

4.5 Billion Social Media Users worldwide & over 33 million social media users in India to support the cause of Autism

'Communication Shutdown' launched to engage social media users to shut their networks for a day on Nov 1 2010, in support of a good cause

New Delhi, October 4, 2010- One day without Social Networking- Can you brave it? On Nov 1, 2010, citizens around the world will become part of, 'Communication Shutdown', a global initiative extended across 40 countries to create awareness and raise funds for charity for Autism. Through this initiative, people around the world have been challenged to go without Facebook or Twitter, for one day. Social communication is one of the biggest challenges for people with autism. By choosing to shutdown their social networks for one day, users will have some idea of what it's like for people with autism who face this challenge every day.

The Communication Shutdown campaign encourages Facebook and Twitter users to make a donation and receive a charity app or (CHAPP) that will signal their support and intention to boycott their social networking accounts on 1 November. ComScore, Inc. (NASDAQ: SCOR), has released a August 2010 report on traffic to Social Networking sites in India, revealing that India has over 33 million social network users and globally more than two thirds of the world's population stay connected through networks like Facebook and Twitter. As people become more reliant on these channels to communicate worldwide, the Communication Shutdown fundraising campaign will also serve as a social experiment on social media habits. From October 1 onwards, the Communication Shutdown CHAPP will be available on the campaign website www.communicationshutdown.org. The site will also host a global mosaic where supporters can see their profile pictures next to celebrities who have signed up.

My wife Katharin and I started The ASHA FOUNDATION TRUST IN 2001 to help differently-abled children with a focus on those suffering from autism. My only child is autistic and I am therefore intimately aware of the challenges they live through in their daily life. They are misunderstood, socially isolated and live in their own world, shut-off from the mainstream. Communication Shutdown is a simple effort to make people feel what autistic individuals go through in their everyday lives." Said Ramesh Vangal, Chief Patron, The Asha Foundation Trust.

'Communication Shutdown' was started by an organization called the AEIOU Foundation (<http://aeiou.org.au/>), a not-for-profit organisation that provides early intervention therapy for children with autism in Australia. When AEIOU was presented with a fundraising idea using social networks, they realised it was much bigger than just Australia. After all, social networks aren't bound by geography. In India, the awareness about autism is being led by an organization called the Asha Foundation, (www.ashafoundation.org) a provider of physical, social and emotional rehabilitation for individuals, particularly children, afflicted by autism.

About Asha Foundation

Where Hope is always Alive with Timely Help

Asha Foundation was set up in 2001 by Katharin Zimpel and Ramesh Vangal as a non-profit organisation. The idea was to reach out to differently-abled children in society and orient them towards a more fulfilling life. Asha Rehab Centre provides physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy to children affected by Cerebral Palsy, Down's syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder and other neurological challenges. In 2006, Asha started a pregnancy education program – Nine Months Miracle – with pre-natal and post-natal exercises to encourage normal deliveries and healthy babies. **In 2007, Asha Integrated School for Autism opened doors to provide special education to children with Autism Spectrum Disorders.**

The aim is to provide quality intervention, holistic and structured teaching, to spread awareness about Autism in society, to help parents overcome that sense of 'being alone'. Asha has a dynamic team of qualified Special Educators and therapists. For assessment, we use standardized tools like Childhood Autism Rating Scale (C.A.R.S) and Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (A.B.L.L.S) Regular 'Train the Trainer' programs are conducted by experts.

The plan is to expand and reach out to more children as we go ahead. Early Intervention, Group Therapy, Individual Educational Program (IEP), Teaching Pre-Vocational Skills, Art and Drama as therapy, Horticultural therapy, Occupational and Communication therapy, all these and more are part of the special learning curve at Asha Integrated School.

Asha Foundation has helped more than 1200 children since its inception. We constantly try to make a difference on "the road less taken..."

www.ashafoundation.org

www.ashais.org

About AEIOU

The AEIOU Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation and Queensland's only part-time and full-time early education program for children aged two-and-a-half to five years who have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Each AEIOU centre is staffed with full-time specialist early childhood teachers, speech pathologists, occupational and music therapists. In addition to providing early education, AEIOU also funds research through Griffith University ARC Linkage projection. This worthwhile project provides new strategies to help engage children with autism in learning activities whilst providing educators with many effective intervention techniques. AEIOU is funded by parent fees, fundraising, donations and some government support. The organization has the ongoing challenge of having to raise additional funds for vital early education and research. AEIOU provides strong advocacy at both State and Federal Government levels to help raise awareness and increase the financial support for children with autism.

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