



NATIONAL DAY Celebrations

As the nation celebrated Singapore's 51st birthday, Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC) joined hands with the Singapore Sikh Education Board (SSEF) and the Central Sikh Gurdwara Board (CSGB) to commemorate this important event at the Central Sikh temple. SSEF also held its annual prayers for Sikh Students from all over the island for their forthcoming examinations. The atmosphere was vibrant with both young and old dressed in red and white while attending prayers in the main prayer hall.

SIWEC had put up a booth as part of its outreach efforts and incorporated interactive games for children. Children enthusiastically answered questions regarding SIWEC to include the objectives, initiatives and programmes SIWEC has for its beneficiaries. NTUC vouchers worth \$100 were given out to 20 winners. More importantly, the congregation received a chance to understand and appreciate SIWEC's endeavours and how these help our society at large.

With the conclusion of prayers, everyone proceeded to gather in the Langgar Hall. There, a large sized vegetarian cake had been prepared and awaited the congregation



to partake in celebration of the nation's birthday. Everyone joined in to sing the National Anthem and recited the state pledge with intense pride and conviction.

Adults and children gathered around the cake together with representatives from SIWEC SSEF and CSGB, to cut the cake accompanied by joyful cheering for Singapore in the background.

The special event was joyously celebrated by all who attended.



More importantly, it was a display of the unwavering support and commitment of the Sikh-community to our country - One people, one nation, one Singapore!

IN THIS ISSUE

2 | SIWEC@ Bhai Maharaj Singh's Barsi

3-4 | Behind the scenes with SIWEC Prison Counselling volunteers

5-7 | Silver Tsunami or Opportunity: SIWEC working with elderly volunteers to change mindsets

8 | @ SIWEC

SIWEC@ Bhai Maharaj Singh's Barsi

Patron

Kartar Singh Thakral

Trustees

Mohinder Singh Thakral
Naranjan Singh Brahmpura
Daljit Singh Gaggarbhana
Manmohan Singh Thakral
Gurcharan Singh Narula
Mahn Singh Bajaj
Jagjit Singh Sekhon

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chairman

Gurdip Singh Usma

Vice Chair

Manmohan singh

Vice Chair

Gurmit Kaur Sroya

Secretary

Sharanjit Kaur

Asst Secretary

Simranjit Kaur

Treasurer

Harmit Singh

Asst Treasurer

Gursharan Kaur

Committee Members

Simranjit Kaur
Harjit Kaur
Albel Singh
Sarjit Kaur Khosa
Amritpal Singh
Sarabjeet Singh

Secretariat Team

Ranjit Singh Wahla
Baldev Singh
Jaspreet Kaur
Nelvinder Kaur
Gayethri Vankobar
Kartar Kaur

On 6 July 2016 SIWEC organised a free health screening by the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), an informational and educational booth for the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) and an educational booth for the Singapore Cancer Society for Bhai Maharaj Singh's barsi (death anniversary). There was also a booth for SIWEC and our services.

Organising such activities provides agencies with an avenue to reach out to and educate the Sikh community, who most often congregate at Gurdwaras during such significant Sikh events. The booth by SANA displayed educational materials on drugs and drug addiction, and the booth by Singapore Cancer Society had materials to educate the public on the types of cancers, and also distributed free Faecal Immunological Test kit.

So the next time you see SIWEC's booth at the Gurdawara, do drop by to say Hi!



Behind the scenes with SIWEC Prison Counselling volunteers

SIWEC staff and volunteers have been visiting Sikh inmates in Changi Prison for counselling sessions. The primary objective of this initiative by SIWEC is to improve the spiritual well-being of our Sikh inmates; encouraging their adoption of a spiritual and law abiding Sikh way of life upon their return to the community.

To understand what drives SIWEC Prison Counselling volunteers to do what they do, we had a chat with three of our wonderful volunteers, and this is their story.



1

Volunteer Name: Anupreet Anand
SIWEC Prison Counselling
volunteer for: Slightly over a year

2

Volunteer Name: Balbir Kaur
SIWEC Prison Counselling
volunteer for: Eight years

3

Volunteer Name: Sarjeet Singh
SIWEC Prison Counselling
volunteer for: Seven years

Volunteering as a prison counsellor is not a common choice for people looking to volunteer. What then led you to wanting to be a prison volunteer with SIWEC?

Anupreet: That, I guess, was Waheguru's plan for me. My education is in Psychology and counselling, and the interest to help people in prison was probably planted in my mind by Waheguru. I just know that the interest had

been there for a long time. So when the opportunity to be a volunteer at prison came along, it seemed like the right thing to do. To me, volunteering is a form of 'Vandchakna' (sharing), and 'Seva', and it has to be meaningful. If I can share my knowledge and skills to help someone, then volunteering my time is worthwhile. It gives me a sense of peace and happiness. After studying Sikhi at the Sikh Centre for three years, and discovering so much more

about our religion, I felt it was time to share the knowledge, especially with those who were in real need. Helping inmates strengthen their minds to be able to cope with the world after release from prison is a challenging task. That is probably another reason for me to be here, and I am truly grateful to God for the opportunity to be able to serve.

Balbir: I wanted to understand the mind of a drug addict, and what led them to such a choice and lifestyle.

Sarjeet: I was formerly a drug addict myself and spent more than 20 years going in and out of prisons & Drug Rehabilitation Centres's. I've managed to turn over a new leaf, and would like to share my experiences of my road to recovery with them. This is the main reason why I chose to become a prison volunteer, and I will be very happy to see our inmates reform & turn over to a new leaf.

In your time serving as a volunteer Prison Counsellor, you must have had sessions that stood out more than others, or impacted you greatly. Could you please share with us your most memorable experience thus far?

Anupreet: Well, each visit to prison has something memorable about it. At times it's a jovial middle-aged inmate who will not let anything get in the way of his jokes and humour, and at times it's a beautiful woman in her early thirties who is trying hard to change her life. It might be a teenager who thinks the whole world is against him, or maybe even an elderly man in his late 70's who has immense experience about life to share. Each one is a different person with a different life and different experience or lesson to share. It is very fulfilling to see them discover new sides to their own personality, which they previously took for granted or never realized. Discovering ones strengths can be very empowering, and that is something I like to focus on.

Balbair: I have seen many inmates who have changed, but I believe few truly remember me. There was a particular inmate however, who upon being released, bought a property near where I live. She wanted to see me daily so I could serve as a daily reminder for her to stay away from drugs. That really warmed my heart and pushed me to continue as a volunteer. It really brightened things for me.

Sarjeet: Some of the inmates do share their personal problems with me & I try to help them with words of encouragement. There are a number of ex-inmates who have given up their bad habits and are leading a happy and normal life. All this is mainly because of the effort & dedication of all volunteers. Great Job to all!

As a volunteer, you impart onto the inmates knowledge, especially in relation to spirituality and the Sikh way of life. As humans however, we constantly learn from each other, no matter our place in the world. As such, what do you feel you have learnt from the prisoners that you have counselled?

Anupreet: Strength and hope are two things that come to my mind. It cannot be easy to live in prison- the negative atmosphere, loneliness, ordinary food etc., yet the inmates manage to smile and laugh and get through their sentences, with the hope that life will go on and be better once they are released. The relapse statistics may not look to good, but the will to keep trying definitely exists.

Balbair: I have learned that they are actually very nice human beings, contrary to the preconceived notions we might have of them. Most often, they are victims of circumstance, with majority coming from broken families.

Sarjeet: They are humans, just like us, and should be given a chance to live a life like anyone else.

What, from your experience, is needed to better support Sikh prisoners?

Anupreet: I feel we need better counselling, and a more structured and professional approach, especially for the drug addicts. They are the type of inmates who

need rehabilitation more than a sentence. Yes, we have to follow laws, but healing cannot be done by punishment alone, it has to be supported by rehabilitation. Rehabilitation with a religious perspective is even better as most inmates seem to identify with it. It is value-based and can be a powerful tool to get through to inmates who come from broken homes or dysfunctional families where they were not taught these while they were growing up. Most of the inmates I have come across are proud to be Sikh. So looking at it positively, I think the base is already there. What will bring results is how we build on that base. Correct knowledge of the religion, and how to apply it to their lives, can do wonders.

Balbair: What I feel the inmates lack is love and support from their friends, families and community. There is a stigma against ex-convicts, which makes their re-entry into society a challenging one. I therefore feel that families should be educated on drugs, the nature of drug abuse, and how to care and welcome their loved one back into the home and into the community upon their release from prison.

Sarjeet: We should dedicate more effort towards helping newly released inmates integrate back into society.

Not many can do what Anupreet, Balbair, and Sarjeet do, and we thank them for their dedicated Seva which, without a doubt, has had a great impact on our Sikh inmates. If you wish to learn more about what SIWEC Prison Counselling, or are interesting in volunteering for this service, please contact SIWEC and we will be glad to have you as part of our team!

Silver Tsunami or Opportunity: SIWEC working with elderly volunteers to change mindsets

Best-selling author and technology analyst Sonia Arrison writes in her recent book, *100 Plus: How the Coming Age of Longevity Will Change Everything, From Careers and Relationships to Family and Faith*, that the first person to live to 150 years has probably already been born. How will such extended life-spans and longevity affect individuals, communities and even entire countries?

One tendency has been to look at ageing in society quite negatively as an issue or challenge that needs to be addressed. A looming silver tsunami needs to be avoided at all costs.

SIWEC, however, has adopted the approach to engage the elderly in our community more positively through recognising their ability to continue to make various meaningful contributions. Furthermore, many elderly demonstrate that they want to remain independent, mentally and physically active and have an interest in ensuring their personal well-being as opposed to being dependent on others.

The successful Sunehri Saheliaan and Sunheray Pal programmes by SIWEC have been conceived through such an approach to caring for the elderly in our community. A large part of the success of the programmes has also been the fact that it is largely volunteer driven by elderly who plan and execute the various activities for fellow seniors, with SIWEC providing mainly supporting functions. This ensures not only the sustainability of the programmes



Sunehri Saheliaan working together to construct the perfect *Peedee* (handcrafted traditional stool).

but also fosters camaraderie, kinship and ownership over the programmes. We highlight through pictures some of the more exciting and interesting activities organised by our Sunehri Saheliaan and Sunheray Pal, and hope to see more of them in action!



"This is not as easy as it looks, but I'm almost done!"
– A *Peedee* in vibrant colours close to completion.



"Do not disturb. Artists at work." Sunehri Saheliaan completely focused on creating their masterpiece!



↑
A healthy mind needs a healthy body. Our Sunehri Saheliaan and Sunheray Pal practising some breathing exercises during a Qigong Workshop.

→
Participants understand the importance of regular exercise and remaining active through simple yet effective Qigong exercises.





←
Finishing up final touches on
their Batik Prints!



→
Beautiful Batik prints completed by
participants who also shared that the
experience was relaxing and even
therapeutic.



Sunehri Saheliana all smiles during a visit to the
Gardens by the Bay!



Our Sunheray Pal truly impressed by the amazing design
and architecture at the Gardens by the Bay, and of course
the vast variety of plant species on display.

@ SIWEC

**"The best way to find yourself
Is to lose yourself in the service of others."**

- Mahatma Gandhi

**FAMILY SUPPORT
SERVICES**

**BEREAVEMENT
SERVICES**

**EDUCATION
SUPPORT SERVICES**

**ELDERCARE
PROGRAMMES**

**REHABILITATION
& AFTERCARE
PROGRAMMES**

**HEALTHCARE
PROGRAMMES**

**MENTORSHIP
PROGRAMMES**

SIWEC is here to help.

If you or someone you know requires assistance or is interested in our services,
please come down to meet us at:

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL

2 Towner Road, #06-02, Singapore 327804

Opening Hours:

Monday- Friday, 9am-6pm

Email: info@siwec.org

or

contact out 24-hour helpline @ 6299 9234