

Kerala Association Derry/Londonderry Annual Report (2023-2024)

Introduction

The Kerala Association Derry/Londonderry began its activities for the year 2023-2024 with a strong commitment to fostering cultural, educational, and social connections among its members. The first meeting of the year was held on 19th May 2023, during which a comprehensive discussion was conducted to finalize the events and activities for the year. Following this, a detailed calendar of events was prepared and circulated among all members, ensuring active participation and engagement throughout the year.

As part of the resolutions passed during the last Annual General Body Meeting, the association also revised its membership fees, which are now set at:

Family: £25

Single: £10

These revised fees were aimed at ensuring the financial sustainability of the association while accommodating the diverse needs of our members.

Detailed Report of Events and Activities

1. Sports Day (24th June 2023)

The first major event of the year was Sports Day, held at Templemore Sports Complex on 24th June 2023. This event was covered by BBC Northern Ireland, reflecting the significance and wide reach of our community activities. The event included a variety of sports competitions, catering to all age groups within the association. Events ranged from traditional games to more modern sports, ensuring that every member had an opportunity to participate. The day was marked by high energy, camaraderie, and sportsmanship, and almost all association members actively participated. The event concluded with an awards ceremony, recognizing the efforts of all participants and winners.

2. Family Trip to Scotland (11th-12th August 2023)

In keeping with our tradition of organizing family-oriented events, a trip to Scotland was planned for 11th and 12th August 2023. This excursion was designed to provide families within the association an opportunity to relax, bond, and create lasting memories. The trip included visits to scenic locations, cultural landmarks, and opportunities for recreational activities. It was a well-organized event that catered to the needs of all members, including children, adults, and the elderly. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing their appreciation for the opportunity to explore Scotland in the company of fellow association members.

3. Malayalam Classes for Youth

Recognizing the importance of preserving our linguistic heritage, the Kerala Association initiated Malayalam language classes for the younger generation. These classes began in early July 2023 and have been ongoing with great success. The curriculum is designed to be engaging and interactive, ensuring that the children not only learn the language but also develop a deeper connection with their cultural roots. The classes have been well-attended, and we have received positive feedback from both parents and students. This initiative has played a crucial role in promoting the use of Malayalam among our youth and ensuring that they remain connected to their cultural identity.

4. Onam Celebration - "AARATTU" (2nd September 2023)

Onam, one of the most significant festivals for the Malayalee community, was celebrated with great enthusiasm on 2nd September 2023. The event, titled "AARATTU," was held at Lisneal College Auditorium, Derry. The celebration was a grand affair, featuring a variety of cultural performances, including traditional dance forms like Thiruvathira, music performances, and drama. The highlight of the event was the Onam Sadhya (feast), which included an array of traditional Kerala dishes served on banana leaves. The event also included sports competitions, which added to the festive spirit. The Onam celebration was a significant success, with participation from nearly all members of the association and the people from the local community making it a day to remember. The event helped the people of other background to understand the culture and custom of Kerala community.

5. Charity Fundraising in Memory of Ruven Simon and Joseph Sebastian

In collaboration with the North West Community Club, the Kerala Association organized a charity fundraising event in memory of Ruven Simon and Joseph Sebastian. These two young individuals, who were beloved members of the community, tragically passed away, and this event was organized to honor their memory. A 5K park run was held as part of this initiative on 14th October 2023. The event saw participation from hundreds of people across the Derry community, including members from different cultural backgrounds, showcasing the solidarity and unity within the community. The funds raised during this event were donated to St. Columb's College, Derry, Foyle Search and Rescue, and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, reflecting our association's commitment to supporting local causes and fostering community ties.

6. Halloween Festival (28th October 2023)

The Halloween Festival, organized on 28th October 2023 at Lincoln Court Auditorium, was an event specifically designed for the youth and children of the association. The event included a variety of fun-filled activities such as a costume competition, face painting, and games, all centered around the Halloween theme. The children had an opportunity to showcase their creativity through their costumes and participate in various entertaining activities. The event was a grand success, thanks to the enthusiastic participation of the youth and the support of the parents. The Halloween Festival provided a platform for the younger members of the association to socialize and build friendships in a fun and festive environment.

7. Charity Fundraising for Donnamol's Family

In November 2023, the association organized a fundraising drive to provide financial assistance to the family of Donnamol, a member who passed away unexpectedly. This initiative saw an outpouring of support from the community, with members contributing generously. The funds raised were handed over to the family to help them during their time of need. This act of kindness and solidarity highlighted the strong sense of community and support within the association, reaffirming our commitment to looking out for one another in times of crisis.

8. Multicultural Event (6th January 2024)

On 6th January 2024, the Kerala Association hosted a multicultural event at St. Columb's College Auditorium. This event was designed to celebrate the diversity within our community and included performances from various cultural groups representing different parts of the world. The event featured dance performances, music, and drama, providing a platform for artists from diverse backgrounds to showcase their talents. The event was attended by prominent figures including MPs, MLAs, the Mayor of Derry City, and other community representatives, underscoring the importance of cultural exchange and mutual respect. The multicultural event was a significant success, drawing praise from attendees and participants alike for its inclusiveness and vibrant display of cultural diversity.

9. Badminton Coaching (January-February 2024)

In an effort to promote physical fitness and sportsmanship among its members, the association organized a six-week badminton coaching program from January to February 2024. The coaching sessions were conducted by the renowned coach, Mr. George Chapman, and were attended by members of all ages. The program provided an excellent opportunity for participants to improve their skills and engage in regular physical activity. The coaching sessions were well-received, with many members expressing their gratitude for the opportunity to learn from a professional coach. The program concluded with a friendly tournament, where participants from different backgrounds could showcase the skills they had acquired.

10. Talent Day (16th March 2024)

Talent Day was held on 16th March 2024 at Lisneal Sports Hall, offering members of all ages an opportunity to showcase their talents in various fields, including singing, dancing, and art. Competitions were organized for different age groups, and the event saw enthusiastic participation from both children and adults. The winners were awarded prizes, and all participants received certificates of appreciation. Talent Day was a great success, providing a platform for members to express their creativity and talent while fostering a sense of community and encouragement among participants.

11. Family Outing (12th August 2024)

A one-day family outing was organized on 12th August 2024, aimed at providing members with an opportunity to relax, unwind, and enjoy a day out with their families. The outing included various recreational activities, games, and a picnic, ensuring that there was something for everyone to enjoy.

The event was well-attended and provided a welcome break from the routine, allowing members to connect with each other in a fun and informal setting.

12. Annual General Body Meeting and Election (24th April 2024)

The Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) was held on 24th April 2024 at Lisneal College Auditorium. The agenda included the election of new office bearers for the upcoming year. However, due to a lack of willing candidates, the election could not be completed, and the AGM concluded without appointing new office bearers. It was decided that the election would be revisited at a later date to resolve this issue. Despite this, the event concluded on a positive note with a grand stage show performed by artists from India, featuring various cultural performances, which helped the new generation of our community to understand about various art performances of Indian origin and a dinner that was enjoyed by all attendees.

Conclusion

The year 2023-2024 was marked by a series of successful events and activities organized by the Kerala Association Derry/Londonderry. From sports and cultural events to charity initiatives and educational programs, the association worked tirelessly to promote community spirit, cultural heritage, and social responsibility among its members. Despite the challenges faced during the AGM, the association remains committed to its mission of serving the community and fostering a sense of unity and belonging among all its members.

We look forward to continuing our work in the coming year, building on the successes of 2023-2024, and striving to make a positive impact on our community.

Secretary

Nimmy Thomas