

Five minutes with Sonali Saini – President of Sol's Arc

For some children growing up is easy, they develop on target and launch themselves into the world. But for others, life is not always so straightforward and a special kind of help is needed. Sol's Arc has Assessment and Remedial Centres in Mumbai which cater to the special needs of children and gives their parents specialized guidance.

Sol's Arc's president Sonali Saini said: "We have children with autism and slow learners who have come out of regular school after the third or fourth grade because they felt lost and couldn't cope. Here we give them the attention they need."



Sonali Saini

There are three therapy centres at Andheri, Kandivali and Byculla and parallel schools at Goregaon and Kandivali educating up to 300 students. The curriculum has been developed specifically for children with special needs with the emphasis on vocational training.

Sonali said: "We want them to be independent in whatever they choose to do in life and our primary goal is to see that they get the right kind of training."

Vocational placements are found for the students in hotels, computer companies and offices for once a week day release but now Sol's Arc is looking for volunteers to help support the vocational training programme.

"Starting in June, we will need volunteers to come to our centres at Versova or Goregaon and help with the vocational programme. The volunteers will be directly involved with the children. "

Sol's Arc is open to all, even those who cannot afford the fees. If the parents are committed, and prepared to make a small payment, sponsorship can usually be found to support the child. There are children at Sol's Arc with cerebral palsy but those with severe physical disabilities cannot be accommodated because of the nature of the building but they are hoping to get the funding for a lift in the near future.

In the seven years since it was founded, Sol's Arc has gone from strength to strength and has touched the lives of so many people.

Sonali said: "It's a thrill just watching the way the kids interact, they learn so much from each other. If one child has difficulty putting on his shoes, another will help him and if one child cannot speak well, another will speak for him. Since all the children have multiple issues, they all learn from each other and complement each other where necessary."

If you would like to volunteer to help with the vocational programme contact Sonali Saini on 98 67219070.
