

Saraswati Vidya Niketan

a non-governmental organization & not-for-profit secondary school. SVN



...at a **GLANCE**



सत्यं वद धर्मं चर
स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः

satyaṃ vada dharmam cara
svādhyāyān mā pramadaḥ

Speak Truth, Practise Dharma,
Never Abandon Studies.



Saraswati Vidya Niketan: A Brief Introduction

प्राणा यथात्मनोऽभिष्टा भूतानामपि ते तथा ।
आत्मौपम्येन भूतेषु दयां कुर्वन्ति साधवः ॥ हितोपदेश, ॥१.१२॥
prāṇā yathātmno'bhīṣṭā bhūtānām api te tathā
ātmaupamyena bhūteṣu dayāṃ kurvanti sādhaveḥ [Hitopadeśa, 1.12]

Just as one values one's own life other beings value theirs. Good persons are compassionate to all beings, seeing everyone as they see themselves. [Hitopadeśa, 1.12]

Saraswati Vidya Niketan (SVN) is a private not-for-profit secondary school, situated in the village of Cornelia Ida, West Coast Demerara, Guyana. It caters for students from Grades 7 to 12. It held its first classes on September 5, 2002 with 35 students, but permission to operate was given by the Ministry of Education on May 11, 2003.

The beginning ...

Prior to independence in 1966, all public education in Guyana was controlled by various denominations of the Christian Church. In 1975, the government of Guyana decided to “nationalise” all private schools including all the religious based ones. However, even after nearly 60 years of independence from Britain the Christian bias in the system continues to prevail ignoring the ethnic and religious diversity of the population.

In 1992, the new administration again permitted the establishment of private schools as a result of which there are now dozens of such schools in Guyana. The more prominent of these have been started and are administered by the main religious organisations. Saraswati Vidya Niketan is guided by a Hindu philosophy of education as encapsulated in its Sanskrit motto: *satyam vada dharmam cara svādhyāyān mā pramadaḥ* – Speak truth. Practice dharma. Never abandon studies.

The present ...

SVN now a multi-million-dollar complex has been fully funded by private donations from friends and supporters both in and out of Guyana. A single prominent Guyanese family in New York has provided the bulk of the funding. With over 500 students now and 45 teachers, the school is sustained by a modest annual fee of a thousand US dollars.

In a short span of just over two years, SVN is nationally and regionally recognised as a leading secondary school in Guyana and the English-speaking Caribbean. In Guyana, students are placed in public secondary schools according to the scores they obtain at what is known as the National Grade Six Assessment (NGSA), with the top 1% of the students going to the premier state schools. SVN has an open policy regarding in that it admits students regardless of their scores. Yet it is able to perform at the same level as the premier state schools.

Students at this level prepare for two examinations administered by the Caribbean Examination Council, recognised by all the Caribbean countries as the region's sole examining board. The first examination called Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) takes place at the end of grade eleven which is followed by the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), a two-year syllabus. SVN has been excelling at both these examinations with a consistent pass rate of over 90%. In 2015, the best performing student from the Caribbean at CSEC came from SVN while in 2022 the best performing student in the Caribbean at the CAPE level also came from SVN.

SVN scholarship programme ...

At its very inception SVN implemented a scholarship programme to help students with the school fee. Almost 150 students have so far benefitted with either full or partial scholarships. There is a local orphanage in the community and SVN admits all of the children eligible for admission providing full scholarships for them.

SVN also had an overseas scholarship programme to provide tertiary education for its best graduating students who wish to be teachers in the school. Again, with the help of our US friends and supporters six SVN students went to the US at the CUNY. One went on to do a Masters's in education psychology at CUNY's Hunter College. Four of them are back teaching at SVN. A single Guyanese family in New York took care of all tuition, room and board and other related expenses.

SVN's scholarship programme also extends to those currently employed. A number of these scholarships were provided for individuals who opted for professional training at the Cyril Potter College of Education and some were given to teachers who opted for the University of Guyana instead.

Non-academic activities ...

At SVN students are exposed to Kathak an Indian dance form taught by a Guyanese who studied dancing in India, under a Government of India scholarship. He is also the karate and archery teacher.

Future plans ...

In years to come SVN will face a major challenge in meeting its operational cost. With a booming oil economy, the school will find it impossible to keep up with the government salary scale for teachers. The only way this is possible at this time is to raise school fees but even in this there needs to be a limit. A possible way out is some kind a state subsidy.

Some of our immediate projects including replacing the now almost dilapidated student furniture, the refurbishing, upgrading, and expansion of the school's washrooms and canteen, the installation of a solar system and a water purification system. The washroom project is currently underway.

SVN is further constrained for space for outdoor student activities. The space in the present temple compound is inadequate. The school has acquired a portion of land in the community that will help it to meet this extra need but a pavillion with changing rooms, washrooms and showers will have to be erected and the ground prepared. Being entirely private and operating as a not for profit, SVN depends almost entirely on local and overseas donors. SVN welcomes donations.

Brief History (2002-2018)



- The sod-turning for the construction of the new school building was performed by Shri Ashok Singhal, the then General Secretary of the Vishw Hindu Parishad, on the sacred occasion of Shri Krishna Janamashtami day, 1998.
- Instructions began soon after in January 1999 in the old Hindi school building.

The idea started here...



The state of the old Hindi school building, started in 1957 by the late Mahatam Singh, ICCR representative in then British Guiana.

On September 5, 2002 classes were transferred to the then brand new 2-storeyed 7,200 square feet concrete building with 35 students and 7 teachers.

Twenty-two years later, by September 2024 the student population rose to 524 students with a 50 strong teaching faculty.

- SVN now offers over 33 subjects at the CSEC (Grade 11) & CAPE (Grade 12 +1) Exam Levels.
- In all, more than 900 students have graduated with Caribbean Secondary Education Certification (CSEC).



The “new building” in which classes began in September 2002.

- The new 3-storeyed 16,800 square feet concrete building added in 2008 on the site of the old Hindi school building; housing the staff room & main office, cafeteria, IT lab, mini-library, classrooms & a mini-document centre



The Expansion

THE SCIENCE LABS...



- 3 flats
- 15,840 square feet
- 3 science labs
- 6 class rooms
- 2 admin offices
- 1 multi-purpose flat (ground floor)
- US\$704,843.52 (G\$148m) spent to date



Swami Ji and students perform the Bhumi puja for the science building in 2014



The completed science building in 2019



The final structure connecting the three buildings and the newly renovated terrace in 2021

The Growth ...



Swami Ji with SVN's first students in 2002



The first batch of students in the temple



Class with the first batch of students



SVN introduces Science - Grade 11 Physics class



As of 2024 SVN has 528 students on roll, marking a 1500% increase in the student population over two decades

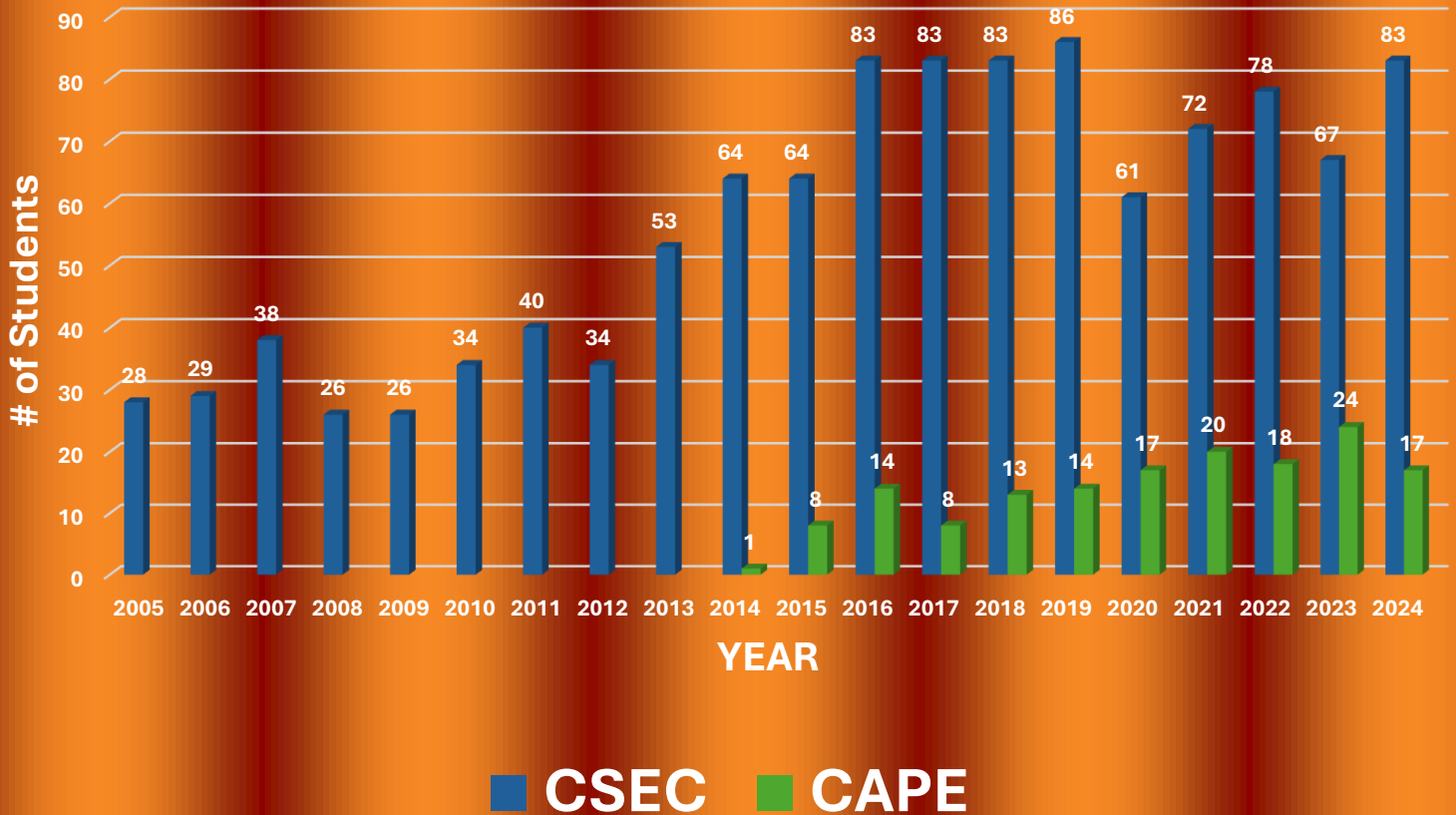
The Growth ...



300%
CSEC
GROWTH



100%
CAPE
GROWTH

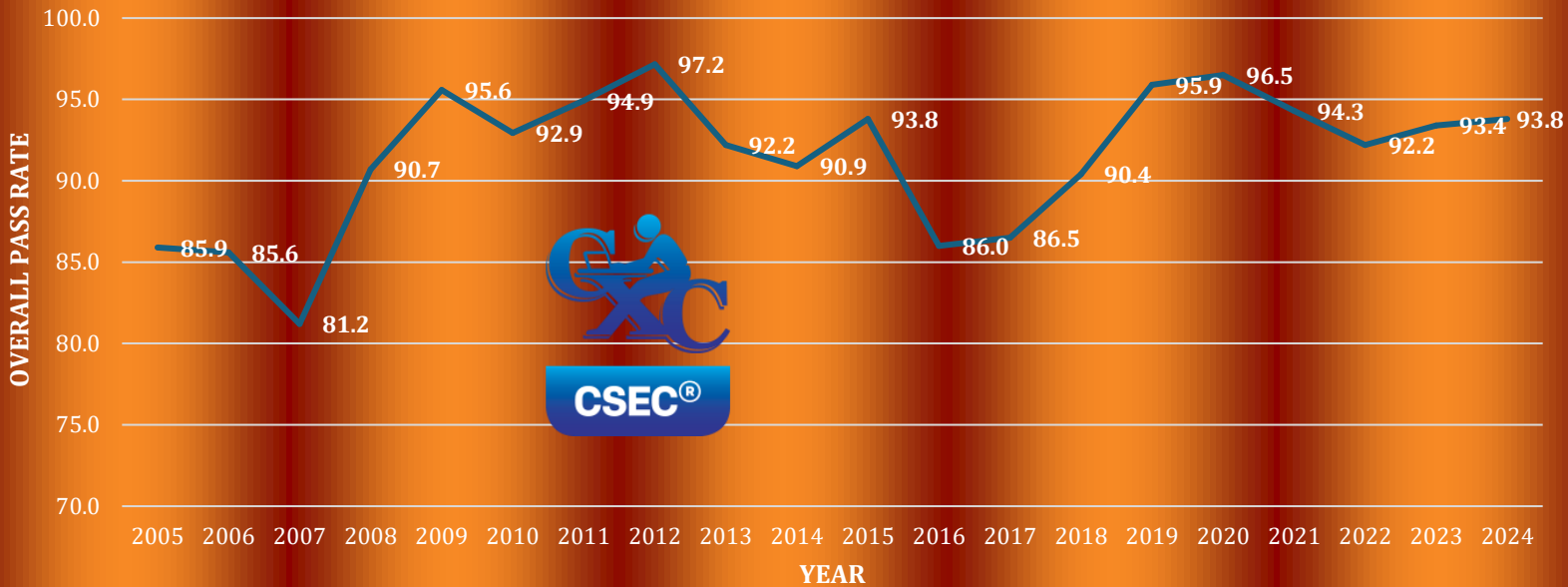


Academics ... CSEC & CAPE Results



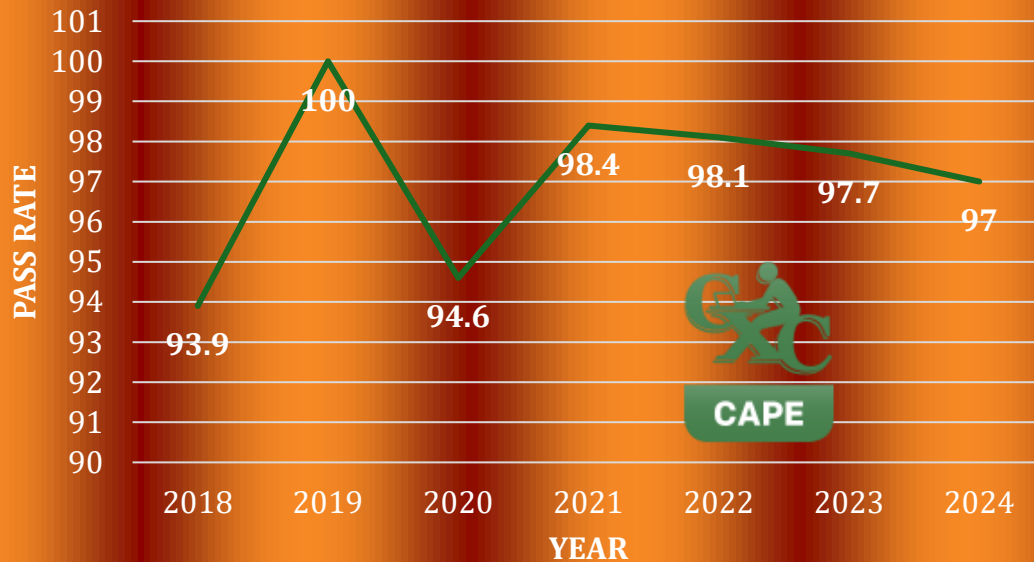
CSEC: 2005 to 2024 GRADE 1-3 PASSES

SVN's Overall Passes (Grades I - III) 2005 - 2024



CAPE: 2018 to 2024 GRADE 1-3 PASSES

SVN'S Overall Passes (Grades I - V)



Academics ... THE BEST



2005 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-

NIRMALA SINGH

7 CSEC SUBJECTS - 6 GRADE ONES, 1 GRADE TWO

BA MATH EDUCATION (GRADE 7-12) - 2011

MA EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY - 2017

PRINCIPAL OF SVN AS OF 2024



2006 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-

KAMINIE SINGH

8 CSEC SUBJECTS - ALL GRADE ONES

BA ENGLISH LITERATURE Magna cum laude

LEHMAN COLLEGE – 2011

DipED. English –University of Guyana 2015

Teacher/Administrator @ SVN



2007 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-

SHIVGOBIN JAIKARRAN

8 CSEC SUBJECTS

5 GRADE ONES

3 GRADE TWOS



2008 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
GOVINDA KAWAL
9 CSEC SUBJECTS
ALL GRADE ONES



2009 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
RAJIV NANDALALL
11 CSEC SUBJECTS
ALL GRADE ONES



2010 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
ANNA HAMID
12 CSEC SUBJECTS
11 GRADE ONES
1 GRADE TWOS



2011 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
SANJEEV NANDALALL
12 CSEC SUBJECTS
ALL GRADE ONES



2012 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
BIBI AMEENA NAZARALLIE
13 CSEC SUBJECTS
ALL GRADE ONES



2013 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
RAFENA MUSTAPHA
15 CSEC SUBJECTS
ALL GRADE ONES



2014 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
WALICA DEOKINANAN
18 CSEC SUBJECTS
15 GRADE ONES
2 GRADE TWOS
1 GRADE THREE



2015 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
VICTORIA NAJAB
20 CSEC SUBJECTS
ALL GRADE ONES



2016 - BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
RAMKUMARIE RAMDASS
19 CSEC SUBJECTS
18 GRADE ONES
1 GRADE TWO



2017 – BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
KESHINI DIGAMBER
17 CSEC SUBJECTS
ALL GRADE ONESc



2018 – BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
JASMATTIE PARBHU
13 CSEC SUBJECTS
ALL GRADE ONES



2019 – BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
CHETRAM HARRINARINE
19 CSEC SUBJECTS
17 GRADE ONES, 2 GRADE TWOS



2020 – BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
GEVESHWAR RAJKISHORE
19 CSEC SUBJECTS
18 GRADE ONES, 1 GRADE TWO



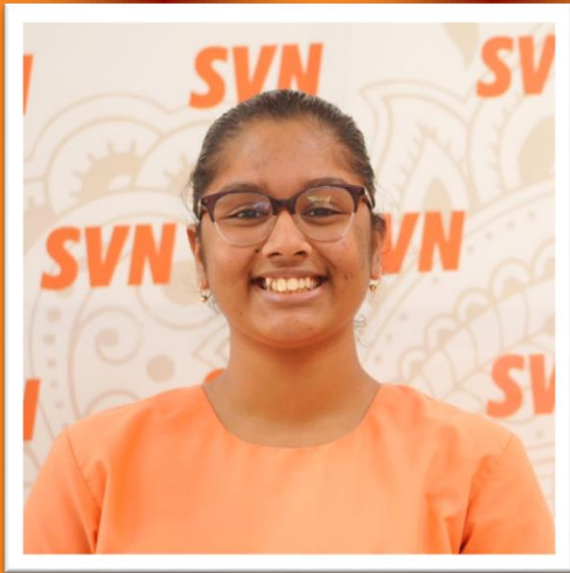
2021 – BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
ROUSHINE LALL
21 CSEC SUBJECTS
17 GRADE ONES, 3 GRADE TWOS



2022 – BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
BHAGMATTIE SARENDRANAATH
20 CSEC SUBJECTS
16 GRADE ONES, 4 GRADE TWOS



2023 – BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-
VIRENDRA DOOKIE
20 CSEC SUBJECTS
19 GRADE ONES, 1 GRADE TWO



2024 – BEST GRADUATING STUDENT:-

CHITRA PARBHU

20 SUBJECTS

18 GRADE ONES, 2 GRADE TWOS

Academics ... RECOGNITION



SVN's Vamanadev Hiralall awarded Prestigious University of Toronto Scholarship



VAMANADEV HIRALALL

List of CSEC & CAPE subjects

- CSEC 2015
19 GRADE I & 1 GRADE II
- CAPE UNIT 1 – 2016
5 GRADE DISTINCTIONS & 3 GRADE II
- CAPE UNIT 2 – 2017
7 GRADE DISTINCTIONS & 1 GRADE I

OTHER RANKINGS

- inducted into CXC merit list in 2015. The merit list, is like CXC Hall of Fame
- According to CXC headquarters, Vamanadev gained entry into the merit list multiple times
- 5th place in the merit list for Information technology
- 4th in HSB 3rd for Agricultural Science
- 1st in Integrated Science in the entire Caribbean.

SVN's Atishta Seenarine

named Most Outstanding Performer in the Caribbean at CAPE



Atishta Seenarine & other awardees with the Honourable Minister of Education in 2022

ATISHTA SEENARINE

List of CSEC & CAPE subjects

- **CSEC 2020 – 19 SUBJECTS
17 GRADE I & 2 GRADE II**
- **CAPE UNIT 1 – 2021
9 UNITS – ALL GRADE ONES**
- **CAPE UNIT 2 – 2022
9 UNITS – ALL GRADE ONES**

SVN IS NAMED THE CAPE SCHOOL OF THE YEAR FOR MOST OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN THE ENTIRE CARIBBEAN BY CXC AND THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GUYANA.

Extra Curricular & Social Work



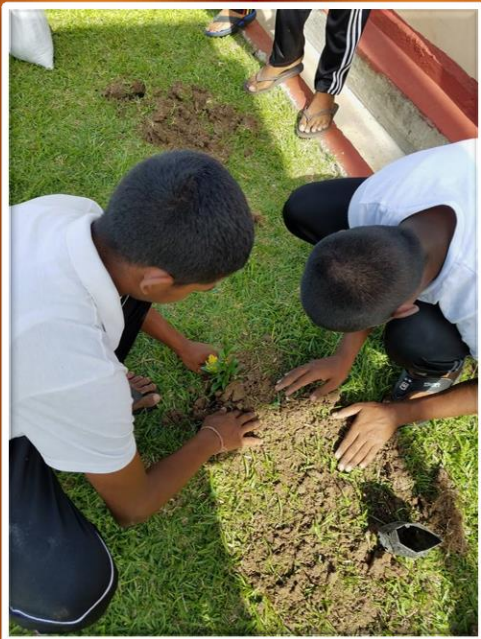
SVN's Karate Team in 2017



Table tennis match between the girls and boys in 2011



Kathak presentation at our annual Phagwah programme



Students planting flower plants to decorate the premise



Students during yoga on the terrace of the admin building



SVN's debate teams in 2005



Students learning to play chess and other games



Arts and crafts workshop with students in 2013



SVN students learning to perform basic medical checks for ZARA's medical outreach programme in 2012



Rangoli competition for Diwali

SVN helps children of former Wales sugar workers



Residents at the handing over ceremony

Living up to its commitment of providing financial assistance to the children of former sugar workers, the Saraswati Vidya Niketan (SVN) reached out to those in the Wales, West Bank Demerara last week-end.

Principal of the school, Swami Aksharananda said 24 children received \$10,000 each, along with food hampers, compliments of N&S Mattai & Company. The money was given through a fund that the SVN, a Hindu school on the West Coast of Demerara, launched recently so that the children can continue their education.

The aim of the fund is for students to be supported for "at least one academic year starting with the current school term."

The principal was proud that the students have raised more than \$560,000 and have so far assisted 123 students, including 99 from Corentyne, Berbice who have also received \$10,000 each.

According to him, Pandit Nando of the Patania Temple successfully identified the students through "the wider community and the churches and masjid."

He promised to return to the "these communities sometime next month to offer the same help."

Swami Aksharananda was also happy that the SVN has "been able to attract a small contribution outside of our school community" while they also have commitment from others.

The workers are still awaiting their severance benefits that the government has promised. But in the meantime, the principal said the students should not suffer as a result and would continue with the assistance later this month.



A complete set of the children's documents in English may be purchased by interested parties at



SVN provided assistance to children affected by the closure of the Wales Sugar Estate in 2016



SVN aided children in Berbice affected by the closure of the sugar estate in 2019



SVN students at the suicide prevention march in 2013

Giving the GIFT of LIFE...



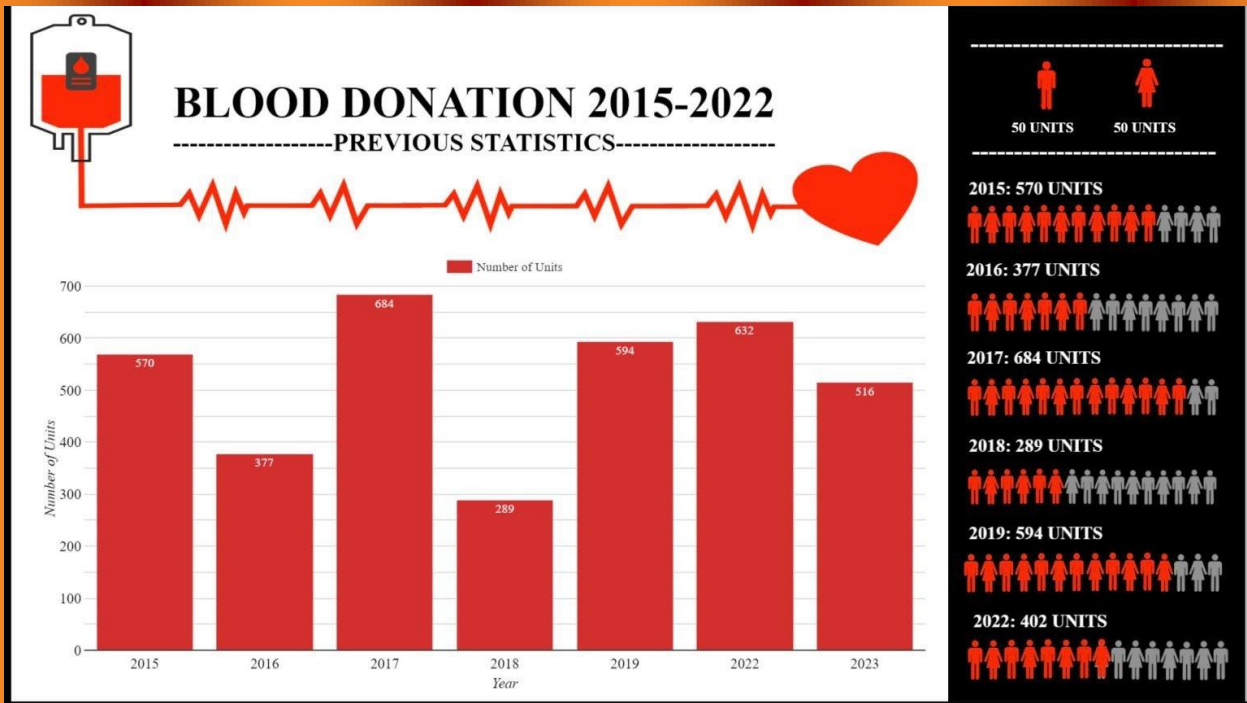
Senior students of SVN donating blood to meet the target



Students standing on the roadway to recruit donors from passers-by



Swami ji donating the first unit of blood for the day



Statistics of SVN's bi-annual blood donation drive from 2015 - 2023

EVENTS



Swami ji with the first group of students performing havan to mark the start of the new term



With SVN's growth, first day havan is now held on the Sunday before the commencement of each school term



Swamis from the Bharat Sevaashram Sangha in India visit SVN



Students greeting Mr. Subraj who donated two school buses to SVN in 2012



The two school buses donated by the Subraj family (ZARA)

The newly inaugurated ZARA Computer Lab funded by the Subraj Family in 2012



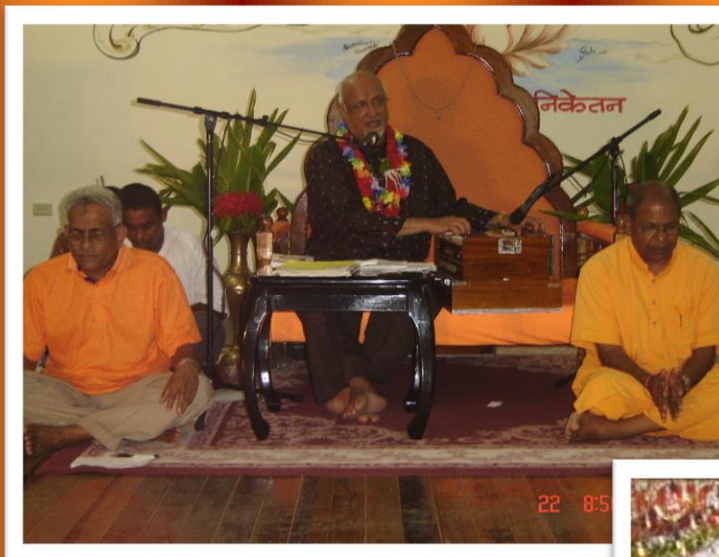
Sanjiv Nandalal (2011) – the first recipient of the Suryanarayan Mandir (NY) Award for the Best Graduating Student of SVN



Pandit Rajin Balgobind Ji performing during an evening of bhajans at SVN in 2012



The late Prakash Gossai Ji performing during an evening of bhajans at SVN in



Swami Brahmadev Ji visiting and lecturing on the Ramacharitamans

