

# Heroes set the bar high

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*(L-R) Fr Hank Nunn, Geeta Menon, Shukla Bose, Bijayini Satpathy, Lynne Fernandez, Surupa Sen, Smita and Ramakrishna*

By: **Jayanthi Madhukar & Khushali P Madhwani**

In a ceremony marked by the recognition of some stellar achievements, the six Bangalore Heroes were felicitated at the city palace

As the sun made its way out on Sunday, the stars made theirs into Bangalore Palace to mark a grand and fitting finale to Bangalore Mirror's iZod Bangalore Heroes campaign. The culmination of the six-week-long endeavour to identify Heroes, from which six were chosen as finalists by an eminent jury and readers' votes, was one gala event.

The persons of the moment — those who make the city an infinitely better place to be in — were Shukla Bose of Parikrma, Smita Ramakrishna and Ramakrishna NK of Rang De, Surupa Sen, Bijayini Satpathy and Lynne Fernandez of Nrityagram, Fr Hank Nunn of Athma Shakti Vidyalaya, Geeta

Menon of Stree Jagruti Samithi and The Ugly Indian (The latter in absentia, as they maintained their resolve to remain anonymous). The acceptance email said as much: "TUI's strength is its anonymity and its widespread acceptance in Bangalore."

The evening began with a specially-curated menu by star chef Manu Chandra of Monkey Bar that included a welcome 'aam panna' drink and bite-sized snacks. Each of the Heroes was introduced to the audience via a video presentation. They were later presented with a fibre gold trophy and a certificate by the chief guest, state transport and Bangalore district incharge minister, Ramalinga Reddy. "It is wonderful that the media makes such efforts to recognise the underdogs of the city," he said. The winners were also given a potted plant which we like to believe symbolises the hopes of countless people touched by their initiatives.

The Heroes were gracious enough to acknowledge the contribution of their colleagues in their selfless ventures. Bose asked the audience to applaud her team of senior teachers from Parikrma schools. On receiving the award, she said: "This proves that ordinary people can do extraordinary things."

Geeta Menon had brought members (domestic workers) from her Samiti to the stage, calling them the real heroes.

Lynne Fernandez of Nrityagram said that it was "overwhelming to see what the other heroes are doing to bring about a change in the lives of people" and she expressed thankfulness to Bangalore Mirror for including arts and acknowledging their work too.

Septuagenarian Fr Nunn was the day's hands-down hero. He pointed to Lynn Fernandes, saying she had interned at Atma Shakti Vidyalaya when she had first come to India. "It is good to appreciate others and be the change in order to find happiness within ourselves," he said, echoing the thoughts of all the heroes present.

"It was extremely sweet of Fr Nunn to go up on stage and say a few words at his age. What a gentleman!" said jury member Jessie Paul. During the standing dinner later, jury members, Suresh Jayaram, actor Chetan, Arundhati Raja and Harish Bijoor made it a point to congratulate the heroes individually.

The spotlight shone brightly on each of the IZod Bangalore Heroes who had made it to the nominated 24 — exemplified best by a moment when the oldest hero, Fr Frank Hank, shook hands with the youngest, Esha Nahar (5). Others, like Geeta Ramanujam (Kathalaya), made a special effort to attend

the ceremony, driving down from Chennai that very morning just to be present.

Nominees S Chandrashekar, Muralidhar Rao, Ayushi Nahar, Tanishka Nahar, Poornima Dasarathi, Pradeep Kumar, Kishore Rao, Srinidhi Sridhar and Srinivas Ramesh were presented with souvenirs by Bangalore City Police Commissioner Raghavendra Auradkar. "Many people think of their own good or that of their kin. But, there are also many others like these Heroes that think and work for the good of others," Auradkar said, in his speech.

Guests — from Jimmy Amrolia, state mentor and vice president, Reliance Industries, to Nivedith Alva, Secretary, Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee, to ace shuttler Ashwini Ponappa, Manira Alva, artist Gurudas Shenoy, Deepa Ramsubramaniam, Priya Chetty-Rajagopal, Executive director, RGF Executive Search, Aslam Gafoor, GM-Marketing, Weber Barbecue Grills, Manjul Gupta, Founder, Body Craft Salon and Spa, to Chytra Anand, Founder and Cosmetic Dermatologist, Kosmoderma Clinics, among others — were bowled over by our Heroes.

Jimmy said: "They are amazing....such selfless service." Swati Gupta of Body Craft concurred, "I had goosebumps when the Heroes were addressing the gathering on stage. It's so heartwarming to know they are doing such great work." Some had special connections with them.

Gafoor was thrilled that his former boss — Bose — was felicitated. Nivedith Alva was seen live-tweeting the event: At Bangalore Heroes event...great effort, he tweeted. Towards the end of the ceremony, the audience was in for yet another treat: Thalavattam's Montry Manuel's drums performance kept the invitees spellbound. Manuel makes music out of instruments made out of waste. Shenoy was keen to meet the "young boy; what an inspiration!"

Dinner followed. A grand spread of idiyappam, rice, mutton curry, veg stew and jackfruit biryani put together by Chef Prashanth of Monkey Bar scored well with everyone present. The fusion desserts — coconut and cashewnut macarons and kesari bhath cheesecake — sealed a sweet deal.

Three wonderful hours later, as the last of our guests trooped out of the Palace's splendid facade, its decorative lights were switched off, we were sure that our Heroes wouldn't rest on their laurels; the next morning they would wake up to embark on another day of admirable work.