

Alumni Award of Distinction 2019

Mrs. Anu Mammen

Mrs. Anu Mammen came to Vellore after her marriage to Dr. Mammen Chandy in 1974, having studied in Coonoor, Madras and Trichur.

In Vellore, their first abode was in MIQ and her first innings as a teacher was as a volunteer in Ida Scudder School. They moved out of MIQ to a small house in Katpadi when their first son was born. With Dr Mammen's busy schedule, duties and long hours, the times were not easy. Mrs Mammen had to collect water from the street taps carrying the child in her arms. In 1978 after their second son was born, they moved back to the hospital campus living in Harley street where there was constant battle with rats.

The next move was to Men's Hostel where Dr Mammen was the Deputy Warden. At a time when phones were considered a luxury, she remembers almost being ducked by the students of the hostel as she had to go to the hostel to take phone calls. Despite these initial episodes, she enjoyed the time she stayed in the Men's hostel wardens' quarters when the students would come in freely with their needs.

The family moved to Australia in 1981. In 1984 on their return, she joined Vidyalayam teaching English and Social Studies to the senior classes and Hindi to the younger ones. Her students remember the Hindi word "ANAR" to this day as she brought a box full of pomegranate seeds to class.

While working in Vidyalayam, she not only was an excellent teacher, but younger students who had not yet adjusted to the school would seek her and cling to her for comfort and motherly affection. Slow learners would approach her for encouragement and support. In addition to her active involvement in the school plays in which tall or short, shy or not, she made sure that every one of the students participated, the project in social studies was particularly enjoyed by the students and many of them talk about the class on the history of Vellore where she took them to the Fort and "everything came alive".

Her students talk about her ability to command love, admiration and respect and her overreaching capacity to love and to nurture. In the words of one of some of her students, "She is the reason why many of us speak English the way we do as she was very insistent that we speak slowly and clearly", "above all her interest in each of her students, her willingness to encourage us and the ability to draw out the potential in us has made an impact and a difference in our impressionable minds".

Mrs Susan Abraham, a former principal of Vidyalayam, who was Mrs Mammen's role model and inspiration, talks about Mrs Mammen being an excellent teacher, a good disciplinarian who endeared herself to both students and colleagues with never an admonition tone or an ill word about any one.

Mrs Mammen firmly believed in the all around development of children as well as creating in them a passion to help those who were not as fortunate.

She continued in Vidyalayam till 2002, with a break in between for 2 years when Dr Mammen was away.

After a three-month course in Counselling, she visited patients in the Rehabilitation Centre. Recognising the need for a library for the patients, she collected books and transported the books bed to bed on a trolley creating a mobile library. She functioned as a Trustee in the Mary Varghese Trust and later took on the role as the Secretary of the Trust.

All the while she listened to the stories that Dr Mammen narrated about the patients in the Haematology ward and especially of the children. Recognising the need to make a difference in the ward which was in a dilapidated state, she then put her heart and soul in to changing the atmosphere. She designed an attractive place, carefully selecting the furniture, curtains and books, where patients and particularly the children had to stay for an extended period while undergoing long drawn out treatment. When the A-ward was later built, she created the play room work area for the children making it a haven where the little ones could spend their time in fun and recreation and where they could function as normally as possible.

When Dr Mammen took over as Director of the Tata Memorial Centre, Kolkata, she moved along with him and continued her work with the children admitted to the haematology wards there.

In campus life, she judged essay competitions, directed plays and with her artistic skills was responsible for decorating the Big Bungalow for important functions. Her role in the Women's Fellowship of the Church and College area fellowship are also noteworthy.

Much of her work was behind the scene as a paver of the way for it all to happen. In her own words she enjoyed every moment of it finding fulfilment in filling whatever role she had to play.

To quote Rabindranath Tagore, it would be true to say of Mrs Anu Mammen - "I slept and dreamed that life was joy, I woke and found that life was service, I served and found that service was joy".

The Alumni Association joins the CMC community in thanking Mrs Anu Mammen for her many years of service and commitment to our children and to those in need through her exemplary characteristics of integrity, high level of commitment, compassion and professional excellence and is proud to honour her with the Alumni Award for the year 2019