



# Our Community

## Academy for Severe Handicaps and Autism (ASHA)

### BREAKING DOWN WALLS OF ISOLATION

One of the most terrible aspects of autism is the way it cuts its sufferers off from the world and loved ones around them. Autistic children spend much of their lives walled into an inner world of their own, much to the distress of parents, teachers, and family members frustrated by trying to break through the barrier to love and care giving.



That's why it is so miraculous to see autistic boys and girls running to Mrs. Jayashree Ramesh and flinging themselves into her arms as they shout her name, "Jay, Jay!" Still in her 20s, Jayashree has worked wonders since she founded the Academy for Severe Handicaps and Autism (ASHA) in Bangalore, India in 1995. After six years in the United

States studying autism and other learning disabilities, she returned home to put her learning and her love into action. Her family donated a house that now serves as ASHA's care-giving facility until a new ASHA school can be funded and built.

Today ASHA serves the needs of 40 severely handicapped children, not only in education and practical training, but also in parent and family support. Jayashree and the ASHA teachers and staff also reach out to the wider community to help create awareness of autism and remove the stigma the disease often carries with it. Original plays are staged, and painting and music competitions are held, after which the students' artwork is converted to greeting cards and calendars. In 2003, a painting by one ASHA student was selected by the Indian Institute of Science for their official New Years greeting card.

Learn more about the miraculous breakthroughs Jayashree and her dedicated staff are creating every day by visiting: <http://www.ashaforautism.com/>