

THE DANDELION DISPATCH



#2 MONTHLY NEWSLETTER APRIL 2025



Dear Friends and Supporters,

At the Smiling Dandelion Foundation (SDF), we believe that creating a world where every child feels included, understood, and valued is not just a goal but a shared responsibility. Your unwavering support has helped us take small but significant steps towards this vision. Over the past few months, we've been privileged to bring joy, connection, and learning to children and young adults with intellectual disabilities. Here's a look at what we've been up to:





TAFI 2.0 – A Celebration of Imagination and Inclusion, Chandigarh

The Art Festival for Inclusion (TAFI) is an initiative by the Smiling Dandelion Foundation that brings together neurodivergent children in a shared creative space. This year, participants were invited to envision themselves as kings and queens, channeling their creativity onto canvas and into stories that featured a king, a villain, and an imaginative kingdom. The experience underscored the remarkable creativity of the children, whose imaginative contributions inspired all their peers. We also created special Story books which the neuro-divergent children filled up with their story ideas with the support of the their neuro-typical buddies.

What truly set this event apart was the authentic camaraderie witnessed throughout the day—a celebration of individuality and connection where every interaction resonated with patience, respect, and joy. TAFI 2.0 served as a powerful reminder that art has the unique ability to break barriers and build bridges, fostering an environment where every child feels they truly belong





Purple Fest – The Essence of a Leader, Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

Held at Rashtrapati Bhavan and organised by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Purple Fest was a celebration of resilience, talent, and inclusion. Smiling Dandelion Foundation was invited to take part in the festival and were asked to conduct storytelling sessions for the differently abled. The event offered a unique perspective on leadership through candid conversations with the dedicated team behind the festival. Their unified message highlighted the President's deep commitment to enhancing the lives of persons with disabilities and praised the transformative leadership of Secretary Rajesh Aggarwal. His passion and accessibility over the past three years have reshaped the department, leaving a lasting impact on the community. The festival provided a prestigious platform for individuals to showcase their abilities, evoking pride and hope among all who attended.





The Shri Ram School Aravali, Gurugram

In a dynamic session at The Shri Ram School Aravali, young students from grades 3 and 4 explored the true meaning of inclusion. Through an engaging story and interactive activities, the children discovered that fostering a welcoming environment begins with each one of us. The session encouraged open dialogue and self-expression, reinforcing the idea that every individual plays a vital role in building an inclusive community. The event was a heartening success, thanks to the enthusiastic participation of the students and the support of educators and organisers alike.



Maharani Ahilya Bai Holkar Award, Chandigarh

We are delighted to announce that our founder has been honored with the Maharani Ahilya Bai Holkar Award by Dr. Renu Vig, Vice Chancellor of Punjab University, alongside distinguished members of the Nivedita Trust in Chandigarh. This recognition highlights the dedication and commitment towards creating a more inclusive world, but it also serves as a reminder that the journey is far from over.

Accepting this award with gratitude and humility, our founder reflected on the continued responsibility it brings. It is not just a celebration of past achievements but a call to strive even harder for meaningful change.

We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who has been part of this journey, supporting our mission and encouraging us to continue making a difference. This recognition motivates us to keep pushing forward, knowing that there is still much to be done.



Storytelling with the Blind School children in Patiala

Storytelling has the power to open hearts and ignite imaginations, and our latest session was a beautiful testament to that. We shared the story of Lotus and Feather—a touching tale of friendship between a girl who cannot speak and an injured crane. The audience included visually impaired children and their neurotypical friends, creating a space where imagination and creativity flourished.

The children brought the story to life in their own unique ways—by feeling a bird and expressing their ideas through crayon drawings. Neurotypical friends supported this creative process, fostering a spirit of collaboration and understanding. It was a beautiful moment where connections were built beyond words.



THANK YOU



Shivani Dhillon



Shalini Gupta



Dr. Nina Vaidya



**Dr. Rekha
Ramachandran**



**Moneisha
Gandhi**



**Gopika
Kapoor**

Inclusion मंच was made possible because of YOU!

Your support, engagement, and enthusiasm during the live sessions helped spark meaningful conversations about inclusion and diversity, empowering parents and guiding them in their parenting journey.

Let's continue to keep the spirit of inclusion alive together!

Inclusion Manch

We are thrilled to share highlights from the Inclusion Manch, a remarkable event organized to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, held from 2nd to 6th December. The event brought together experts, advocates, and families to discuss innovative approaches to inclusion, support, and empowerment.

Our founder, Shivani Dhillon, delivered an insightful session on “The Value of Storytelling in Development,” emphasizing how storytelling can be a powerful tool to foster connection and understanding, especially in the context of disability inclusion. Her session was one of the many thought-provoking discussions that made the event a resounding success.

With over 1,500 parents and families tuning in, the event highlighted the growing need for awareness and resources for caregivers in the inclusion space. The inspiring and insightful sessions created a space for learning, connection, and community building.



Smiling Dandelion Foundation at Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa

We are proud to share that the Smiling Dandelion Foundation participated in the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa—South Asia's largest arts festival. As part of our commitment to inclusion, we hosted two engaging storytelling sessions specifically designed for the neurodiverse community.

Our sessions aimed to make the world of art and stories more accessible and welcoming for all. Through interactive storytelling and creative engagement, we fostered an inclusive environment where everyone could participate, express, and connect.

Being part of such a prestigious festival was a wonderful opportunity to advocate for inclusion in the arts. We remain committed to creating more such spaces where creativity knows no boundaries.



Picnic with children & Young adults with Intellectual Disabilities and their caregivers, Chandigarh

As a foundation we put a lot of emphasis on the importance of good mental health of caregivers. The picnic was a great opportunity for caregivers to have fun with their children without being tensed about their well being. The children had a big secure area to play and roam about. The caregivers sang song, danced while the children played various games and tried the obstacle area as well.



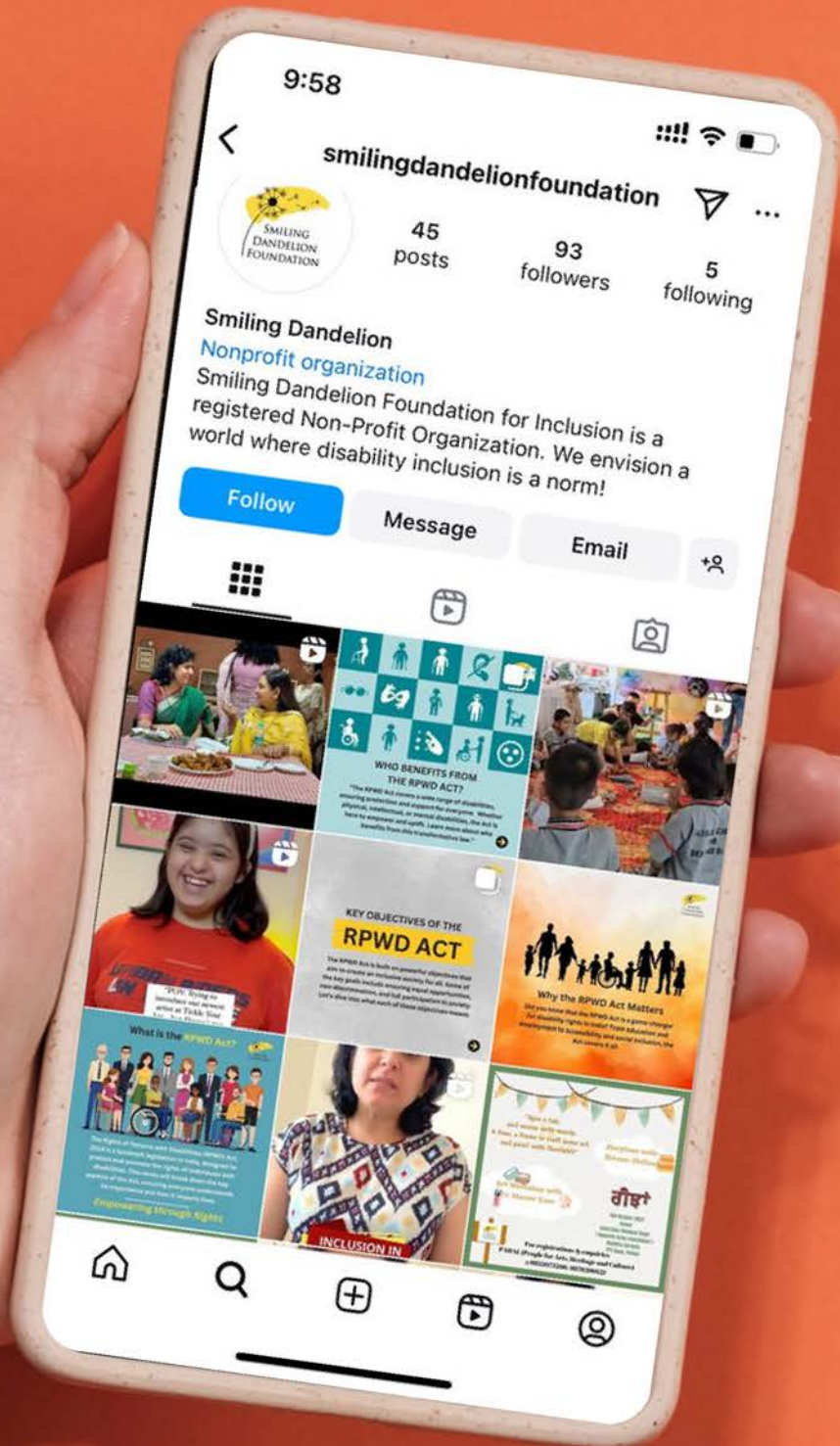


Special visit for our children to meet IPL legends Ricky Ponting, Glenn Maxwell, and Shreyas Iyer

Smiling Dandelion Foundation along with other organisations working in the field of disability together organised a special visit for our children to meet IPL legends Ricky Ponting, Glenn Maxwell, and Shreyas Iyer—an unforgettable experience made possible with the support of Punjab Kings (PBKS).

From high-fives to heartfelt conversations, the players made each child feel seen and celebrated. Moments like these break barriers and prove that inclusivity belongs everywhere—even in the world of professional sport.

At SDF, we believe joy is a right, not a privilege and this day was a powerful reminder of that.



Our Growing Social Media Presence

We're excited to share that SDF's social media platforms are growing! We're using Instagram and other channels to spread awareness, share personal stories, and provide practical resources for families and educators working with individuals with intellectual disabilities. Follow us to stay updated on events, insights, and ways to get involved!

Rahul Jindal

Co-Founder

Rahul is a curious, courageous, respectful and humble senior leader. With deep experience in general management globally, he excels at building better products, systems, narratives, and organizational capabilities. Rahul is also passionate about mentoring start-ups and entrepreneurs. Rahul's journey as a father has been a pivotal in his discovery of neurodiversity, and he strives to make a difference as an ally and public speaker building awareness and inclusion for people with disabilities.



Shivani Dhillon

Co-Founder

Shivani Dhillon's journey as an ex-BBC journalist, therapeutic storyteller and founder of Samvid- Stories & Beyond reflects a deep commitment to positively impacting the lives of those with intellectual disabilities and promoting inclusivity. Her rich background in journalism in both India and the UK, enables a blend of storytelling and journalistic skills to her current initiatives. Blessed with a daughter who has Down Syndrome, she founded Down Syndrome Support Group India.



Yuvraj Wadhwa

Head, Strategy & organisational planning

Yuvraj is an empathetic individual who is committed to being a catalyst for holistic change that improves the lives of the neurodiverse community. His younger sister, Simran, has Down syndrome who has completed her Senior Secondary Education & is an aspiring baker. Yuvraj is an investor at Accel Partners, a leading global venture capital firm, based in their Bangalore office. Prior to joining Accel, Yuvraj was a management consultant at Bain & Company.



Aditi Sood

Intern, Research

As a second-year law student Aditi's fervour lies in advocating for equality and rights of all individuals. Her interest in disability rights stems from the belief that it is imperative to acknowledge and support individuals with special needs to enable them to lead fulfilling lives as integral members of society.



We are a registered non-profit with an active CSR Certificate.
Show your love and support by contributing to our fund raising efforts.

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THANK YOU!

Thank you for being part of this journey. With your support, we are building a community where every child and family feels seen, heard, and valued. Together, we are creating ripples of change, and we look forward to sharing even more moments of joy and progress with you.

And before we go, we'd like to leave you with this—never underestimate the power of joy and connection! Whether it's through a story, a shared laugh, or a slice of pizza made with love, we believe that the little moments are what truly make a difference. At SDF, we're all about those moments. Stay tuned for more smiles, stories, and maybe even a few more pizzas!

With gratitude,
The Smiling Dandelion Foundation Team

