



Keeping in Touch

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On behalf of the Principal and CEO, Srivalsan Murugan

Dear Parents,

I am delighted to pen this edition of 'Keeping in Touch', a beautiful communiqué which keeps us connected and fortifies our collaborative bond. Learning is a continuous progression and I have been learning many an important lesson from my pupils, in my interactions with them. I cherish these exchanges because it gives me one of the greatest opportunities to dialogue with the change makers of tomorrow, our boys, on a subject as vast and deep as the proverbial seven seas – the subject of LIFE.

Believe me when I say, I have had the most humbling and enriching experiences, listening to their responses and conversing with them, on the nuances of this voyage – for, my perspective is that we are all on a voyage called life, laced with numerous events in-between, which the Irish author, James Joyce terms as 'slices of life'.

This is something of what a group of enthusiastic pupils discussed and deliberated at the 'Coffee, Cookies and Conversation' episode, led by our Principal and CEO, Mr. Srivalsan Murugan and Ms. Clarissa Martins, our former librarian. The life and works of Wilbur Smith, was but a catalyst to this most delightful tête-à-tête which served as a platform for budding writers, poets, journalists, thinkers and philosophers. Look out for the OOB blog – here's to more writers! In case you would like to catch up on our blog, here's the link for you - <https://ourownboyssharjah.wordpress.com/blog/>

There is yet another extraordinary journey, I would like to talk about. It's that of the country, you and me, call our 'Home Away from Home'. The journey of the United Arab Emirates, which commemorates this year as the 'Year of the 50th' – indeed, Long live the Nation! Even as I sat with my colleagues, visiting parents and pupils in the audience, in the Sheikh Zayed Multipurpose Hall, to witness the momentous National Day Celebrations through a splendid programme put up by the Department of the Arabic Language, I had but only three words which constantly resonated in my mind - Professional, Dedicated and Awesome; words that emanated from my boys.

Thank you, Ms. Samira Al Balushi, Supervisor of the Arabic and Islamic Studies Department, and your devoted team for having involved 149 pupils, pan-school, to present the magnificent culture and traditions of the UAE, through an array of traditional songs and dances. 'Golden Hues', a compilation of articles and poems in English and Arabic along with photographs charting the meteoric rise of a nation that achieves the impossible and believes in the beauty of its dreams was released by the Principal and CEO, Mr. Srivalsan Murugan in its signature edition, on the momentous occasion. Thank you Ms. Jessy Paulose, Supervisor, UAE National Agenda, UAE Social Studies & Moral Education and Designated Safeguarding Lead, for this extraordinary initiative! Here's to the next 50! May the Almighty Bless this Nation and its Rulers abundantly!

My personal favourites, at the festive event were those little toddlers, from the kindergarten, who jiggled on stage, with not a care in the world – they enjoyed every bit of the remarkable act they put up, oblivious even to the encouragements of the audience. Which brings me to another set of words, yes, from those student interactions – Love, Pray, Live, Eat, Laugh, which may not necessarily be in the chronological order I have placed them in.

Here, must I pause, to mention that with much solemnity, Commemoration Day was observed on 30th November, where the UAE flag was flown at half-mast from 8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. followed by a minute of silent prayer, in homage to the nation's martyrs.

Continuing the story of our little ones, who, when not on stage, gnawing at the strings of our hearts, have been industriously learning through a myriad range of activities through events held on World Science Day, Children's Day, International Day of Tolerance et al. These future innovators, leaders and pioneers, learn about and imbibe the virtues of curiosity, kindness, patience and gratitude.

Our champions of KG 2 presented an assembly on 'EXPO 2020' and another one in Arabic on the theme 'UAE- at a glance', for the first time in the school auditorium! Two words, resonate in my mind – Always Learning.

One of my pupils, told me, "Life is Achievements". I pondered for a while and said unto myself, 'yes, it is indeed'. For we achieve to better ourselves, and the greatest challenge is to keep raising the bar, for one's self – that is the quintessence of true competition.

Among the achievers from the Primary section we have Ehaan Waheed of grade 3H who was declared the winner for the 'Tell-a-Tale through 60 seconds Advertisement' event, (Best Visual Effects category), at Montage 2021 organized by JSS Private School, Dubai. Along with him Nabhya Sharma of grade 4D did us proud as he won the 1st position in the Digital Poster event of Innotech Digital Festival, organized by Our Own Girls, Sharjah. We lifted the 'Overall Trophy' at the Innotech Digital Festival – sheer diligence. In the Senior category, Mohamed Hanif of grade 12A won the 2nd position in Programming and Jayden Vaz of Grade 11C won the 2nd position in Photo Magic respectively. Yet two more champions who did us proud at this event are Abhiram Sunitha Binu of 7G who won the 2nd position at the AR/ VR – video making (Junior category), and Sreehari Deepu Nair of 8A, Syed Rayhan Ali of 8A and Kailasnath of 8H secured the 2nd position in the Minecons Innovation Challenge category.

Perseverance, yet another word, picked up from these conversations of mine echoes even as I delight in keeping you updated that Amarnath Sreevalsan of grade 6E and Hamad Aamir Baig of grade 5F were awarded with a Certificate of Appreciation for their contributions during the Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign, 'Protect Your Mom'. Our champ Amarnath also won a quiz competition associated with the UAE National Day, organized by the Karnataka Sports Association; and participated in the Expo 2020 Dubai Run. He also won the 2nd position in the Children's Day Public speaking contest conducted by the Chinar Global Academy. Well done! Yet again, Hamad Aamir Baig took part in the Dubai Municipality Cleanup Programme, under the banner Cleanup the World, Cleanup UAE. Excellence is a journey!

Joining our band of achievers is Gaurav Jayaprakash of 7F who participated in the English Olympiad National Qualifier conducted by International Olympiad Foundation and secured the 1st rank, Gold Medal, in the UAE National Ranking. Another champ, Anish Nagasai of grade 8I presented a documentary video on Telangana as part of the Telangana Cultural Programme at Expo 2020 India Pavilion.

Adding to the list of our perspicacious achievers, are Juan Mathew of 9B who won the 1st prize for the 'Best Speech,' 1st Runner-up for the 'Best Position Paper,' and 1st Runner-up for the 'Best Draft Resolution' at the 16th edition of the United Nations Simulation Conference, conducted virtually and organized by Our Own Indian School, Dubai. 18 schools participated in the event, which also witnessed Abijith Madhavankutty of 9C winning the 3rd prize for the 'Best Position Paper'.

Feats of our other champs include Shubankar Ghosh and Mahin Poptani, both of grade 12B winning the 2nd prize in the Senior category at the National Science Congress, whilst the team comprising of Harishankar Ranjit Menon, Harshit Kumar Saini and Nithin Santhosh, all of 11A, won the 2nd prize in the Scientific Case Study, Senior Category.

Innovation, Dedication, Commitment...yet another set of words, my boys came up with which brings me to talk about the virtual launch of the GEMS Alumni App, that took place with an Induction Programme for Grades 11 and 12. What a great initiative by our Chairman, Mr. Sunny Varkey, even as this app allows our alumni to be connected and be part of a global network of GEMS pupils under a single umbrella. Rooted is what I would envisage!

Our parent representatives pronounced numerous instances of dedication and commitment at our Parent Advisory Council virtual meet on 27th November, which further cements our enriched collaboration and boosts us all, as we champion the par-excellence teaching-learning process at OOB!

Life also encompasses de-stressing and well-being. This was further explored in a webinar for pupils of grades 10 and 12. The event covered aspects of fear (a crucial 'learning-walk' word in life) and how the nervous system is impacted by it. Techniques to train the nervous system to make fear work in favour of us was an immeasurable

learning experience. We also had Ms. Sudha Srivalasan, Senior Counsellor and Cluster Lead for Career Counselling from GEMS Our Own English High School, Dubai, conduct a career guidance workshop for our senior school pupils, even as they now, are in the midst of the Term 1 CBSE Board examinations. She covered the aspects of work readiness, various career options, and psychometric tests that could help pupils find their career interests and aptitude. The overall session facilitated a gestalt view of careers.

Well, before I conclude this edition of KIT, I am reminded of Shakespeare's words in Julius Caesar, "Men at some time are masters of their fates" (Act 1, Scene 2) and no better example to endorse this quote than our much-hallowed mega in-house production, 'Troy: Fall of a City'. An absolute stunning, astounding and out of this world experience, senior school concert, which makes a statement so bold, that compels both you and us to proclaim from the pinnacle, we at OOB have arrived! Each one of our boys has been an outstanding master of his fate, carving a niche out for himself. I will go on record with this, when I opine, that of this brilliant team, led by Ms. Bindu Gopalakrishnan, Head of Middle School, we will have given birth to actors, directors, costume designers, visual effects specialists, musicians, singers...the list is infinite. But most important of all, we have established that a production as large as this, delivered with such finesse and distinction emanates from the fires of passion!

Here's a quick reminder on our Social Media presence: we are active on Twitter @OOB_GEMS, Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GEMSOurOwnBoys> and Instagram, with the account gems_oob. Do follow us for the latest photos and regular updates.

As we march towards the ending of 2021, we look forward to 2022, a year of great promises, greater steadfastness and a lot more love, as we partner with you as a team to metamorphose our boys to Men Who Matter! Kudos to the year we bid farewell to, and a warm welcome with open arms to the New Year, that's knocking on our doors...let's raise a cup of kindness, good cheer, love, warmth and a whole lot more.

My mentor and coach, Mr. Srivalasan Murugan, will pen the next edition of Keeping in Touch as we usher in 365 days of Opportunities, Optimism and Balance. Till then – Cheers!



Shane J Alliew
Supervisor – Middle School, Grades 7 & 8