

MENCAFEP
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Mentally Handicapped Children & Families Educational Project

A Programme for Children / Young People with Learning Disabilities

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Sharing Smiles

A SEMI ANNUAL PUBLICATION FOR FRIENDS OF MENCAFEP

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Manike, who was born deaf, spent most of her childhood in a residential school for deaf and blind children. There she learned to communicate through sign language. After she had completed school she returned home, to discover that people in her family and community could not talk with their hands! Though she had much to say, nobody was capable of listening! Frustrated and angry, she threw tantrums and acted like a child.

One of Manike's aunts, who was working at MENCAFEP at the time, asked if her niece could be taken on as a trainee – more for Manike's benefit than the three deaf children at MENCAFEP during this time. At that time in MENCAFEP's staff members were very rusty with their sign language. What little they knew had been picked up from the deaf children and that was different than what Manike had learned at school.

Again in an environment where few people understood her, Manike withdrew into her solitary, silent world, keeping her feelings to herself. Eventually, however, she voiced her dissatisfaction in a nonverbal childish rage – kicking, biting and punching her peers at a staff party – that got it's point across.

Since then, the entire staffs have learned sign language, with staff members taking it in turns to sign for Manike at staff meetings. This has made all the difference not only for Manike, but all the children in MENCAFEP have benefited as MENCAFEP has developed its **TOTAL COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUE** (the use of every part of the body and surrounding environment to communicate with each other).

"We've learned to communicate with her, and she's learned to communicate with us," Ranji says. "She helped bring communication to the MENCAFEP family." Thank you for taking the time to go through this small story.



Manike and Sarojani taking a break from work.

This Newsletter is sponsored by Inter Fashion, Nuwara Eliya Sri Lanka.

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A programme for children/young people with learning disabilities.
The special child/young person has the right to live & be part of their community.

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