

Maya Puwath - මයාපුවත්

Quarterly Newsletter of Mahamaya Girls' College
Alumnae Association of North America (MGCAANA)
Volume 21– Issue 4 - October 2025



Message from the Editors

Dear valued readers,

We hope you all had a pleasant and relaxing summer and are now preparing for the cozy winter months ahead.

This issue of *Maya Puwath* carries both reflection and anticipation. We are deeply saddened to share the news of the passing of our beloved former principal, **Mrs. Lalitha Fernando**, who left us this August at the remarkable age of 100. Mrs. Fernando's leadership, dedication, and unwavering commitment to Mahamaya Girls' College left an enduring legacy that continues to inspire generations. To honor her memory, we have included a heartfelt article written by **Mrs. Sujatha Werake**, beautifully capturing Mrs. Fernando's invaluable contributions to the school and her many accomplishments during her tenure.

We are also pleased to share that the **memorial Dharma Deshana** held in her honor, led by **Bhante Kurunegoda Dhammaloka**, Head Monk of the Hudson Valley Buddhist Vihara, was conducted successfully. The event brought together participants from across the world, reflecting the deep respect and admiration so many continue to hold for Mrs. Fernando.

In this issue, you will also find details of **upcoming MGCAANA events** — please be sure to **save the dates!** Formal invitations and additional details will be shared soon, and we look forward to your participation and continued support.

As always, we hope you enjoy reading this edition of *Maya Puwath*. Until we meet again in January, we wish you all a safe, peaceful, and joyous winter season. Stay warm and take good care of yourselves and your loved ones.

Warm Regards,

Newsletter committee



In this issue

- Editor's note
- Remembering Late Principal Mrs. Fernando
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- MGCAANA news and more

Cirappavāsiṃ purisaṃ,
dūrato sotthimāgataṃ;
Ñātimittā suhajjā ca,
abhinandanti āgataṃ.
Tatheva katapuññampi,
asmā lokā paraṃ gataṃ;
Puññāni paṭigaṇhanti,
piyaṃ ñātīva āgataṃ.

Relatives, friends, and companions welcome a long-absent person returning from abroad. Like wise in passing from this world to the next, the merit one has collected welcomes him.

Dhammapada
Verse 16
Piya Vagga

In Remembrance of our Late Principal, Mrs. Lalitha Fernando



We, as MGCAANA members, with deep gratitude and appreciation, organize this Punya Karma in honor of one of our best principals, who has contributed immensely to making Mahamaya one of the best Buddhist schools in the country. After Mrs. Soma Pujitha Goonawardena, the greatest principal of all, retired in 1972 after 21 years of selfless service mainly to Kandyan districts, Mrs. Lalitha Abeysinghe Fernando (wife of Prof. P.E.E. Fernando, Sinhala Professor at Peradeniya) became the principal on 17th January, 1972. She was an alumna and served as a staff member of Mahamaya starting in 1950.

She was born on 18 February 1925, and she passed away at the age of 100 years. When she was 11 years she joined Mahamaya as a student in Grade 7. Later, she and her sister Nalini became hostellers when their father was transferred to another city. She entered the University of Ceylon, Colombo, from Ratnapura Seevali Vidyalaya, as Mahamaya did not have a university entrance class. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Pali, Sinhala, and History in 1949.

Her teaching career:

Miss Lalitha Abeyratne began her teaching career at Visakha Vidyalaya, Colombo, under Mrs. Susan Pulimood. In 1950, she returned to Mahamaya Girls' College as a young teacher to help start a University Entrance class. Together with three other young graduates, they successfully sent the first Mahamaya girl to the university in 1951.

In Remembrance of our Late Principal, Mrs. Lalitha Fernando

In 1952, Miss Lalitha Abeyratne married Prof. P.E.E. Fernando. She received her Post-graduate Diploma in Education in 1964 from the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya. After that, she taught for four years at Girls' High School, Kandy, and served as Vice Principal at Pushpadana Balika Maha Vidyalaya, Kandy.

Mrs. Lalitha Fernando returned to Mahamaya when the Department of Education appointed her as the Principal in 1972. She was determined to do everything in her power to follow every detail of the policy laid down by the retiring Principal, Mrs. Soma Pujitha Goonawardena. Earlier, she had worked in the staff under Mrs. Goonawardena.

By this time, the primary school classes of Mahamaya had been gradually phased out. In 1971 was the first youth uprising in Sri Lanka occurred. The government launched a program of reconciliation, and the rural children and urban poor children were allowed access to facilities and opportunities that the urban middle class children enjoyed. The Government increased the intake of children from the deprived areas to the better schools in the cities through the Grade 5 scholarship Examination.

Hancock Bungalow across the Lake was acquired and remodeled to house the primary school. Mrs. Fernando did it very successfully.

During her first year as Principal, the government revolutionized the school syllabus by introducing the NCGE Examination, which required connecting the education with the community. Mrs. Fernando organized the staff and the students to deal with the new challenge. The teachers and students worked with the community on various educational projects successfully.

During her time, following the educational reforms, German, French, Home Science, Art, Eastern and Western Music, and Commerce were introduced as subjects for G.C.E. A Level classes. Mrs. Fernando implemented the new syllabus very successfully and the school had excellent results in the public examinations.

In Remembrance of our Late Principal, Mrs. Lalitha Fernando

Religious programs:

As she was an alumna, she was aware of the ideals of the founders of the school. She continued the various religious programs already followed in the school. As she had to follow the timetable common to all schools in Sri Lanka, Mrs. Fernando Bana could not be accommodated on weekdays in school hours as had been the practice. Buddhist discussions and Bana were shifted to weekends. After observing Pansil every morning, at the general assembly was followed by a reading and brief discussion from the Dhammapada by the Principal. Another Buddhist tradition she initiated was organizing the whole school to participate in the Poson Bhakthi Gee Festival.

In 1973, she established the Kala Mandalaya with the hope of promoting cultural activities. She founded the school's Hevisi Band and the Eastern Orchestra. These children participated in national and international events.

Like Mrs. Goonawardena, Mrs. Fernando also maintained a high standard of English in the school. She encouraged students to take part in inter-school English debates, drama competitions, and established a tradition of term-end concerts. English gained an important place.

She paid great attention to the development of sports.

Community Service:

Mrs. Fernando emphasized the idea of serving society. The NCGE (National Certificate in General Education Examination) and HNCE (Higher National Certificate in Education) syllabus emphasized working for the community. The Principal's objectives and those of the Education authorities helped reinforce values and traditions of social service among students. Much attention was placed on social service and Shramadana activities. The competitive activities, such as prize-givings, sports-meets, drama, dancing, music, story writing, and art competitions, were encouraged. Through the Buddhist Society, the children were encouraged to care and serve the needy in society. Dana campaigns or giving of alms and utility goods to old people's homes and orphanages were organized, and regular visits to hospitals were encouraged.

In Remembrance of our Late Principal, Mrs. Lalitha Fernando

The Girl Guide Company was restructured with the formation of The Little Friends, The Guides, and the Ranger Club. The work camps were organized not only in the school, but also in the city. In 1978, the guides were sent with dry rations and clothing to Polonnaruwa to help cyclone victims.

Shramadana activities were extended to working at the Home of Children with Special Needs, Deaf and Blind School, and the Home for the Aged, and even to the Kandy General Hospital. Mrs. Fernando's emphasis on social service and community work as an integral component of an all-round education.

1970s, Sri Lanka was experiencing economic and social crises. Mrs. Fernando established a Cooperative Society in the school, and in 1978, a Savings Bank. She revived the interest in nature and the environment. A Nature Club was formed to encourage students to learn to care for the environment. Very successful tree planting campaigns were organized.

Mrs. Fernando initiated various measures to improve discipline and deal with the expanding number of students. One such measure was the oath-taking ceremony for the prefects at a special assembly of the school.

Mrs. Fernando was able to maintain the high academic standards achieved under Mrs. Soma Pujitha Goonawardena. She was able to get the teachers to work with her, with great enthusiasm. She was one of the few excellent principals that Mahamaya had in its history.

~ Written by Mrs. Sujatha Werake

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Memorial Dharma Deshana in Honor of Mrs. Fernando

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the MGCAANA members and former students of our late principal, Mrs. Lalitha Fernando, for joining the memorial Dharma Deshana conducted by Bhante Kurunegoda Dhammaloka, the head monk of the Hudson Valley Buddhist Vihara. Participants from around the world came together to honor and show their support for Mrs. Fernando.

Memorial Dharma Deshana in Honor of Late Principal Mrs. Lalita Fernando

*Organized by Mahamaya Girls' College Alumnae
Association of North America
(MGCAANA)*



Led by **Bhante Kurunegoda Dhammaloka**,
Head Monk of **Hudson Valley Buddhist
Vihara**



Join via **Zoom** on **Friday, September 19th 2025**

5.30 pm PST

6.30 pm MST

7.30 pm CST

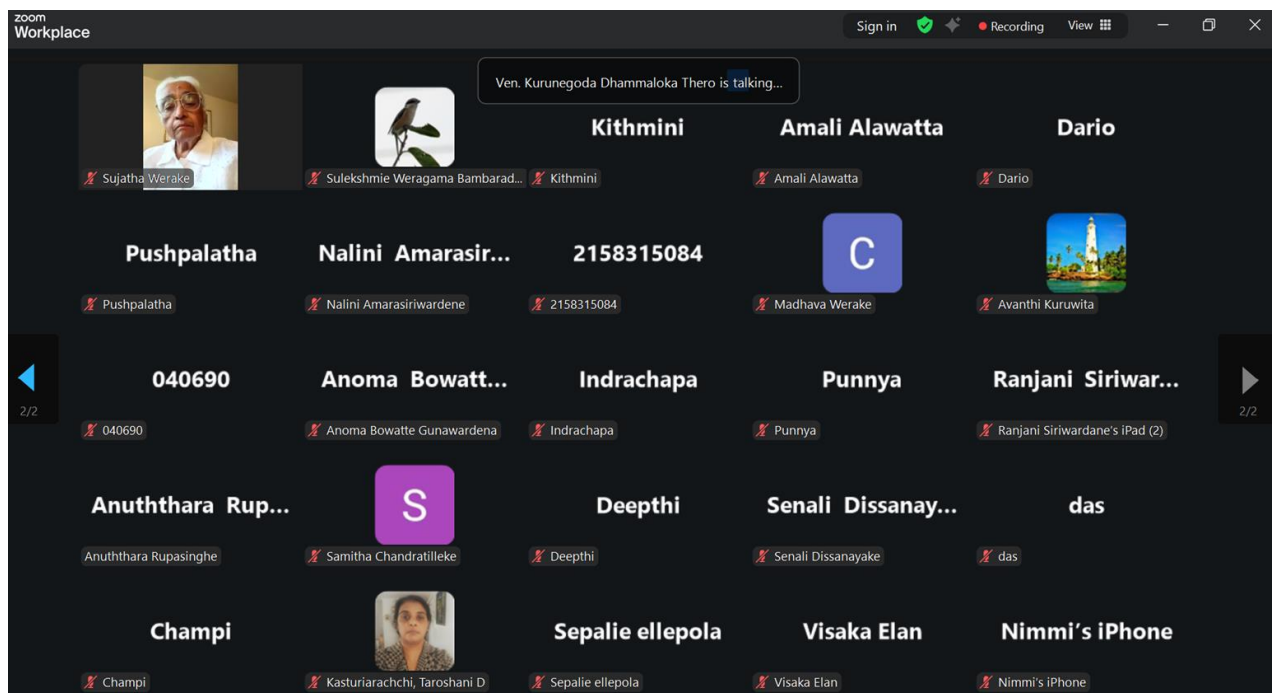
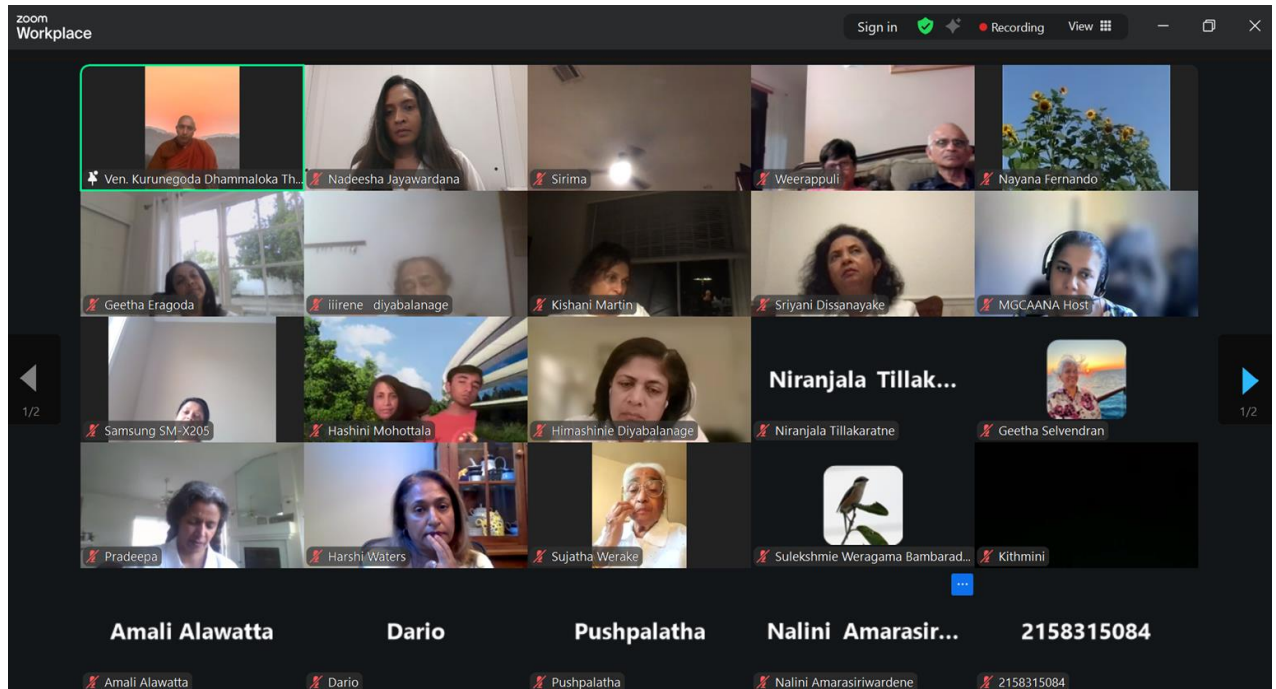
8.30 pm EST

**Sri Lankan Time: 6.00 am (Saturday, September
20th 2025)**

*If you wish to contribute towards the Pirikara, kindly **Zelle**
directly to the **Dhammaloka Thero: +1 703 350 5625***

Memorial Dharma Deshana in Honor of Mrs. Fernando

VIRTUAL ATTENDEES





MGCCANA member Ayanthi Fernando's daughter Lahini was a winner in the LA County Library Bookmark Competition 2025. Congratulations and best wishes to this young artist.



Mahamaya Girls' College Alumnae Association
of North America (MGCAANA)



Christmas Bake-Along

with Maheshinie

 December 6th 2025, Saturday

 1 p.m. PST, 4 p.m. EST,
3 p.m. CST, and 2 p.m. MST

Join us for a cozy, festive bake-along!
Learn to make beautiful holiday cookies

Italian Christmas Cookies



Min
Donation
\$10

**Virtual
Event
via Zoom**



Deepest Condolences on the passing of
Mr. Karunaratne Wijayasooriya

*Beloved husband of former Mahamaya teacher
Mrs. Eloma Hettiarachchi*

The MGCAANA family extends our heartfelt condolences
to Mrs. Eloma Hettiarachchi and her family during this
time of profound sadness.

May they be surrounded by strength, comfort,
and peace as they navigate this loss.

May Mr. Karunaratne Wijayasooriya
attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana.

With Heartfelt Sympathy,
MGCAANA Association
Board of Directors & Executive Committee
(2025/2026)

Reaching the New Goal **\$60,000** Set for Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF)

The Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF), set up by MGCAANA, provides financial aid to disadvantaged students at Mahamaya Girls' College. Scholarships from VSTF pay for educational expenses and boarding fees of students attending Mahamaya. "Vidya," a Sanskrit word, means knowledge or wisdom. Our initial goal was to raise \$20,000, which we achieved in 2018; The current goal is \$60,000.

The total amount collected for VSTF reached **\$58,806** as of October 2025. Currently, we have reached the new goal.

To donate online or by cheque, please visit:

<http://mahamayaalumnina.org/vstf.php>

We value your donations - fulfilling our purpose of MGCAANA

According to Ms. Himashinie Diyabalanage (Co-chair, VSTF) - on behalf of the endowment committee and the VSTF Board of Trustees:

VSTF Announcements: We are excited to share that in 2025, the VSTF awarded **27 scholarships worth Rs 35,000 each**. These scholarships will support deserving students in pursuing their educational goals. Congratulations to the recipients and thank you to our sponsors and extinguish donors for making this possible.

https://www.mahamayaalumnina.org/VidyaTrustFund/MGCAANA_Vidya_Scholarship_Trust_Fund_Brochure.pdf

Renewing MGCAANA Membership for the Year 2025

Thank you to members who already renewed their membership for the year 2025/2026. If you have not renewed your membership yet, this is a friendly reminder to renew your membership to support MGCAANA's ongoing activities.

How can you renew your membership?

By Phone: Pay by Zelle to mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Online: Use your credit card via PayPal account to pay your membership fee through the MGCAANA membership renewal page or this QR code, <https://www.mahamayaalumnae.org/membership.html>

By Mail: Please mail a check payable to MGCAANA (Annual membership: \$15 - Students; \$25 - Regular). Address: Treasurer, MGCAANA, 2417 NE 20th, Renton, WA 98056.



Note: If you wish, you can also renew your membership for 3, 5, or 10 years by paying US\$70.00, US\$115.00 and US \$230.00 respectively. Your support helps MGCAANA continue its legacy in helping Mayans and their communities in North America as well as current students at Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

Upcoming MGCAANA Activities

- Board meetings
- Next Newsletter (January 2025)
- Member-led webinars - Stay tuned.

Want to know what your Board of Directors (BOD) is up to?

Please read the minutes of the BOD's monthly meetings posted on MGCAANA website:

<http://www.mahamayaalumnae.org/minutes.php>

If you have new ideas, concerns, suggestions etc. to improve MGCAANA and to find out how it operates, please feel free to connect with the BOD through email:

Mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Newsletter Committee :

Ms. Veroni Nadeesha Jayawardana and Ms. Ayanthi Fernando

Dear valued members,

Please send your articles, pictures and artistic creations for the MGCAANA Newsletter to its official email account of MGCAANA, which is mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Send in any personal success stories, recipes or even old memories that you would like to share with our fellow Mayans. Kids and family members are most welcome to share their artistry with us. The Newsletter committee will retain your original work of art and will publish your work as space is available.

Thank you,

The Newsletter Committee.
MGCAANA 2025/2026