

*Center for Indian Cultural Education –
Bal Vihar of St. Louis*

UDAAN



*Celebrating 30 years of Instilling
Cultural Education in St. Louis*

29 APRIL, SATURDAY, 2023

Clayton High School

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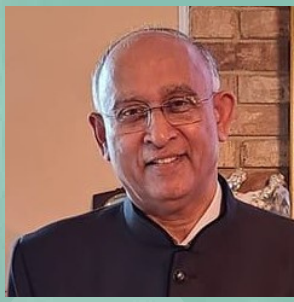


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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ✨

I would like to thank you for being here at the 30th Anniversary Celebrations of the Center for Indian Cultural Education- Bal Vihar.

'Bal' means children and 'Vihar' means a place for being together, thus children's school. Bal Vihar started its mission in the St. Louis area in 1992 to impart Indian cultural education to children of Indian origin within the metro area and make this institution an exciting and encouraging educational environment for children through appropriate activities conducted by committed professional volunteers.

Our focus on Bal Vihar's mission has ensured we make a difference in the community –

- Our school has sent over 2000 students out into the world, equipping them with Indian cultural knowledge and tools to achieve their ambitions.
- Current enrollment is now 325+ students ranging from ages 5 to 16.
- Our volunteers (teachers, admin, and parents) involvement help us continue our mission, fulfill key tasks, and mobilize community resources for increased success.

"Udaan" is a celebration of this exciting journey we have undertaken over the last 30 years in instilling Indian cultural values, celebrating our diversity, imparting knowledge about the Indian subcontinent, and raising our children as responsible, spiritual, and tolerant citizens of the world.

As a leader of this organization, I thank the teachers, volunteers, and parents for their support of Bal Vihar. We wish you enjoy this celebration and we hope to see you again year after year. ✨

Sincerely,
Dr. Sudhir Brahmbhatt

OUR VISION ✨

To foster and preserve Indian cultural values amongst children.



PROGRAM



Group 5: Grade 5. Y1 -2: Grades 8 & 9 Y2-3: Grades 9 & 10 Y4: Juniors Y5: Seniors

Bal Vihar: Ek Udaan Apni Pehchaan Ki Ore...

UDAAN: A Voyage to Explore India's Vibrant Culture & Heritage

Cultural Program Chairs: *Shanthi Krishnan, Komal Sabherwal, Vaishali Soneta, Jinal Doshi*

Tech Directors: *Rajitha Vasistha, Lakshmy Subramonian, Aditya Gunturu, Shanthi Krishnan, Shobha Nedungadi, Seema Jain, Anu Hukeri*

Master of Ceremonies: *Tejaswini Nayak & Raj Iyer*



Swagatam by Balvihar Students -- A unique welcome by Bal Vihar Students

Traditional Diya (lamp) Lighting By Special Guests

CULTURAL PROGRAMME

On a bright Sunday morning, Jai & Aruni's magic tree house transports them to Bal Vihar of St. Louis, where they are introduced to India and its rich culture through the kids learning there! Will they be enticed to wish for a trip to India? Sit back, relax, and let's find out!

Yoga, Bhajan Fusion | Vocals & Yoga By Group 5 & Up

Following the Indian traditional diya (lamp) lighting & invoking blessings at the beginning of any event, we start today's program by paying homage to the source of all energy, 'The Supreme Mother Goddess.'

- This is a **Yoga Bhajan Fusion** Act performed to the *stotram Aye Giri Nandini* set to tune by A.R. Rehman from the album Chathurbhujam. This stotram composed by Adi Shankaracharya is said to bring peace to all and remove negative thoughts and obstacles.

Choreographed By: *Kavita Ramakrishnan, Padmaja Suresh, Sowmya Batchu, Rekha Yanamala, Shweta Srikanth, Rashmi Paralkar.*

Keynote Speaker - Dr. Kirti Mehrotra / Administrator Lafayette High School / Rockwood School District



PROGRAM

Group K-8 refers to grades Kindergarten-8th



Act 1: Unity in Diversity | Group K

- The concept of unity in diversity highlights the way of living in India. The way people look, their language, food, way of dressing, music, and dance, everything is different as we move across the country. Despite the differences, a beautiful rich cultural thread binds us all together.

Choreographed By: Hemal Sharma.

Act 2: Favorite Things Unique to India | Group 1

- India is a land of rich and ancient culture. Filled with colorful folktales, ethnic sports, exotic fruits, delicious Indian cuisine, beautiful festivals, and many other things.
- Karadi Tales: Mangoes, Bhelpuri, and Cricket

Choreographed By: Lalitha Jilakara.

Act 3: India's Beautiful Landscape | Group 2

- Here we present the physical beauty of India its diverse, and varying topography and the various seasons of India in their splendor. Most noticeable is the monsoon season which can be experienced only in India! From the gigantic Himalayan range to the lush green coastline, this peninsular country is the ultimate hub of biodiversity and breathtakingly beautiful landscapes and seasons.
- Medley Song

Choreographed by: Lalitha Jilakara.

Act 4: Festivals of India | Groups 3 & 4

India is also called the land of festivals; each season is a host to several festivals. Here we present an array of colorful festivals through dance.

Choreographed By Lalitha Jilakara & Shweta Pejathya

Act 5: Samskaras | Group 5

Samskaras, or Hindu rites of passage, according to ancient sages, are the ornaments that decorate one's personality. They mark the important stages of life and enable one to live a fulfilling life complete with happiness and contentment. '**Vivaha**' is one of the most important and colorful Samskara, involving many pre wedding and post wedding Indian rituals.

- Wedding Song Medley

Choreographed By: Nirali Shah.



Act 6: India's patriotic movement | Group 6, parents and Family Visiting from India

The Indian subcontinent was first united in the struggle for freedom from the British Monarchy. Now modern India is home to a myriad of ethnic subcultures enriching and existing together peacefully. Songs have always played an undisputed role in inciting the spirit of nationalism in the hearts of millions of Indian people. Many patriotic songs, written by the literary stalwarts of India have acquired legendary status and are still sung by people as a homage to the sacrifices made by legendary freedom fighters.

- Salute to India and her freedom fighters

Choreographed By: Vaishali Soneta.



PROGRAM



Y1 -2: Grades 8 & 9 Y2-3: Grades 9 & 10 Y4: Juniors Y5: Seniors

Vote of Thanks

Address by Bal Vihar President Dr. Sudhir Brahmbhatt

Act 7: Star Trek: Voyage to Heaven | Group 6, 7 & Youth

- Where is Captain Kirk's latest voyage headed? What is Lord Krishna doing on a Star Trek enterprise? Why is Spock not surprised to see the lord God? What do Captain Kirk's mission and the Bhagavad Gita have in common? Let's go on a journey with the Star Trek enterprise to know the answers!

Directed By: Rajitha Vasistha, Lakshmy Subramonian

Finale Dance | Group 6 & Up

- Here culminates our Udaan to understand the essence of being of Indian Origin, after enjoying the various aspects of our culturally vibrant and rich India. Now we present a whimsical song highlighting the indomitable Indian spirit that lives in all of us.
- All is Well Song

Choreographed by: Lalitha Jilakara.



EVENT PARTICIPANTS

Group K-8 refers to grades Kindergarten-8th

Group K

Aashka Hugar
Adhvait Jinu
Ameya Sharma
Arya Patel
Arya Shah
Bhavya Sharma
Gahan Manne
Jay Mehta
Keya Shah
Mivaan Patel
Myra Khetarpaul
Sahasra Macherla
Tejas Dhawan
Viraj Dandamudi

Group 2

Aadhya Donakanti
Hridhaan Jangle
Namita Rai
Sahasra Macherla
Shaiva Desai
Shreya Shah
Suhani Mahajan
Syna Taneja
Vayun Pushpa

Group 1

Aadi Garine
Aaryan Jha
Ava Khetarpaul
Hridhaan Soneta
Jiyaan Simon
Mila Bordewick
Rian Dhawan
Shaan Singh
Shrey Patel
Shyla Jeffrey
Sonali Saini
Zarah Khatri

Group 3

Adithri Yeluguri
Advaitha Yeluguri
Amogh Bhattacharya
Anushka Rausaria
Ayush Jain
Barghav Manne
Harshan Chava
Manit Singh

Group 3

Nimit Pathak
Shuban Chawda
Siona Rana
Sri Tanvi
Sveni Dedhia-Shah
Syna Taneja
Yana Mistry

Group 4

Anjali Simon
Avi Patel
Daniel Mehta
Jia Shah
Neilaksh Varanasi
Rayan Goswami
Rudra Nagure
Saanvi Upadhyay
Souravi Upadhyay
Veer Nagure

EVENT PARTICIPANTS

Group K-8 refers to grades Kindergarten-8th

Y1 -2: Grades 8 & 9 Y2-3: Grades 9 & 10 Y4: Juniors Y5: Seniors

Group 5

Aaryan Singh
Deeya Soneta
Keya Patel
Navya Shah
Sachi Patel
Shreeya Patel
Sridhar Lanka

Group 7-Y5

Ananya Singh
Avighna Macherla
Maya Kumar
Nishka Rao
Saanvi Javiya
Siya Taneja
Vidhee Soneta

Tech Crew

Aaryan Jain
Abhijith Nair
Aditya Gunturu
Ajay Raman
Amol Bansal
Evan Bowers
Gia Doshi

Group 6

Abhinav Anne
Aditi Jha
Ajay Krishnaa Shankar
Janvi Jain
Krish Patel
Madhulika Jinu
Neil Doshi
Nishi Patel
Om Garine
Ritvik Mandalapu
Saanvi Javiya
Samarth Donakanti
Sanay Nemmadi
Sanaya Rana
Shreyansh Yalamuri
Vidhee Soneta



EVENT PARTICIPANTS

Group 7-8: Grades 7 & 8 Y1-2: Grades 8 & 9 Y2-3: Grades 9 & 10 Y4: Juniors Y5: Seniors

Yoga (Grades 5 & up)

Aaryan Singh
Abhinav Mandiga
Advay Jain
Chahel Desai
Deeya Soneta
Keya Patel
Krish Patel
Krishna Kaneria
Minal Amith
Navya Shah
Ria Kura
Saanvi Javiya
Sachi Patel
Sonaksh Varanasi
Sreedhar Lanka

Bhajan (Y3-7)

Ajay Krishnaa Shankar
Avighna Macherla
Ishan Paralkar
Janvi Jain
Madhulika Jinu
Maya Kumar
Neil Doshi
Om Garine
Omi Desai
Samvida Batchu
Shreyas Iyer
Varennya Vemulapali
Vidhee Soneta

Skit (Group 6 & up)

Aaryan Jain
Aryan Singh
Avanti Singh
Ayush Rausaria
Henna Soneta
Maanvi Aggarwal
Nishka Rao
Nidi Pejathaya
Nihal Modugu
Shreyas Iyer
Siya Taneja



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Anurag Venigalla
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Arpita Puranik
Ashwik Koduri
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Dhyana Desai
Diya Gupta
Diya Patel
Eesha Jasti
Haley Bhavsar
Henna Soneta
Jia Patel
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STUDENT REFLECTIONS



I've been going to Balvihar since 2nd grade. It has opened me to various opportunities and experiences. I have made lifelong friends and mentors, which have guided me to be the person I am today. After moving from India, I have been able to stay connected to my roots. Proud to be Bal Vihar's legacy.

By: Amyra Taneja, Y3

Balvihar is a great way for us kids to learn about our cultural heritage and our roots. I get to meet and make new friends along with working together on fun projects like making clay Ganesha and diya. I enjoy learning about India, its history and culture, yoga, and bhajans (Indian devotional songs). Balvihar has helped me gain more knowledge, discipline, and confidence. I am excited to be graduating this year and look forward to doing service projects in the youth group next year.

By: Sonaksh Varanasi, Group 7

My favorite things about Bal Vihar are Yoga and meeting my Indian friends!

I have been attending since I was 5 years old; my favorite events are Diwali and Holi. I like coming here so I can meet other kids like me who are born in the USA & have family and roots in India. I do want to share that I wish Bal Vihar adds a playground to this building so my friends and I can spend more time playing.

By: Myra Bhatt, Group 4



Celebrating Holi At Bal Vihar Event

Celebrating Family Night






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STUDENT REFLECTIONS



Though I was born in America my roots are from India. India is a big country with so many different religions, languages, festivals, cultures and traditions. I get to learn a lot of things about India and its culture in my Balvihar class.

I love going to the Hindu temple and the Gurudwara. I enjoy celebrating different Indian festivals with my family and friends at Bal Vihar. Holi and Diwali are my favorites!

I like participating in Indian events like the Republic and the annual day.

I am happy that being at Balvihar I can connect with my roots and be proud of my culture.

By: Neilaksh Varanasi, Group 4



Youth Kids at the Diwali Event

I love going to Bal Vihar because I get to see all my friends and learn about Indian culture. I learned about India's geography, mythology, and festivals. My favorite part is learning festivals and yoga!

By: Deeya Soneta, Group 5

Growing up in a multicultural world can be both fascinating and challenging. As a young Indian American, I have always been curious about my roots and the rich cultural heritage of India. Joining Bal Vihar early on was a turning point in my life. Learning bhajans and Aartis made me a part of religious celebrations at home.

Yoga sessions have promoted mental well-being, teaching me mindfulness and self-discipline to manage anxieties and build resilience.

My favorite aspect has been exploring India's cultural and historical tapestry. It has captivated me with the epic tales of Ramayana, Mahabharata, and diverse stories of India's history. Learning about the Indian struggle for independence and geographical marvels has ignited a desire to visit these places, making trips to India even more special.

I am grateful for my Bal Vihar journey, which has played a pivotal role in shaping my identity and connecting me to my roots.

By: Anmol Bansal, Group 7

BalVihar has helped me learn how rich Indian culture is compared to the modern world or younger countries. I have learned life skills by the teachings of Ramayan and Mahabharata. I get to learn a lot of things without the pressure of exams. I like the snacks that they give at the end of the Balvihar Session.

By: Aaryan Jain. Group 7



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STUDENT REFLECTIONS



I'm extremely thankful to have attended Bal Vihar throughout my childhood. Listening to stories about the Mahabharata as a child was never a dull time, and reading the Gita in Youth Group has been an interesting and insightful experience for me as well, learning and proving that God is real, and is the true higher power who created and controls our world.

Participating in CANstruction was also an enjoyable experience, the final result was amazing, and it showed how important good teamwork is in order to effectively reach your goal. The new friends I made in 5th grade are very important to me; they helped me get situated at Bal Vihar, and it was great getting to know them and eventually continuing our friendship into middle school. Bal Vihar had a lasting impact on my life, and I'll always be grateful for the great lessons, experiences, and memories that it gave me.

By: Ahan Singh Y2

I first joined Bal Vihar ten years ago, in third grade. I went into it thinking that it would be a good opportunity to spend time with my friends, and it was, but I actually learned more than I anticipated. Without even realizing it, I became immersed in Indian culture from learning about Hinduism to the geography and food of India. I was shocked to find myself actually enjoying yoga and bhajan classes, and even though it's been five years since I've taken either one of these classes, I can still do surya namaskars and have multiple bhajans memorized.

Though traditional classes were informative, it was ultimately the people I met and the opportunities to connect with the community that made Bal Vihar a truly memorable experience for me. I met a few of my closest friends through Bal Vihar and became closer with the ones I already had because Bal Vihar gave me the opportunity to see them every other week. Getting to participate in volunteer activities like CANstruction, collecting school supplies, and preparing meals to deliver to a homeless shelter with these people made my experience with the program even more impactful and enjoyable.

By: Diya Gupta, Y5



Laxmi Pooja Ceremony on Diwali



2022 CANstruction Event

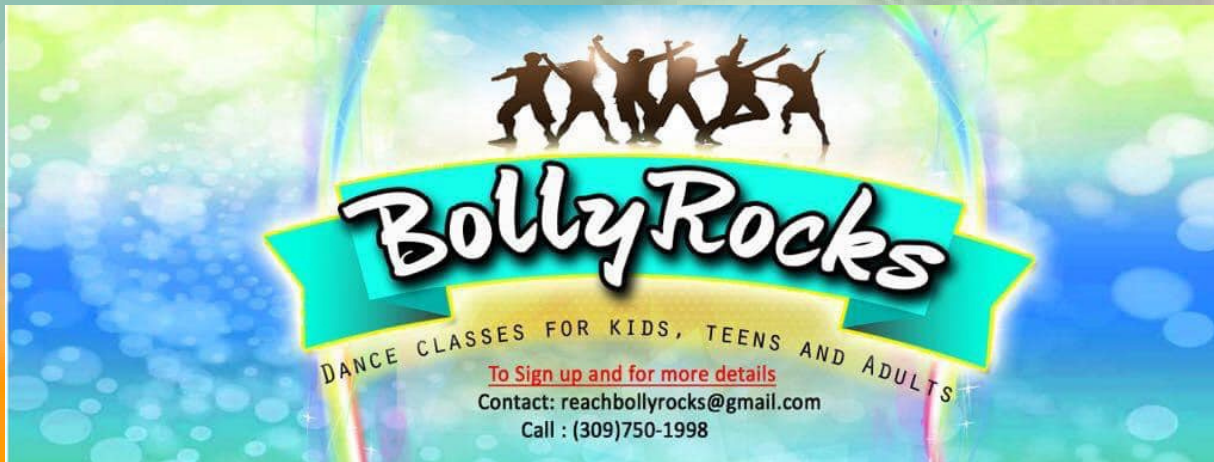
I like Bal Vihar because I have made some of my best friends here. It is also a very friendly and welcoming environment and I always feel so appreciated here. I've learned a lot of great lessons and have become more in touch with my roots. I also enjoy all the fun events that Bal Vihar plans.

By: Riya Bazawada, Y3

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Vaishali Soneta

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Creative Input & Editing: **Shailee Saran Varanasi**

We deeply appreciate all our participants, teachers, choreographers, parent volunteers, and sponsors for their help and support.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN! ✨ 2023 - 24

Why Join Bal Vihar?

EDUCATE

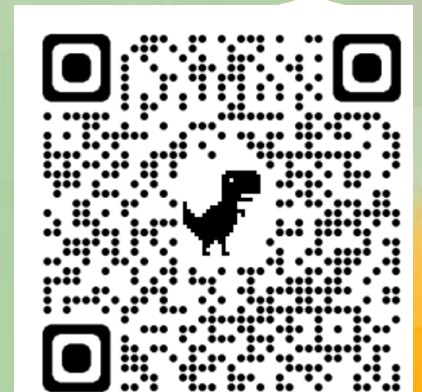
- Exposure to Meditation, Yoga, and Bhajan. (Hindu devotional song)
- We study important scriptures like Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, & Bhagavad-Gītā.
- Focus on holistic cultural education using art, discussion-based learning, and interactive sessions. ✨

VOLUNTEER

- Students participate in community awareness programs: visiting local hospitals, collecting food & clothing donations for local pantries & working with senior citizens.
- Interacting with children from other local cultural schools is also an important goal for Bal Vihar.
- Our children collaborate with The Bach Society of St. Louis, The Magic House, The St. Louis Art Museum, and the St. Louis Science Center.

CELEBRATE

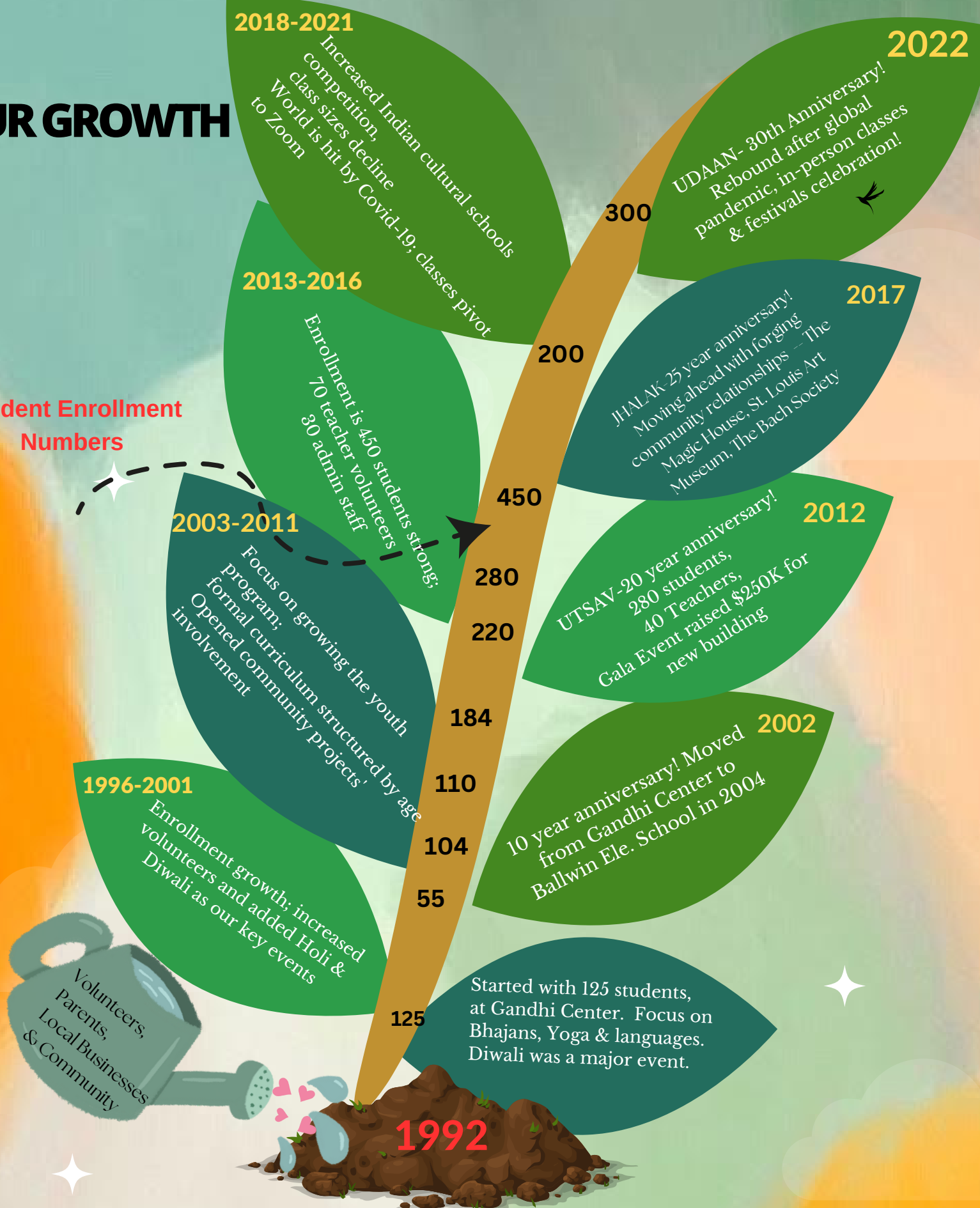
- Celebrating Indian Republic Day, Holi, and Diwali along with other Indian festivals is a huge draw for our children.



➡ <https://registration.balviharstlouis.org/>

OUR GROWTH

Student Enrollment Numbers



The Center for Indian Cultural Education Bal Vihar of St. Louis is a non-profit organization under section 501 (c) (3). Your individual donations are tax deductible. (Excludes company matching portion.) Federal Tax ID: 20-2542002