

Maya Puwath - මායා පුවත්

*Bi-Monthly Newsletter of Mahamaya Girls' College
Alumnae Association of North America (MGCAANA)*
Volume 13 – Issue 5 – October 2017



Message from the Editors

Dear readers,

As we say farewell to summer and embrace fall weather, we hope that things are well with you. We hope that the recent natural disasters in the United States did not affect you and that you are taking good care. For readers from Canada, we hope that you had a pleasant Thanksgiving!

As promised in the last MayaPuwath newsletter, in this issue you will find how you can help the MGCAANA Board of Directors select 2 charities for our annual charitable donation. Please visit the survey and cast your vote! Also, if you qualify for the MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship Program, don't forget to apply before the deadline. You will also find a very touching, true story on how Vidya Scholarships have helped high-performing yet financially disadvantaged students at Mahamaya Girls' College.

In addition to our usual Pause-Rewind-Play article, you will find a tasty recipe, important child safety tips for parents as well as the United Nations Women statement on the International Day of the Girl Child (October 11). Last but not least, if you continue reading, you will find out about how a very inspirational Mahamaya alumna was honored recently at a national awards ceremony in Sri Lanka.

Happy reading!

Sincerely,

Maya Puwath Newsletter Committee

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Like a beautiful flower full of color
but without fragrance, even so,
fruitless are the fair words of one
who does not practice them.

Dhammapada (Verse 051)

MGCAANA's Charitable Donations

The Executive Committee and the new Board of Directors (BOD) have been exploring new ways to engage our valued MGCAANA members from both Canada and the United States. As part of that, they are looking to engage you in selecting two charitable organizations of members' choice toward which MGCAANA will contribute its annual charitable donations. In the past, the Executive Committee and the BOD picked a charity, and this year, they would like MGCAANA members like you to pick a charity from each country! Please visit this [survey link](#) to cast your vote and pick a charity of your choice to give back to the communities we live!



Canadian
Cancer
Society

Société
canadienne
du cancer



CANADIAN WILDLIFE
FEDERATION

FÉDÉRATION
CANADIENNE
DE LA FAUNE



**NOKID
HUNGRY**
SHARE OUR STRENGTH

Pathways
to Education

World Vision

BCRF
BREAST
CANCER
RESEARCH
FOUNDATION



Habitat
for Humanity®

Some Upcoming MGCAANA Activities

- Board Meetings (October & November)
- Next Newsletter (December)
- MGCAANA Graduate & Undergraduate Scholarship (Deadline: December 31, 2017)
- Awarding Nanda Pussegoda Leula Memorial Scholarships (2018)
- Awarding Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF) Scholarships

UN Women statement: International Day of the Girl Child, 11 October

“Some people say that it is shameful for girls to go to work or go to school. These are old traditions and conventions.” These are the words of Alan and Israa, two Syrian girls who, through a [UN Women-supported training and community centre](#) in Beirut, Lebanon, are learning how to repair mobile phones. This training is helping to break down traditional ideas about what girls can and cannot do, and through giving them relevant skills for their future, it is building resilience and helping to break conventional isolation.

This year, on the [International Day of the Girl Child](#), we are focused on how to ‘EmPOWER Girls: Before, during and after crises’. Throughout 2017 we have seen growing conflict, instability and inequality, with 128.6 million people this year expected to need humanitarian assistance due to security threats, climate change and poverty. More than three-quarters of those who have become refugees or who are displaced from their homes, are women and children [1]. Among these, women and girls are among the most vulnerable in times of crisis.

Displaced and vulnerable women and girls face higher risks of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as damage to their livelihoods [2]; girls are 2.5 times more likely than boys to miss school during disasters [3]; and displaced girls are often married off as children in an effort to ensure their security. A 2013 assessment estimated a rise in the percentage of Syrian girl refugees in Jordan being married before age 18 from below 17 per cent before the conflict, to more than 50 per cent afterwards.

At UN Women, we are working to ensure that girls experiencing crises have positive options that allow them to grow and develop social and economic skills. Along with local women’s organizations, we support women and girl refugees through our Global Flagship Initiative, on Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP) [4], which boosts civic engagement and leadership by advocating for women’s political and social participation at the local, national and international levels. LEAP also establishes Empowerment Hubs where women can network and access critical services and training, and provides job placements, cash-for-work initiatives and training for businesses.

Programmes like these can turn situations of displacement into opportunities for empowerment for girls and young women, remove them from potentially violent situations, and serve as a path to economic security so that they are not forced to marry older men to provide for their physical and financial wellbeing. As Alan and Israa experienced, UN Women is also tapping into the possibilities of mobile technology, developing a Virtual Skills School, so that women and girls who have dropped out of school due to early marriage, childbearing or traditional practices, who are living with a disability, or who are displaced from their homes and in refugee camps, have access to second-chance learning.

On the International Day of the Girl Child, let us commit to investing in skills training and education for girls and livelihood activities for young women around the world who are facing crises. Far from being passive recipients of assistance, these girls are leaders who will use the skills that they develop today to rebuild their communities, and create a better future for all of us.

Related link: [In Focus: International Day of the Girl](#)

Notes

[1] “Protecting Women in in Emergency Situations,” UNFPA. <http://www.unfpa.org/resources/protecting-women-emergency-situations#sthash.yskdqgSa.dpuf>.

[2] “Women and girls in forced and protracted displacement,” *GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report*, September 5, 2016, <http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/HDQ1364.pdf>.

[3] <https://www.womankind.org.uk/blog/detail/our-blog/2016/06/03/women-and-girls-bearing-the-brunt-of-humanitarian-disasters>

[4] “Humanitarian Action,” UN Women, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/humanitarian-action>



Planet 50-50 by 2030
Step It Up for Gender Equality

Congratulations to Mahamaya Alumna Ms. Thilini Nadeeka Shalwin!



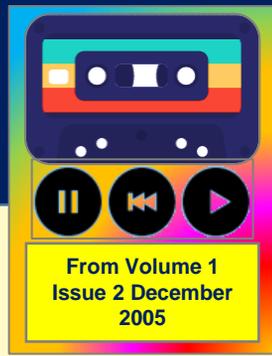
On September 27, 2017, Mahamaya alumna Thilini Nadeeka Shalwin was honored with a Sri Lankan of the Year Award in the “Unsung Hero” category. Ada Derana Sri Lankan of the Year 2017 ceremony felicitated outstanding individuals and groups of Sri Lanka, and Ms. Shalwin is one of the 14 award winners this year, representing a range of fields and professions. Ada Derana launched this awards ceremony last year to honour and celebrate individuals and groups whose efforts and achievements have far reaching influence on the country, positively impacting the local community and helping to profile Sri Lanka among the international community.

Please take a moment to view this [YouTube video](#) to see how Ms. Shalwin went above and beyond her calling as a teacher at a rural school, to harness the power of social media to successfully fund a drinking water project for her school.

MGCAANA would like to congratulate Ms. Shalwin for her dedication, creativity, and inspiration. We are proud of you and we wish you best on all your future endeavors.

(News Source: [Ada Derana](#))

Maya Puwath has been reaching the MGCAANA membership since 2005, and "Pause – Rewind – Play" re-publishes past contributions to Maya Puwath, by MGCAANA members.



Karaniya Metta Sutra

From Buddhanet.net, edited by Chathuri Nugawela-Munasinghe (December 2006)

"I have often wondered what all the Paali stanzas meant. So I was pleased to find the following translation and thought of sharing it with you"– Chathuri

Universal Loving Kindness.

One must be able, upright and straightforward; Pleasant in Speech, mild and not proud. Easily contented and easily supportable; Not caught up in too many "duties" and frugal in one's wants. Calm in mind, non-discriminative and courteous; avoiding any mean deeds blame worthy by the wise. Thinking always thus: "May all beings be happy and safe, May they all have tranquil minds.

Whatsoever pulsates with the breath of life -the frail or strong, without exception, the long, the large, the medium-sized, the short, the thin or fat.

Those visible, and those invisible, those living far away or nearby; beings who are already born and yet unborn. May they all be happy!

May no-one deceive another, nor despise him in anyway anywhere.

Let no-one wish another ill, owing to anger or provocation. Just as a mother would protect her son - her only son - with her life - even so let him cultivate this boundless love to all living beings.

Radiating with a full heart loving thoughts of kindness towards all the world, free from anger, malice or anxiety - above, below and in all directions.

And while standing, walking, sitting or reclining - still free from drowsiness -let him maintain this state of mindfulness - termed the "Highest Living" And living free from mere views, being virtuous, perfect in insight, free from the lust of sexual desire, never again shall he be entangled in the round of rebirth.

Hate is never overcome by hate. By love alone it is quelled. This is a truth of ancient date. Today still unexcelled.

Avoidance of evil, Performance of good deeds, Purification of one's thoughts is what is taught in this sutra.

A True Story with a Fictitious Name:
How Much Vidya Scholarships Mean to Economically Disadvantaged Students
(Sent by: Sujatha Werake)

From the first day of grade one, Bindu knew that she would have to work harder at school. She started school without that many advantages. Her parents worked hard in the fields under the hot sun for minimum wages, just to feed the family. They hoped for more for their children.

“My parents always taught me that education is the key to success,” says Bindu. “That is what made me an independent learner. I have always craved education.” But no matter how much she learned or how well she did in school, the future looked intimidating to Bindu. Growing up in a farming community in a rural area, with her sick father not being able to provide much for the family was not easy. The whole family had to depend on her mother’s income that came from farming and working for others. She had two other siblings and grandparents living with her as well.

Bindu woke up early morning for months to study for the All Island 5th Grade Government Scholarship Examination in her one-room house with no electricity. She did her best. Her elementary school had a few teachers and not many students. Bindu had a dream. She wanted to help her family one day and make them proud.

The results came in, and she had done extremely well in her All Island 5th Grade Government Scholarship Examination. She scored high enough to pick any school of her choice with the marks she had received. Her teachers, knowing her ability, encouraged her parents to admit Bindu to a better school. With the help of her teachers, her family and well-wishers, she picked Mahamaya Girls’ College and got admission. Her rural village was about 75 miles away from her new school.

For her family, financing the education for this girl with big dreams was a challenging issue. Bindu was brought to the hostel managed by Mahamaya Girls’ College, and she started education at Grade 6. Paying hostel fees for the parents was extremely difficult. The first few months, the parents somehow managed to pay the fees. As the time passed, the payments did not come. The hostel had to bear the cost for a long time. There were several other hostellers who had similar stories. The Hostel Management faced a difficult situation with new students. There were a number of scholarship holders who could not pay their hostel fees. Hostel had no other choice but to keep them in the hostel in this heartbreaking situation. No matter how hard they work at school, without financial help there was no way that they could continue their studies. There was also no way that the Hostel Management could keep them forever without the support of some donor.

The teacher in charge of the hostel at the time, contacted Mahamaya Girls’ College Alumnae Association in North America (MGCAANA) at this point and made a request to financially help these hostellers to pay their dues. That was the beginning of the Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF) that MGCAANA legally established in Sri Lanka to help these intelligent, but economically disadvantaged students like Bindu. MGCAANA’s earnest aim is to support these students to be successful in their lives. No matter how hard they work, they would not be at Mahamaya without financial help. Let’s get together and help these young Mayans to be strong, focused and dream big. Let them be better and become more productive citizens. If we don’t help these students who else would? Let’s stop the parents from taking them back to the village schools.

By check: Please write your check to "Mahamaya Girls' College Alumnae Association of North America" with "Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund" in the memo line and send it to the following mailing address:
Treasurer, MGCAANA, 2417, NE 20th Street, Renton, WA 98056, USA

Online: [Via PayPal](#)

Donations from Sri Lankan Rupees: Please send us an email to mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com and MGCAANA will make arrangements to do the payment.

MGCAANA UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (2017-2018)

The Selection Committee of the MGCAANA Undergraduate & Graduate Scholarship Program is looking for Mahamaya alumnae who demonstrate outstanding academic achievements, leadership and active participation in extra curricular activities and also a significant level of financial need. Intended to cover the cost of textbooks for a semester, scholarships of \$500.00 each will be awarded to two (2) candidates.

Application Period & Deadline: September 1, 2017-December 31, 2017

Award Notification: By January 31, 2018

Once the application period begins, please visit our website at www.mahamayaalumna.org to view and download the scholarship application. If you have any questions about this scholarship program, please contact us at mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com.

We look forward to receiving your applications!

Creamy Tomato Shrimp Pasta

Sent by Devi Gunasekera

Recipe Corner

Backstory:

A couple of years ago my daughter started complaining about my Sri Lankan cooking :) To get her out of my hair, I asked to her find some recipes that she thinks are good and easy to make. To her credit she found some amazing recipes. Now we prepare and enjoy these recipes often. Here's an easy pasta recipe she found from BuzzFeed.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 pounds shrimp, deveined and peeled
- 1 cup tomato, chopped
- ½ cup green onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chili powder*
- ½ cup parsley, chopped
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons pepper*
- 1 cup milk
- 250 grams cooked rotini pasta

PREPARATION

1. Melt butter in a large pot over medium-high heat.
2. Add shrimp and cook the shrimp until pink.
3. Add the tomato, green onion, chili powder, parsley, salt, and pepper, stirring until evenly mixed.
4. Pour in the milk, bringing to a boil.
5. Stir in the cooked pasta until well-coated and thickened.
6. Enjoy! (Serves 3-4)

*Adjust the amount of chili powder and pepper to you taste

CREAMY TOMATO SHRIMP



Image source: BuzzFeed

Tips for the Safety of Our children

Sent by: Sujatha Werake

- Make your home a safe place for your children.
- Cover all your power outlets, remove wires from unsafe places, out of arm's reach of babies and toddlers to prevent injuries.
- Check your smoke alarms regularly. Change the batteries on time.
- Child passenger safety requires consistent use of correctly-installed safety seats, booster seats, or seat belts that are appropriate for each child's size and age.
- Buy toys that are safe for children.
- Never tie strings, cords, necklaces, toys or anything around your child's neck.
- Never leave a child unattended on a shopping cart.
- On a stroller, secure the baby with a safety harness.
- Never leave your child alone in a bathtub. Prevent in-home drowning deaths of children.
- Be aware of recalled products of toys and other child products.
- Use safety gates to block stairways and other dangerous areas.
- Keep older children's toys such as marbles away from children under 3 years.
- Secure windows with window guards.
- Secure furniture to avoid tip-over.
- Cleaning products and medication should be safely stored out of reach of children.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Train your children what to do in emergencies at home or outside home. Have a list of emergency telephone numbers posted at home. Have these telephone numbers in their school bag.
- Give clear instructions to the school and to your child on what to do if there is an emergency situation at school. It can be an earthquake, floods, or some other natural disaster, a shooting incident, or an accident on the playground.
- If you are a gun owner, those guns need to be stored in a safe locker.
- Teach them ice skating if you live in an area where snow falls in winter.

Digital safety/internet safety/media safety/online safety/cyber safety:

- We as parents, families, and friends, protecting ourselves is not a small issue as we all are connected through digital devices.
- Digital safety is learning how to protect your privacy and your family from predators.
- Pay attention to your children's digital devices. Invest time in building resilience and confidence in our children by making them aware of the risks involved.
- Communicate well with your children. Develop a close relationship with your children.
- Protect your children from cyberbullies.

Sexual abuse:

- It is a serious and devastating issue.
- Abusers are usually men.
- They tend to know the person they are abusing.
- It occurs in all social and economic classes.
- Protecting your child from any abuser is extremely important at all costs.
- As parents, act wisely.
- Your child is the most important part of your life.
- Their safety is in your hands.
- Constant supervision and vigilance by adults is essential to preventing all forms of child abuse.
- Prevention involves teaching children never to keep secrets and the difference between "good" and "bad" touching.
- Parents need to begin this work at home.
- Most schools now have programs to teach young children about sexual abuse and prevention.
- Teenagers also need to be taught how to avoid rape and date rape.
- Protect your child and be the best parent that you can be.



Want to know what your new Board of Directors (BOD) will be undertaking in 2017-2018?

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

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

If you have new ideas, concerns, or suggestions to improve how MGCAANA operates etc. please feel free to connect with the BOD through e-mail:

Mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

Contributing to Maya Puwath

Contributing to Maya Puwath is a great and easy way you could be an active member of MGCAANA. We accept content produced by you, articles written by others with proper acknowledgement, as well as news from Mahamaya Girls' College, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

No time to write an article but would still like to contribute to Maya Puwath? Not a problem! We welcome content produced by children of MGCAANA member that we will feature in the Kids' Corner of Maya Puwath.

Please send your contributions to the upcoming October issue of Maya Puwath:

Mahamaya_alumnae@yahoo.com

MGCAANA Annual General Meeting & Dinner 2018

Who: Mahamaya Girls' College Alumnae Association in North America (MGCAANA)

What: 14th Annual General Meeting & Dinner

When: Sunday, May 27, 2018 (*During the Memorial Day long weekend*)

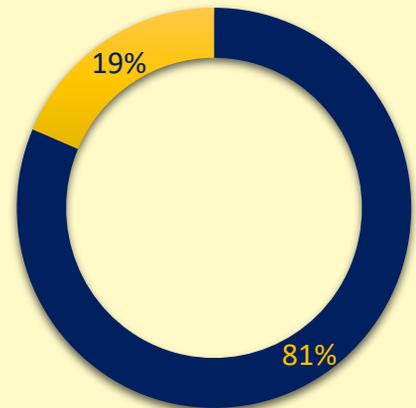
Where: State College, Pennsylvania

Vidya Scholarship Trust Fund (VSTF)

VSTF awards scholarships to the most deserving, economically-disadvantaged students who do well in their studies and extra curricular activities from grades 6 and up at Mahamaya. An initial goal of VSTF has been to establish a fund with a capital of, at least, \$20,000. As of May 2017, \$16,283.65 has been raised thanks to generous donors like you. If you would like to help VSTF reach its \$20,000 goal, please assist MGCAANA in its fundraising efforts. You can donate (online/check) and most importantly, encourage others to donate:

<http://www.mahamayaalumna.org/vstf.php>

VSTF Progress



■ Funds Raised ■ Remaining

Newsletter Committee: Vihara Dharmaratne, Vajeera Dorabawila, Lilika Molligoda

Maya Puwath is a publication of Mahamaya Girls' College Alumnae Association in North America (MGCAANA)