

# The first day in spring – Fathers Day 2013

The Peradeniya Alumni, their families and friends met in Rowville on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2013, the Fathers Day. When the children of the Alumni had met, a suggestion was made by one of them to provide a scholarship to a student at Peradeniya instead of succumbing to the usual Fathers Day hype. The idea found favour among everyone. The Alumni Association, PUAAViC agreed with them and decided to launch on the same day its scholarships program which they had been working towards for some time. Last year the collection on the day and subsequent donations together with the interest from association funds enabled PUAAViC to provide 55 scholarships.

The Fathers Day 2013 event received a big boost from the tireless work put in by the children of the alumni. Many had studied at Universities in Australia. Yet they had been smitten by the affection their parents had displayed over the years towards their university at the distant foothills of Hantane. Some tirelessly organised games for the parents, children and grandchildren. Others leading to the event and also on the day gave moving testimonies. One spoke eloquently about the elation he had felt when he experienced the joy he was bringing to the students he had sponsored from last year. Another spoke of the need of the students based on her experience in Sri Lanka a few years back when she had returned with a few mates from University here to work at Peradeniya.

The hall at St Simon's Church Hall in Rowville had been booked for the event because the hopes of an outdoor event had been fast fading with the wintry conditions refusing to ease up even towards the end of August. As it turned out, it was a glorious crispy morning with bright sunshine to lift the spirits yet cool



enough to stay lively. As people walked into the hall they were greeted to the beat of Koththu Roti in progress and to the waft of the spicy curries being cooked on location. The alumni members had undertaken to provide the main meal to minimise the expenses by such industry. It was a delight to see the youthful alumni enthusiastically blending with the more experienced in the kitchen.

Even if the promotion of the event had helped to bring scholarships into focus, the donations were generously contributed by the alumni and their children driven by their inherent desire to give something back to their own or their parent's alma mater. Most present had been direct or indirect beneficiaries of a wonderful education. The Fathers Day was simply an occasion and the Scholarships Program a mere vehicle for the alumni and their kids to give expression to their instinctive altruism.

As the assembly broke up and returned home, they were enveloped with a rare feeling of lasting elation which always results from a shared achievement of a community. At the end of the day, there was no one to give thanks, none to receive. It had been a universal expression of gratitude and affection by all who were present to the great institution that is the University of Peradeniya.