

NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2020

VISAKHA VIDYALAYA OLD GIRLS' ASSOCIATION



LIGHT UP THE WORLD WITH YOUR LAMP



July 2020 Newsletter of VVOGA went to press hinting of the end of COVID-19 pandemic situation in Sri Lanka but with the possibility of return. December 2020 Newsletter of VVOGA goes to press wishing that all of us will continue to move forward despite COVID-19. Facing multiple challenges, we Visakhians are discovering our own unique ways of striving ahead, healing ourselves and reaching out to those amongst us.

COVID-19 has opened our eyes to many truths of life. But have we really seen and understood them? Did we realize that some of us have not been able to go or move out of our houses for a longtime even without Covid? Did we understand that there are diseases other than COVID-19 for which cures are not even in the horizon? Did we understand that barriers to education exist and that they take differing shapes and colours? Have we given back, in the true sense of giving back? Did we start taking action?

We are penning this whilst reminiscing on the wise words of panellists taking part in the first webinar series conducted by the social activities sub-committee of the VVOGA, 'unleashing the inner sparkle'. Conquering the new normal; seven Visakhians joined virtually to share their thoughts on life essentials, stressing on the need to take the lead to make the change. Powerful words of panellist Thesara Jayawardena invited us all to start this very change, from ourselves, from our homes. 'As the leading ladies' school in the country, inspiring thousands and thousands of girls, it is our duty to start the change. We don't need power or politics, we can start with aesthetics.' (Thesara Jayawardena on 06.12.2020)

2020 has been a challenging year indeed. 2020 reminded us that we need very few living essentials which are surpassed by our wants. 2020 taught us that we can live without many of our wants. Beneath the huge veil of COVID-19, new eyes started experiencing this world, whilst some eyes closed forever. We could not see many of these eyes. Unseen by many, some arrived in new places, some left their beloved places. But did we welcome them? Were we grateful for their efforts; was there at least a word of appreciation? Or did we just think that what we have done is sufficient to rid ourselves of the guilt?

2020 taught us that human life is very fragile, that can be taken away by an unseen novel virus that has the ability to adapt and attack with alarming speed. 2020 taught us that we need to unite in every way if we are to succeed. Unity comes in the acceptance of differences, understanding and reaching out in every direction, and in the will to leave no one behind.

**Let's be the change and welcome 2021!
Wish you all a very happy new year!**

*Madhavi N Gunawardena
Gayanthi Kaluarachchi*



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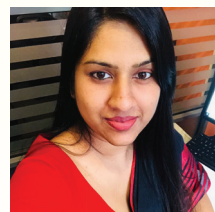
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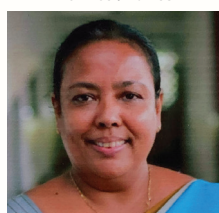
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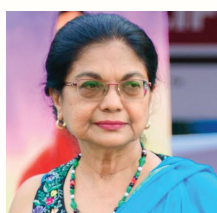
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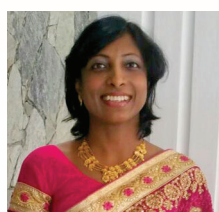
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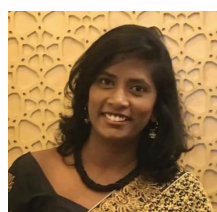
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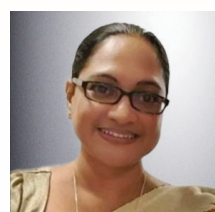
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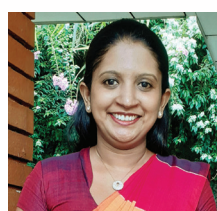
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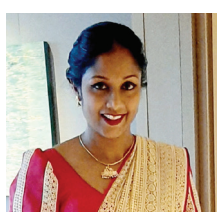
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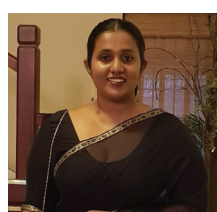
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New Members | Co-Convenor



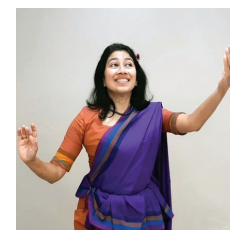
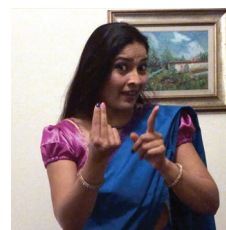
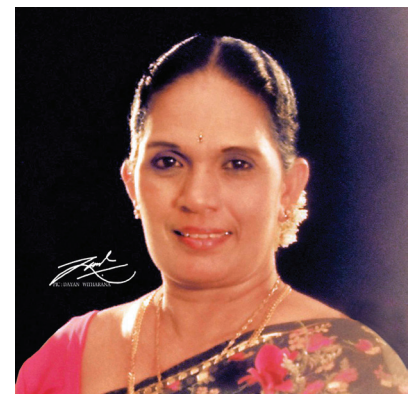
VVOGA AGM 2020 & SING-ALONG

The Annual General Meeting of VVOGA 2020 was held on the 19th of September at the Jeremias Dias Hall. It was pleasing to witness enthusiastic member participation in astonishing numbers when VVOGA celebrated its 86th anniversary this year. The proceedings of the meeting were performed as planned concluding it with the election of the new executive committee of passionate and exemplary Visakhians. The AGM was followed by a well-organized sing-along session making it eventful and memorable for everyone to reminisce memories of wonderful school days.



IN TRIBUTE...

Teachers are more than educators. Our long time dancing teacher Mrs. Sunila Jayanthi Lokumana, remains true to this slogan, teaching her young students to conquer both the stage and their lives vibrantly. Young Visakhians under her wings found a great friend, a mentor, and a parent in her, in addition to the rhythmic dancing steps which continue to colour their lives long after leaving school. She was always there to hold the light that guided them through successes and failures in life. To honor their beloved teacher, six of our Alumni from five countries reunited and recreated a dance which they had performed 28 years ago on school stage.



Pictured above :

left to right: Ayodya Rodrigo, Dulmini Ponnampereuma, Kavisha Athauda, Pradeepa Hettiarachchi, Rasitha Wickramasinghe, Surani Wijesurendra



ACADEMICS AMIDST COVID-19

COVID-19 has pushed the whole world to the deepest educational crisis of all time. It has devoured months of precious school life interrupting the education of students all over the world not sparing Sri Lanka. Despite these challenging times, the school has done its best to ensure that its impact on students' academics is minimal. The alternative learning methods implemented by the school in response to this is commendable.

To cope up with the pandemic, all traditional classes were converted to virtual classes conducted online. Zoom and Microsoft teams were utilized to deliver the lessons to the students from the beginning of the closure of schools. Special time tables were created for both primary and secondary grades where time slots were allocated for all the respective subjects.

Special programmes were conducted for those who sat for Advanced Level in October, which included online discussion sessions, revision and follow up sessions. Whilst these programmes confined students to the lessons they were also capable of abating the psychological distress experienced by them as a result of the postponements of the examination. Even though their educational experience radically changed just before the examination, the school successfully recouped their psychological states by boosting their confidence to face the examination.

The Ordinary Level classes are also being conducted online until the school reopens. Despite difficulties, our academic staff is taking every effort possible to complete the prescribed syllabus and the much needed revision lessons to the students. The main aim of the school is to provide the maximum possible advantage to the students during this troubled times. The school has not disregarded the primary section although the first few years of school for all of the primary graders have been entirely different to what it was few years ago. The interactive practical sessions, outdoor activities, concerts, singing and playing have been sacrificed for their own safety. However, the school conducts academic sessions as effectively and interactively as possible with the support of parents. These sessions have also given them an opportunity to be connected to their friends as well.

The Grade 5 students who sat for the scholarship examination benefited from these programs whilst the model paper session; "Awartha" was highly effective in preparing them for the exam. None of this would have been possible without the proper guidance and direction of the Principal, Vice Principals and the respective Sectional Heads. The unwavering commitment of our teachers towards the daughters of Visakha is deeply appreciated. All teachers have gone the extra mile to reduce the educational divide for the students, accepting and adapting to the situation and overcoming digital barriers, with the continued support from the education support staff. These efforts assisted in keeping the students connected to the school. The school has also increased connections with the families emphasizing their role in the child's learning needs.

These tough times require constant diligence, patience and mutual support of each one of us for the community to keep functioning. The immense contribution made by the school towards young Visakhians is both highly appreciated and acknowledged by the Visakha community.



11TH COLOMBO GIRL GUIDES 1923 - 2023

11th Colombo Girl Guides of Visakha Vidyalaya are looking forward to their centenary in 2023. As part of the anticipated celebrations, we hope to publish a VV Girl Guide Centenary Souvenir to commemorate the occasion. Past and present Guides, Rangers and Little Friends of Visakha Vidyalaya are kindly requested to get in touch with present and former Captains and Sylvannas and share their reminiscences, photographs, posters, programmes, awards and any other memorabilia pertaining to their time as Guides, in school and after leaving school, to be included in the souvenir publication. An Editorial Committee will be formed in due course. We thank you for your support.

Remember – "Once a Guide, Always a Guide!"

1923 - First
batch of newly
enrolled Girl
Guides of 11th
Colombo
Company



2020 - Guides of
11th Colombo E
Company who
were awarded the
Girl Powered
Nutrition Badge
launched by
WAGGGS

Anoja Fernando
Shanta Jayalath
Sriyani Wijeratne
Sriyani Hewawasam
Chitra Gunasekera

- anojaf@yahoo.com
- shantajayalath@gmail.com
- sriyaniwije@hotmail.com
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A JOURNEY OF 100 YEARS VISAKHA CENTENARY PUBLICATION

"Visakha - the embodiment of all that is virtuous and beautiful- an apt name for an educational institute for Buddhist Girls in Sri Lanka..."

So begins the memoir that chronicles the journey of the institute that is synonymous with the excellence of Buddhist girls' education in Sri Lanka. Through the course of its 580 pages, unfolds the story of Visakha Vidyalaya from its humble beginnings at "The Firs" down the Turret Road to her current stately and glorious presence in Vajira Road, through the reminiscences of many Visakhians who have crossed her hallowed portals through her glorious hundred years of existence.

Here is the story of one lady who turned her sorrow of losing a child in to the joy of many children for centuries to come. The inception of this great institution occurred during an era when girls were only meant to be seen but not heard. During the times, when girls were expected to learn sewing and singing but not so much science or philosophy, here is the story of a school that produced some of the most notable females who stood abreast with men in many fields; Women who proved that they shall be second to none because they have been brought up to believe that it is *by wisdom is one cleansed*. -

In these pages you will find many stories of laughter, mischief and triumph. And in it, like a flower pressed among the pages of an old book, which still bears a hint of its old colour and glory, you shall discover the spirit of your youthful days spent at Visakha. Every Visakhian, I believe, will feel a stirring deep within their existence, the warmth of the light of the lamp burning deep within them as they turn the pages of this treasure of a book. One Visakhian wrote in her appreciation of the centenary publication:

"Visakha Centenary Publication is truly a treasure and the one book I will carry with me in my journey across the river Styx... for how can my soul be complete without this book"

Compiling this publication was a mammoth task undertaken by the Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls' Association. It was not merely compiling a book with a set of articles but a fact finding mission that compiled the verified history of the school into one mammoth publication. The hunt for the old photos and articles, verification of facts and collecting articles, editing, proofreading and the work surrounding the printing and publication was a colossal task that took three long years. The dedication and diligence shown by the editorial board led by Mrs. Shanta Gunaratna is a mark of sheer Visakhian excellence. In appreciation of the great service rendered by the editorial board a small felicitation ceremony was held on 10th of December at the Jeremias Dias Hall.

-Kaushalya Mendis



"A TREASURE FOR EVERY VISAKHIAN"

The centenary publication of Visakha Vidyalaya is a monumental work that I would consider to be a treasure for every Visakhian. It has captured the school's early years and its gradual development, in pictorial, historical and anecdotal form. To read through its pages is to re-live those years at Visakha. Congratulations to the editor Shanta Gunaratna, Anoja Fernando and the committee for this absolutely wonderful publication that epitomises excellence, which is the Visakha brand. Well done! May Visakha continue to play its role, as the leading Buddhist girls' school in Sri Lanka, for the next one hundred years.

Anoja Wijeyesekera (née Jinadasa)



"UNLEASH YOUR INNER SPARKLE" MONTHLY WEBINAR SERIES

Social Activities Sub Committee of the VVOGA inaugurated a Monthly Webinar series on "*Lifestyle Essentials*" for the membership.

The inaugural webinar of this Series was held via Zoom on 06.12.2020 at 6.00 pm (local time) on the topic of "*Creating Sensitivity through Aesthetics*." Six gifted Visakhians joined hands virtually,

The panellists :

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| ▶ Kishani Jayasinghe | - International Operatic Soprano, |
| ▶ Lakmali Dharmavanse | - Published poet, Lyricist and freelance Journalist |
| ▶ Nishali Silva` | - Dancer, Choreographer and Performing Artist |
| ▶ Sankani Edirisinghe | - Vocalist & Musician, |
| ▶ Thesara Jayawardene | - Award winning actress & Novelist |
| ▶ Virajini Tennakoon | - the State Literary Award Winning Novelist,
Short Story writer, Poet and recorded Lyricist |

Moderator - Kanchanamala Geekiyanage

The Social Activities Sub Committee is thankful to all who contributed to make the inaugural webinar a resounding success.

VV VIVA LA VIDA A NIGHT OF VISAKHIAN VIRTUOSITY

VIVA LA VIDA - "A Night of Visakhian Virtuosity" - The virtual talent show for all past Visakhians was also introduced on the 6th of December, 2020. The registrations are now open whilst further information is available on the event Facebook pages; VV VIVA La VIDA' and VVOGA'.

Entry categories : Singing, Instrument Playing, Dancing, Acting, Miming, Stand-up Comedy and Arts, Digital Arts (Including Sculpture.)

Individuals as well as Group

The theme song 'NIL AMBARE' of the event, which was again the fruit of team work was released via YouTube and Facebook.

Evaluation will be in three stages by a Panel of Judges with the finals scheduled to take place on 13th February 2021.

SMART BOARD PROJECT

In keeping with advancing technology of our time, the VVOGA is implementing the Smart Board project. The VVOGA implemented Phase 2 of the Smart Board project in December 2020. Eight smart boards were handed over to the secondary school laboratories & One smart board to the A/L commerce English medium class. Teachers who will be using the smart boards will be trained on the using of these boards to reap maximum benefit from this project.

After evaluation of 'phase 1' of this project which donated 5 smart boards to the A/L laboratories & seminar rooms, 'phase 2' was implemented having incorporated lessons learnt from 'phase 1'.

The infrastructure of this project is funded by the bi-ennial Visakha Vidyalaya Dinner Dance which also supports the improvement of general English & English medium studies in school.



THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

The Phase 12 of the programme was launched in 2020.

All students requiring financial assistance can apply for this scholarship, through the respective sectional heads. A strict selection process is followed to shortlist candidates based on their need of financial assistance, educational performance & involvement in co-curricular & extra-curricular activities. The contributions made by our very own past Visakhians in this endeavor is sincerely appreciated.

THE CENTENARY PRIMARY SCHOOL BUILDING A GIFT TO YOUNG VISAKHIANS!

The construction of the much awaited Centenary Primary School Building commenced on 15th July this year with a simple ceremony graced by Madam Principal. Members of the school management, representatives of the VVOGA and the School Development Society joined her. The funding for the project is estimated to cost 82.5 M (inclusive of VAT at 8%) and is being financed by kind donations and fund raisers of the VVOGA and its members. This building will consist of the parents' and well wishers' pavilion on ground level and Grade 3 and 4 classes on first and second floors with five classrooms for each grade. The building will be provided with two sets of washrooms and staircases on either side of the building.

The building is taking shape nicely, completing up to the second floor slab level, which will provide 12000 sqft of space for the primary section.



THE CAREER GUIDANCE PROGRAMME

Embracing the virtual technology, the annual career guidance workshop was conducted on the 18th July 2020, via Microsoft Teams. Organized by the Educational Subcommittee of the VVOGA, eminent panellists from diverse sectors shared their insights with participants inspiring their future careers. Panelists shared their experiences and the secrets of success with the participants. The rapidly developing and changing global job market and the pace at which this is exposed to the Sri Lankan youth was discussed in detail while emphasizing on building the essential link between education and the labour market. The event had over 150 participants, making it a success.

The second phase of the program will be introducing upcoming new job opportunities and the skill set required for these jobs. Hence the future seminars will also have a component on introducing the soft skills required for existing and future jobs. The programme will allow the students to learn of opportunities in the non-traditional careers.





VISAKHIANS HAVE DONE IT AGAIN!

Throughout the past century, Visakha Vidyalaya has continued to gift valuable women to almost all the fields in the country. The school has nurtured young girls to excel in academics, sports as well as in extra-curricular and the past victories of the Visakhians have upgraded the school's position as the finest girls' school in the country.

The recent release of z-score marks for university entrance from the GCE Advanced Level Examination saw Visakhians excelling in all streams of study. 47 Visakhians have become eligible to study Medicine making the school the second among the best performing schools in the Bioscience stream. The percentage of students who are eligible to apply for universities from the Bioscience stream records a whopping 89%.

With 28 Visakhians qualifying to study Engineering whilst 89% of whom eligible to apply for universities under this stream, raising the school to be the best performing school in the A/L examination 2019 in the Physical Science stream.

The Arts and Commerce sections also celebrated the success of the students with 93% and 97% students entering the universities from each stream respectively.

For the first time in the recent history of the school Sandali Gihansa Gunawardena a young treasure, scored 197 points in the 2020 Grade 5 scholarship amidst the COVID-19 challenges. These results unveil the solid hard work, commitment and sincerity of all sections of the school.

Visakhians have also excelled in All Island competitions held during the year. The students of the Senior Science Society of Visakha Vidyalaya emerged overall champions over 129 schools at the "Visentia '20" Chemistry quiz competition organized by Royal College throughout a week from 26th November 2020. Nilakna Warushavithana was ranked 5th in the individual performance.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

- Aristotle

Tharushi Mahagamage
Class of 2014



Sachini Wijewardena
Island First
Bioscience - 2019



Sudara Sansali de Silva
Island Second
Commerce - 2019



Anuki Chamathka Pasqual
Island Fourth
Physical Science - 2019

VISAKHIAN ANURADHA YAHAMPATH

CLASS OF 1981

The Provincial Council of the Eastern Province added a new leaf to its history, when award winning exporter, Mrs Anuradha Yahampath was appointed as the Governor, being the first female to hold this post in the Eastern Province. An alumna of the University of Leeds, she was awarded the Best Innovative Exporter Award in 2018, by the Export Development Board of Sri Lanka. 'Weaving with bamboo' was introduced by Anuradha for the first time in Sri Lanka, a more eco-logical alternative to cotton. Her work to empower rural women engaged in weaving has been appreciated on numerous occasions. Anuradha has actively participated in Sri Lanka's political landscape since the 1980s. Her fundamental belief is in protecting the culture and the history of Sri Lanka, whilst making Sri Lanka a front runner in a new age of sustainable development in the world.



VISAKHIAN CHIRANGEE PERERA

HEAD PREFECT 1997

The primary students of Visakha had the opportunity to listen to their one time head girl recently, which was a great learning experience for them. Chirangee reached out to little hearts through 'Story time with Auntie Chirangee' helping them to cope with difficulties related to COVID-19. In her pursuit to enrich our younger generation, Chirangee has embraced promoting educational media for children which makes them excited about learning while being entertained. Her inner sparkle continues to brighten the young in a very subtle manner.

Chirangee's experiences and exposure, gained as a Visakhian has enhanced her qualities making a strong leader with integrity and accountability. She has obtained a Master's degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from West Virginia University and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from California State University, Fresno. Chirangee has continued to give back, contributing to the larger community.

Surani Bandara (Class of '98)



VISAKHIAN SANTHUSHYA FERNANDO

DEPUTY HEAD GIRL, 1994

Dr Santhushya Fernando co-authored the United Nations publication of 'Montage of Sexuality in Sri Lanka', highlighting the human narratives and policy gaps related to gender and power, a salient academic publication in 2018, adding to a growing collection of both academic and non-academic work of her. She has also authored the children's story 'Amaraneeya Mala' (Immortal Flower) illustrated by Sybil Wettasinghe.

A versatile personality, she reads to children of marginalized communities whilst visiting them with a mobile library. She performed with 'Zohra', the all-girls Afghan orchestra that raises funds for emancipation of girls and equal opportunity in education. Her extensive work in building health, housing, agriculture, education and disability management in war affected rural Sri Lanka has been commended by the Sri Lanka Army in 2009. Dr Santhushya is a consultant community physician by profession, being an alumnus of Army Medical College in Pakistan, Post Graduate Institute of Medicine – University of Colombo, and of the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. She was awarded the Prime Minister's Gold Medal for the best English creative writer amongst SAARC youth by Shri Narasimha Rao, Premier of India in 1992. She was a shining star during her school career as well, being the Best All Rounder in 1992.



Malmee Weerasiri (Class of '95)



VISAKHA VIDYALAYA HOSTEL

A HOME AWAY FROM HOME...

Visakha Vidyalaya hostel which was established in 1927, declared open by Governor Sir Herbert Stanley holds nearly a century of proud memories. As the Centenary Publication too holds testimony, it has been a warm, homely entity for the hostellers throughout the years. Currently the Hostel accommodates 150 Visakhians.

The Visakha Vidyalaya Old Girls' Association has taken the initiative to convert the hostel into the warm, homely place it was once known to be.



The 'Hostel Renovation Project' of VVOGA aims to restore both the old hostel building which holds a century of memories, and the new hostel building which was built more recently in 2005, The initial project cost is estimated to be 2.0 million LKR.

The newly formed Hostel Sub-committee is extending an open invitation to all past hostellers and fellow past Visakhians to rally round and support their ongoing projects in converting the hostel into a better and a pleasant residence for young Visakhians.

Please contact :

Asanka Madhupani (Convener)

0773759167 asankamadhupani@gmail.com

Jayathi Anupama (Co-convener)

0764737782 jayathianupama@gmail.com

OBITUARY NOTICE

Mrs Soma Abhaydeera, a beloved primary school and social studies teacher for two generations of Visakhians passed away on 23.10.2020. Having served mother Visakha both as a teacher and as a Sectional Head from 1954.09.01 to 1985.01.24 she continued her ties with school and her students long after her retirement.

May she attain the supreme bliss of Nirvana!



SPORTS NOTICE

An invitation to join the Sports Advisory Committees of VVOGA

The sports subcommittee of VVOGA is taking steps to form Sports Advisory Committees for selected sports. Past Visakhians who have excelled in these sports are invited to become advisory committee members in order to upgrade the standards of sports at Visakha Vidyalaya. Preference shall be given to those who have played the sport at international / national level and who have captained the respective school team.

Advisory committees will be formed for the games of: Tennis, Badminton, Volleyball, Squash, Cricket, Gymnastics, Elle, Football, Rowing, Wushu, Karate, Carrom and Mountaineering.

Interested Visakhians should send your CV (containing your Name / OGA registration Number / A/L year / Captaincy / Achievements / Contact Number / Email Address) to dr.malindi@gmail.com copying to chandanikot@gmail.com

Generous Visakhians,



Due to the prevailing situation the VVOGA is unable to have events that would generate substantial amounts of Funds to aid the planned activities. We would greatly appreciate your generous donations towards this.

We appeal to our members to donate Rs 1000/- or more to the VVOGA to facilitate the numerous ongoing commitments in spite of the closure of schools. Your generous donation can be sent Online or by cheque to the VVOGA 133 Vajira Road Col 5. Please include your name and address so your receipt can be posted.

Online Bank Transfer:

A/C Name: VVOGA Bank: BOC (7010)
Branch: Bambalapitiya (037) A/C No: 718378
Ledger Code: 107/ OGA# / D

*Please email payment confirmation to dulanieranga@gmail.com & samadhi.tennakoon@hotmail.com
Cc: vvoqa.treasurersoffice@gmail.com

Direct Deposits:

Treasurer's Office will be open on every Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday from 9.00am to 12noon



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Annual Bodhi Pooja



Date : 16th January 2021

At Visakha Bo maluwa with a limited number of participants.

Maintenance Fund of Visakha Vidyalaya

Sponsorships and donations are welcome from all VVOGA members.

Sponsorship minimum 50,000 LKR

Donations minimum 5,000 LKR

Contact

Rasangani - 0718018910
Randima - 0763821126



GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE



BLOOD DONATION PROGRAM 2021

Organized by Old Girls' Association of Visakha Vidyalaya

Saturday 27th February

From 9 AM - 3 PM

At National Blood Center, Narahenpita, Colombo 5

Contact :

Charuni - 071 4 410 467

Erandi - 076 4 991 397



Visakha Vidyalaya Centenary Publication

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