

Deaf's Nani (Grand Mother) institutes Scholarship for 5 SKK Divyangs.

A grandmother (Nani) of a hearing-impaired child, Dulari Uppal, instituted a scholarship for similar students of the Samaj Kalyan Kendra's (SKK)run School for hearing Handicapped. Each of the five selected Divyang will receive an amount equivalent to one hundred Singapore dollars annually, one hundred dollars per Divyang.

Named the Dulari Uppal Divyang Scholarship for Excellence, five hearing handicapped students will be selected annually based on agreed criteria. It is primarily meant for hearing-impaired students who come from economically poor families but are meritorious. She provided about Rs 37,000 to SKK, a well-known charitable registered society for five scholarships. A similar amount will be transferred to SKK for improving infrastructure for the Divyangjan.

At a simple function, the Promoter Smt. Dulari Uppal distributed the certificates and cheques to the five students. They are Arun Singh Manhas of 4th class, Kirti Angral of 5th class, Rahul Bhandral of 7th class, Ritish Kumar of 8th class and Sahil Kumar of 10th class. Two of them have lost their father, and the parents of the other three can hardly make both ends meet.



Motivation for these scholarships for hearing impaired Divyang came from the success story of their grandson, Nihal who was born deaf. A hearing handicapped person in the family, they were motivated to help similar handicapped students in Jammu, their native place, and finally arrangement was tied-up with the Samaj Kalyan Kendra which runs a school for Hearing Handicapped up to 12th class free of cost.

The Promoter, Dulari Kohli had schooling at Model Academy and studied classical music and married Bal Krishan Uppal, who joined the Merchant Navy after studying in Jammu and Punjab University. He passed away only last month in Jammu. While the family first moved

to Calcutta and then to Singapore, they keep visiting Jammu to do something for Jammu. Early this year, ten scholarships were instituted for the students of Ranbir Higher Secondary School in the name of her father Bal Krishan Uppal where he had his schooling.

The Uppal family including their daughter, Gauri Uppal, the moving spirit for such charitable initiatives, shifted to Singapore in 1973. Wife of a former Foreign Service Officer of the Singapore Govt., Gauri set up 'The Learning Farm' 21 years ago and devoted her life to this free residential agricultural school to help vulnerable youth return to their villages for organic farming. With a Master's in Linguistics, she not only helped her son Nihal, with speech therapy after his cochlear implant, but also helped the deaf population in Singapore, Indonesia, the UK, Malaysia, Australia, and the USA. Nihal has made a stupendous achievement after his cochlear implant and therapy, completing Computer Engineering from the University of Melbourne. Currently, he is working as a Senior Engineer with DISNEY in London.

Incidentally, Gauri, was at Indonesia, handing over her farm to a university after running it for 21 years. She joined the event in Jammu through video link. It was an emotional day for them.

Speaking on the occasion, Dulari Uppal said that the scholarship is an effort to pay back to Jammu which she and her family loved the most. She said that although she has moved out of Jammu, her heart lives there. Referring to her grandson Nihal, she said that she has faced the challenges of deafness but Nihal proved that no obstacle is too big to limit one's dreams. Born deaf, today he has a successful career and is happily married. She said that seeing Nihal's achievements, she is confident that with the right support, love & compassion and opportunity, every child of the School for Hearing Handicapped can also reach the top of their career.

In an emotional tone, Dulari Uppal told the students that "your silence is not a limitation- it is just a different way of experiencing the world". She further told the students that they possess strength, intelligence, and talents that the world needs and advised them to work hard, dream big, and never let anyone tell them what they can or cannot achieve. "In everything you do, be brave," she added.

Earlier, the President of SKK, K B Jandial welcomed Smt. Commending the family's charitable initiatives in Jammu and abroad, he described both the late Bal Krishan Uppal and Dulari as proud Dogras. He apprised Smt. Uppal of the history of the school, set up by philanthropist and visionary late Dr. R. R. Khajuria 45 years ago in a rented room in a temple and now housed in Custodian property. He made a special mention of the benevolence of the Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha and said that he is getting a new school building for Divyang students, and in about 18 months, these students will be studying in a building with modern amenities and a much better environment.

The General Secreatry, J K Vaid gave a detailed account the challenges the SKK and the School experienced in 45 years' long journey and said that these could not deter the NGO from the chosen path of welfare of these Divyang and successfully overcome all odds.

Vice Principal Neelam Sharma presented the formal vote of thanks.

Present on the occasion included Vice President Brig (Ret) Dr Rakesh Khajuiria, Prem Gupta, B B Magotra, Nisar Ahmad, O P Sharma, V K Padha, Principal Roshan Bhan.