases of courage and talent throughout the camp. A motivational talk was given by Mr. Ranjan Biswas, MD Trailblazers and Dr. CM Sunta by way of storytelling. Young burn survivors were motivated to aim high in their lives and look beyond the scars. A heartwarming Silver Bell session followed, where a silver bell was passed from one child to another and the child with the silver bell shared how he or she got the burns and how they felt living with it. They also expressed how the camp changed them and made them more confident.

Overall, Camp Karma 2017 was successful in harnessing the healing power of games, arts, music and outdoor recreation enabling burn survivors to transcend their scars.

SKI AND SCUBA CAMPS



LEARNINGS

- Become a certified skier
- Experience a new country
- Acclimatization to snow
- Learn how cheese and chocolate are made

UPCOMING OUTDOOR PROGRAMMES - 2018



LEARNINGS

- Become a PADI certified Open Water Diver
- Experience the underwater world
- Explore the culture and cuisine of Bali
- Observe how the most expensive coffee is made




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