



SRI ARUNODAYAM
Home for Mentally Challenged Destitute

EVENT REPORT

SRI ARUNODAYAM'S
SPECIAL MOM AWARD 2019



True Love Persevers.
Doesn't Give Up.
Never Leaves

Date : May 12, 2019
Time : 5.30 pm
Venue : Good Shepherd
Convent,
Nungambakkam,
Chennai

It takes a special kind of woman to make a Special Mom!

Presenting a report on our **Third Annual Special Mom Awards** held on International Mother's Day, May 12, 2019, where 15 incredible women and their families were honored and awarded.

It takes a special kind of woman to make a mother, and it takes an even more special kind of woman to be mother to special children!

Our 'Special Mom' Award is a unique program that commenced in 2017 to start a transformation in the way society considers and responds to special children and their families who are most often misunderstood, discriminated against and judged. On May 12, 2019 at Good Shepherd Convent, Nungambakkam, we celebrated the third occurrence of this unique event aimed at mothers who brave the odds for the sake of their special children. To us, they are unsung heroes and we give them the honor they truly deserve by recognizing and supporting them through this program.

And so it was that **Asiyabenazir S** (Virudunagar, TN), **Baby R** (Cuddalore, TN), **Chidambaragomathi** (Tirunelveli, TN), **Jayanthi M** (Chennai, TN), **Kalavathy** (Thiruvallur, TN), **Lakshmi P** (Tirunelveli, TN), **Lakshmi Suneetha** (East Godavari, AP), **Nalini R** (Krishnagiri, TN), **Ponrajam M** (Chennai, TN), **Radha Nandakumar** (Chennai, TN), **Rajakili K** (Kanyakumari, TN), **Savithri M** (Coimbatore, TN), **Shanthi Pappa** (Marthandam, TN), **Usha Subramanian** (Chennai, TN), and **Vasumathi R** (Chennai, TN) joined our 'hall of fame' as the third batch of Special Moms who are now an integral part of the Sri Arunodayam family.

We were delighted to have **Mr. S Krishnan I.A.S, Principal Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, Government of Tamil Nadu** preside as our Chief Guest together with Sri Arunodayam's benefactors who gave away the awards and a host of prizes to the 15 finalists. Mr. Krishnan's very enlightening address helped us recall a powerful quote by Mahatma Gandhi who said that *"the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members"*. A message worth repeating over and over, especially in these times.

Our 3rd Annual Special Mom Awards event was held on May 12, 2019 (International Mother's Day), where we celebrated the lives of 15 incredible Mothers of Special Children.

They each received a Cash Award of INR 15,000/- and a Special Lifetime Pass entitling them to free services from Sri Arunodayam.

Sri Arunodayam is grateful to:

Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives, M/s Rising Stars Mobile India Pvt Ltd., Mrs. Sasirekha Natarajan & Family, Ittycheria's Granddaughters, Dr. K. Sankara Rao & Family, Mrs. Sanyuktha Gupta & Family, Ms. Madhuri A Amin & Family, Ms. Ritu Jain & Family, Mr. K Ravikumar & Family, Lions Club of Chennai Golden Roses, and Emerald Jewel Industry India Ltd., Coimbatore.



Sri Arunodayam's Special Lifetime Pass is carefully thought out to provide a lifetime of free services to each year's awardees and their children.

The Special Mom Award is an annual event as we quest for applicants from across the country for the 15 most deserving finalists.

This year, Sri Arunodayam received applications from mothers across Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and a group of eminent panelists screened each application carefully to arrive at the 15 finalists. The Special Moms films and stories are available at: <https://sriarunodayam.org/special-mom-award-2019>

- **Automatic membership to Sri Arunodayam's SPECIAL MOM FORUM** – a project aimed at empowering all special mom finalists through regular training programs to help them advance in caregiving and personal areas of development. Such empowerment will help shape them into powerful agents of change in society.
- **Free short duration stay for their children in an emergency:** The mothers are entitled to leave their children in our care for limited periods of time when they may be required to travel and have no one to care for their children during those periods.
- **Sri Arunodayam as custodian and official guardian of their children:** Understanding their anxiety concerning the future of their children on their demise, Sri Arunodayam offers the parents an option to appoint us as custodian and official guardian of their children. Sri Arunodayam will either induct or network with peer organizations to enable a safe home for the children on their parent's demise.

Each year we capture our finalists' stories on film, which are presented at the time of the awards. It is always a moving experience to witness their many trials and challenges, yet it all turns to admiration as both mothers and children rise up to face the odds through incredible achievements that show their true caliber. This is something that we believe society must witness, and that's why the films have always been the most powerful segment of this program.

Most finalists were in shock, never imagining that they would be recognized for their role as mother to special children. Almost all of them said that they were humbled and grateful to Sri Arunodayam for helping them see their worth.

Around 700 guests (including 250 special mom family members) enjoyed a wonderful evening together as the high emotion of the films were balanced with the exhilarating performances of children and youngsters with intellectual disability. The evening ended with a grand dinner for all who attended.

TESTIMONIALS

S Krishnan, I.A.S.

[Principal Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, Government of Tamil Nadu]



"I've heard a lot about Sri Arunodayam but came to understand its various activities at this event. I feel proud that there is an organization in the state of Tamil Nadu, that too in Chennai that is working for this good cause. I am humbled by the great service that is being rendered to abandoned children by Sri Arunodayam. A truly cultured and civilized society "lives with compassion". To love all without discrimination is essential for a healthy society. We must learn to live with compassion, and the new philosophy demands that all special children live within society. I deeply appreciate Sri Arunodayam's effort to recognize special moms through this program, which I believe will ultimately curb the rate of abandonment. We must provide all the possible support to mothers of special children so that they are able to care for them and not contemplate abandoning them. I congratulate all the special moms and wish them the very best."

Radha Nandakumar

[2019 Special Mom Awardee]



"The very thought of an event to honor mothers of special children deserves great applause. This is a unique type of honor as far as my knowledge goes. Organizations working with children with severe disabilities usually take on such responsibility for a limited period of time, but Sri Arunodayam provides them with lifetime care. This noble work requires tremendous courage and commitment. As for the event, it went flawlessly - right from the nomination process, to the courteous film crew visiting our homes and giving us the freedom to express ourselves, to the staff who took care of us through the weekend as we attended the Special Mom Forum prior to the Awards. The cooperation was admirable, given the amount of hard work, time and energy it must have taken to make this event so spectacular. It requires immense dedication and commitment to train special children for a wonderful performance, and the love showered by the staff can well be estimated from the way the children reciprocated. Even the volunteers who took care of our families were aptly chosen. In all, I admire the thought of such a recognition, the manner in which it was carried out, and the dignity that was accorded to each individual."

Picture Gallery

Welcoming our Guests



The Show Begins



Honouring our Special Moms



Entertainment Highlights



Although there are several awards honoring mothers across India and the world, Sri Arunodayam's Special Mom Award is uniquely different in that it honor mothers of special children. This has resulted in a unique platform for advocacy on issues related to intellectual disability. Through the Special Mom Award, Sri Arunodayam honors family values and the progressive abilities of mothers who make a significant impact on the lives of their children, families, and communities. Through these awards, Sri Arunodayam aims to share inspiring family experiences that could provide hope to thousands of families of special children across our country, encouraging them in their journey towards a more inclusive society.