

# Event Report: Miles for Minds: Moving Towards Mental Wellness

**Date:** 27th October 2024

**Location:** Island Grounds, Chennai

On World Mental Health Day, the Madras School of Social Work (MSSW) organized a 5 km marathon titled “Miles for Minds: Moving Towards Mental Wellness”. The event, spearheaded by the Vriddhi Forum of MSSW, was designed to promote awareness about the importance of mental health. The event brought together participants from all walks of life, reflecting the collective commitment to mental wellness.

## Registration and Welcome Ceremony

The day started early, with registration opening at 5:00 AM. Participants streamed in, brimming with enthusiasm, in their bibs and merchandise provided by Decathlon. By 5:30 AM, the registration closed, and the hosts extended a warm welcome to everyone.

The event was officially inaugurated with the presence of distinguished guests:

- Dr. Subashini, Dean of MSSW
- Mr. Anand, director of the Sneha Foundation, an organization dedicated to suicide prevention and mental health awareness.
- Dr. Prabha and Dr. Satish, senior neurologists from Apollo Hospital, who brought valuable insights into the connection between physical health and mental wellness.

These eminent personalities set the tone for the day, emphasizing the need for community-driven mental health initiatives.

## Sponsors and Partners

The marathon was made possible through the generous contributions of its sponsors, whose efforts highlighted the importance of public-private collaboration for social causes:

- Gold Sponsors: Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) and Apollo Hospital.
- Silver Sponsors: KEIMed and Naturals.

- Associate Sponsor: MS Industries.
- Goodwill Sponsors: Vummidi Bangaru Jewelers, HS Complex, and Amma's Pastry.
- Certificate Sponsor: Poorvika Mobiles.
- Merchandise Sponsor: Decathlon.
- Refreshments Sponsor: Hot Breads.
- Beverages Sponsors: Winners Bakery and Justin Cars.
- Venue Partner: Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC).

The Greater Chennai Corporation Police Department ensured smooth logistics and safety for all participants, while Apollo Hospital provided medical assistance throughout the event. Their collective support transformed the event into a resounding success.

### **Zumba Session and Marathon Kickoff**

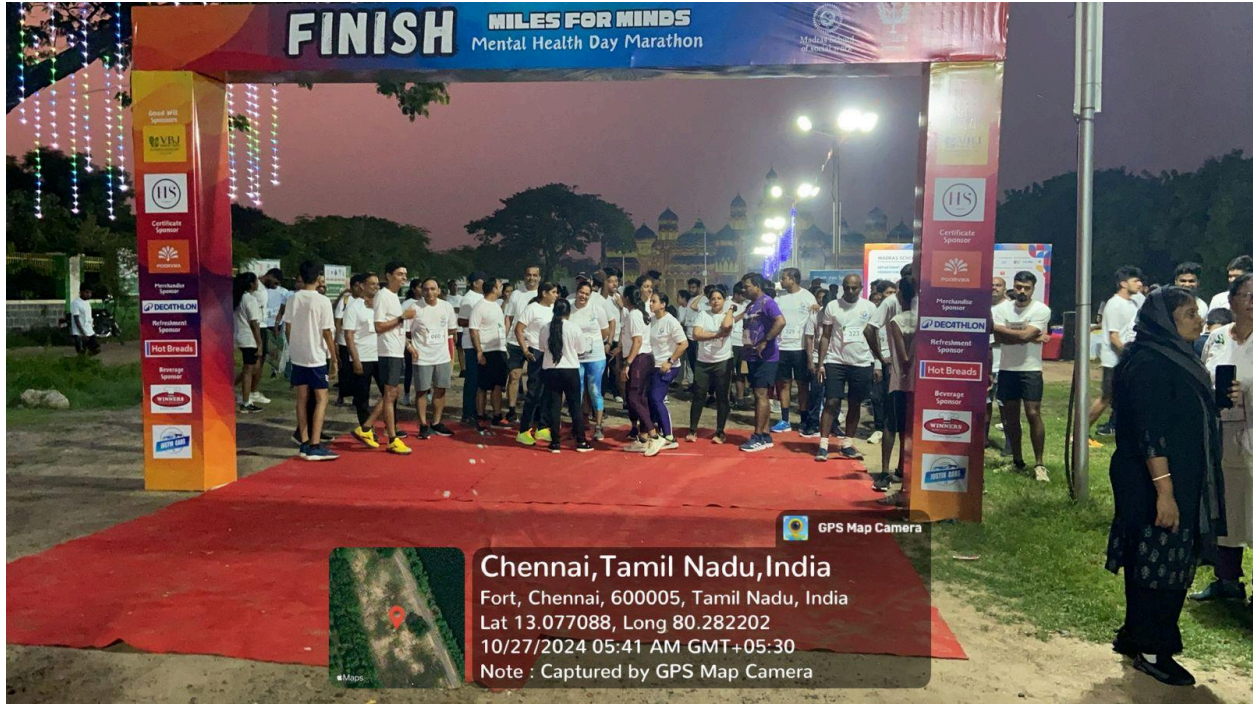
At 5:35 AM, participants gathered for a dynamic Zumba session led by the students of MSSW. This energetic warm-up session added vibrancy to the atmosphere, preparing everyone for the 5 km run.

The marathon officially began at 6:00 AM, flagged off by Mr. Anand from Sneha Foundation. The route took participants through Chennai's picturesque landmarks, starting from Island Ground Gate 9, via Munroe Statue, Sivananda Salai, Napier Bridge, War Memorial, and Flagstaff Road, looping back to Island Ground Gate 9.

Water points and medical stations were strategically placed along the route, ensuring the participants' safety and hydration.







## Post-Marathon Refreshments and Formal Program

The race concluded at 6:30 AM as participants crossed the finish line with a sense of accomplishment. They were greeted with refreshments sponsored by Hot Breads and beverages provided by Winners Bakery. From water and Glucon-D to piping hot tea and coffee, a variety of options were available to help participants rehydrate and recharge.

At 7:00 AM, the formal program commenced. Ms. Madhar Shameem, Forum coordinator and Ms. Shilpa Grace Samuel, Forum Coordinator from the Vriddhi Forum welcomed the audience and delivered an insightful address on the marathon's purpose: awareness towards mental wellness.



This was followed by two compelling keynote speeches:

1. Mr. Anand (Sneha Foundation) emphasized the importance of suicide prevention and the need to create safe spaces for mental health conversations.
2. Dr. Prabha (Apollo Hospital) highlighted the connection between mental health and physical well-being, focusing on how lifestyle changes, including regular exercise, can prevent conditions like stroke.

The *Miles for Minds* marathon was not only about the participants' physical endurance but also about their inspiring stories and achievements.

Kevin and Adrian, two young participants, stole the spotlight with their determination and energy. These remarkable kids ran an impressive 4 kilometers without a break, showcasing resilience and enthusiasm that set an example for everyone. Their achievement was met with cheers and applause, celebrating their incredible spirit.

Another notable moment was contributed by a dedicated police officer who chose *Miles for Minds* to mark his 99th marathon. His consistent participation in marathons demonstrates a lifelong commitment to health, fitness, and inspiring others to stay active.

These extraordinary stories added a personal and heartwarming touch to the event, reminding us that every step—big or small—matters in the journey toward physical and mental well-being.

### **Cheque Presentation to Sneha Foundation**

Following these inspiring moments, a cheque of ₹20,000 was formally presented to Sneha Foundation by the Vriddhi Forum members, with Mr. Anand accepting the contribution on behalf of the foundation. This act of generosity, enabled by the collective efforts of all participants, was a testament to the event's commitment to supporting mental health initiatives.

Sneha Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to addressing the critical issue of suicide prevention and promoting mental health awareness. Established with the vision of creating a society that values emotional well-being, the foundation provides



free, confidential, and professional support to individuals experiencing distress, depression, or suicidal thoughts.

Through its 24/7 helpline, community outreach programs, and mental health workshops, Sneha Foundation empowers individuals with coping strategies and fosters resilience in challenging times. The organization also actively works to reduce the stigma around mental health by initiating conversations and advocating for policies that support mental wellness.

Sneha Foundation's mission aligns perfectly with the goals of the *Miles for Minds* marathon, making them a fitting partner for this event. Their dedication to saving lives and promoting mental health underscores the importance of collective efforts to build a supportive and empathetic society.





## Prize Distribution

The winners of the marathon in the male and female categories were then felicitated with certificates, medals, and trophies as a mark of their accomplishment. Additionally, they received gift vouchers from Decathlon, further celebrating their remarkable achievements.

The winners of the marathon were announced in two categories:

Male Winners:

1. First Place: Vigneshwaran
2. Second Place: Parthasarathy. S
3. Third Place: Mohamed Razik









Female Winners:

1. First Place: Hari Varsha K S
2. Second Place: Sameeha
3. Third Place: Yohaniya







**Conclusion and Celebrations**

The event concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks delivered by Ms. Sana, President of the Vriddhi Forum. She expressed profound gratitude to the participants, sponsors, organizing team, and volunteers for their unwavering support in making the event a grand success.



Following this, certificates of participation were distributed to all runners. The event ended on a celebratory note with a vibrant DJ session, where participants danced and celebrated their contributions to the cause, marking the perfect conclusion to a meaningful and memorable day.

### **The Larger Cause: Mental Health Matters**

The “Miles for Minds Marathon” underscored the vital connection between physical fitness and mental health. By bringing together people from diverse backgrounds, the event succeeded in breaking the stigma around mental health and encouraging open conversations.

Madras School of Social Work and the Vriddhi Forum extend heartfelt gratitude to everyone who participated and supported this initiative. Together, we took meaningful strides towards a healthier, more empathetic society.